

Minneapolis Board of Education approves contract for Bernadeia Johnson

Written by
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The Minneapolis Board of Education unanimously approved a contract with Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent-designee Bernadeia Johnson last Tuesday evening.

“I am extremely hopeful for the future and excited to lead this work,” said Johnson. “I am eager to focus on the academic work of the district and I know we can do great things for the children of Minneapolis.”

The contract which was approved at Tuesday night’s board meeting specifies that Johnson will receive an annual salary of \$190,000. The contract also contains provisions for a performance-based bonus tied to academic achievement of students. Annual performance goals will be formally established by the school board in writing by August 31 of the contract year. The school board has sole discretion to determine whether or not the goals were achieved.

While the contract also contains provisions for family health insurance, dental insurance, disability and life insurance, Johnson chose to forego additional benefits normally included in the superintendent’s package and opted to receive terms and conditions similar to the contracts in place for the Minneapolis Public Schools’ executive leadership team. This contract includes cuts to paid vacation and sick time and the elimination of personal time. Johnson hopes that by forfeiting these benefits, she will lead the way for other administrative and professional employees covered by collective bargaining agreements.

New leadership team announced

Johnson also announced her executive leadership team, effective July 1, 2010. The organizational structure aligns with the school district’s 2007-2013 strategic plan priorities.

Areas of strategic focus reflected in Johnson’s leadership structure include student achievement

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and academics; accountability; operational excellence, which includes finance and human resources; and engagement, communications and diversity. Each of these strategic areas of focus will be guided by leaders who will serve on Johnson's executive team.

"Our strategic plan guides all of our actions and prioritizes the core of our work – teaching and learning – with a set of recommendations to improve outcomes at the school and district level," said Johnson. "What is critical for me is a leadership structure that allows me to intently focus on the academic work of the district while at the same time entrusting the day-to-day operations to a high functioning team of leaders."

As previously announced, Erin Glynn will serve as Acting Chief Academic Officer until the position, which has been posted nationally, is filled. The division of academics is responsible for accelerating achievement for all students. Priorities include developing and implementing a comprehensive focused instruction system based on the curriculum audit recommendations to increase consistency of teaching and learning across schools. This division will also assist in the work of teacher development and have direct responsibility for high priority schools. The division of schools will implement programs to drive achievement results for all students and guide principals in their roles as instructional leaders. Three new associate superintendents will round out this area.

Jill Stever-Zeitlin, who has guided several strategic planning efforts, will lead the Division of Accountability, Planning and Innovation. Priorities include designing and implementing a comprehensive accountability system that measures individual, department, school and district-wide progress toward specific targets. The system will include rewards for exceptional performance and supports when needed for improvement. Additionally, this division will lead efforts to authorize and support high-quality, autonomous schools.

Business and Operations will continue to be led by Steve Liss and will have responsibility for all functions necessary to run an effective and efficient enterprise. Immediate priorities include the development of a long-range financial plan, under the direction of current finance lead Peggy Ingison, and the diagnosis and development of an improved information management system. Fulfilling the goals put forth by The New Teacher Project report will also be key and guided by current human resources lead Pat Pratt-Cook. Emphasis will be on rethinking district practices and contract rules that contribute to staff instability. A focus will be improving internal processes and practices so that schools have the opportunity to build strong, stable instructional teams. This includes ensuring accurate and timely projections for school staffing and effectively training and supporting school leaders.

Authentic engagement, communications and commitments to diversity and equity continue to be central to fulfilling the strategic plan goals. Priorities include strengthening internal communications and connecting with diverse populations whose first language is not English. MPS plans to adopt an internationally-recognized model for engagement from the International Association for Public Participation to establish clear expectations and best practices. Jackie Turner will continue to direct family and community engagement and Stan Alleyne will lead communication efforts.

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“Structural changes alone will not deliver the outcomes we want for all students,” said Johnson. “We will also be improving decision-making processes and clarifying priorities in order to implement our plan and achieve our vision of every child college ready.

Coupled with the announcement of her leadership team, Johnson announced she will soon begin an administrative audit guided by Dr. Robert Schiller, consultant to the Broad Superintendent’s Academy and former superintendent. He will conduct a thorough examination of the senior and mid-range leadership functions in light of the district’s tight financial resources. He will evaluate the organizational structure in comparison to the best structures and best practices of selected benchmarked districts. Any additional changes will be informed by this analysis.

“I am extremely hopeful for the future and excited to lead this work,” said Johnson. “With the expertise and counsel of those on my leadership team and the professionalism and dedication of MPS staff, I know we can do great things for the children of Minneapolis.”

The 2010-11 organizational chart is available online at www.mpls.k12.mn.us.