

# Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

## Accountability and Support Committee

**Wednesday, April 19, 2023**  
450 Columbus Blvd.  
Plaza North, Meeting Rooms C & D  
Hartford, Connecticut

### **Minutes** **(Approved on June 5, 2023)**

#### **I. Call to Order**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, Committee Chairperson Erin D. Benham called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

#### Committee

Members Present: Erin D. Benham  
Malia K. Sieve  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Elwood Exley, Jr.  
Dr. Karen Dubois-Walton

#### Committee

Members Absent:

#### Staff Present:

Irene Parisi  
Iris White  
Greg Dresko  
Jennifer Webb  
Leslie Navarrete  
Donna Pasternak

#### Guests Present:

Dr. Matthew Conway, Superintendent, Derby Public Schools, Derby  
Dr. Michael Rafferty, Director of Teaching & Learning, Derby  
Rachael Caggiano, Principal, Derby Middle School, Derby  
Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent, Hartford Public Schools, Hartford  
Flora Padro, Principal, Hartford Public High School, Hartford  
Dr. Verna Ruffin, Superintendent, Waterbury Public Schools, Waterbury  
Jacqueline Gilmore, Principal, North End Middle School, Waterbury  
Vincent Balsamo, Principal, Michael F. Wallace Middle School, Waterbury  
Peter McCasland, Principal, West Side Middle School, Waterbury

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

Elwood Exley, Jr., moved, Donald F. Harris, Jr., seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the February 15, 2023, Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

Vote: In Favor: Exley, Benham, Sieve, Dubois-Walton, and Harris  
Abstained: 0  
Opposed: 0  
Absent:

### **III. Derby Middle School (DMS), Derby**

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer for the CSDE Academic Office, provided a brief overview of the three-year Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan process. Ms. Parisi welcomed Dr. Matthew Conway, Superintendent of Derby Public Schools, Rachael Caggiano, Principal of Derby Middle School, and Dr. Michael Rafferty, Director of Teaching & Learning, to provide a progress update.

DMS expressed their gratitude to the CSDE for their support throughout the school's three years in the Commissioner's Network and in the school's one year of planning to develop their turnaround plan. When DMS entered the Commissioner's Network, an approved turnaround plan was developed to address talent, academics, climate/culture, and operations. Some of the improvements around the abovementioned domains that DMS highlighted for the Committee were the development of an instructional coaching model to increase teacher capacity and effectiveness, implementation of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model; the establishment of a school culture focused on achievement; and the revamping of the school schedule to maximize instructional time and create extended learning opportunities. DMS staff and administration are also continuing with the professional learning that is focused on the Harvard University coursework and other professional learning to increase teacher capacity and effectiveness.

If the State Board of Education (SBE) approves the school's request of a one-year extension in the Commissioner's Network, DMS would like to continue to focus on staff professional development and growth through collaborative partnerships with Harvard University and Partners for Educational Leadership to support ongoing instructional practice improvements and develop a sustainability planning for the future. Additionally, the school would like to continue funding intervention support for students in need of additional resources and afterschool learning opportunities for student.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions. The Committee commended DMS for its progress and congratulated DMS Principal Rachael Caggiano for being the 2023 Connecticut Middle School Principal of the Year.

### **IV. Hartford Public High School (HPHS), Hartford**

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer for the CSDE Academic Office, welcomed Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, and Flora Padro, Principal of Hartford Public High School, to provide a progress update. Before, HPHS began its progress update, CSDE Education Consultant Jennifer Webb shared that the school experienced a restructure in which three separate school academy structures were combined into a single unified high school, HPHS, and as result the school was granted an additional planning year in 2019-20.

HPHS expressed their gratitude to the CSDE for their support throughout the school's three years in the Commissioner's Network and in the school's planning year to develop their turnaround plan. When HPHS entered the Commissioner's Network, an approved turnaround plan was developed to address talent, academics, climate/culture, and operations. Some of the improvements around the abovementioned domains that HPHS highlighted for the Committee were leveraging wraparound services and outreach efforts to support and inform families on the importance of regular school attendance and utilizing a restorative practice approach to address chronic absenteeism; expanding the pathway academies; establishing the Allied Health career pathway and its increasing enrollment; and accomplishing the state Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Challenge in 2021-22, and the schools is already meeting their target for this current year.

If the SBE approves the school's request of a one-year extension in the Commissioner's Network, HPHS would like to continue leveraging learning walks in order to conduct informal observations, monitor instruction and pace, and support teacher implementation of professional learning; supporting and strengthening the Allied Health career pathway; and refining and expanding the Multi-Tiered System of Supports as well as continue developing the restorative mindset for all in the HPHS community.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions.

#### **V. North End Middle School (NEMS), Waterbury**

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer for the CSDE Academic Office, welcomed Dr. Verna Ruffin, Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools, and Jacqueline Gilmore, Principal of North End Middle School, to provide a progress update.

NEMS expressed their gratitude to the CSDE for their support throughout the school's three years in the Commissioner's Network and in the school's one year of planning to develop their turnaround plan. When NEMS entered the Commissioner's Network, an approved turnaround plan was developed to address talent, academics, climate/culture, and operations. Some of the improvements around the abovementioned domains that NEMS highlighted for the Committee were the development of a shared and common vision for essential instructional practices and of leadership structures, practices, and systems to support NEMS' vision for effective instruction; establishment of content coordinators to support targeted and intentional planning and to provide feedback and coaching to staff; carrying out facility upgrades to promote collaborative spaces; and the revitalization of the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practice frameworks.

If the SBE approves the school's request of a one-year extension in the Commissioner's Network, NEMS would like to build a teacher leadership academy to support ongoing instructional practice improvements and continue to provide stipends for instructional leadership positions and the afterschool programming to support academics and social-emotional learning. NEMS also emphasized how being in the Commissioner's Network with other district schools has strengthen collaboration efforts within the district.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions.

#### **VI. Michael F. Wallace Middle School (WMS), Waterbury**

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer for the CSDE Academic Office, welcomed Dr. Verna Ruffin, Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools, and Vincent Balsamo, Principal of Michael F. Wallace Middle School, to provide a progress update.

WMS expressed their gratitude to the CSDE for their support throughout the school's three years in the Commissioner's Network and in the school's one year of planning to develop their turnaround plan. When WMS entered the Commissioner's Network, an approved turnaround plan was developed to address talent, academics, climate/culture, and operations. Some of the improvements around the abovementioned domains that WMS highlighted for the Committee were the development, implementation, and strengthening of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) structures and practices and of WMS' vision for effective instruction; and the revamping of the school and special education calendar to accommodate English language arts and mathematics intervention.

If the SBE approves the school's request of a one year extension in the Commissioner's Network, WMS would like to continue to providing professional learning for high quality instruction including a focus on systemically designing and scaffolding instruction, continue the school's afterschool programming to support student needs with academics and social-emotional learning; and strengthen the implementation of the

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative system to support student behavior management.

WMS echoed the sentiment of NEMS that being in the Commissioner Network with other district schools has strengthen collaboration efforts within the district.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions.

#### **VII. West Side Middle School (WSMS), Waterbury**

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer for the CSDE Academic Office, welcomed Dr. Verna Ruffin, Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools, and Peter McCasland, Principal of West Side Middle School, to provide a progress update.

WSMS expressed their gratitude to the CSDE for their support throughout the school's three years in the Commissioner's Network and in the school's one year of planning to develop their turnaround plan. When WSMS entered the Commissioner's Network, an approved turnaround plan was developed to address talent, academics, climate/culture, and operations. Some of the improvements around the abovementioned domains that WSMS highlighted for the Committee were the development of a schoolwide, systematic approach to teaching and learning with clearly defined structures in place, the provision of professional development that aligns with the needs and areas of improvement that WSMS aims to achieve; and the development, implementation, and strengthening of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) structures and practices, including co-teaching training and coaching for teacher, to increase their capacity and effectiveness to meet students' needs.

If the SBE approves the school's request of a one-year extension in the Commissioner's Network, WSMS would like to continue the school's afterschool programming to support student needs, to revise systems, protocols, and the effectiveness of the instructional data teams in reviewing assessments and using data to drive instruction; and decrease their chronic absenteeism rate through a multi-tiered systems approach.

WSMS echoed the sentiment of NEMS that being in the Commissioner's Network with other district schools has strengthen collaboration efforts NEMS that being in the Commissioner Network with other district schools has strengthen collaboration efforts within the district. The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions.

The Committee thanked the teams from Derby, Hartford, and Waterbury Commissioner's Network schools for their progress updates. The Committee was in agreement to move the abovementioned Commissioner's Network schools to the SBE for approval of the schools' request for a one-year extension in the Commissioner Network.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete