

Ins and outs of the state takeover

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It is fairly clear how the Oakland school district came under state control: the district fell into a financial crisis and sought a multimillion-dollar loan from the state.

The process of regaining its powers has proven more complicated.

Under the takeover law, the state superintendent decides when to restore the board's authority over five areas: financial management, staffing, student achievement, facilities and community relations and governance.

First, though, the district needs to impress auditors with the Fiscal Crisis & Management Assistance Team. It has to average a score of at least a 6 out of 10 on its periodic progress reports, and it can't score poorly on any of the sub-categories.

But the transfer of power hasn't been that simple. It's been almost two years since the school district hit the mark on community relations and governance, and the state superintendent is only now agreeing to let the district take charge of that area.

A bill introduced late last year by Assemblyman Sandre Swanson would make the process more straightforward. As soon as FCMAT auditors give the district high enough ratings in a particular area, the school board would regain control over those matters.

State Superintendent Jack O'Connell, who opposes the bill, says it didn't influence the timing of the agreement in the least. Swanson thinks it did.

Either way, the pending legislation heads to the Senate Education Committee at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday. It cleared the state Assembly in June.

— By Katy Murphy

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