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# Williams resigns as Buffalo superintendent

**Business First**

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The Buffalo School Board voted 7-2 Wednesday afternoon to accept the resignation of Superintendent **James Williams**.

The resignation is effective Sept. 15, however, Williams will now have a seven-day window if he changes his mind.

Board members **Ralph Hernandez** and **Chris Jacobs** voted against the action. It is expected an interim superintendent will be appointed next week.

"Great six years," Williams said as he arrived at the Frank E. Merriweather Jr. Branch Library for a previously scheduled community meeting with parents, WKBW-TV reported.

"I'm not bitter," he added.

The Buffalo Control Board must also approve the resignation. The terms of the package were not disclosed.

Mayor **Byron Brown** had this reaction:

"As I've said in the past, it's time to embrace change when it comes to the Buffalo Public Schools. With the start of the school year fast approaching, it's time to focus the attention on our kids and move forward. I believe new leadership and new direction is needed for our schools."

Williams, 67, has been lightning rod for controversy since he arrived six years ago.

"It is unfortunate that we are losing such an intelligent administrator, however, when an employer loses confidence in his employee, as was the case here, it's time to move on," said Rev. **Darius Pridgen**, Ellicott District councilman.

The school board voted a few weeks ago to begin the termination process even though

Williams said he was planning to retire in June 2012. Many of the board members wanted him out of the position immediately.

"I'm sick and tired of hearing about adults and their issues when it comes to the Buffalo School District, we need to focus entirely on the children in the district and their education," Pridgen added. "This issue is more important than developing the waterfront or the (Buffalo Niagara) medical campus. Our most vulnerable people in Buffalo, right now, is our children. These kids are our future."

This comes after word that the district lost \$18 million in grants for troubled schools. Board members were also concerned with the superintendent's proposal to create a new administrative position, after laying off hundreds of teachers. Failing test score was another red flag to the board that leadership in the district must change.

**Robert Bennett** is a member and chancellor emeritus of the state Board of Regents, the state's governing body for education. He has been vocal about bringing Erie 1 BOCES Superintendent **Donald Ogilvie** onboard to assist the troubled city school district. The school board is responsible for appointing an interim superintendent, but it has not yet made any decisions.

"I think the district has an enormous set of challenges," Bennett said. "Whoever becomes interim (superintendent) has to take a fresh look at everything."

That includes all of the schools within the districts, individual school models, human resources and the district's expired labor contracts, he said.

"I think there's an awful lot of work to do. This is a legitimate economic crisis," Bennett said.

The final decision about Williams termination was supposed to be made earlier in the month but the superintendent was on vacation. Policy says he must be present when the board votes.