

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

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 May 18, 2021.

Minutes (Approved July 13, 2021)

I. Call to Order

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's website, the Accountability and Support Committee (hereinafter "Committee") met virtually on May 18, 2021, via GoToMeeting. This virtual meeting was [livestreamed](#).

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
Irene Parisi
Leslie Navarrete
Robert Kelly
Felicia Canty
Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez
Iris White

Guests Present: John Scalice, Principal, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Susan Briggs, Board Chairperson, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Josh Thomases, Executive Vice President, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Latoya Hubbard, Director of Operations, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Tyrone Elliot, Director & High School Principal, The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport
Dr. Nicholas Speara, Executive Director, Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), New London
Richard Muckle, Board Chairperson, Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), New London

II. Approval of Minutes

Erin Benham moved, Elwood Exley, Jr seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the February 18, 2021 Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

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

III. 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. Ms. Lamenzo shared that the self-reported data presented demonstrates progress between the fall of 2020 to spring of 2021. During Great Oaks Charter School's last charter renewal, the CSDE identified the charter school's chronic absenteeism, suspension, academic performance, and certification compliance as areas of focus for their corrective action plan. As of present-day, Great Oaks Charter School has reached 100 percent certification compliance, shared Ms. Lamenzo. The Committee then welcomed Principal of Great Oaks Charter School John Scalice, Board Chairperson of Great Oaks Charter School Susan Briggs, Executive Vice President of Great Oaks Charter School Josh Thomases, and Director of Operations of Great Oaks Charter School Latoya Hubbard to provide a progress update.

Great Oaks Charter School shared some of their highlights and ongoing efforts to improve areas of focus in their corrective action plan. In particular, Great Oaks Charter School highlighted the considerable effort the charter school put forth in developing a learning management system to accomplish continuous learning in a blended learning environment, and efforts to support to their educators, including AmeriCorps staff, to reach teacher certification compliance while also creating a teacher pipeline. Great Oaks Charter School went on to explain how they are utilizing NWEA data as guidance to set and monitor projected growth for students. They also briefed the Committee on the ongoing conversations around participating in Smarter Balanced Assessment testing in the near future and disaggregating that data for lessons learned and next steps.

Great Oaks Charter School continues to work on increasing student attendance and academic performance. The charter school reported observing a consistent and positive trend of attendance and growth targets being achieved by students participating in the Saturday Academy, an online after school academic support program. Families are also responding well to the initiative. There is intent to continue offering after school opportunities outside of school for student academic support, like Saturday Academy. In addition, the charter school discussed observing in their three-year cohort data an accumulation of academic growth with students who have been attending the charter school consecutively. The charter school attributes the accumulation of academic growth to their intense focus on ELA and mathematics, targeted intervention, and changes made to their tutor model, curriculum, and curriculum delivery. The three-year cohort data as well showed a high staff retention rate, shared the charter school. Great Oaks Charter School went on to recount the positive impact that the revamp of their attendance team and processes along with the completion of their data systems have had on addressing chronic absenteeism. To further provide support to families to improve student attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the charter school hired an infection control nurse.

Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The Committee thanked Principal of Great Oaks Charter School John Scalice, Board Chairperson of Great Oaks Charter School Susan Briggs, Executive Vice President of Great Oaks Charter School Josh Thomases, and Director of Operations of Great Oaks Charter School Latoya Hubbard for the update and commended their efforts.

IV. The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office provided an overview of the work to date with The Bridge Academy and their corrective action plan. The CSDE identified the academy's chronic absenteeism, suspension, academic performance in both ELA and mathematics, and special education program as areas of focus for their corrective action plan. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed Executive Director and High School Principal of The Bridge Academy Tyrone Elliott.

The Bridge Academy shared key strategies and structures implemented with the assistance and guidance of the CSDE Turnaround Office that have showed promise in the improvement of attendance, academic, and special education. For example, an attendance team and subcommittee were formed to address attendance and culture and climate matters and initiatives. The charter school went on to explain the processes and practices adopted by the attendance team and subcommittee as well as the work committed by both thus far. Mr. Elliot shared that chronic absenteeism has dropped since last school year from 17.5 percent to 13.4 percent as of last month. The Bridge Academy continues to look for impactful ways that align with their SEL work to address chronic absenteeism such as looking into paying for school transportation for their high school students (where the chronic absenteeism spiked when funding for transportation was no longer available.), participating in the CSDE Talk Tuesdays, and establishing home visits including in the summer time and weekends. The charter school is also working on strengthening wraparound services for students and families by extending community partnerships that address SEL needs and hiring a SEL coordinator to run the charter school's social emotional learning program and to plan and coordinate the support students will need to resettle into a full time in-person learning environment.

With respect to academic performance, The Bridge Academy observed a 51-point increase from last school year's SAT scores and a math growth across all grades as a result of an increased focus on accelerating learning from fall to winter. Moreover, The Bridge Academy formed a strong partnership with Housatonic Community College to extend college credit opportunities to juniors and rising sophomores and hired an instructional coach to improve instruction. The charter school also reported to the Committee that all IEP goals have been revised, the instructional coach is facilitating meetings with SPED teachers and mainstream teachers to better provide individualized support for students with IEPs, and the charter school is providing a robust special education professional development to bring the special education program to compliance. Moreover, as a result of the implementation of PBIS with fidelity and the assistance of the state, the charter school reported a zero-suspension rate for this school year. There are ongoing efforts planned to keep suspension rate at a low by the charter school working with their SEL Coordinator to implement SEL-centered structures that align with current best restorative practices in place like the Castle Model.

The charter school plans to support learning in the summer with a 5-week summer academy for students, and with the ESSR 2 and ESSR 3 funding they plan to create a literacy program and an instructional math program for high school students, ending in the fall. Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The Committee thanked Executive Director and High School Principal of The Bridge Academy Tyrone Elliott for the update and commended the charter school's progress and efforts.

V. 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 climate and culture 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.

ISAAC shared highlights of their progress in the areas of focus identified in their correction action plan and from areas of continuing focus. Highlights included: the implementation of a curriculum for all subjects at each grade level and its increase accessibility and practicality for families, the expansion of the charter school's bilingual program and the strengthening of ESL support systems for students and families, the implementation of IAB internal assessment benchmark(s) to improve mathematics and ELA

instruction, and the deployment of a targeted outreach initiative to continue increasing the engagement of Latino students and their families. ISAAC also reported to the Committee that since the hire of a Spanish-speaking community liaison the charter school has observed an increase in Latino and in ESL family and student engagement and received positive feedback from them on the steps the charter schools is taking to improve school -family and school-student relationships.

The charter school went on to share that they are providing professional development focused on increasing teacher's capacity in data collection and analysis, and in how to develop and leverage data-driven assessments as well as leadership opportunities to teacher leads to lead these professional development workshops. ISAAC also shared an update on the implementation of their SRBI team which has prioritized reengaging students, removing barriers to ensure student learning, and making sure interventions are being followed through with fidelity. As a result of the SRBI team's efforts, the student in-person learning rate is increasing. Additionally, the charter school reported having zero-suspensions, including both in-school and explosion, noting their strong efforts in improving the school's culture and climate and implementing structures and systems with fidelity. ISAAC also attributed the highlighted progress shared with the Committee to the collaborative work the charter school has engaged in with the CSDE and NEASC.

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.

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

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete