

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Monday, March 6, 2017
450 Columbus Plaza North Hearing Room J
Hartford, Connecticut

Minutes

I. Call to Order

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, Committee Chairperson Dr. Estela López called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Dr. Estela López, Chairperson
Erin D. Benham
Robert J. Trefry
Malia Sieve

Committee Member Absent: William Davenport

Staff Present: Desi Nesmith
Kaylan Ricciardi
Leslie Carson
Carla Ghostlaw

Guests Present: Nathan D. Quesnel, Superintendent of East Hartford Public Schools
Cynthia Ritchie, Assistant Superintendent of East Hartford Public Schools
Dr. Lesley Morgan-Thompson, Principal of O'Brien STEM Academy
Corrie Schram, Assistant Principal of O'Brien STEM Academy
Abby I. Dolliver, Superintendent of Norwich Public Schools
Peter Camp, Principal of Uncas Network School
Dr. Kathleen Ouellette, Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools
Darren Schwartz, Chief Academic Officer, Waterbury Public Schools
Jackie Davis, Leader in Residence, Waterbury Public Schools
Adela Jorge-Nelson, Bilingual/ESOL Supervisor, Waterbury Public Schools
Jan Frenis, PK-12 Math Supervisor, Waterbury Public Schools
Dena Mortensen, PK-12 English Language Arts Supervisor, Waterbury Public Schools
Paul Whyte, Instructional Leadership Director, Waterbury Public Schools
Melissa Baldwin, Interim Special Education Director, Waterbury Public Schools

II. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Dr. Lopez, seconded by William Davenport, the committee voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the February 6, 2017, meeting of the Accountability and Support Committee.

III. Continuing Program Approval for Sacred Heart University

Sarah Barzee and Shannon Marimon from the Talent Office gave an overview of the Continuing Program Approval for Sacred Heart University (SHU). The executive summary was discussed with committee to present the visiting team's findings for the school's focused visit. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Committee Review Recommendations for Continuing Approval were also provided, and are based on visit findings. The CSDE Review committee is recommending full continuing approval for SHU for the period of September 30, 2015, through September 30, 2022.

IV. Continuing Program Approval for Charter Oak State University

Sarah Barzee and Shannon Marimon from the Talent Office gave an overview of the Continuing Program Approval for Charter Oak State University (COSC). The executive summary was discussed with committee to present the visiting team's findings for the school's focused visit. The Connecticut State Department of Education Committee Review Recommendations for Continuing Approval were also provided, and are based on visit findings. The CSDE Review committee is recommending full continuing approval for COSC for the period September 30, 2015, through September 30, 2022.

V. O'Brien STEM Academy, East Hartford

Superintendent Quesnel introduced his team to the committee and expressed how proud he is of the school's growth. Dr. Lesley Morgan-Thompson, Principal at O'Brien STEM Academy, explained that the school was dealing with multiple challenges such as high chronic absenteeism, low parent engagement and involvement; they had low performance in reading and math prior to joining the Commissioner's Network. The school has implemented a focused plan to improve reading performance. O'Brien has implemented an inquiry-based instructional model with a strong emphasis on instructional coaching to build teacher capacity. Through the work of the family and community outreach coordinator and social worker, they have created a family center which houses a food pantry and supports the work of CommPACT. Parents are volunteering in school every day. The school is working proactively to create more positive relationships with parents. Dr. Morgan-Thompson reported a decrease in chronic absenteeism and suspension rate for 2015-16 school year. This year O'Brien School has focused on climate training. Last year 39 students were suspended compared to 6 year to date, with no suspension since last October. O'Brien School has put into place a coaching model and implemented lesson studies to develop teachers' ability to coach colleagues and provide professional development training for new staff members. Lastly, in response to lagging math scores, the school utilizes "Driven by Data" comprised of four building blocks of data-driven instruction. She explains that data driven instruction has the power to dramatically improve student performance. Committee was pleased to see that Dr. Lesley Morgan-Thompson had analyzed and thought out the next steps and in return they have received immediate feedback from both the teachers and students. Committee hopes that we can all learn from the good work O'Brien School is doing.

VI. Uncas Network School, Norwich

Uncas Network School has had significant leadership changes before the 2016-17 school year. Chronic absenteeism decreased by 6.1 percentage points from the 2013-14 baseline year to 2015-16 and Uncas School is working to continue the decline. One of the first strategies that Uncas utilized to decrease chronic absenteeism was visiting families in the summer. This allowed the new administration to build positive relationships with students and families as well as provide a support for parents to help prepare their child for school. The suspension rate decreased by 6.2 percentage points from the 2013-14 baseline year to 2015-16. There have been many proactive strategies implemented at Uncas to address the suspension rate including building consistent management routines in classrooms and increasing teacher collaboration in regard to at-risk students. As a result of the consistency and collaboration, the relationship between teachers and students is improving. Families have reported a greater sense of accessibility with teachers and administration. This is a result of an increased focus on communication and outreach. The increase in home visits by the Principal, Social Worker, and other support staff has resulted in families feeling more connected to the school. In terms of next steps related to climate and culture, Uncas will welcome Scarlett Lewis to share the Choose Love Movement with the staff. Smarter Balanced Assessment data in Math is improving. The percentage of students at level 3 or above in mathematics increased by 4.4 percentage points. The challenges for Uncas continue to be increasing family engagement supporting student achievement, improving teacher capacity in relation to effective Tier 1 strategies and improving Smarter Balanced Results. Uncas will continue to address ELA and Math concerns by delivering targeted and explicit instruction. As a district, Norwich is developing an instructional framework. They are working together as a district and are strategic in how they use funding with the continued goal of growing the sustainability of the effective programs and practices.

VII. Waterbury Public Schools Overview

The Waterbury Public Schools was encouraged by the discussion with the State Board of Education's Accountability and Support Committee. Specific data points Waterbury Public Schools highlighted to the Committee were:

1. Waterbury opened the meeting by thanking the committee on having a collegial conversation regarding the state of the Waterbury Public Schools and were pleased to return for the second time in a calendar year to provide a district perspective on improvements. Waterbury was specifically interested in learning best practices from other districts as they present to the Committee in the future.
2. Approximately 10 percent growth in the graduate rate in 5 years.
3. Every academic indicator in section 1 for Math, ELA and Science on the State Accountability Index improved from 2014-2015 school year to 2015-2016 school year. Internal measures indicate a predicted improvement again for the current school year.
4. Chronic absenteeism was reduced again for the third straight year to be one of the lowest for the 5 major cities in Connecticut.
5. Waterbury has the lowest outplacement of Special Education students of all cities in the state.

6. Arrests are down 35 percent at this time compared to last school year. In addition, there are 800 less suspensions in the district at this time in the school year compared to last school year. The work in school-based diversion initiatives was noted as being particularly effective.
7. 102 curricula are currently being updated and revised via a curriculum management cycle with over 150 teachers trained and writing on a daily basis.
8. The English Learner population in Waterbury has made tremendous gains on Smarter Balanced and LAS Links, outperforming the state target of 80 percent of students making progress. Human capital strategies were particularly noted as being a model for the state.

Waterbury Public Schools staff thanked the committee for transparent accountability discussion while also feeling supported in the efforts taken by all of the staff, students and community of Waterbury.

VIII. Charter Approval Preview, Integrated Day Charter School and The Bridge Academy

Desi Nesmith reminded the committee of The Bridge Academy and Integrated Day Charter School charter renewal resolutions going before the State Board for its consideration at the April 5, 2017 meeting. The committee was provided with a brief history of the schools. The charter renewal process was outlined including site visits to the schools and the public hearings held in their respective host cities. He also indicated that the renewal recommendations were being finalized and the complete renewal information for each school would be made available to the full Board later in April.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Prepared by: Carla Ghostlaw