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Interim Executive County Superintendent

January 13, 2023

Dr. Daniel Dooley, Superintendent
Absecon Public School District
800 Irelan Avenue
Absecon, NJ 08201

RE: 2022-23 Efficiency Standards Budget Review

Dear Dr. Dooley,

The 2022-23 School Budget has been reviewed pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7f-46 for the purpose of identifying excess administrative and non-instructional expenditures using the efficiency standards enumerated in N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-9-3.

Health Insurance:

- The Absecon Public School District is privately insured with AmeriHealth New Jersey and a part of the Brown and Brown trust. The district's medical/Rx only increased 4% this year.
- When the district settled its collective bargaining agreement in 2021-22, it negotiated a savings of just under \$90,000 based upon the enrollment in our PPO 10 plan.

Articulation:

- Since developing their own transportation department in the fiscal year 20-21, the Absecon School District started out with four leased buses from Sheppard Bus Company and now has eleven of them.
- Absecon has experienced significant savings (projected \$220,000 by the end of FY23). The projected savings will undoubtedly increase for this current fiscal year, as the district has numerous opportunities to provide transportation for other district's extracurricular activities (Brigantine, Linwood, and Ventnor). The district also assists Atlantic Community Charter School in a to/from school daily route.
- To date, Absecon has not experienced any driver shortages, frequent delays, or an inability to participate in extracurricular activities. In fact, the district's after school programs have grown exponentially with the new busing opportunities that an in-house department provides for their children and community.
- To ensure educational equity across its student population, Absecon Public School District, through data analysis, identified groups of students and individual students who require supports above and beyond its typical curricular or schoolwide social emotional offerings. Additionally, the district was able to track attendance trends, discipline referrals, requests for assistance, requests for counseling, math benchmark and formative assessment data, and reading/writing benchmark and formative assessment data.
- It should be noted that there was no disruption to the provision of programming in the Absecon Public School District during COVID-19.

- Under the leadership of Dr. Dooley, over the course of five years, the district has revamped its language arts and mathematics programs with high quality, research-based materials. In addition, the district has implemented a balanced literacy block driven by data collected through Fountas and Pinnell assessments, improved its classroom library offerings to celebrate diversity and engage student readers, created a common language that builds the capacity of student writers through Writer's Workshop, and launched Ready Math with exceptional results.

Commendations:

- Annual training is provided to district staff and the I&RS and PIRT teams to ensure appropriate implementation of supports and interventions for students.
- To meet the social-emotional needs of its students, teachers in the district are provided with training on various SEL factors and how to appropriately address students in need. In addition, time is dedicated within the elementary school for SEL/Character Development lessons and counseling support is also offered for students. And, the Youth Advocacy Program's provision of therapy within the school building helps remove the barrier of transportation for services.
- The Absecon Public School District is entering year four in their partnership with the School Climate Transformation Project (SCTP) in collaboration with the NJDOE and Rutgers University. Through this process, the district has explored climate and cultural changes that foster the social-emotional wellbeing of all students. Some of these practices consist of: restorative practices throughout the district as reflected in a newly revised student code of conduct and procedure; Student Summit, which gives middle school students a voice and allows them to become partners with the learning community, especially in decisions which directly impact them; classroom lessons through the guidance department to address bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and prosocial behaviors; and, Family Meetings that include the entire middle school coming together quarterly to celebrate successes and share stories of inspiration.
- The district's Therapy Dog Program, part of Dr. Dooley's vision, services over 300 children per week in counseling sessions, as reward incentives, and in times of de-escalation. This program has become so widely known throughout the county that administrators from other districts have visited Absecon for ideas and best practices on how to implement a therapy dog program of their own.

Please know that the Atlantic County Office is willing to work with you to maximize the use of district funds to support the productive operation of the district.

Sincerely yours,

Leslie White-Coursey
Interim Executive County Superintendent