



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Learning & Teaching Committee

April 22, 2020

Online

In attendance: Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Mr. Conaway (Co-Chair of Committee), Mr. Matthew Wilcox (Board Member), Dr. Iline Tracey (Interim Superintendent), Dr. Paul Whyte, Keisha Hannans, Lynn Brantley, Kenneth Mathews, Dr. Richard Therrien, Typhanie Jackson, Dr. Michele Sherban, Pamela Augustine-Jefferson, Pedro Mendia, Carmen Rodriguez, Kermit Carolina, Erik Patchkofsky, Carolyn Ross-Lee, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, Val-Jean Belton, Derek Stephenson, Jessica Haxhi

Dr. Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Dr. Joyner: Welcome and Introductions

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements

- Dr. Joyner started by thanking Dr. Tracey, Central Office Staff, support staff at every level, principals, teachers, cafeteria workers, custodians, parents, and students for their hard work during this time. He also thanked Mayor Elicker, Maritza Bond, Tyisha Walker, Board of Education President Yesenia Diaz, Police Chief Reyes and Fire Chief Alston for their leadership. He also thanked Mr. Conaway for his meetings and assistance regarding this committee, as well as Dr. Richard Therrien and Ms. Typhanie Jackson.
- Dr. Joyner reviewed the protocols for the meeting.

2. Distance Learning: Overview of Status in the District by Subject Area

- Dr. Tracey expressed that she is pleased with the level of work that went into how quickly distance learning was put into place. There has been a focus on continuity of educational opportunity for students.
- English Language Arts: Ms. Brantley described the steps that ELA took. There are lead coaches for every grade that formed teams of coaches at their grade-level districtwide. They worked closely with Pedro Mendia (EL Department) to make sure resources were created in English and Spanish. They put together online resources for teachers and paper packets and meet every two weeks to plan ahead. They continue to get feedback from teachers in grade level meetings and adjust content accordingly. They worked with the companies Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt (HMH) and Lexia to ensure continued reading interventions for students. Coaches are monitoring interventions.
- Mr. Conaway asked what next school year might be like, in terms of planning ahead.

- Ms. Brantley expressed that all staff need to be comfortable with distance learning and we need to make sure it is being done well. We will need to have structures and systems in place for us to seamlessly move to back to it, if necessary. She emphasized the need to address the “whole child” through social-emotional work and cross-content work.
- Ms. Hannans noted that when we return to school, we will need to focus on making connections with staff and students, doing team building and relationship-building, etc.
- Mathematics: Mr. Mathews described how the math department has lead coaches assigned to each level, and subcommittees for each course. They are offering optional weekly drop-in sessions to support teachers at different levels/courses. The math department is encouraging teachers to create their own instructional videos. He shared the “Math Department Distance Learning” drive where they have recommended learning objectives and a variety of learning activities posted for teachers to utilize with students each week.
- Dr. Joyner commented that it was an excellent resource for teachers to have so much content available.
- Science: Mr. Therrien shared the Science page of the NHPS Curriculum Site, noting how he has asked teachers to also encourage students to practice science away from the computer, such as observing nature and taking notes on changes they see, etc. He is trying to balance the onscreen learning with “real-science” offline in his guidance to teachers. He noted that all the subject areas (ELA, Social Studies, Math, World Languages, PhysEd, Arts, etc..) had similar web pages with distance learning resources aligned to standards and curriculum which had been ramped up several weeks before school had closed.
- Dr. Joyner complimented to Dr. Tracey and the staff for their foresight.
- World Languages: Ms. Haxhi described the support for world languages instruction through a teachers-only website, a variety of distance-learning resources specific to world language instruction, her online office hours and various mini-webinars they are offering.
- Districtwide Technology Support: Ms. Haxhi also explained the districtwide distance learning professional development being offered through a dedicated distance learning page on the NHPS Curriculum Site with curated videos and documents to assist teachers, created with the assistance of David Low from The Sound School. David Low and a group of volunteer NHPS teachers have also been staffing a daily online “help line” for teachers needing assistance with technology. She praised their volunteerism and willingness to help out.
- Physical Education and Health: Mr. Patchkosfky explained that they are asking students to do 120 minutes of movement per week; their biggest concern is student inactivity. They are offering standard fitness lessons that might take longer, plus shorter 10-minute options for them to do movement throughout the day, between classes.
- They have been working on NCAA requirements for students and that has now been handled. In case school does come back, they have created 6-,4-, and 2-week schedule possibilities for shortened league seasons with no play-offs. For the fall, they are looking at streaming options for games in case fans are not allowed.

- Dr. Tracey noted that there are still 2,000 students in the system who have not logged into any of the online learning platforms. They aren't sure if the students haven't logged in because they don't have computers. They have also identified about 500 students who are homeless.
- Dr. Joyner offered his condolences to Carmen Rodriguez for the loss of her mother.
- Early Childhood: Ms. Augustine-Jefferson explained the early childhood plan. Most of their teachers are using Class Dojo; some are using Google Classroom. All activities that parents and children do together. They establish a question of the day and do learning across the subject areas. They encourage teachers to record a morning message every day to keep the teacher-student connection. They are finding that families might also need emotional or physical/food support and recommending them to community services. 261 students have not been logging in regularly; they are reaching up to those families individually.
- Special Education: Ms. Jackson explained that her department is sending out a newsletter on a bi-weekly basis; it has links to teachers who are sharing their online learning lessons, scheduling ideas, social-emotional support and self-care activities. They also have a Google site where they have collated all of the relevant information for special education teachers. They have created modules for paraprofessionals for training from now until the end of the school year.
- English Learners: Pedro Mendia noted that the English Learners department has been collaborating with the other departments to ensure that they are providing access for ELs to the curriculum through the content areas. They worked with the ELA department to produce packets for students and are providing Mandarin, Pashto, Arabic supports for students who speak those languages. They are deploying "Imagine Learning" resources, including math, because it is available in multiple languages, especially for students in dual language programs. They have been communicating regularly with families, using the translation services we have available in the department.
- Mr. Mendia noted that the opportunity gap is even greater than we imagined; many families don't have access to the minimum technology required.
- Professional Learning: Ms. Gumbs-Johnson, new supervisors of professional learning, and David Low, Sound school teacher, have been doing 12 Google Meets trainings for special education social workers, speech and language staff. She has been working with the Wallace Foundation to talk about developing the Principal leadership-pipeline. She will be working with Youth, Family & Community Engagement to create learning opportunities for families.
- Dr. Joyner officially welcomed Ms. Gumbs-Johnson to the school district.
- Youth, Family, & Community Engagement: Mr. Carolina described how YFCE has been in touch with 1500 students. Sergio Rodriguez and Daniel Diaz have been working hard to assist families with food needs, technology equipment, etc. They have been working with the local area police departments to make "social distance" visits to houses for students who are engaged in highly at-risk behaviors.

- Dr. Tracey described the areas for which she will update the Board of Alders at their Education committee meeting later this evening: Support for Staff, Support for Families & Students, Community Support.

Distance Learning: Graduation Issues (Board guidance if needed)

Dr. Tracey had a phone call with the Commissioner of Education today. The decision whether to open school and have graduations will be a health-consideration. It is certain that there will be some type of graduation to recognize their accomplishments at some point, whether it be in the summer or fall. Dr. Tracey will also be having a Zoom meeting with the Student Council to field their ideas about what would be best. Dr. Whyte noted that each school is also having meetings with their seniors to discuss what types of celebrations they might want.

Distance Learning: Policy on Grading

- Dr. Tracey will bring the potential grading policy for quarter four to this Committee and to Governance. We looked at a guidance letter from the CSDE Commissioner of Education with options including pass/fail, pass/incomplete, and pass with distinction.
- Relevant components were shared as follows:

"As guidance, the CSDE identifies the following potential options for pass/fail grading policies:

- A. **Standard Pass/Fail:** *The traditional pass/fail standard, similar to what many colleges and graduate schools permit, as well as many high schools currently offer.*
 - B. **Pass/Incomplete:** *This standard would apply to students in grades 9, 10, and 11. Students who for whatever reason were not able to complete their online assignments would have a district-determined timeline to complete the work, or approved project, and receive either a Pass or Fail grade. This option supports (1) students who may not have had adequate access to technology tools during class cancellations, (2) students with IEPs in need of direct support, or who otherwise require additional resources to succeed, (3) EL students, (4) students who may need counseling or mental health services that they cannot receive at home, (5) students who are sick themselves, caring for a family member, or dealing with the trauma of loss as a result of the pandemic, and (6) disengaged students, who with a second chance opportunity and counseling could regain their agency and get a result of Pass (and credit).*
 - C. **Pass with Distinction:** *In some cases districts may want to recognize students who worked at a very high academic level during this extraordinary time of the coronavirus pandemic and celebrate their efforts with a designation of 'Pass with Distinction'.*
 - D. **Recommendations:** *Recommendations continue to serve as an important means of communicating information about students to colleges, universities, vocational programs and other post-secondary educational opportunities. Districts should use recommendations to supplement pass/fail protocols and share information concerning students' academic strengths and interests, personal qualities, role in the school community, extracurricular accomplishments, potential direction in the future, and other qualitative assessments of a student's potential contribution to the school or program at issue and society in the future.*
 - E. **Student Transcripts:** *Districts should modify student transcripts to provide adequate context about the disruption caused by COVID-19 and the resulting change in grading for the period after March 1, 2020. While Pass/Fail protocols may address learning and alleviate the associated pressures on students and their families, districts should continue to provide meaningful feedback to students to support student progress and foster academic growth.*
- Please note that in communication with the NCAA, the commitment was made that a Pass/Fail or Pass/Incomplete would not negatively impact our student athletes. "*
- The state is leaving the final decision to the Local Education Agencies. Mr. Conaway and Dr. Joyner said that they would look for and support the recommendation of Dr. Tracey.
 - Dr. Joyner noted that we can put students in flexible groups in the fall to try to catch students up as best as possible.

- Mr. Wilcox commented that some universities are giving an option to have pass/fail because some students are more concerned about their grades due to future plans. He suggested we take a look at options such as that.
- There was discussion about how to move forward with the grading policy decision for the fourth quarter. Dr. Joyner suggested that it might be a motion that was time-bound to this circumstance. Mr. Wilcox suggested spelling out the policy that could be modified or accepted. Mr. Conaway agreed with having a time-bound motion, but also a notion of hybrid to it.
- Ms. Jackson explained that CAFE had sent guidance that could be used.
- Mr. Wilcox suggested that there is time to create the specific policy, so we could not have to rush the full Board discussion until the policy is ready.
- The Committee asked the Superintendent to draft a policy that includes these ideas to bring to the Board.

Strategic Plan Update

- Ms. Jackson went through the current draft of the Strategic Plan document, noting that some items would still be added as well as outlining the recent changes that have been made.

Closure

- Dr. Joyner noted that Mr. Conaway and he would debrief the session to discuss how we can make improvements for the next meeting. Mr. Conaway thanked the staff and Dr. Tracey.
- **Mr. Conaway made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 PM. Mr. Wilcox seconded the motion.**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Haxhi