RCSD gets new distinguished educator: Jaime Aquino

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The New York State Education Department has appointed Jaime Aquino as the new distinguished educator for the Rochester City School District, it announced Wednesday.

Aquino, born in the Dominican Republic, has worked in the Los Angeles, Denver and Hartford, Connecticut, school districts over the last 30 years.

He fills the job that Kenneth Eastwood, former superintendent of Middletown, Orange County, was originally slated for. Eastwood was appointed in April but pulled out weeks later after failing to come to terms with the district on his fee.

“The Rochester City School District needs to address many deficiencies in instruction and student support that are barriers to student learning,” Commissioner MaryEllen Elia said in a statement. “Working with Superintendent (Barbara) Deane-Williams and the district, Dr. Aquino will assess the district’s fiscal, operational and instructional operations and develop strategies for improvement.”

School Board President Van White said Elia called him last night to let him know the state had named a new candidate; that is in contrast to East-

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wood’s appointment, which White and the district learned about only a few hours in advance.

“I haven’t met (Aquino), but I’m actually excited about (his) credentials with urban districts,” White said. “No disrespect to Ken Eastwood, but this is a far cry (from him). ... I’m not crazy about having to pay for a distinguished educator, but if we have to, this seems like the right guy to have.”

Aquino is chief program officer at New Leaders for New Schools, a nonprofit educational leadership training organization. Before that he was superintendent of instruction in the Los Angeles Unified School District; chief academic officer in Denver Public Schools; and deputy superintendent for curriculum and instruction for Hartford Public Schools.
He began his career as a teacher in New York City and won the statewide Bilingual Teacher of the Year award in 1990.

His name came up last year as a possible replacement for New York City Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña, according to the New York Times.

The distinguished educator role is a state-mandated consultant for low-performing districts; Hempstead, on Long Island, is the only other district in New York that has one now.

As with Eastwood, the board now needs to negotiate a fee for Aquino’s services over the next year or more. He is supposed to begin Aug. 18 and has 45 days from then to complete “an action plan outlining the goals and objectives for the district and himself for the ensuing school year.”

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