

# CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

## Accountability and Support Committee

Tuesday, December 15, 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 December 15, 2020.

### Minutes

(Approved on: January 19, 2021)

#### 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: Desi Nesmith  
Lisa Lamenzo  
Leslie Navarrete  
Irene Parisi  
Robert Kelly  
Felicia Canty  
Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez  
Iris White  
Carole Dibble  
Matthew Falconer

Guests Present: Dr. Iline Tracey, Superintendent of Schools, New Haven  
David Diah, Principal, Wexler-Grant Community School, New Haven  
Dr. Tracy Youngberg, Superintendent of Schools, Windham  
Pamela Cavanagh, Principal, Windham High School, Windham  
Ronelle Swagerty, Chief Executive Officer, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport  
Collette Fearon, Elementary Principal, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport  
Valore Turner, Middle School Principal, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport  
Donald Foley, Board Chairperson, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport

## **II. Approval of Minutes**

Donald F. Harris, Jr. moved, Erin D. Benham, Jr seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the November 19, 2020, Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

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

## **III. Wexler-Grant Community School, New Haven**

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview of the work to date with Wexler-Grant Community School. The CSDE identified attendance as an area of focus for Wexler-Grant Community School. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed Wexler-Grant Community School Principal David Diah to provide a progress update.

Principal David Diah shared key strategies and structures Wexler-Grant Community School has developed and implemented to improve teaching and learning, develop teacher and leadership capacity, and build community partnerships to support school's goals and family's needs. Principal David Diah explained how the school is developing teacher capacity through support structures like coaching cycles, peer observations, collegial walk-throughs, and professional development that are focused on tier 1 instruction. He added that incorporating data teams and Scientific Research Based Interventions (SBRI) has also strengthen teacher capacity, as well as student performance. He attributed Wexler-Grant Community School exceeding their SPI and SBA growth model ESSA milestone targets in 2018-19 to the abovementioned support structures.

Wexler-Grant Community School is focusing on maximizing learning time and structures to support student achievement, and on increasing family engagement. The school recently restructured Grades K-4's ELA and math blocks and established intervention blocks in Grades K-8, which have help tremendously in remote learning. The leadership team and attendance team continue to work on different strategies and structures to address attendance. Principal David Diah mentioned mentoring, partnerships with community leaders, and providing family support as some initiatives the school has implemented to reduce chronic absenteeism, build family engagement, and increase student engagement. Afterwards, Superintendent Iline Tracey provided a high-level update on how the district is supporting Wexler-Grant Community School to improve attendance.

Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The committee thanked Principal David Diah and Superintendent Iline Tracey for the update.

## **IV. Windham High School, Windham**

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview of the work to date with Windham High School. The CSDE identified Windham High School's student achievement and attendance as areas of focus. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed Windham High School Principal Pamela Cavanagh and Superintendent Tracy Youngberg to provide a progress update.

Superintendent Tracy Youngberg provided a high-level update on Windham High School's culture and climate improvement. She highlighted the important role the Commissioner Network funding and the CSDE technical support has played in supporting the school's turnaround.

Superintendent Tracy Youngberg called on Principal Pamela Cavanagh to further brief the committee on Windham High School's progress.

Principal Pamela Cavanagh described the steps Windham High School has taken to reduce student suspension rates, such as building staff - student relationship and administration-staff relationship, implementing the RULER's approach, and reinforcing restorative practices. To advance instructional practice, the Windham High School administration developed an instructional calendar to improve support structures and systems for their educators. Additionally, the high school is providing educators with opportunities to peer observe and to receive executive coaching, as well as, providing robust professional development with SERC on various culture and climate topics. Principal Pamela Cavanagh stated Windham High School data team has been revamped and explained its important role in helping to improve instructional practice.

Windham High School has implemented a multi-tiered system approach to continue working on improving student attendance. The school is also focusing on SAT preparation and technical support to make sure students are successful during the administration of the standardized test. Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments.

The committee thanked Windham High School Principal Pamela Cavanagh and Superintendent Tracy Youngberg for providing a progress update and looks forward to Windham High School Principal Pamela Cavanagh and Superintendent Tracy Youngberg's progress.

#### **V. New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport**

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview of the work to date with New Beginnings Family Academy. The CSDE identified academic performance, ELA, and math as areas of growth for New Beginnings Family Academy. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed New Beginnings Family Academy Chief Executive Officer Ronelle Swagerty, Elementary Principal Collette Fearon, Middle School Principal Valore Turner, and Board Chairperson Donald Foley.

Ms. Ronelle Swagerty shared key strategies and structures New Beginnings Family Academy has developed and implemented to improve academic performance and math and literacy skills. Some of the significant changes New Beginnings Family Academy made included designing and implementing a cohesive literacy curriculum that consists of tiers 1-3 instruction and progress monitoring, building teacher capacity, restructuring instructional framework to deliver and support tiers 1 through 3 instruction and intervention, and making data-driven decisions to support rigorous and equitable academic performance. New Beginnings Family Academy acknowledge the need to continue to strengthen these structures and processes as it relates to math. New Beginnings Family Academy also went into depth about the school's intentional efforts to recruit a diverse staff reflective of the student population. Their efforts were commended by committee members. Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments.

The committee thanked New Beginnings Family Academy Chief Executive Officer Ronelle Swagerty, Elementary Principal Collette Fearon, Middle School Principal Valore Turner, and Board Chairperson Donald Foley for providing a progress update and commended their progress.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete