



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

New Haven Board of Education Strategic Planning Minutes

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Hillhouse Fieldhouse, 480 Sherman Parkway, New Haven, CT 06551

Morning Session

Presenters: Dr. Francis Barnes and Ann Borthwick

Session Objectives:

- Analyze New Haven Public Schools as a system in terms of the shared characteristics of high performing school systems.
- Understand the elements of effective strategic thinking
- Craft draft vision statements for priority areas of New Haven Public Schools as a foundation for strategic planning.

Group Norms:

- Respect each other's ideas
- Remain open minded
- If misspeaks occur, ask for clarification while in the room

Welcome by Dr. Tracey and Dr. Birks

- Dr. Tracey and Dr. Birks welcomed the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and reminded them of the purpose of their work and the need to capitalize on the work of the Superintendent's Transition Team and its high-level recommendations along with the District's Continuous Improvement Plan to inform the work of the team.
- The District's direction and why the SPC was established was reiterated with a reminder to the team of being engaged in the business of continuous improvement and continuous learning-- each school/department has a strategic continuous plan with deliverables. As a result, the district is expanding their strategic plan to ensure the inclusion of all stakeholders and to garner the collective geniuses of everyone. Having a common language, common understanding of research, and common thinking will support the development of a coherent One New Haven Strategic Plan.
- There is a need to create a coherent through-line so that everyone in New Haven knows the direction of the district. New Haven Public Schools should have one collective vision and mission. The SPC needs to co-create the vision as a team which takes time and positive energy.

- Dr. Tracey elicited commitment from the SPC to follow through in completing the work of the SPC.
1. The National Institution for School Leadership (NISL) presenter, Dr. Barnes, began the session with a reflection on the key points from the research regarding the readiness of students entering credit-bearing courses in community college which the SPC had examined the day before.
 - If we prepare New Haven's graduates to meet that readiness standard – 12th grade level of literacy and proficiency in algebra, some geometry, and a working knowledge of statistics and probability – we would be well ahead of where we are now, where less than 30% of students graduate at those levels.
 2. Systems theory was introduced with the following points:
 - Strategic thinking begins with a framework; vision should be grounded in a global context.
 - In an effective system everything works together.
 - Effective systems sustain themselves.
 - Vision is the end goal.
 - New Haven Public Schools is perfectly designed to produce the results it is getting.
 - The SPC will engage in strategic thinking and design to create a system for New Haven Public Schools where everything complements each other.
 3. The SPC was reminded of the list they had created at the end of yesterday's session and was encouraged to think about some things they learned from top-performing education systems around the world:
 - The capacity to be nimble.
 - Emphasis on early childhood education.
 - Teacher time – how teachers and teaching assistants are organized to learn every day from each other and from research.
 - Authentic work experiences – vocational and technical schools; connecting to the community.
 - Teacher preparation / Status of teachers / Respect for teachers
 - SPC members were reminded that they have the opportunity to redesign New Haven Public Schools and that the power and expertise were already in the room.
 4. After reflection on the studies and discussions of the previous session the groups identified one thing among those ideas that should be considered during the strategic thinking and planning process. Key considerations are:
 - Programs and structures need to be consistent across the district.
 - The district should develop a consistent through-line for the way business is done in New Haven Public Schools.
 - Shared Governance model: everyone should have a stake in the vision and mission of the district. Shared leadership will support a consistent through-line.
 - There are numerous community partners with whom we could collaborate. Yale has lots of mechanics, engineers, and the like, and it would advantageous to have partnerships with Yale to develop the technical expertise of our students.

- Locus of control of curriculum: too many options/choices in curriculum may be a disadvantage.
- New Haven Public Schools need to build teacher capacity.
- Considerations should be given to developing a system that allows for teachers to learn and implement best practices.
- Depth should be emphasized over breadth.
- New Haven Public Schools need a system in place to meet children where they are so they can adjust and access the curriculum. How do we build a system that can effectively support trauma-impacted students?
- SPC values should be included in the vision of New Haven Public Schools.
- Restorative practice may be a bridge to build healthy relationships with parents, teachers and administrators.

5. NISL's Conceptual Framework for Strategic Thinking

- Global Context: Sets your vision
- Vision: Your desired state
- Local Context: Your current state
- Theory of Action: Bridges where you are – your current state – to your desired state.
 - Considers assumptions, interests, objectives, capabilities, threats, and risks.
- Strategy: Linking to each strategic intent / theory of action
 - Considers the social complexities: assumptions, interests, objectives, capabilities, threats, and risks
- Decisions / Actions

Key discussion points included:

- One way to think about (social) system strategy design:
Structures + Process = Behavior
- One participant noted that some external factors come into play and impact the work of the district.

6. Dr. Barnes introduced and summarized the *9 Building Blocks* for a World-Class Systems. The *Building Blocks* are a distillation of approximately 30 years of research conducted on the world's best education systems by the National Center on Education and the economy (NCEE). He noted that no education system, including the top performers, are doing all of the *9 Building Blocks* perfectly. However, these *Building Blocks* are a composite picture, drawn from this comparative research, of what a very high-performing system might look like if it were based on the best of what NCEE has seen around the world, if it was put together in a coherent, internally consistent system, based on a consistent set of principles that inform all of the *Building Blocks*. The *9 Building Blocks* for a World-Class System are:

1. Provide strong supports for children and their families before students arrive At school.
2. Provide more resources for at-risk students than for others.

3. Develop world-class, highly coherent instructional systems.
 4. Create clear gateways for students through the system, set to global standards, with no dead ends.
 5. Assure an abundant supply of highly qualified teachers.
 6. Redesign schools to be places in which teachers will be treated as professionals, with incentives and supports to continuously improve their professional practice and the performance of their students.
 7. Create an effective system of career and technical education and training
 8. Create a leadership development system that develops leaders at all levels to manage such systems effectively.
 9. Institute a governance system that has the authority and legitimacy to develop coherent, powerful policies and is capable of implementing them at scale.
7. The SPC members read the *9 Building Blocks* and considered how any one of these blocks will assist a district to achieve equitable outcomes for all students. Each group selected three *Building Blocks* and then come to consensus on the Interdependence and the interconnectedness of those three blocks in their assigned priority areas, then benchmarked where members felt New Haven was regarding the implementation of the *9 Building Blocks* in relation to high performing jurisdictions like Singapore and Massachusetts, as well as Connecticut as a whole.

Afternoon Session

8. The SPC began the session by continuing the table discussions, analyzing the *9 Building Blocks* against New Haven's current context.
9. Led by Dr. Barnes, the Strategic Planning Committee re-examined the Conceptual Framework for Strategic Thinking and began to focus on the development of the district vision:
 - The group was challenged to look closely at their local contexts. The district's vision should solve identified deficiencies. The group was guided through Pittsburgh's analysis of their local context.
 - The question was posed whether a vision statement should be concise, or more descriptive. Dr. Barnes noted that when developing a strategic plan, the vision statement has to be detailed enough so that everyone understands your values.
 - Dr. Birks indicated that the goal is to have one overarching vision and 3-5 year plan for New Haven Public Schools at the end of the Strategic Planning process. That vision will be informed by the visions developed in each of the New Haven Public Schools priority areas.
10. The SPC Priority Groups shared the following information from their initial discussions:

- **Academics**
 - Students need to be able to navigate to pathways to careers (college, vocational opportunities, etc.) and identify tuition sources.
 - Connecticut has a high cost of living which make it challenging for families to relocate to another city or town.
 - This group also described local context:
 - 25.6% of New Haven residents are living in poverty.
 - Some students who make it to college don't persist to second year.
 - Graduation rate is 80%
 - 60-65% of New Haven Public Schools graduates attend college

- **Talent Management**
 - This group focused on the *8th Building Block*: Create a leadership development system that develops leaders at all levels to manage systems effectively.
 - The group's assumptions, observations and perceptions included:
 - The community's perception is that the district's solution for managing ineffective leaders is to transfer them to another position/building in the district.
 - The district engage in recruitment practices; however, the district has a practice of hiring from within.
 - To what extent is TEVAL used to inform school leader selection and recruitment?
 - All school leaders have been rated effective or higher for the past 3 years.
 - The district operates on the assumption of good teachers make good administrators.
 - Leaders are not equipped with the necessary skills/resources to manage systems effectively and coherently.

- **Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness**
 - Some problems/concerns raised by this group were:
 - Perceptions of organizational inefficiencies
 - Perception that there is not a careful process in place to determine the effectiveness of existing programs / consultants to determine if they are cost-effective.
 - No balanced budget (expenses don't match revenues)
 - No future planning in regards to budget
 - No CFO
 - No clear understanding of how funds are allocated to schools
 - The district's website needs updating to improve transparency.

- **Culture / Climate**
 - As a district, we believe in fostering a positive culture and climate in order to ensure the development of the whole child. In order to achieve this vision, we will:
 - Maintain open communications between all stakeholders.
 - Create open and inviting environments within each of our schools.
 - Maintain a climate of joy and inquiry.

- **Family/Community Engagement**
 - Stakeholders need transparency about the magnet process
 - Offer Universal Pre-Kindergarten throughout the district
 - Leverage technology throughout the district
 - Parent University – Is it a parent initiated?
 - Stakeholders need to be informed by the district
 - How can stakeholders know what is going on in ALL schools?
 - Schools need to be intentional in identifying the needs of the community.

Adjournment

Ann Borthwick provided a brief overview of future Strategic Planning Sessions (May 16, 2019 - May 17, 2019).

- Continue development of district vision
- Discuss and clarify the criteria necessary for New Haven Public Schools graduates to be considered college and career ready
- Examine the research on how people learn

Dr. Birks reiterated her appreciation to the Strategic Planning Committee members for their hard work and diligence and indicated the desire to begin Session 2 with a brief discussion around the establishment of group norms.