

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

Accountability and Support Committee

Wednesday, December 13, 2017  
450 Columbus Plaza North Hearing Room J  
Hartford, Connecticut

**Draft Minutes**

**I. Call to Order**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, Committee Chairperson Dr. Estela López called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Committee                    Dr. Estela López, Chairperson  
Members Present:        Erin D. Benham  
                                     William P. Davenport  
                                     Donald F. Harris, Jr.

Committee                    None  
Member Absent:

Staff Present:              Desi Nesmith  
                                     Felicia Canty  
                                     Robert Kelly  
                                     Lisa Lamenzo  
                                     Carla Ghostlaw

Guests Present:            John Taylor, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington, New Haven  
                                     Timothy Dutton, Executive Director, The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport  
                                     Rachel Allison, The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport  
                                     Joseph J. Vrabely, Jr., State Board of Education Member

**II. Approval of Minutes**

William P. Davenport moved, Erin D. Benham seconded, that the committee approve the minutes of the November 8, 2017, Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

Vote:    In Favor:        Lopez, Benham, Davenport, Harris  
             Abstained:        0  
             Opposed:         0  
             Absent:             0

**III. Booker T. Washington, New Haven**

Booker T. Washington Academy (BTWA) was called before the Committee to explain how it was meeting the terms of its probation. The focus areas were student suspension, chronic absenteeism, and student academic achievement. John Taylor, Director, BTWA discussed how he and the school sought to develop a collaborative relationship with the Turnaround Office in its effort to create a corrective action that addresses the issues for which the school was placed on probation last February 2017. His presentation focused on how the plan was developed to meet the terms of probation as well as successes and improvement efforts going forward.

**Suspension:**

Since last school year, school administration, has developed a system of identification and review of student data and teachers data that may reveal issues related to implementing effective classroom management. Staff are provided professional development training in classroom management strategies. This has resulted in lower out-of-classroom referrals which led to suspensions. Staff have received professional development in Restorative Practices, which have lowered the numbers of classroom disturbances. To further support students, the school has hired a full-time social worker. Also, BTWA has partnered with Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence to provide training and now implements the RULER framework with fidelity to support the social and emotional development of its students. As a result of these efforts, the school's suspension rate has been reduced from 14.1 percent in 2014-15 to 5.9 percent in 2016-17.

**Chronic Absenteeism:**

Since last school year, the school has created a framework to proactively intervene when student attendance issues arise. An Attendance Team comprised of the Principal, Dean of School Culture, and a teacher, review student attendance data and implement a tiered approach to address students that are demonstrating difficulties getting to school. The tiered approach includes family outreach on the importance of student attendance, development of school attendance policy expectations and monthly celebrations for students with good attendance. The families of students with attendance issues receive direct communication from the school regarding school policy, review the issues resulting in poor attendance and schedule home visits by the social worker and principal to ensure issues are resolved and students are in school. The school's chronic absenteeism rate has been reduced from 30.4 percent in 2014-15 to 15.3 percent in 2016-17.

**Student Achievement:**

The school provides a tiered approach to supporting and improving the teaching performance of its staff. Administration continuously conducts classroom observations tied to teacher evaluations. Targeted professional development is provided to teachers informed by classroom observations and student performance. Teachers receive structured assistance including mentoring by more seasoned staff, observations of high performing classrooms and targeted embedded coaching supports with four week progress reviews. BTWA's third grade participated in state testing for the first time in the spring of 2017. The school's state Smarter Balanced Assessment results in ELA show 74.2 percent of third graders met or exceeded proficiency with 35.5 percent of students reaching mastery. In mathematics, while the proficiency rate of third grade student performance on the state test is suppressed, 45.2 percent of students reached mastery.

Mr. Taylor indicated the school will continue to implement its corrective action plan and will continue to provide a well-rounded education to its students. The school will maintain its focus on the academic achievement and will continue follow-up visits and technical assistance opportunities designed to improve its educational program. The social and emotional well-being of its students pose issues that the school will continue to address. The funding of the school program is a burden and challenge that the school strives to overcome.

The committee thanked Mr. John Taylor, Executive Director at Booker T. Washington, for his great leadership and successful school year.

#### **IV. The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport**

The Bridge Academy was called before the Committee to explain how it is meeting the terms of its probation. The issues are student suspension and student academic achievement. Tim Dutton, Director and Rachel Allison, Principal presented how these issues are being addressed.

##### **Suspension:**

Both administrators and several staff members were trained in school climate strategies and Restorative Practices in the summer of 2017. All staff received train-the-trainer professional development on Restorative Practices in late summer and early fall 2017. Parents and the greater school community were provided with a presentation on what Restorative Practices are, how it will be used at the school, and how it can be used at home in late fall 2017. Jo Ann Freiberg, Connecticut State Department of Education Consultant and Restorative Practices Trainer, provided staff training on December 8, 2017. The school's suspension rate in 2015-16 was 18.4 percent and increased to 19.3 percent in 2016-17. As of November 2017, the school reports a 6 percent student suspension rate.

##### **Student Achievement:**

Last school year the school introduced Fountas and Pinnell Tier 2 reading instruction and provides one hour of small group reading instruction to each of their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The program required that they redesign their middle school course schedule and hire and train six paraprofessionals. The program continues to show success into the 2017-18 school year as their six week assessment data shows steady improvement in reading fluency and comprehension scores. The program has helped the school increase its Smarter Balanced Assessment results in ELA from 17.3 percent proficient in 2015-16 to 28.9 percent proficient in 2016-17. In math, scores increased from 5 percent in 2015-16 to 11.2 percent in 2016-17. In addition, their internal NWEA MAP scores for both reading and math have shown consistent gains in proficiency over the two years since the start of administering the assessment.

The Committee members expressed repeated concerns about the lack of significant progress of The Bridge students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in English Language Arts and Mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment and SAT overtime. The Committee expressed concerns about the schools suspension rate being higher than the state average and Bridgeport (the host district). The Committee stressed to the school leaders the importance of taking immediate and effective action to improve student achievement and school culture and climate. The Committee also discussed some possible next steps including the possibility of additional meetings, where school leadership would apprise the Committee of action it has taken and its impact on student achievement and school culture and climate at the school overtime.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Prepared by: Carla Ghostlaw