

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Thursday, December 11, 2014**  
**Room 307A, State Office Building**  
**165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford**  
**Accountability and Support Committee Meeting**

Members Present: Dr. Estela Lopez, Chairperson  
Charles Jaskiewicz III  
Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca  
Erin Benham

Others Present: Morgan Barth, Division Director of Turnaround  
Adam Goldfarb, Chief of Staff  
Robert Kelly, Charter Office  
Michael Kent, Consultant, Turnaround  
Kaylan Ricciardi, Consultant, Turnaround  
Gloria McCree, Director, Office of Internal Audit  
Christine Ely, Executive Assistant to Morgan Barth  
Paul Whyte, Turnaround Director from Waterbury

Members Absent:

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:15a.m.

**II. Items for Discussion**

**A. Approval of July 30, 2014 Minutes**

A motion was made by Erin Benham, seconded by Charles Jaskiewicz, and unanimously adopted to approve the minutes of the Accountability and Support Committee meeting on July 30, 2014.

Vote:	Yes:	Dr. Estela Lopez, Charles Jaskiewicz III, Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca, Erin Benham
	No:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	0

**B. Update on Alliance Districts**

**C. Update on Commissioner's Network**

**For the purpose of reporting, agenda items B and C were combined.**

Mr. Morgan Barth presented a Turnaround Office Update that focused on leading indicator data as reported by Commissioner's Network and SIG schools and by the state's 30 Alliance Districts. Mr. Barth presented a slide show that showed initial attendance, climate and student achievement data from the Network schools. The data demonstrated significant improvements to average daily attendance and chronic absenteeism across Network schools. Other data point to initial improvements in the first quarter of the academic year.

Mr. Jaskiewicz asked what impact student transience has on attendance at turnaround schools. Mr. Barth replied that it has a significant impact, but that schools work to ensure strong attendance regardless of a student's transience. Board members commented specifically on impressive improvements at Briggs Alternative High School in Norwalk, Walsh Elementary in Waterbury and DiLoreto School in New Britain which has year-to-date 4percent chronic absenteeism. Dr. Lopez and Ms. Benham commented on the need for schools and districts to monitor year-to-date data each month.

Turnaround office consultants, Mr. Kent and Ms. Ricciardi described the quarterly monitoring process that they led for the schools and districts they serve; it has become a very rigorous and informative process. Ms. Ricciardi spoke of the on-the-ground help that SDE consultants offered by co-planning with building leaders last spring and summer and by visiting schools every two weeks. Mr. Kent explained that the Alliance Districts were very well prepared for quarterly monitoring visits; they presented their district data and have a more clear focus on priorities.

Mr. Whyte spoke as a representative of Waterbury Public Schools on the progress at Walsh Elementary and Crosby High School. Mr. Whyte explained that there were several signs of improvement at Walsh, increased attendance, a steep reduction in suspensions and the implantation of Project Child, the school's new teaching method. Mr. Whyte also explained the planning process at Crosby High School. Understanding that Waterbury's initial turnaround plan for Crosby was not adequate, the SDE and Waterbury reconvened a Turnaround Committee to write a new plan. This committee is co-chaired by Mr. Whyte and Dr. Steven Adamowski, who serves as the Commissioner's designee. Together the committee has created a draft plan which calls for breaking Crosby into four autonomous and theme-based small learning communities (SLCs.) The plan also includes working with a partner, Project GRAD, which is an organization that has significant experience in high school redesign.

Dr. Lopez expressed that she was pleased that changes are being implemented at Walsh, rather than another planning year. Ms. Lopez and other board members expressed approval with the draft plans from Crosby High School. Mr. Barth explained that while this year is, in effect, another planning year for Crosby, state funding has been paused until a new turnaround plan is approved; the SDE expects to bring this plan for State of Connecticut Board of Education approval in February.

#### **D. Charter School Updates**

Mr. Barth summarized the process by which the SBE approved an amended charter for Booker T. Washington Academy (BTWA), a charter school in New Haven and explained the process that the SDE has undertaken to monitor the progress of BTWA. The SDE has verified that BTWA has met all of the conditions articulated in the August 4, 2014, Resolution in which the SBE approved BTWA's amended charter. The SDE has been monitoring the progress of BTWA by reviewing bi-weekly progress reports sent by BTWA, visiting the school and reviewing budget and financial documents. Mr. Kelly explained that overall, BTWA has gotten off to a strong start this school year and has been in compliance with all SDE requests. Mr. Barth explained that SDE staff has visited the school on three occasions and can verify a sound programmatic start to the school year.

Ms. McCree gave a summary of the work that she and the Office of Internal Audit has undertaken. OIA is not auditing BTWA but, rather, is providing consultative services to ensure that its budget and practices represent standard accounting practices. Ms. McCree stated that BTWA's more recent draft documents are significantly improved from earlier submissions, but that BTWA still has improvements to make.

Ms. Lopez inquired as to whether the nature of BTWA's submissions reflects common mistakes of a young organization. Ms. McCree responded that these are issues of a young organization.

Mr. Jaskiewicz stated that the school had done tremendous work in changing its plans and getting up and operational in a short amount of time. He and other board members concurred they were pleased with the school's progress.

Ms. Lopez requested that the Department provide to the full board at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year a comprehensive update on the status of BTWA.

Mr. Barth gave an overview of charter school accountability and presented data that shows that most of Connecticut's charter schools significantly out-perform their host districts; and that charter schools represent a significantly higher proportion of low-income children and children of color. Charter schools serve a population that is only slightly less likely to be special ed or ELL (a 1% difference) than the state average.

Mr. Barth and Mr. Kelly reviewed the newly revised charter school renewal process which is significantly enhanced from the last renewal process. The SDE has added components that check for all matters of governance, management and financial compliance – and that include the policy enhancements announced by the SDE in

August. The renewal process also adds components to measure student achievement outcomes and scores charter schools using a rubric. This process has become more rigorous, more transparent and with a greater focus on accountability for performance. Mr. Barth also spoke about a recently released report from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and its ranking of Connecticut. Mr. Barth explained that the SDE has already added several new policies and that the new renewal process includes many of the accountability measures that NACSA advocates.

Dr. Lopez asked that the SDE be prepared to report on charter school accountability, data and the renewal process at the next full board meeting. She stated this is an opportunity to show the public that we have a rigorous process in place. Dr. Lopez thanked the SDE staff members for their very hard work during the renewal process.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

*Christine M. Ely* \_\_\_\_\_

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