

**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
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July 30, 2010

Via Electronic Transmission

Paul Socolar, Editor
The Philadelphia Public School Notebook
3721 Midvale Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19129

RE: Release of Dr. Ackerman's Performance Criteria

Dear Mr. Socolar:

In accordance with the directive as enumerated in the Final Determination, dated July 1, 2010, issued by Pennsylvania's Office of Open Records *In the Matter of Kristen Graham, on behalf of The Philadelphia Inquirer, v. The Philadelphia School District*, OOR Dkt. AP 2010-0484, The School District of Philadelphia ("School District") is enclosing a copy of the "Performance Objectives" and "Standards Critical for Achieving Goals" or otherwise the "criteria" used in connection with the annual performance evaluation of Dr. Arlene C. Ackerman, Superintendent of Schools, for the 2008-2009 calendar year.

Equally as important, Dr. Ackerman's performance evaluation involved a thorough process for the development of reasonable and measureable criteria and an extensive review of major goals and objectives as set forth by the School District's governing body. When Dr. Ackerman assumed her role as CEO and Superintendent of the School District in June 2008, she and the School Reform Commission ("SRC") signed a contractual agreement which clearly defined the terms and objectives that would be used to evaluate her performance and determine any incentive pay. The performance objectives they agreed upon were based on national best practices and policies as published by the Council of Great City Schools ("CGCS") in a 2008 report entitled "Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary." Notably, the CGCS report found that the amount of incentive pay or pay-for-performance provisions (in 2008 dollars) had a range of up to \$75,000; in addition, salaries varied substantially according to the size of a school district.¹ The following examples illustrate the variation that exists across cities:

1. In Atlanta, Georgia, an urban district with approximately 50,000 students enrolled, the Board of Education voted to award the superintendent a bonus of \$78,115.

¹ To view the complete report issued by the CGCS, please use the following link:
http://www.cgcs.org/Pubs/Urban_Indicator_08-09.pdf

2. In Washington, DC, a district of 45,700 students, the superintendent initially received a signing bonus of \$41,250 (to compensate her for having to sell her house in Colorado in 2007) and an additional \$27,500 contingent upon meeting goals in "student academic achievement" and "communications with community and families" (2008).

3. In Texas, the Houston Independent School District enrolls 202,773 students in public and charter schools and pays the Superintendent a base salary of \$327,010 annually, plus a performance bonus of \$77,500; also in Texas, the Alief School District with an enrollment of 45,000 (one-quarter the size of HISD), pays the Superintendent \$306,780 with no additional bonus; The Fort Bend Independent School District (TX) Superintendent Tim Jenney earns a base salary of \$247,800 plus up to \$70,000 for performance results in a district of 69,300 students.

Clear policy and defining performance goals is something the School District lacked but developed after Dr. Ackerman arrived. Without an official or documented performance review, her predecessor Paul Vallas, had received a total of \$400,000 in retention bonuses. In addition, he was awarded performance bonuses equaling 20% of his base salary every year he served. However, after a surprise deficit of \$73 million emerged, the SRC did not award him the annual 20% bonus in his last year of service. As indicated in the CGCS 2008 report and elsewhere, the practice of tying incentive or performance pay to results with clearly defined objectives and benchmarks is on the rise in school districts across the country.

The performance criteria agreed upon by Dr. Ackerman and the SRC were finalized in January 2009. The CEO/Superintendent Performance Review document is organized according to four major objectives with as many as six benchmarks per major objective. The four key performance objectives include:

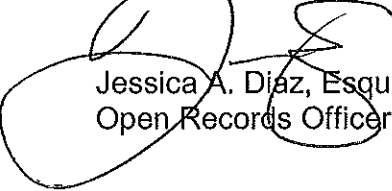
1. Accelerating the achievement for all students and reducing the differences in achievement among students in a safe environment that promotes student learning;
2. Creating an equitable distribution of resources within the School District of Philadelphia;
3. Creating accountability systems for all adults within the School District of Philadelphia; and,
4. Creating family, community and other stakeholders as partners in raising and maintaining high student achievement.

In June 2009, Superintendent Ackerman opted to forgo any consideration for a performance bonus. While confident and positive about all that the community and School District had accomplished together in one year, Dr. Ackerman recognized that the School District's five-year strategic plan, Imagine 2014, was only in its first phase of implementation. By the mid-point of her second year as Superintendent, both she and the community were seeing measurable results. In fidelity to their agreement, Dr. Ackerman respectfully submitted her record to the SRC for review. The Commissioners independently evaluated Dr. Ackerman and awarded her the 20% bonus.

Please note that while the School District opted not to exercise its unequivocal right to appeal this administrative ruling, it must still proceed with caution in disclosing records of the agency that contain information that is deemed both subject to public access as well as information that is protected from public disclosure as required by Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law ("Act.") For example, and pursuant to 65 P.S. §67.706 of the Act, if a record contains information that may be subject to public access while also containing information that is exempt, the agency shall grant such access by redacting the information where disclosure is prohibited. As such, information that is not subject to access and expressly protected by 65 P.S. §§67.708 (b)(7)(ii) and (vi) were redacted from these records in accordance with the Act.

Should you have any questions or wish to speak with me directly, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,



Jessica A. Diaz, Esquire
Open Records Officer

Attachments