

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

A link to participate in the meeting was available on [the State Board of Education's Website](#) on July 13, 2021.

Minutes (Approved September 22, 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 July 13, 2021, via GoToMeeting. A link to participate in the meeting was available on [the State Board of Education's Website](#) on July 13, 2021.

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
Bryan Klimkiewicz

Guests Present: Dr. Nicholas Spera, Executive Director, Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), New London
Richard Muckle, Board Chairperson, Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), New London
Attorney Dori Antonetti, ISAAC's Legal Counsel, Shipman & Goodwin LLP
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

Bonnie E. Burr moved, Erin Benham seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the May 18, 2021 Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

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

III. New Beginnings Family Academy (NBFA), Bridgeport

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director for the CSDE Turnaround Office, welcomed New Beginnings Family Academy Chief Executive Officer Ronelle Swagerty, Elementary Principal Collette Fearon, Middle School Principal Valore Turner, and Board Chairperson Donald Foley to provide a brief overview of the charter's Early Childhood Center (ECC) proposal. Ms. Lamenzo noted that there will be opportunities for in-depth discussion on the final ECC proposal before it is submitted to the State Board of Education for approval.

New Beginnings Family Academy (NBFA) shared their proposal to increase student learning and development outcomes by designing and implementing an evidence-based, trauma-informed, Early Childhood Center ("ECC") through restructuring the current PK-8 model to a PK-6 model, phasing-out Grades 7 and 8 by June 2023. This proposal also includes the establishment of a new building on NBFA's campus to serve as the school's Early Childhood Center Grades PK and Kindergarten for the 2022-23 school year. The New Beginnings leadership team shared their ongoing efforts to engage local stakeholders and external partners in the development of their plan.

Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The committee thanked New Beginnings Family Academy for the update.

IV. 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 on their probation status. The CSDE identified special education billing, disposal of school-owned computers and other IT equipment, board governance, and school policies and procedures, as areas of focus for ISAAC's corrective action plan on their probation status. She shared that while the corrective action plan has yet to be approved, ISAAC is working towards completion with guidance from the CSDE. Ms. Lamenzo welcomed ISAAC Executive Director Dr. Nicholas Spera, ISAAC, Board Chairperson Richard Muckle, and Attorney Dori Antonetti to provide a progress update.

ISAAC shared highlights of their progress in the areas of focus identified in their corrective action plan on their probation status. Highlights included: developing systems and procedures of transparency and accountability, creating inventory procedures that are attached to policies and best practices, strengthening communication of personnel-related policies and procedures with staff, increasing the accessibility of school policies and procedures with families, and planning and coordinating ongoing board training opportunities in alignment with probation terms.

ISAAC continues to work with their legal team and the CSDE to address areas of focus identified in their pending corrective action plan. Attorney Antonetti stated that the full board and subcommittee members will receive training to ensure oversight is continuous.

Ms. Lamenzo shared that ISAAC will come before SBE Accountability and Support Committee this fall for a progress update.

Chair López opened the floor for questions and comments. The committee reiterated the severity of the investigation and findings that led to the probation status and reminded ISAAC's team of the importance of intentional corrective actions.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete