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NOVEMBER 29, 2018

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Study Outlines Steps to Increase Student Achievement in Jackson Public Schools *Partners Commit to Working Together to Develop Plan of Action to Support Educational Excellence in Jackson Public Schools*

JACKSON, Miss. – Today, Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, Jackson Mayor Chokwe A. Lumumba, the Jackson Public School District (JPS) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in conjunction with the Better Together Commission, released [findings](#) from the student-centered study of the district.

The release of the [in-depth report](#), conducted over nine months by Insight Education Group, marks a significant milestone in the process that began over a year ago when this group of partners opted for a “third way” to support transformative change for the state’s second largest school district. The study, along with a diverse range of community engagement activities, focused on identifying the assets and opportunities that can be leveraged to ensure every JPS student receives an excellent education.

“As governor, I am committed to providing a world-class learning environment for all school children in Mississippi. The recommendations in this report provide a solid foundation on which the Jackson Public Schools can continue the process of improving the educational outcomes for its children,” said Bryant. “As a partner with the City of Jackson, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Jackson Public Schools, I will do everything in my power to support the school improvement efforts needed to provide the learning environment all children deserve.”

The findings are informed by a review of previous reports and a deeper analysis of the district, including an examination of student achievement data; attendance and behavior; district staffing; school scheduling; classroom instruction leadership capacity; instructional coaching; professional development; student supports; and district finances. In addition to a comprehensive set of recommendations, the report outlines several assets the district can build upon to be a model for change, including ambitious students, caring staff, dedicated leadership and invested community support.

“We have an opportunity before us to not only transform the public education system of Jackson, Miss., but to provide a model for the rest of the country to subscribe to,” said Lumumba. “We believe that the only way to have a truly successful educational system is to have strategic partners in both the city, the state, philanthropic support of people and institutions like the Kellogg Foundation, and lastly, but most importantly, the parents and the students themselves in the community. Through those partnerships, we believe that we can truly execute something amazing for the city of Jackson.”

The findings shared today closely align with much of what the commission learned early in the process—teacher quality, teacher supports, district leadership and college and career readiness are critically important to improving student achievement in JPS.

“One of the things that is clear from these findings and from our conversations with the community is that we have a multitude of assets and opportunities we can use to improve how we serve students and support parents,” said Dr. Errick Greene, JPS superintendent. “We have a wealth of information we can use to prioritize and plan for the future—a future we can only achieve if everyone in the community remains invested in the success of our students and our schools.”

Some of the findings and recommendations from the report include:

- **Organizational Structure:** The district should focus on defining and communicating its mission, vision and goals, as well as revisiting its organizational structure to serve those goals and improve teaching and learning in schools.
- **Core Instruction:** JPS needs to develop a systematic process for continuous improvement that will ensure there are clear, rigorous expectations for teachers, and support the consistent delivery of standards-based instruction. These changes will help improve student achievement and align district assessments with statewide standards.
- **Exceptional Education and Struggling Students:** The district’s current approach to exceptional education and struggling students is not meeting the needs of students with the greatest need. Standardizing the support for struggling students across all schools will help the district improve support for students over time.
- **Talent Management:** Currently, there is not a rigorous and consistently implemented evaluation plan in place for the district, which makes it difficult to link staff performance with student achievement data or other measures. The district should consider revising its principal supervisor model; increasing the capacity of its educators; developing a robust plan for recruitment and retention; and codifying expectations for performance at all levels through an accountability system based on the instruction framework.
- **Finances:** Over the years, declining enrollment across the system has resulted in less money. Next steps will require tough decisions and trade-offs.

Over the course of the year, thousands of Jackson residents weighed in to share their hopes and aspirations for their children’s education and how to strengthen JPS to achieve those aspirations. The commission conducted several multi-faceted community engagement events to hear from all pockets of the city, including two youth summits, a series of stakeholder meetings, a family literacy event at the Jackson Zoo, and canvassing households across the city. Along with the recently released report, this data when finalized will help Superintendent Greene, district leadership and community partners develop a comprehensive plan of action to ensure all students graduate high school ready for college or careers.

“For Jackson’s children to thrive in school, their families and neighbors need the chance to envision a brighter future for students with people from every sector of the community,” said La June Montgomery Tabron, president and CEO of the Kellogg Foundation. “We entered this partnership to support that process. The findings of this study, and the other insights from parents and young people, are a powerful foundation for Superintendent Errick Greene and the community to move forward.”

With the study of the district complete and input gathered from a diverse, cross-section of the community, the commission has met its goals outlined in the MOU. Detailed findings from the

community engagement efforts will be released in early 2019. After Nov. 29, the commission will shift its focus to provide support for Greene and the JPS Board of Trustees as they work closely with the community and district staff to develop a strategic operating plan based on the findings of the study and community engagement process.

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About the Better Together Commission

The Better Together Commission is a 15-member body of volunteers charged with engaging the community and conducting a study of the educational ecosystem to ensure children's success in the Jackson Public School District (JPS). Throughout this year, the Commission has been working with the community to create a plan that ensures the academic success of all JPS students.