

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford

**Ad Hoc Committee on Accountability**

Jay Voss, Chair  
Janet M. Finneran  
Allan B. Taylor

Minutes of Meeting  
November 1, 2010

**Call to Order**

Mark McQuillan called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. The meeting was held in room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. Present were Ms. Finneran and Mr. Taylor (Mr. Taylor arrived at 9:15 a.m.). Absent was Mr. Voss. Also present were Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan, Deputy Commissioner George A. Coleman, Associate Commissioner Dr. Marion H. Martinez, Bureau Chief Lol Fearon, Assistant to the Commissioner and State Board of Education Pam Bergin, Attorney for the Legal and Governmental Affairs Ron Harris.

**Approval of Minutes of the March 24, 2010 Committee Meeting**

Minutes were unanimously approved by Ms. Finneran and Mr. Taylor.

**Newly Added Districts**

At the beginning of each new district presentation, Lol Fearon made a brief overview of the district and discussed the partnership between the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement and that district. He talked about developing a District Improvement Plan (DIP), the results of Connecticut Association for Learning Initiative (CALI) training, Decision Support Architecture Consortium (DSAC) and Lighthouse Training.

**Hamden Public Schools**

Superintendent Fran Rabinowitz was present for the presentation. Lol Fearon made introductions. Superintendent Rabinowitz opened with the comment that the State Department has been a tremendous help. Superintendent Rabinowitz has been the superintendent in Hamden for four years. She discussed the DSAC self-assessment, which she felt did not provide enough specific data. Areas that were indicated as needing improvement are being addressed. Data facilitators are in every school. Hamden is making progress in their sub-groups and is continuing with the sub-group analysis. Superintendent Rabinowitz made a recommendation that pre-school be available for the outer rim communities. She realizes that the high school has not made the gains that she wants to see. The high school is more programmatic. It has been suggested that there be an alternative school. There needs to be much work done at the high school.

Commissioner McQuillan asked about the Secondary School Reform in Hamden – Superintendent Rabinowitz responded that in Grade 9, there are more drop outs than any other grade. They are designing in house extra courses and tutoring during study halls. RAISES is in the middle school and there are high level courses and a support net.

Ms. Finneran congratulated Superintendent Rabinowitz on what she has done so far for Hamden Public Schools. In the data charts, it looks like that data dropped off for Asians, why? There is a change in the demographics after Grade 6; less Asian-Americans enters middle school.

Commissioner McQuillan commented that the DSAC results should be refined for more precise information. There should be a better differential. DSAC should be refined and restructured.

Superintendent Rabinowitz commented that the demonstration schools and executive coaches are wonderful. Funding for professional development has been reduced so it is great that CALI training is free.

Mr Taylor commented that Hamden is making wonderful use of CALI training and that their vertical scale scores show progress. However, growth scores looked like no progress.

Lol Fearon commented that Hamden has developed a DIP and is revising it. The revised DIP is going to the district board this month and will go to the State Board of Education in February 2011.

### **West Haven Public Schools**

Superintendent Neil Cavallaro and Assistant Superintendent Anne Druzolowski were present for the presentation. Lol Fearon made introductions. He commented that West Haven has their DIP in place.

This is Superintendent Cavallaro's third year as superintendent. He thinks that the right processes are in place. Teachers are all trained in CALI and research based instructional practices. West Haven has rewritten their curriculum and has restructured schools. Superintendent Cavallaro commented that his biggest concern is the high school.

Commissioner McQuillan commented that West Haven needs to be very careful about monitoring, consistency and transition. He also asked about the Secondary School Reform. Superintendent Cavallaro commented that West Haven Public Schools has implemented CALI. They have upped the credits needed in the high school to 24 and they have added high credit classes in the high school.

There is an alternate school for Grade 9 and a Student Assistance Team (SAT) team already set up in the high school. Superintendent Cavallaro is giving the middle and high schools high expectations. The focus will be to address individual student needs. There is a personalized program in the PACE program. The personalized program has 9 credits for 9 courses for students to graduate who would not graduate otherwise. There is a guidance counselor assigned to students in Grades 5 – 12.

In the future, Superintendent Cavallaro would like to increase CALI training including Larry Ainsworth's courses.

Superintendent Cavallaro commented that the DIP and SIP are CALI based and that all principals and teachers have been trained in school climate. DDDM is happening at all levels and with all teachers.

Superintendent Cavallaro commented that a lot of time is being spent on ELL students. He, also, commented that West Haven needs pre-school, better support for kindergarten and extra teachers. He would like an Early Childhood Administrator to partner with pre-schools.

Superintendent Cavallaro commented that the DIP will be ready either January or February 2011.

### **Windsor Public Schools**

Superintendent Elizabeth Feser and Board President Milo Peck were present for the presentation. Lol Fearon made introductions. He commented that Windsor has their DIP and is in the process of revising it.

This is Superintendent Feser's ninth year as superintendent. Superintendent Feser commented that Windsor Public Schools is taking CALI very seriously.

Ms. Finneran commented on attachment #2 (SSP), page 2, that the figure for years of teacher experience was very low. There are more than 50 percent of non-tenured teachers.

Commissioner McQuillan commented that Windsor has been working on their DIP for some time and that there has been a lot of push back.

Superintendent Feser commented that there has been a massive overhead of staff training and there is no full day kindergarten. Every student should be college ready when they graduate.

Commissioner McQuillan asked about the Secondary School Reform in Windsor – Superintendent Feser responded that there is an increase of requirements in math and science. She also commented that Windsor is looking into a freshman academy and asked for support for this. Windsor is trying to improve the transition for Grades 8 and 9.

Superintendent Feser commented that Windsor Public Schools for the past two years has had online training. Juniors and seniors in high school are doing very well with this. Windsor started Lighthouse Training for the board of education last March.

Board President Peck commented that on the town board there is a great turnover so once the board members who have had Lighthouse Training leave there has to be new training and new standards set.

Board President Peck commented that there is no full day kindergarten. There is no space. Windsor now has five elementary schools and would like to have four. The board will vote on this in March. If it passes, it will probably be in effect in 2012. The board needs to develop focused goals and have long term objectives. They should zero in on the objectives. There are goal standards in the DIP.

Superintendent Feser commented that they need alignment between the middle school and the high school. Windsor will be rolling out the SRBI in high school.

Commissioner McQuillan commented about the commitment and that the superintendent is going a good job.

### **Status of Windham Public Schools**

Interim Superintendent Ana Ortiz was present along with several town board members, central office staff and other town officials.

Interim Superintendent Ortiz commented that a second audit is taking place that is looking into fiscal, data, demographics, curriculum and ELLs. This audit will be presented to the town board. She, also, thanked the committee for inviting her to this meeting. Windham Public Schools became a partner district in 2007-08 and their DIP has been revamped several times (the DIP was originally approved by the State Board of Education November 2008). The expectation is that their Data Teams will be exemplary by June 2011. Hispanic males are not making it in the middle school and high school. A gap continues and high school students are not faring well. Lighthouse Training will start this Wednesday night. To date, the achievement gap continues to be the largest in the state. In the next five years, Windham will be losing 80 percent of their teachers. Windham public schools need drastic changes. Before they can move forward and look objectively, they must change everything. They are already looking at the research done on the second audit and work is in progress.

Mr. Taylor commented on what kind of changes. The response was governance structure, decision makers and union contracts.

Commissioner McQuillan commented on the letter from the town board and that the sense of urgency was not clearly heard at the town board meeting about filling the superintendent position. The town board needs to start immediately on the search for filling the superintendent position.

Interim Superintendent Ortiz commented that the hours and competitive pay for the teachers is a problem. The first analysis is in January and Lighthouse Training should be integrated.

Commissioner McQuillan commented that the reconstitution of the district board may happen. Changes need to be sufficient, evidence of improving scores need to be sufficient. It is all about results. There is a protocol for reconstitution. It is in the law and there is a clear process.

Interim Superintendent Ortiz commented that it is essential that the large community of Hispanic students be brought into the mix. She, also, stated that a Community Task Force has been established and that there is an open door policy with this task force. There is a serious community issue.

Interim Superintendent Ortiz commented that tensions exist between the school community and political leaders. Everyone has to get involved and look at the problems. The audit will give Windham better information on what needs to be done. Data will be analyzed, synthesized and

community groups will get together and discuss what processes need to be done. Data from the audit will be given to us in December 2010 and then onto the Forum for Community in February/March 2011 to make concrete recommendations. Everyone has come together so far.

Mr. Taylor and Commissioner McQuillan discussed the possibility of coming to Windham's board meeting in December.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadine Dube