MEDIA RELEASE
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For immediate release

‘Groundbreaking’ analysis
Panel releases review of district practices

TRACY – After nearly six month of analysis, a panel of charter school authorizer experts today released its report on New Jerusalem Elementary School District’s oversight effectiveness and district officials are pleased with its outcome.

“We are very excited about what the panel produced,” said NJESD superintendent David Thoming. “We knew we had and have areas to work on; we expected that. We also are pleased to read the many positive and affirming commendations.”

Three highly respected educational leaders from throughout California spent several hours over six months with district officials in analyzing documents and practices, and interviewed charter operators to generate its final report. The review was to ensure that NJESD provides effective program and fiscal authorization, and effective oversight for its independent charter schools and for any future charters approved by the district’s governing board.

“NJESD has developed a comprehensive system of review for charter petitions and for oversight of the schools it has approved,” said Carol Barkley, retired director of charter schools for the California Department of Education and lead panelist. “Its approach is comprehensive, from an internal focus on its own capacity and continuous improvement activities, to a robust set of protocols for ensuring the approval of charter schools that are likely to be sustaining high quality schools, and a matrix of activities to ensure that approved schools are living up to the promises in their charters.”

Dr. Mick Founts, retired San Joaquin County superintendent, and Cathi Vogel, retired San Francisco Unified School District chief business official, were the other panelists. San Joaquin County Office of Education was invited to participate but declined, citing “their heavy workload,” according to Thoming.

“The fact that those two (Thoming and NJESD Deputy Superintendent Dr. Jeff Tilton) took the risk to do something no other agency has yet attempted in remarkable,” said Founts, who sat on the California Advisory Commission of Charter Schools most of his 23-year tenure with SJCOE. “This is groundbreaking stuff!”

Tilton, who discovered that there is no instrument or tool in the entire nation to measure effective charter school oversight despite various statewide and national organizations supporting charter school authorizers, located research published in May 2016 that made recommendations on effective oversight. He then created a comprehensive “self-study” tool that was aligned with both the study and California law and promptly commenced an internal review in August.

“The (tool) provided an excellent method to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of NJESD’s fiduciary responsibilities as an authorizer,” said Vogel. “The (district’s) website, with its comprehensive charter material written in lay language, provides excellent reference information for charters, boards, parents, staff and the community.”

“We looked for an objective review of our charter oversight procedures,” added Thoming. “Hopefully now the politically motivated attacks by those who do not believe in school choice will taper.”

The entire report is available on the district website: www.njesd.net

-- 30 --