

## Receivership Comes to Buffalo 25 Schools Subject to New Law

Five Buffalo Schools have been identified as “persistently struggling” schools while 20 others received the “struggling school” designation. All will operate under the year-one rules included in the new receivership law.

Receivership is a process. Persistently struggling schools have just one year to reach SED targets. Struggling schools have two years. Eighty-nine indicators will be used to measure annual growth. The expectation is that schools will show demonstrable progress of 1, 3 and 6 percent over a three-year period. The current receiver for these schools is the Superintendent. Those schools not meeting goals will be turned over to an outside receiver at the conclusion of their improvement period.

As with any new process, there is uncertainty. The Buffalo Teachers Union (BTF) is wary of the law as it gives the receiver the power to change the curriculum, extend the school day, remove the staff and change the work rules. The law allows for input from unions and the use of a conciliator where changes are made. Failing agreement, the Commissioner rules. Many believe that the Commissioner is likely to agree with the receiver.

Likewise, the relationship between the Board and the Superintendent will be impacted. BOE decisions impacting receiver schools can be overturned by the Superintendent. Board control in receiver schools is weakened. The Superintendent will have to decide on how much of the power he will use. Buffalo’s divided, contentious Board adds to the complexity.

As the law rolls out, first year progress will be based on the implementation of each school’s improvement plan. Community Engagement Teams at each building will approve the plans and then oversee progress and report to the Superintendent.

The good news is that state-wide the law provides \$75m in funding for receiver schools. The bad news is that as school starts the identified schools in Buffalo have yet to receive their share.

There are clearly skeptics about the turnaround process the receivership law mandates. The Board, the unions and some community members are displeased by the loss of power and local control of their schools. There are others who are upbeat and believe the law will finally bring meaningful change to struggling schools. Will the law be effective? Can it overcome societal problems such as poverty, racial discrimination, inclusion of immigrant populations, individuals with special needs and many more? Time will tell!