

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

**Joint Meeting of the
Accountability and Support Committee
and the
Legislation and Policy Development Committee**

Tuesday, April 21, 2015

Draft Minutes -- Subject to Revision

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") met on Tuesday, April 21, 2015, in Room 117 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut.

Members Present: Dr. Estela López, Chairperson, Accountability and Support Committee
Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Chairperson, Legislation and Policy Development Committee
Erin Benham, Member, Accountability and Support Committee
Terry Jones, Member, Legislation and Policy Development Committee

Members Absent: Maria I. Mojica, Legislation and Policy Development Committee
Robert J. Trefry, Ex Officio, Legislation and Bylaws Committee

Guests Present: Paul Whyte, Turnaround Director, Waterbury
Ms. Jade L. Gopie, Principal, Crosby High School
Steven Adamowski, Special Master

Staff Present: Pamela Charland
Kathy Demsey
Kelly Donnelly
Shondel Edwards
Ajit Gopalakrishnan
Glen Peterson
Sergio Rodriguez
Michelle Rosado
Dianna Roberge-Wentzell
Charlene Russell-Tucker

- I. Call to Order**
Chairwoman López called meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.
- II. Introductions**
Chairwoman López invited committee members and guests to introduce themselves.
- III. Minutes of December 11, 2014, Accountability and Support Committee Meeting**

Ms. Benham moved, Dr. López seconded, that the Committee approve the minutes of the December 11, 2014, Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

Vote on	In favor:	Dr. Estela Lopez, Erin Benham
motion:	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Update on Crosby High School Turnaround Plan

Dr. Adamowski noted that the Plan will be initiated in the 2015 school year. He invited Mr. Paul Whyte to update the Board members on the Crosby High School Turnaround Plan.

Mr. Whyte stated that the plan focused on addressing two major areas: (1) chronic absenteeism; and (2) specific targets that would measure the success of the Crosby Turnaround Plan. He explained the school's efforts to address chronic absenteeism, including conducting interviews with every student who was chronically absent; reviewing potential barriers to attendance; availing themselves of all available resources, including social work and guidance; and closely examining data to guide their efforts and measure success.

Discussion ensued, including the importance of connecting with the middle school students before they enter Crosby High School, and the school's outreach in this area to ensure a smoother transition.

Ms. Hopkins-Staten requested that the Board be provided with data on chronic absenteeism by gender.

Dr. Lopez expressed concerns about the high extent of absenteeism, and her desire to move beyond planning and to proceed with actions designed to ensure progress. She questioned how they are measuring the success of their written plan.

Dr. Adamowski responded that the revised plan is targeted at reducing the number of dropouts through the Freshman Academy and other initiatives, and represents realistic targets.

Ms. Jade L. Gopie, Principal of Crosby, described improvement efforts at Crosby, including working with middle school staff; outreach to parents (i.e., home visits); efforts to explain to students and families the importance of attending school, improvements to the physical building, greater interaction with students by all staff members, professional development tailored to staff needs, and the establishment of the Freshman Academy.

Ms. Hopkins-Staten shared Dr. Lopez's concern about the targets in the revised plan. She stated that the targets are unacceptable and must be much more aggressive. She also requested to see the budget for implementing the plan.

Dr. Wentzell concurred that the targets in the plan are inconsistent with the Department's standards. She added that attendance is considered a leading indicator and, as such, should be held in higher regard. Dr. Wentzell noted that the Crosby plan received only conditional approval by the State Board of Education and Waterbury is obligated to accept the Board's conditions in order to remain in the Commissioner's Network.

Dr. Russell-Tucker agreed with the suggestion for providing additional community supports. Mr. Gopalakrishnan stated that, at a minimum, the targets should be at the state average for the whole school. Dr. Wentzell agreed and stated that the plan should be fully operational within three years.

Discussion ensued regarding cultural competency training (e.g., professional developing in the areas of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and cultural competency) and ways to enhance family involvement (e.g., school gardens).

With regard to academic performance, consensus was reached that the goals need to be much more ambitious. Board members expressed their concerns about the performance of elementary school students, especially in the area of reading. They recognized that their concerns extend beyond Crosby, and are more systemic across the district.

Dr. Wentzell asked what Waterbury was planning and if changes had been made at the elementary level, especially with respect to the provision of direct instruction, phonics and decoding. She stated that the district needs to check on the alignment of reading instruction across all grades.

Ms. Hopkins-Staten expected and hoped for the same level of support from the community as provided by the State Board. Dr. Wentzell also suggested intense partnership within the district and all its schools including Crosby. The district and community need to be invested in the plan.

Consensus and Follow-up Actions

1. Crosby must revise its chronic absenteeism targets to make them more aggressive, given the intense intervention. Crosby staff should work with the Commissioner and her staff to establish these targets. The 9th grade target should be in the vicinity of 10%, given the planned Freshman Academy, and the whole school target should at least match state averages for the high school grades. Also, there should be a line item in the budget for the Developing Tomorrow's Professionals Program.
2. The Department will review Waterbury's Alliance District application in connection with the Crosby plan to ensure that the overall district is working in a coordinated, systemic manner to support Crosby's success and the success of all Waterbury students.
3. The Department will report on Waterbury's plan at a future State Board of Education meeting.

V. Proposed school classification and Turnaround strategy in ESEA Flexibility Renewal

Mr. Gopalakrishnan stated that this is informational. He shared the proposed school classification approach in Connecticut's ESEA Flexibility application. It places new Focus and Turnaround schools in category 4 and existing Focus and Turnaround schools in category 5. He discussed the local and state-structured decision-making pathways for schools in categories 4 or 5 that fail to show improvement for two consecutive years.

Ms. Benham asked for the number of Focus and Turnaround schools which was provided by Mr. Gopalakrishnan (55 and 28 respectively). Mr. Gopalakrishnan clarified that some Focus schools had exited over the past few years but Turnaround school had exited to date.

VI. Future Meetings

Dr. Lopez requested a meeting to review the mid-year progress data from the Commissioner’s Network schools.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shondel Edwards
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