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News Release

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In keeping with its mission to educate each student to empower success, the Nashua School District is committed to fulfilling the three-year settlement with the US Justice Department to provide added levels of instruction and support for English learner students.

“I fully support this partnership with the DOJ,” said Heather Raymond, President of the Nashua Board of Education. “Nashua takes pride in our status as a welcoming city. Our school district has more than 1,400 students who are English language learners. The City of Nashua and the Nashua School District are committed to working together to create more equitable learning opportunities for our community’s children.”

In July 2019 the US Department of Justice initiated an investigation into the Nashua School District English learner program. The nature of the original complaint against the program was not revealed to the district. Last fall, as part of the investigation, the department interviewed elementary, middle, and high school administrators, ELL teachers, classroom and content area teachers, and ELL outreach workers, as well as Robert Cioppa, Director of Student Services and ELL.

“Although uncomfortable, the experience is providing the impetus for more positive changes in our program,” said Cioppa, “which will lead to positive outcomes for our ELL students and their families.”

Seven areas of remediation were identified as a result of the investigation, and the school district

- needs to provide sufficient ELL services to all of our ELL students
- needs to provide sufficient ELL certified teachers to staff the ELL program
- needs to provide meaningful access to core content instruction for ELL students
- needs to provide training to principals so they can adequately evaluate teachers of ELLs
- needs to provide sufficient curricula to implement the ELL program
- needs to communicate more effectively with ELL parents
- needs to adequately evaluate the efficacy of the ELL program

“Steps have been taken already to help each of our students overcome language barriers,” said Garth J. McKinney, Superintendent of Nashua School District. “We are focused on doing all we can to support students to read, write, and speak in English so they can fully participate in their classes. Today we are

looking to hire more teachers certified to teach English as a second language to alleviate the shortfall in our teaching ranks.”

In spring 2019, Mayor James Donchess supported the school district’s long-standing defined need for funding in the area and, through the establishment of a \$200,000 contingency, funded the addition of four ELL teachers to the program.

“Nashua is a city where all, including immigrant newcomers, are welcome, accepted, and supported as they integrate into our community,” said Donchess. “I join the Nashua Board of Education in recognizing that more needs to be done to address barriers to our students learning in school and I am committed to doing what my office can to make that happen.”

School officials recognize families of English learners are key in supporting student success in school. In fall 2019, the school district created a new position to augment communication efforts at both the school district and school levels. Yeny Naranjo Armenteros was hired as the ELL Communication Coordinator and sees her role as forging healthy relationships with ELL families that encourage greater parent engagement with schools.

“We're working to create a more reliable and consistent interpreting process for families who request language interpretation,” said Armenteros. “Our teachers now utilize new translation apps to make sure important messages about student classroom work reach home successfully. Our families know that we are available to help their understanding of school and how their children are doing in school, and will fulfill interpreting and translation services, as needed.”

McKinney said also that the focus for the upcoming school year’s professional development offerings and school district and school staff meetings will focus on the findings of the Department of Justice investigation, to be sure all staff understand the emphasis on addressing the immediate needs of the ELL program to fulfill the settlement.

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