

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Thursday, October 10, 2019
450 Columbus Plaza North Hearing Room J
Hartford, Connecticut

Minutes

(Approved on: December 11, 2019)

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 2:59 p.m.

Committee Dr. Estela López, Chairperson
Members Present: Erin D. Benham
 Donald F. Harris, Jr.

Committee William Davenport
Member Absent:

Staff Present: Desi Nesmith
 Lisa Lamenzo
 Robert Kelly
 Leslie Navarrete

Guests Present: Ronelle Swagerty, District Head/CEO, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport
 Valore Turner, Middle School Principal of New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport
 Collette Fearon, Elementary School Principal of New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport
 Jill Johnson, Executive Director/Principal of Explorations Charter School, Winstead
 Ginni Block, Board Chairperson of Explorations Charter School, Winstead

II. Approval of Minutes

Estela López moved, Donald F. Harris, Jr. seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the December 10, 2018 Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

Vote: In Favor: Lopez, Benham, and Harris
 Abstained:
 Opposed: 0
 Absent: Davenport

III. New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport

Turnaround Office Bureau Chief Lisa Lamenzo provided a brief overview of New Beginnings Family Academy, a state charter school renewal status and turned it over to Ronelle Swagerty, District Head/CEO, New Beginnings Family Academy.

Ronelle Swagerty, District Head/CEO, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport a state charter school opened her remarks by explaining how New Beginnings Family Academy worked with the Turnaround Office to improve on its focus core areas, literacy and numeracy skills.

The charter school focused on strengthening their instructional approach to make sure its educators have the proper support and necessary training to improve in these two focus core areas. She added that the school put forth a lot of time and effort to diversify their workforce, particularly male educators.

New Beginnings Family Academy noted that their math rate superseded the state of Connecticut math rate average. Their major success came from working diligently with the turnaround office to restructure their school master schedule while keep intact the school culture, NBFA's Smarter Balanced Assessment results for mathematics and ELA increased by 10 percentage points.

The committee thanked Mrs. Ronelle Swagerty, District Head/CEO, New Beginnings Family Academy, Valore Turner, Middle School Principal at New Beginnings Family Academy, and Collette Fearon, Elementary School Principal at New Beginnings Family Academy for the great leadership and successful school year.

IV. Explorations Charter School, Winsted

Turnaround Office Bureau Chief Lisa Lamenzo provided a brief overview of Explorations, a state charter school renewal status and turned it over to Jill Johnson, Executive Director/Principal of Explorations Charter School.

Jill Johnson, Executive Director/Principal of Explorations, Winsted reported to the committee on the student demographics, high student support level need, low consistent staff turnover rate, and the non-conventional instructional teaching structures they have put in place with the help of the Turnaround Office to improve student success rate at their school. She summarized that Explorations Charter School has implemented co-teaching in all subject areas to provide appropriate levels of support to students, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices, which has helped to decrease the school's chronic absenteeism and reduced their suspension rate by 10 percentage points.

Additionally, the charter school leadership has put forth great efforts increasing and maintaining school safety climate by ensuring students have at least one trusted adult they could turn to and putting in place effective structures and resources for staff to better support students. The school surveys their efforts regularly to assess process and impact. Executive Director Johnson underscored that many number of

students have transitioned from a therapeutic base to school. She also described their growing partnership with neighboring community college(s), and rising career ready student population.

The committee commended Explorations Charter School leadership for their laudable work with student population and actionable strides to make progress in their focus areas. However, the committee underscored the importance of continuous growth and referred to Bureau Chief Lisa Lamenzo for strategic planning recommendations. Bureau Chief Lisa Lamenzo recommended to continue conducting monthly meetings between the Turnaround Office and Explorations Leadership to closely examine what is being implemented, the impact of those initiatives, and next steps required; as well as looking into working with other CSDE Offices to identify best practices.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete