

JANUARY 27, 1986

NUTLEY MONITORING REPORT

MR. KUCINSKI, DR. FADULE, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION,
STAFF, AND THE PUBLIC -

ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE ESSEX COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS, I AM MOST PLEASED TO BE HERE TONIGHT TO PRESENT THE
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE OFFICIAL STATE MONITORING OF THE
NUTLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

I MUST PUBLICLY THANK AND COMMEND YOUR ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF
FOR THE HIGH DEGREE OF PROFESSIONALISM DEMONSTRATED IN THEIR
PREPARATION FOR OUR VISIT AS WELL AS THE COOPERATION AND
CORDIALITY EXTENDED DURING OUR VISIT. IT IS QUITE APPARENT
THAT POSITIVE AND EXCITING THINGS ARE HAPPENING TO AND FOR
CHILDREN IN THE NUTLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

BEFORE I DISCUSS MY SPECIFIC FINDINGS REGARDING YOUR SCHOOL
DISTRICT, LET ME SUMMARIZE THE STATE'S PROCESS OF MONITORING.

THE STATE'S MONITORING SYSTEM WAS DEVELOPED WITH A DUAL

PURPOSE:

FIRST - TO ASSIST LOCAL DISTRICTS IN REFOCUSING THEIR
ENERGIES AND RESOURCES UPON SOUND EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING, AND

SECONDLY - TO ENSURE A MEASURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN MEETING
THE MANDATE TO PROVIDE A THOROUGH AND EFFICIENT
SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

TOWARDS THESE ENDS, THE STATE'S MONITORING SYSTEM FOCUSES ON 10
ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN DEEMED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
AS ESSENTIAL FOR A THOROUGH AND EFFICIENT EDUCATION. THE TEN
ELEMENTS ARE:

1. PLANNING
2. SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RELATIONS
3. COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTION
4. STUDENT ATTENDANCE
5. FACILITIES
6. PROFESSIONAL STAFF
7. MANDATED PROGRAMS
8. ACHIEVEMENT IN STATE MANDATED MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
9. EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
10. FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

THE MONITORING PROCESS INCLUDES THREE MAJOR COMPONENTS:

1. A DESK AUDIT BY COUNTY STAFF - WHICH INVOLVES A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ALL DOCUMENTS RELATED TO SPECIFIC ELEMENTS WHICH EXIST IN THE COUNTY OFFICE. THIS AUDIT INCLUDES A REVIEW OF THE CERTIFICATION STATUS OF ALL TEACHING STAFF MEMBERS IN YOUR EMPLOY. THIS GENERALLY OCCURS ONE MONTH PRIOR TO OUR VISIT TO THE DISTRICT.
2. THE SECOND ASPECT OF MONITORING INVOLVES A CENTRAL OFFICE VISIT FOR DISTRICT LEVEL MONITORING. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE ELEMENTS AND INDICATORS IN THIS REVIEW ARE ALSO REVIEWED BY WAY OF DESK AUDIT AND/OR SCHOOL LEVEL MONITORING, IT IS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL THAT THE CENTRAL OFFICE PERSON MOST DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ELEMENT MAY BE USED AS A RESOURCE PERSON TO PROVIDE ANY UPDATED INFORMATION WHICH MAY HAVE OCCURRED AFTER THE DESK AUDIT AND TO DESCRIBE DISCREPANCIES WHICH MAY BE FOUND AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL.

3. THE THIRD COMPONENT INVOLVES VISITS TO ALL SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT. THE STATE TEAM MEMBERS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO GO INTO THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND TALK WITH PRINCIPALS, TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF, MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL AND STUDENTS. IT IS THROUGH THIS VISITATION THAT COUNTY OFFICE PERSONNEL GET SCHOOL STAFF INPUT WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISTRICT'S CURRICULUM, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM, AND SO FORTH.

THE CERTIFICATION OF A DISTRICT IS BASED UPON THE DISTRICT RECEIVING A RATING OF ACCEPTABLE ON THE SPECIFIED INDICATORS WITHIN EACH OF THE 10 ELEMENTS. I MUST STATE THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR BENEFITS OF THIS PROCESS RESULTS FROM THE SELF-ASSESSMENT THAT IS REQUIRED OF YOUR STAFF. THEY MUST LOOK AT WHAT YOU - THIS BOARD AND COMMUNITY - EXPECT FROM SCHOOLING FOR YOUR CHILDREN - WHERE THE DISTRICT IS IN RESPECT TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS - AND HOW THE DISTRICT CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND LESSEN THE GAP BETWEEN WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.

THIS SELF-ASSESSMENT, THEN, IS EITHER CORROBORATED BY OUR MONITORING EFFORT OR MAJOR DISCREPANCIES ARE IDENTIFIED.

AS YOU ARE WELL AWARE, THIS YEAR WE SPENT THE BETTER PART OF ONE MONTH WITH 11 STAFF MEMBERS MONITORING NUTLEY.

GENERALLY, WE WERE MOST PLEASED WITH OUR VISIT TO YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE SUPERINTENDENT, ADMINISTRATION, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY ARE TO BE HIGHLY COMMENDED FOR A COMMITMENT TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, UNPARALLELED IN MANY REGARDS IN OTHER SIMILAR SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

OF THE 10 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS, ALL HAVE BEEN RATED AS ACCEPTABLE, THEREBY RESULTING IN MY RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSIONER THAT NUTLEY BE CERTIFIED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

IN THE ELEMENT OF PLANNING, THE DISTRICT HAS RECEIVED A RATING OF ACCEPTABLE ON ALL INDICATORS. WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THE EFFORTS INVOLVING LONG RANGE PLANNING FOR CURRICULUM REVISION. YOUR CURRICULUM REVISION PROCESS IS COMPREHENSIVE AND THE DESIGN,

IN FACT, HAS A VERY STRONG EVALUATION COMPONENT. PERHAPS THE MOST NOTEWORTHY ASPECT OF YOUR CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS IS THE SATURDAY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE SESSIONS IN WHICH MOST TEACHERS ARE INVOLVED. WITHOUT A DOUBT, THIS PROCESS EXEMPLIFIES EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING.

IN THE SECOND ELEMENT OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONS, THERE IS MUCH EVIDENCE THAT THE COMMUNITY IS KEPT INFORMED AS TO SCHOOL ISSUES AND EVENTS THROUGH NEWSLETTERS, SPECIAL MEETINGS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES, AND BOARD AGENDA AND BOARD MINUTES.

A UNIQUE AND MOST SIGNIFICANT MANNER OF RECOGNITION OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP EXISTS IN YOUR ACADEMIC BOOSTERS CLUB. IT'S REFRESHING TO SEE A SCHOOL BOARD, ITS ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNITY REFOCUS ENERGIES ON ACADEMIC STUDENT LEARNING.

ELEMENT 3 - COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, IS CONCERNED

WITH THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND/OR BEHAVIORS THAT EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPECTS ITS CHILDREN TO DEVELOP. NOTEWORTHY ARE THE EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TO PROVIDE VARIED INSTRUCTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL TYPES OF STUDENTS.

IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE DISTRICT HAS MADE A COMMITMENT IN THE AREAS OF LIBRARY/MEDIA SERVICES, STUDY AND RESEARCH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, AND IN PROVIDING AND REFINING ALTERNATIVE SERVICES FOR STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS DISRUPTIVE AND DISAFFECTED.

I KNOW THAT YOU WILL AGREE WHEN I SAY THAT THE CURRICULUM IS THE HEART OF ANY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. WITHOUT A WELL-DEFINED AND CLEARLY ARTICULATED CURRICULUM, A SCHOOL DISTRICT WILL MOST CERTAINLY FLOUNDER. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT NUTLEY IS ALIVE AND WELL!

ELEMENT 4 - STUDENT ATTENDANCE, INDICATES THAT THE DISTRICT'S AVERAGE ATTENDANCE RATE IS ^{94%}~~93.8%~~ AND EXCEEDS THE STATE REQUIREMENT OF 90%.

ELEMENT 5 - DEALS WITH THE PHYSICAL PLANT OR FACILITIES AND IS DEFINED AS PROVIDING A SAFE FACILITY IN WHICH TO CARRY OUT THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE DISTRICT'S COMPREHENSIVE MULTI-YEAR MAINTENANCE PLAN CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS EXEMPLARY. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN IS OBSERVABLE WHEN ONE VISITS THE BUILDINGS OF THIS DISTRICT. ADDITIONALLY, DISTRICT APPROACHES IN CONDUCTING HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTIONS HAVE BEEN MOST VIGOROUS.

I NOTE THAT THE FEW SAFETY VIOLATIONS WHICH SURFACED DURING OUR VISITS TO YOUR BUILDINGS WERE CORRECTED PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF OUR MONITORING.

ELEMENT 6 - DEALS WITH PROFESSIONAL STAFF - THEIR CREDENTIALS, ABSENTEE RATES, AND STAFF EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. ALL PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS ARE APPROPRIATELY CERTIFICATED FOR THEIR SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS. THE ANNUAL RATE OF STAFF ABSENTEEISM WAS 2.73% AND FALLS WELL BELOW THE STATE MAXIMUM OF 5%.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS WHICH IS USED IS COMPREHENSIVE AND COMPLIES WITH STATE BOARD REGULATIONS.

ALL INDICATORS IN THE ELEMENT OF MANDATED PROGRAMS - ELEMENT 7 HAVE BEEN RATED AS ACCEPTABLE. THAT INCLUDES YOUR BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, BILINGUAL/ESL PROGRAM, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

THE DISTRICT OF NUTLEY ENJOYS A LONG HISTORY OF PROVIDING OUTSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES. I AM MOST PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THIS FINE TRADITION STILL EXISTS TODAY.

OUR REVIEW OF ELEMENT 8 - ACHIEVEMENT IN STATE MANDATED BASIC SKILLS INDICATES THAT THE DISTRICT'S STUDENTS FAR EXCEED STATE MINIMUM STANDARDS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS.

ELEMENT 9 FOCUSES ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. IT IS APPARENT THAT BECAUSE OF THE BREADTH AND SCOPE/

DIVERSITY OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS, EQUAL EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY ARE PROVIDED TO ALL CHILDREN IN THE NUTLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE DISTRICT HAS DEVELOPED EXTENSIVE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THAT THE DISTRICT REACHES A WIDE RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS.

THE FINAL ELEMENT - THE FINANCIAL AREA - ALSO RECEIVED A RATING OF ACCEPTABLE. THE DISTRICT MUST BE COMMENDED FOR ITS FINANCIAL RECORD KEEPING - AS WELL AS FOR THE REPORTING OF REQUIRED RECORDS IN A TIMELY AND ACCURATE MANNER.

OVERALL, FROM OUR REVIEW OF ALL REPORTS, RECORDS, AND DOCUMENTS, AS WELL AS OUR OBSERVATIONS WHEN WE VISITED THE NUTLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS - WE HAVE CONCLUDED AND IN FACT AFFIRMED YOUR BELIEF IN THE QUALITY OF THIS SCHOOL SYSTEM.

BASED UPON OUR MONITORING, I AM RECOMMENDING TO THE COMMISSIONER

-11-

OF EDUCATION THAT THE STATE BOARD CERTIFY THE NUTLEY DISTRICT
FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT A VERY FINE SCHOOL
DISTRICT AND TO PRESENT OUR FINDINGS TONIGHT.