

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

Accountability and Support Committee Meeting

Estela Lopez, Chairperson
Charles Jaskiewicz III
Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca

March 31, 2014

Draft Minutes of Meeting

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the State Department of Education's Web site, the State Board of Education Accountability and Support Committee met on March 31, 2014, in room 307B of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut.

I. Call to Order

Chairwoman Estela Lopez called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. Present were Dr. Lopez, and Charles Jaskiewicz and Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca (both via telephone).

Also present for all or part of the meeting were Morgan Barth, Glen Peterson, Pamela Charland, Mark Linabury, Keryn Felder, and Lisa Carta Corriveau. Special guest Jeff Sudmyer, Regional Superintendent for Achievement First, Hartford, was also in attendance.

II. Approval of August 23, 2013, Minutes

Minutes approved by Mr. Jaskiewicz; second by Ms. Keavney-Maruca. Minutes approved.

III. Update on Student Discipline at Achievement First Hartford Charter School

Mark Linabury opened up the discussion by reviewing some of the focus items that are being done at the school to address this problem. An interim progress report was completed by January 31, 2014; an ED166 was prepared. An additional report was done on March 3, 2014; "Notable progress" had been made at the school. Mr. Linabury reminded the committee that certification would be done at the end of the year. Renewal of the school is slated for June 2016.

Jeff Sudmyer indicated that the school data shows significant progress being made. Suspensions per student have gone down 66 percent and, in the elementary school, suspension are down 89 percent. Achievement First has PBIS imbedded into the fabric of the culture at the school. Mr. Sudmyer shared with the committee some of the activities taking place at the school to inspire "scholars", including a merit system, which allows students to earn Achievement First money to buy things, dress down days, and school trips. The school has weekly data system meetings where the data team looks for "hot spots" or spikes in certain areas that can immediately be followed up on. Administrators are encouraged to "narrate the positive." The school has also concentrated on improvements to special education, including co-teaching and inclusion, and focusing on the area of joy. Teachers are very enthusiastic; there is presently a "March Madness"

competition going on at the school. The school is starting to engage parents more via phone calls and the Parent Leadership Council is becoming more robust.

Mr. Jaskiewicz asked Mr. Sudmyer if there were “trigger points” that would automatically raise a red flag to leadership in the school. Mr. Sudmyer explained that goals for the school were set a year ahead of time and monthly meetings are held to assess the progress of these goals.

Dr. Lopez requested from Mr. Sudmyer some additional information be provided. She asked that the report be broken down by students of color, but since the school is 99.9 percent *students of color*, she asked that the data be broken down by gender. Mr. Sudmyer will e-mail this information to Dr. Lopez. Dr. Lopez also asked Mr. Sudmyer what he considered to be the biggest driver in the lowering of in-school suspensions. Students are usually back in class before 90 minutes. He explained that there is also heightened attention on the staff’s part; they seek to be proactive rather than reactive. Attrition accounts for 3.3 percent of lower student numbers.

Ms. Keavney-Maruca asked Mr. Sudmyer to comment on the assertion that Charter Schools push out students with behavioral issues. Mr. Sudmyer replied that Achievement First wants to keep those students and the school’s attrition rate is only 3.34.

IV. Update on Commissioner’s Network and Alliance Districts

Morgan Barth updated the committee on the progress of the Commissioner’s Network and Alliance District programs. For the Commissioner’s Network, the Turnaround Office is currently finishing the process of mid-year school audits. Members of the Turnaround staff spent a full day at each Network school, reviewed data, observed instruction and met with focus groups comprised of teachers, students and parents. This created mid-year feedback that is being shared with each school and district team, which will lead to substantive changes by the end of the school year. The Turnaround Office is currently taking in a third cohort of schools. The Office is working with turnaround committees at six schools to create turnaround plans, which will be brought to the State Board for consideration later this spring. If approved, six schools will join the Commissioner’s Network this summer.

The first cohort of schools (currently in their second year in the Network) are Stanton in Norwich, High School in the Community (HSC) in New Haven, Milner in Hartford and Curiale in Bridgeport. Stanton has been an exemplary school led by excellent administrators and a very supportive superintendent, Abby Dolliver. Curiale has not yet shown measurable gains but has certainly turned the corner in its second year. Fran Rabinowitz, the new Bridgeport superintendent is a strong leader who will help guide the school. Milner and HSC are two of the schools that are being run by lead partners, FUSE and the New Haven Federation of Teachers, respectively. HSC is piloting “mastery-based learning,” which is an instructional approach that focuses on ensuring that students demonstrate mastery of certain skills in order to earn credit.

Cohort 2 schools (currently in their first year in the Network) include Crosby and Walsh in Waterbury, Windham Middle School, Dunbar in Bridgeport, Wilbur Cross in New Haven and DiLoreto in New Britain. Mr. Barth is very proud of Wilbur Cross’s International Academy and DiLoreto, both of which are having a strong first year and both of which are focusing on dual-language instruction. Crosby and Walsh are struggling the most and both schools are seeking permanent principals. Crosby, in particular, has not been able to follow through on many elements in its turnaround plan. Mr. Barth stated the importance of supporting schools with both

help from the CSDE and by finding strong partners to work with Network schools. However, it is difficult to find strong partners who can help manage school turnaround. CSDE staff is working hard to address the challenges at all Network schools to help ensure school turnaround. Mr. Barth indicated that the third cohort of schools would be discussed at the May Board meeting.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:09 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted: *Lisa Carta Corriveau*
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