

# CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

## Accountability and Support Committee

Wednesday, April 22, 2020  
GoToMeeting

### **Draft Minutes** **(Approved on: May 20 2020)**

#### **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 3:00 p.m.

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

Committee Member Absent: None

Staff Present: Desi Nesmith  
Lisa Lamenzo  
Leslie Navarrete  
Jennifer Webb  
Michael Kent  
Aldith Dewar

Guests Present: Nancy Sarra, Superintendent, New Britain Public Schools, New Britain  
Damon Pearce, Principal, New Britain High School, New Britain  
Johanna Robles, Principal, Pulaski Middle School, New Britain  
Todd Verdi, Principal, Slade Middle School, New Britain  
Andrea Foligno, Principal, Smalley Elementary School, New Britain  
Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent, Hartford Superintendent of Schools, Hartford  
Kiaundra Smith, Principal, Hartford High School, Hartford

#### **II. Approval of Minutes**

Erin Benham moved, Donald F. Harris, Jr. seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the March 11, 2020 Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

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

#### **III. New Britain High School, New Britain**

Nancy Sarra, Superintendent of New Britain Public Schools and Damon Pearce, Principal of New Britain High School reported on the school's progress. Currently in year three of the Commissioner's Network, Superintendent Sarra acknowledged that the high school has not met the gains they intended three years ago, but reported confidence in the newly adopted learning systems and structures to strengthen building leader support and a focus on fidelity of implementation to improve student outcomes. Principal Pearce shared that Commissioner's Network funding has helped with the sustainability and success of the school's manufacturing academy, which has provided students with the opportunity to go into the manufacturing industry. The school has been working to improve focus areas,

investing in building leadership capacity to support and sustain the development and implementation of a culturally relevant and rigorous curricula, and continuing their efforts to improve attendance. The committee thanked Superintendent Sarra and Principal Pearce for their update and recommended that they leverage Commissioners' Network funds to improve identified areas of improvement in order to increase student outcomes.

#### **IV. New Britain CN Planning Schools**

Nancy Sarra, Superintendent of New Britain Public Schools and Principals of Pulaski Middle School, Slade Middle Schools, and Smalley Elementary School appeared before the committee to discuss their potential entrance in the Commissioner's Network for the 2021 school year. Division Director Lisa Lamenzo provided the committee an overview of the Commissioner's Network Application process and mentioned the district's need for curriculum as reflected by the initial audits. Superintendent Sarra shared the district's curriculum plan and the steps to ensure it is vertically aligned, equitable and student-centered. This plan includes a focus on Pulaski, Slade, and Smalley School, which is reflected in each of their plans. Superintendent Sarra also expressed her confidence with the leadership of building administrators and the plan to hold them accountable to ensure their plans are implemented.

Pulaski Middle School Principal Johanna Robles described the school's turnaround plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. The plan was strategically developed with community needs and sustainability in mind, grounded by the school's vision to provide a safe, equitable, and intellectually challenging environment that will empower all students to become culturally competent, innovative thinkers, creative problem solvers and inspirational learners.

Slade Middle School Principal Todd Verdi shared highlights of their school's turnaround plan. Based on the school's initial audit, the school's turnaround committee developed a plan to create an inclusive and strong social emotional environment for students and staff, restructure student's schedule to maximize instructional time, implement extended learning and intervention opportunities, and provide teachers collaborative planning time. Principal Verdi stressed that equity is a fundamental component to the school's plan.

Smalley Elementary School Principal Andrea Foligno described their school's process in using the Commissioner's Network instructional audit and data as a foundation to the development of their plan. Smalley's turnaround committee identified key priorities and strategies to increase academic rigor, maximize instructional time, strengthen teacher instructional capacity, reduce chronic absenteeism, and strengthen student, family, and staff engagement. The school also mentioned that budget priorities will be based on school needs and sustainability of reform.

The committee thanked the three New Britain schools for their interest in the Commissioner's Network and looks forward in seeing improvement in their school and performance.

#### **V. Hartford High School, Hartford**

Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, and Hartford High School Principal Kiaundra Smith appeared before the committee to discuss their potential entrance in the Commissioner's Network for the 2021 school year. Superintendent Dr. Torres-Rodriguez described how the turnaround plan aligns with the district's model of excellence, which is a three year configuration of schools across the district. The plan, along with the district model, aims to transform Hartford High School into a comprehensive neighborhood school with a focus on post-secondary success and a long term vision of having the high school become a flagship school for the district and across the state. Using the Commissioner's Network instructional audit and data trends, Hartford High School's plan contains core components including: a freshman academy supporting incoming students transitioning into high school; improving attendance; embedding a social emotional component to support a positive culture and climate and a school environment that is restorative and responsive to the needs of students,

families, community partners, and staff; and developing an alternative day program to meet the needs of over-age and under credited high school students and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade repeaters.

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The committee thanked Hartford High School for their interest in the Commissioner’s Network and looks forward in seeing improvement in their school and performance.

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

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete