

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

**The Legislation and Policy Development Committee
Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 8:00 a.m.**

Committee Members

Malia K. Sieve, Chair
Karen DuBois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Bonnie E. Burr,
Elwood Exley, Jr., Martha Paluch Prou

Minutes

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on October 4, 2023.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order at 8:10. Also present were Committee Members Donald F. Harris, Elwood Exley, Jr., and Bonnie Burr, who were joined shortly thereafter by Committee Members Karen DuBois-Walton and Martha Paluch Prou. Also in attendance were student members of the State Board of Education, Yasmeeen Galal and Connor Cowan, as well as the following individuals from the CSDE: Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; Michael P. McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs; Megan Alubicki Flick, ESL/Bilingual Consultant; and Sonya Efiyanayi, Administrative Assistant, Communications Office.

Presenters:

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, CSDE
Megan Alubicki Flick, ESL/Bilingual Consultant, Academic Office, CSDE
Laura Anastasio, Attorney, CSDE
Paul Vicinus, Superintendent of Schools, West Hartford Public Schools

II. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Exley moved to approve the September 6, 2023, meeting minutes with one change. Specifically, Mr. Exley requested that the word “learners” be added after “multilingual.” Mr. Harris seconded. The minutes, as amended, were unanimously approved.

III. Review and Discussion: Draft Parent Bill of Rights for English Learners/Multilingual Learners

Ms. Parisi and Dr. Alubicki Flick reviewed the additional work they had done on the proposed Parent Bill of Rights for English Learners/Multilingual Learners since the LPDC’s prior meeting. Ms. Parisi noted that the Academic Office had communicated with other states to determine how they were approaching a comparable enumeration of rights. Dr. Alubicki Flick added that she had spoken with and received information from Georgia, California, Montana, Massachusetts, and

Vermont and also cited an LEP.gov (limited English proficiency) website that also has language resources.

Ms. Parisi and Dr. Alubicki Blick advised that the proposed Bill of Parental Rights was to be published in fifteen different languages, focusing on the most prevalent. In response to Ms. Burr's question as to whether all districts used the same set of languages, Dr. Alubicki Flick noted that some districts have a higher concentration of individuals from certain countries than others; for example, while one district may have a large Indian population and thus, there are various Indian languages that it would use, these same languages would not be necessary elsewhere. Ms. Parisi added that English and Spanish are the predominant languages overall, but local districts come up with policies regarding the use of other languages based upon their respective populations.

Mr. Harris asked why the CSDE had selected fifteen languages rather than a greater number. Dr. Alubicki Flick noted that the top fifteen languages cover approximately 92% of students in Connecticut public schools. Ms. Sieve asked whether the districts could translate the Bill of Parental Rights into other languages, and Dr. Alubicki Flick stated that the CSDE intends to provide resources to help districts translate for the remaining 8% of public-school students. Ms. Parisi explained that selecting the top fifteen languages expedited their dissemination at the local level, with the district then employing other applicable languages.

Ms. Parisi advised that she does not know the cost of implementing these language resources and that there was not a line-item appropriation, but that the Academic Office would be working with the Fiscal Office on it. She added that the CSDE would not be the actual translators; rather, it would be provided by an approved translation service. Ms. Sieve emphasized the Committee's concern that no parents be left out and that there be as much language accessibility as possible, and Dr. DuBois-Walton asked about the timeline for this program. Ms. Sieve and Dr. DuBois-Walton also asked about the language of the proposed Bill of Parental Rights, whether it was the same as the legislation and whether it was sufficiently reader friendly. Ms. Parisi responded that some districts were already using it since it was set forth in statute.

The Committee discussed Ms. Parisi and Dr. Alubicki Flick returning in November with a detailed iteration of how the Bill of Parental Rights, when finalized, would be distributed.

IV. Review and Discussion: West Hartford Racial Imbalance Plan

At Ms. Sieve's request, Attorney Anastasio provided the Committee with a brief refresher regarding the racial imbalance law, adding that although Charter Oak School in West Hartford, had come off the racially imbalanced list, it is now back on. Paul Vicinus, the Superintendent of the West Hartford Public Schools, then began a presentation regarding Charter Oak.

Mr. Vicinus noted it is not a pure magnet school, nor are any of West Hartford's other magnet schools; rather, they are a mix of neighborhood and magnet schools. One of the key variables is the IB program and the other is a one-year holdover, the hope being that magnet students will attend the PreK program and then stay for the remainder of the elementary experience. During 2021-2022, there was only a 38% retention rate as parents were still concerned about COVID and wanted their children in neighborhood schools. There was, however, a 90% retention rate among

students of color, both neighborhood and magnet, which resulted in the higher racial-imbalance percentage.

In addition to the IB program, Charter Oak has specialists that work in the area of technology and also offers both Spanish and Chinese language, beginning in PreK, whereas other elementary schools have only Spanish, starting in third grade. Charter Oak also has a music programs. Teachers are allowed to opt into Charter Oak, so it has more diversity in its teaching staff than other West Hartford elementary schools.

Given these initiatives, Charter Oak has become very attractive, so few neighborhood students have chosen to opt out of the school. The neighborhood is 79% students of color. The PreK is about 70% students of color. Approximately 65% of students who magnet into Charter Oak are students of color as it is a popular school. Nonetheless, the school is back to a 70% retention rate among students *not* of color from PreK to regular elementary grades at Charter Oak. Consequently, West Hartford anticipates the racial disparity number going down next year by one-to-two points. Although it is unclear as to whether the number will be below 25%, the district anticipates it continuing to decrease and fall under the threshold in the near future.

In response to Dr. DuBois-Walton's question as to what West Hartford is doing to ensure that other magnet schools are attractive to students, the district's new diversity director explained that West Hartford has done a lot of work on the diversity issues, which is something that attracted her to the district. West Hartford has been participating in Teacher-in-Residence program and is trying to ensure that individuals in this program are in schools in which there is less diversity. West Hartford has also recently created a DEI group consisting of parents across all elementary schools.

Given the lack of remaining time, Ms. Sieve suggested that the Committee move the firearm safety discussion to the November meeting. Additionally, Dr. DuBois-Walton requested that the Committee add to the November agenda a discussion of religious guidance.

Ms. Sieve called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:27. Mr. Harris moved, and Mr. Exley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.