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By RHONDA CROWDER

Staff Reporter

Last Friday, Mayor Frank G. Jackson announced that they have jumped the last hurdle in the first leg of what he calls a three prong attack to improve the quality of education the city's children receive – charter schools.

Initially,Jackson's plan called for the creation of a Transformation Alliance, a panel of representatives from the district, charter school and the community, with the power to approve or block new charter schools from opening in the city. But, he received some criticism for the proposal.

So, in order to see this plan through fruition,Jacksoncompromised.

Instead, the Transformation Alliance will simply be an advisory board charged to review charter school sponsors or authorizers and make recommendations to Ohio Department of Education who will have the final approval.

“It’s the first step that we need to provide quality education,” saidJackson. “It also gives us equal footing with charter schools.”

He believes it brings more accountability to both systems as well.

And, most importantly, it gives the mayor and school officials the opportunity to go after a levy in the upcoming November election.

“This agreement is a powerful example of what is possible when the entire community – educators, parents, elected officials and businesses – commit to collaboration over confrontation,” said American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weigarten.

He applauded Jackson and the Cleveland Teacher’s Union President David Quolke for working together and remaining committed to creating reforms that focus on truly improving teaching and learning.

“This agreement offers a clear path forward to strengthenCleveland’s public schools and ensureCleveland’s children are prepared for the demands of the 21st century,” he said.

With Jackson, Quolke, and Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO Eric Gordon having testified inColumbus, the plan will now go to vote in the legislature next month.

It has received the support of Governor John Kasich, State Senator Nina Turner, and others. “This plan strikes a careful balance maximizing flexibility for the CMSD, recognizing the critical role our teachers play and protecting collective bargaining, and ensuring sustainability of high performing charter schools while providing needed accountability for all charters,” said Ohio House Democratic Leader Armond Budish (D-Beachwood).

Budish is looking forward to continuing to work with the mayor, education leaders, and his colleagues in the House and Senate to pass this plan.

During an interview withJackson, yesterday, he said they will begin to work on determining the milleage for the levy. The second leg of the attack involves the passage of legislation and obtaining the finances. Implementation is the third leg.

“This is major forCleveland,” said Jackson, who went on to explain that this type of reform would allow reconsideration of teacher assignments, pay scales, and evaluations in addition to reviewing charter schools.

Jacksonalso said this plan “goes further than any attempt for reform in the county.”