

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Monday, June 12, 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
Peter Haberlandt
Charlene Russell-Tucker
John Frassinelli
Kim Traverso
Carla Ghostlaw

Guests Present: Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools
Phillip Dwyer, Board of Education Chair, Fairfield Public Schools
Michael Cummings, Director of Elementary Education, Fairfield Public Schools
Leslie Pearson, Principal, McKinley Elementary School
Mindy Morgan, Parent, McKinley Elementary School
Anna Wood, Parent, McKinley Elementary School

II. Approval of Minutes

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

III. Consideration of Fairfield Public Schools Revised Amendment to Racial Imbalance Plan

Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools, gave an overview of the revised amendment of Fairfield's Racial Imbalance Plan with a purpose to correct racial imbalance at McKinley School. The revised amendment was requested at the January 4, 2017 State Board of Education meeting.

During the 2015-16 school year, the Fairfield Board of Education studied the possibility of redistricting the student population to remedy this issue. Dr. Jones indicated great things are happening at McKinley School and that the neighborhoods are becoming more diverse at a quicker rate. The school is on target to implement its plan. The Connecticut State Board of Education has set a standard by which to judge whether or not a school district is in compliance with the statute. All schools must be within 25 percentage points of the district average of minority students at the same grade span. Because McKinley School has exceeded the 25 percent standard in all but one of the last six years, the Board is required to propose revisions to the district's current racial imbalance plan that will move McKinley School under the 25 percentage point differential. Committee members discussed the renovation and expansion project happening at the Holland High School and Mill Hill School. School attendance areas will be revised to balance enrollments to reduce significantly the extent of the minority student disparity between McKinley School and the other elementary schools. It was noted that racial imbalance laws apply to all schools whether or not they are magnet schools.

Parents Mindy Morgan and Anna Wood were invited to the meeting and both expressed how fortunate they are to have their kids attend McKinley School. They talked about how proud they are of the diversity and their cultural differences and also how much they love the organic feeling at McKinley School in terms of community. Both parents shared their feelings of dedication and love for their school. While both parents are from different backgrounds and cultures, they come to McKinley with the same belief that they are a family where everyone is accepted and everyone cares about each other.

Committee members recommended that Fairfield Public Schools revise their written submission to be more specific about what they will be doing and when.

IV. Student Discipline Discussion

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operation Officer, John Frassinelli, Bureau Chief, and Kim Traverso, Education Consultant from the Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education gave a presentation on Suspensions and Expulsions of Students in Preschool and Kindergarten to Grade 2.

The annual report on student discipline, including suspensions and expulsions, indicates that there were 1,674 children in Grades Preschool-2 who were suspended, either in school or out of school, in 2015-16. Of those, 1,198 (71.6%) were Black or Latino and 979 (58.5%) were Black or Latino boys. The number of Preschool-2 students who received an out-of-school suspension in 2015-16 was 787. Ms. Russell-Tucker raised her concerns about the numbers being presented in the annual report. A memo to all superintendents will be sent addressing the suspensions and expulsions of students in Preschool and Kindergarten to Grade 2 and it will include a resource list to support positive approaches to behavior. Committee members requested that districts submit the action plan with their self-reported data on a monthly basis. There was a discussion on tiered monitoring and

supports for districts for reducing suspensions and expulsions and what the department can do to support districts. The framework listed different practices for all districts, the levels of suspensions and expulsions by district and identified districts with the highest levels of suspensions and expulsions. Suggestions by the committee members included scheduling courageous conversations, trainings for the principals, and putting teams together. Committee questioned if this will be a joint effort and if we will ensure systems are aligned. Jo Ann Freiberg, Education Consultant, in the Turnaround Office will give an overview of the School Climate and Restorative Practices as well as an update of the Alliance District statewide involvement at the next SBE Accountability and Support Committee meeting scheduled in the fall. Restorative Practice Trainings have been scheduled in schools and districts.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Prepared by: Carla Ghostlaw