

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

Accountability and Support Committee

Wednesday, May 15, 2024
450 Columbus Blvd.
Plaza North, Meeting Rooms C & D
Hartford, Connecticut

**Minutes
(Approved on: September 12, 2024)**

I. Call to Order

Pursuant to the 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
Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Allan B Taylor

Committee

Members Absent: Dr. Seth D. Zimmerman

Staff Present:

Irene Parisi
Dr. Charles Hewes
Dr. Melissa Jenkins
Jennifer Webb
Leslie Navarrete
Margaret Hughes
Iris White
Amanda Baksa
Jennifer Murrhy
Greg Dresko

Guests Present:

Dr. Jordan E. Grossman, Superintendent, Canton Public Schools, Canton
Jon Bishop, Assistant Superintendent, Canton Public Schools, Canton
Jeffrey Moore, Principal, Canton Middle School, Canton
John Scalice, Chief Executive Officer, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Chris Pelligrino, High School Principal, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Denise Linares, Middle School Principal, Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport
Dr. Leslie Torres- Rodriguez, Superintendent, Hartford Public Schools, Hartford
Charlene Diaz, Assistant Director of Grants, Hartford Public Schools, Hartford
Corrine Barney, Chief of Schools and Innovation, Hartford Public Schools,
Hartford

II. Approval of Minutes

Allan B. Taylor, moved, and Donald F. Harris, Jr., seconded, that the Committee approved the minutes of the April 11, 2024, Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

Vote: In Favor: Benham, Taylor, and Harris
Abstained: 0
Opposed: 0
Absent: Zimmerman

III. Canton Middle School, Canton

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, provided an overview of the Commissioner's Network program. Up to 25 schools can participate in the Commissioner's Network, and currently, 15 schools participate in the Commissioner's Network. She also mentioned in her overview that there is a total of four planning Commissioner's Network schools scheduled to present to the State Board of Education (SBE) Accountability and Support Committee for recommendation to the full SBE. Canton Middle School (CMS) is one of the four planning Commissioner's Network schools.

Jennifer Webb, Bureau Chief for the CSDE Turnaround Office, went on to provide a summary of CMS' current and historical data. Ms. Webb also mentioned in her summary that CMS is identified as a Category 4 Focus School for High Needs English Language Arts (ELA) Growth, based on the Next Generation Accountability System's Accountability Index. Iris White, Education Consultant for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview for the Committee on the work to date with Canton Middle School.

Ms. White shared that CMS has: a positive school culture and climate; a low teacher turnover; and experienced steady decline in its absenteeism rate. She continued to share that CMS aims to implement high-leverage strategies to support the school's Turnaround Plan: a professional learning plan that is aligned, sustained, reflective of both teacher and student needs; high-quality Tier I instruction; and a schedule to increase opportunities for flexible intervention and staff team collaboration.

Dr. Jordan E. Grossman, Superintendent of Canton Public Schools; Jon Bishop, Assistant Superintendent of Canton Public Schools; and Jeffrey Moore, Principal of Canton Middle School were welcomed. CMS expressed its gratitude to the CSDE for its support throughout the planning process of the Commissioner's Network. The school noted that CMS visited a Commissioner's Network school during its planning year, and its participation in the Commissioner's Network will help CMS and the district focus on what needs to be improved and provide guidance to complete it expeditiously. Moreover, the school's participation in the Commissioner's Network will support: the creation of a professional development plan that is aligned, sustained, reflective of both teacher and student needs, clearly communicated, values staff feedback, and directly impacts Tier I instruction; creation of a clear vision of high-quality instruction that maintains flexibility and departmental best practices; development of students' resiliency and executive functioning skills; and CMS conducting an assessment to identify a schedule that provides increased flexibility for students to receive support and increased opportunities for staff collaboration, and instructional walkthroughs to identify best practices, assess areas of need and promote a culture of professional learning.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions from the Committee. The Committee recommended Canton Middle School of Canton to the full State Board of Education

IV. Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport

Jennifer Webb, Bureau Chief for the CSDE Turnaround Office, went on to provide a summary of Great Oaks Charter School's current and historical data. Margaret Hughes, Associate Education Consultant for the CSDE Turnaround Office, provided an overview for the Committee on the work to date with Great Oaks Charter School (Great Oaks).

Ms. Hughes reported that the school's Turnaround Plan aims to improve teaching and learning by utilizing strategies, methods, and best practices that have proven to be effective in improving student academic performance. She added the Great Oaks strives to implement high-leverage strategies to support the school's Turnaround Plan, such as high-quality professional learning, differentiate Tier 1 instruction, and an extensive data-driven decision-making process.

John Scalice, Chief Executive Officer of Great Oaks Charter School; Chris Pelligrino, High School Principal at Great Oaks Charter School; and Denise Linares, Middle School Principal at Great Oaks Charter School were welcomed. Great Oaks expressed its gratitude to the CSDE for its support throughout the planning process of the Commissioner's Network. The school noted that its efforts to implement a curricula, high-dosage tutoring, and climate and culture practices in the previous years has equipped the school and staff to support the Turnaround Plan of Great Oaks.

Moreover, the school's participation in the Commissioner's Network will support: the creation and implementation of professional learning systems; implementation of coaching opportunities around Tier 1 instruction; enhancement of instructional quality by identifying and integrating prerequisite skills to accelerate learning; revamp and implementation of an academic multi-tiered system of support (MTSS); the creation and implementation of a MTSS for attendance; refinement of the school's generation and utilization of student behavior data; reconstruction of the schedule to maximize instructional time; and opportunities for collaborative planning time to allow for vertical team planning and data team meetings.

Additionally, Great Oaks reported that the school's bilingual support continues to progress – the hire of a teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) teacher, pending completion of two teachers in the TESOL program, and new staff starting the English as a Second Language (ESL) Teaching Certification program soon.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions from the Committee. The Committee recommended Great Oaks Charter School of Bridgeport to the full State Board of Education.

V. Hartford Public Schools: Fiscal Update on Program Sustainability Funded by State and Federal Grants

Dr. Charles Hewes, Deputy Commissioner for Academics and Innovation, provided an overview, indicating that an invitation letter via e-mail was sent to the Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, Dr. Leslie Torres- Rodriguez, to attend and provide the SBE Accountability and Support Committee a fiscal update on the district's sustainability of programs that are funded by state and federal grants.

Dr. Hewes proceeded to provide the Committee with an overview of Hartford Public Schools's state and federal grants, the obligations for liquidation of state and federal grants and the reimbursement process. Dr. Hewes welcomed Dr. Leslie Torres- Rodriguez. Dr. Torres- Rodriguez and her district team were given the opportunity to provide further insight on the district's budget and payment processes; fiscal gaps in the district's 2023-2024 school year budget and the impact these fiscal gaps will have on the Hartford public schools and future budgets; and future insight on outstanding state and federal grants.

The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions from the Committee. Chair Erin Benham moved that the SBE Accountability and Support Committee recommend to the full SBE to discuss the invocation of [Section 10-223e\(2\) of the Connecticut General Statute](#) for the purpose of Connecticut State Department of Education to support Hartford public schools at the upcoming SBE meeting on June 5, 2024. Committee member Donald Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete