

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Thursday, November 19, 2020

This meeting was live streamed for public access. A link to the live stream was available on the [State Board of Education's Website](#) the morning of November 19, 2020.

Minutes

(Approved on: December 15, 2020)

I. Call to Order

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, and posted on the agency's website, the meeting was livestreamed and link to the live stream was available on the State Board of Education website for public access. 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.
Elwood Exley, Jr.
Bonnie E. Burr

Committee Member Absent: None

Staff Present: Lisa Lamenzo
Leslie Navarrete
Irene Parisi
Robert Kelly
Felicia Canty
Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez
Christopher Todd
Dr. Shuana Tucker
Megan Alubicki-Flick

Guests Present: Dr. Nicholas Spera, Executive Director, ISAAC, New London
Denise Dunning, Principal, ISAAC, New London
Richard Muckle, Board Chairperson, ISAAC, New London
Tanya Collins, Dean of Students and Human Resources, ISAAC, New London
John Scalice, Executive Director, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Susan Briggs, Board Chairperson, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Latoya Hubbard, Director of Operations, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Josh Thomases, Executive Vice President of the Great Oaks Foundation, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Dacia Toll, Co-CEO & President, Achievement First Academy
Laurie Bussmann, VP of Operations & Technology, Achievement First Academy
Rhiannon Kogan, District TEAM Facilitator, Achievement First Academy
Raven Obas, AF Hartford, Elementary School Principal, Hartford
Scot Kerr, Executive Director, AF Bridgeport, Bridgeport
Samantha Lucky, Elementary School Principal, AF Bridgeport, Bridgeport
Shanice Adams, Elementary School Principal, Elm City College Preparatory, New Haven

II. Approval of Minutes

Bonnie E. Burr moved, Elwood Exley, Jr seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the October 20, 2020 Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

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

III. Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), New London

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview of the work to date with ISAAC and their corrective action plan. The CSDE identified chronic absenteeism, suspension, and academic performance in both ELA and Mathematics, as areas of focus for ISAAC's corrective action plan. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed ISAAC Executive Director Dr. Nicholas Spera, ISAAC Principal Denise Dunning, ISAAC Dean of Students and Human Resources Tanya Collins, and Board Chairperson Richard Muckle to provide a progress update.

Dr. Spera shared key strategies and structures ISAAC has developed and implemented in collaboration with CSDE, NEASC, and the school community in order to become a NEASC accredited school while also addressing the school's areas of focus. With the assistance of these partnerships, ISAAC is now a candidate school. Dr. Spera explained the important role the school's social and emotional wellness surveys have played in improving climate and culture and in integrating social emotional learning with rigorous academics. He added how ISAAC's new core values and beliefs, which is a NEASC candidate school requirement and in alignment with social emotional learning components and the best practices, helped to further establish and maintain a safe, welcoming, and productive climate and culture among the school community.

ISAAC is focusing on strengthening family engagement; they filled their stipend family outreach position. In addition, Dr. Spera highlighted that the school developed and implemented a core curriculum, cohesive student-centered assessments, an administrator evaluation plan, and an improvement plan that align with the school's goals, teacher's SOL goals, and common core. With the help of the CSDE, ISAAC reached 100 percent connectivity and made technology upgrades to reinforce curriculum delivery in remote learning. Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The committee thanked Executive Director Dr. Spera and his executive team for their update and commended their progress and efforts.

IV. Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview of the work to date with Great Oaks Charter School and their corrective action plan. The CSDE identified Great Oaks' chronic absenteeism, suspension, academic performance, and reaching 100 percent certification compliance, by October 31, 2020, as areas of focus for their corrective action plan. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed Executive Director of Great Oaks Charter School John Scalice, Board Chairperson Susan Briggs, and Mr. Scalice's executive team to provide a progress update.

Mr. Scalice described the steps Great Oaks Charter School has taken to support students, families, and educators in remote learning, such as ensuring 100 percent connectivity before the pandemic surged, developing SEL programs to strengthen student engagement in a virtual setting, changing operation model to enable student check-ins, providing technical support to families and educators, implementing

wellness focused professional learning opportunities for educators, and assembling attendance teams to closely monitor remote learning attendance by streamlining Schoology to PowerSchool.

Great Oak Charter School went on to explain the measures the school took to work towards certification compliance. While certification compliance as of November 6th is at 71 percent, August applications are still being processed by CSDE Talent Office. Once all applications are processed, Mr. Scalice is confident that the school reached its compliance level. Great Oak Charter School continues to work on refining academic curriculum development and improving curriculum delivery. Mr. Scalice shared with the board members how community building, developing relationships among administrators, teachers, and students, providing teachers professional learning opportunities on best restorative practices and implementing support structures for teachers, as well as creating a meaningful platform for student input have helped drastically reduce school suspension rate. Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments.

The committee thanked Executive Director of Great Oaks Charter School John Scalice, Board Chairperson Susan Briggs, and Mr. Scalice's executive team for providing a progress update and look forward to Great Oaks Charter School's progress.

V. Achievement First Academy

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview of the work to date with Achievement First. The CSDE identified certification compliance, bilingual program, and TEAM as areas of focus for Achievement First Hartford, Achievement First Bridgeport, Amistad Academy, and Elm City College Preparatory. All four school principals were introduced and available for questions.

Achievement First Academy Co-CEO & President Dacia Toll provided a high-level update on certification compliance. While a number of certification applications are still being processed by CSDE Talent Office, Ms. Toll is confident that Elm City College Preparatory and AF Bridgeport Academy have reached 100 percent certification compliance, and AF Hartford Academy and Amistad Academy reached 99 percent certification. Although suspension is not part of the district's correction action plan, she noted that all four schools have been working diligently to reduce suspension rates and progress has been made and will continue. Ms. Toll called on AF Bridgeport Academy Principal Samantha Lucky to brief the board members on the groundwork carried out to meet certification levels. AF Bridgeport Academy Principal Samantha Lucky went on to explain the steps the school took to work towards certification compliance with the support of the CSDE and network-support staff.

District TEAM Facilitator Rhiannon Kogan provided a progress update on TEAM. Ms. Kogan spoke in detail on the systemic overhaul of TEAM and the streamline approach that Achievement First adopted to turnaround TEAM's performance. Up to date, 100 percent of new teachers are paired with a mentor and several mentors are trained and ready to accept new teachers in the middle of year, if need be. Additionally, this year the program recruited 27 new mentors, allowing two teachers per mentor. District VP of Operations & Technology Laurie Bussmann provided a progress update on the district's bilingual program. With the support of the CSDE, Achievement First Academy has developed a short and long term approach to support EL students. The district's short term approach was to optimize recruitment efforts for bilingual and/or TESOL teachers and redevelop its bilingual program. The district's long term 1 year plan was to develop a bilingual/TESOL certification pipeline to support its program. With the guidance of the CSDE, the district partnered with ARCTEL Program and has enrolled 14 teachers who are expected to be certified by next year. Achievement First plans to continue this program on an ongoing basis.

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Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The committee thanked Achievement First Academy central and school district team for providing a progress update and look forward to their progress.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete