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**NOLA-PS SUPERINTENDENT DELIVERS UPDATE ON JFK FINDINGS TO OPSB**

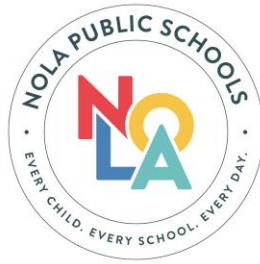
**NEW ORLEANS – (September 26, 2019) - The following is a statement that was delivered to the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) by Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr., Superintendent of NOLA Public Schools (NOLAPS), at the Board Business Meeting on Thursday, Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>. The remarks are in reference to the investigation into the New Beginnings Schools Foundation (NBSF) grade changing issues that occurred at John F. Kennedy (JFK) High School:**

“Tonight I would like to provide an update on John F. Kennedy High School, as I have prioritized monthly over the past several board meetings because I believe our community deserves to be informed about the status of the students who participated in the graduation at JFK for the 2018-2019 school year and our ongoing oversight of the work being done with current students.

Tonight I would like to share that a final report has been completed by NOLA public schools staff. The report summarizes our review of the incidents that occurred at JFK and subsequent actions taken by our administration in response. This report has also been shared with the state Office of Inspector General and the board president for New Beginnings Schools Foundation.

And while our review into this matter is complete given our authority and responsibilities, it should be mentioned the state inspector general is still in the process of conducting its own investigation.

In short, based upon information gathered and reviewed, our investigation into grade change allegations raised in February was ultimately inconclusive. However, a second grade change scheme was reported to OPSB in May. This second incident resulted in some students who participated in the 2018-2019 graduation at JFK not being certified.



These actions taken by JFK officials at the time resulted in:

1. Graduating seniors not being able to receive diplomas and transcripts in a timely manner,
2. Some students being required to take additional courses over the summer, and
3. Some students being required to take end of course exams during the summer, all in an effort to properly certify graduates.

Over the course of our review, the OPSB administration decided to seek revocation of new beginnings' charter given the non-compliance uncovered. Almost simultaneously, the New Beginnings Schools Foundation (NBSF) charter board voted to surrender the charters for both John F. Kennedy at Lake Area High School and Pierre A. Capdau Charter School at Avery Alexander effective at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

This outcome was an appropriate reaction and was accepted due to the fact that the staff who were involved in the non-compliance issues were no longer with the organization, and such a transition at the end of this school year would provide for a more stable, long-term transition for the students to a new operator. Additionally, this surrender allowed my team to focus our energies immediately upon the graduating class of 2019 and students returning for this school year.

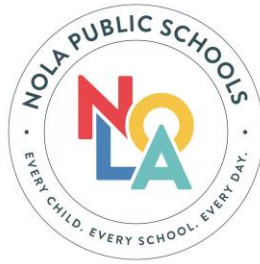
Although this report summarizes the district's review of facts and even though NBSF voted to surrender its charters, there is still an open notice of Non-compliance, Level 2 that is currently being monitored.

During the district's review of grade changing allegations, OPSB also became aware of an allegation that the CEO for NBSF altered minutes from a NBSF board meeting which led to a transportation contract being awarded that may not have gone through the appropriate approval process. However, the allegation has not been confirmed to date.

In response to this concern, among other actions, our administration now monitors NBSF management and financial reports, we receive copies of all contracts issued and payments in excess of \$10,000. And any outstanding compliance issues that are a part of the open notice of non-compliance will be addressed through our usual charter school accountability framework. Which includes assessing, tracking noncompliance notices, sharing those notices publicly at board meeting, and taking appropriate action.

At this time, our focus is twofold with regards to JFK: working to support students within the class of 2019 to resolve any outstanding academic issues and ensuring current JFK students are set up for success.

I'm happy to report that the new CEO of NBSF and current JFK staff have proven to be cooperative and committed to doing what is best for students through this transition, and I applaud their efforts. And I have also assigned my team members to schools, to offer support and be heavily engaged in daily operations at the school, including continued monitoring of student records for accuracy.



As for the class of 2019, I have a detailed update to share regarding those students specifically:

Of the 155 students who participated in the graduation at JFK for the 2018-2019 school year:

- Initially only 85 students were eligible to graduate in May
- Since then 52 more students were verified by LDOE including summer school completion and waivers approved for a total of 137 graduates.

That leaves 18 students. 14 of these students are in various stages:

- Some students are eligible for a waiver that needs to be submitted by NBSF
- Some are enrolled in high school
- A few students only need EOC exam
- Some students were previously enrolled in credit recovery, but the LDOE has identified issues that shall be reviewed and remedied
- While a few students are simply still enrolled in credit recovery

As for the remaining students - we are urgently and consistently reaching out to them. Our focus is these 18 students and ensuring that they can move forward in their journeys. And, I remain committed to supporting the current students at JFK as well as the staff to achieve great things this school year. Working together on behalf of our children is what NOLA Public Schools is truly about.

Moving forward, I fully expect to hear and report positive things about what students and staff will accomplish at JFK this year and beyond. Additionally, I want to share that our accountability team has been engaging with other high schools across the city and report that what happened at JFK is not, I repeat not, a widespread problem.

We are proud of our high schools and the work they are doing to help prepare our children for college, careers, and beyond. “

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**ABOUT NOLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS:** NOLA Public Schools is the public school district for Orleans Parish, which includes the district’s elected school board, known as the Orleans Parish School Board, and the district’s administration led by NOLA Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr. NOLA Public Schools currently oversees 78 public schools, including 75 charter schools, three direct-operated schools and a school with two educational programs for students in secure-care facilities. For more information, visit [www.nolapublicschools.com](http://www.nolapublicschools.com). For updates, follow NOLA Public Schools on [Facebook @NOLAPublicSchools](#), [Instagram @nolaps](#) and [Twitter @NOLAPSchools](#).