



## NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Learning & Teaching Committee

December 16, 2020

Online

**In attendance:** Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Mr. Conaway (Board Member), Ivelise Velazquez, Dr. Paul Whyte, Keisha Redd-Hannans, Val-Jean Belton, Sequella Coleman, Rosalyn Garcia, Paul Camarco, Kathleen Mattern, Robert McCain, Dianne Spence, Matthew Brown, Monique Brunson, Lynn Brantley, Carolyn Ross-Lee, Pedro Mendia Landa, Rosalyn Diaz, Sandra Clark, Dr. Richard Therrien, Ellen Maust, Ken Mathews, Dr. Michele Sherban, Pamela Augustine-Jefferson, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, JoAnne Wilcox, Claudette Kidd, Jessica Haxhi

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

#### **1. How do we conduct this meeting respectfully and effectively? Dr. Joyner**

Dr. Joyner welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked Ms. Velazquez to facilitate the meeting today. He noted that everyone counts, and is respected and valued.

#### **2. How are our school leaders addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities of remote learning? A panel of principals will address the question regarding remote learning – Ms. Ivelise Velazquez**

**Ms. Velazquez welcomed the Committee and introduced the question noted above.**

**Sequella Coleman, Principal, Davis St. School**, explained that even though we are using a different platform, we are keeping the structure of learning in New Haven Public Schools. All school, parent, and staff meetings are being held, standards are being upheld, and structures are being maintained. She noted the many positive collaborations between teachers, coaches, administrators, etc.

**Mr. Heriberto Cordero, Principal, Fair Haven School**, said that things are going well for his school. They had their “FTO” (Family Teacher Organization) meeting last night; students are learning and teachers are working very hard to engage them. They are doing blended programs in literacy and math. They believe in small group instruction, so they are now trying to use a lot more breakout rooms. They are trying to meet the needs of their English language learners. The dual language program (50% English/50% Spanish) continues successfully.

**Monique Brunson, Principal, Dr. Mayo Early Childhood School**, talked about the challenges of early childhood education because students need someone to sit with them. Each student has a device. Parents and grandparents are doing a great job of sitting with students and using technology. Staff has helped train families. They try to mimic their regular school day – teachers are using technology such as “Boom Cards” to encourage independent practice. They are trying to give students opportunities to interact with each other even though they are not in school.

**Matthew Brown, Principal, High School in the Community**, explained that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had done research on how schools need to emphasize, “rigor, relevance, and relationships.” This year, HSC decided that the priorities should be in this order: “relationships, rigor, and relevance,” during the pandemic. They have a 30-minute advisory block at the beginning of the day called “flight crew.” They took this opportunity to improve it in terms of content and social-emotional work. One challenge is that some students who are at the tail end of the school career (seniors) are dropping off in terms of attendance because they need to go to work. While work can be good, many students are working far more than before. The challenge is to get them through the last quarter of their senior year to graduate.

**Derek Stephenson, Principal, Riverside High School**, spends many hours considering how to engage his students and create meaningful relationships. They are trying to figure out what is preventing engagement when they have the laptops and the wi-fi available. He said that students are struggling most with basic needs and financial barriers. Families are doing the best they can to access community resources, but he is seeing an alarming number of students disengaged. They are doing a toy drive/neutral items of support for their students and parents. The collection is this Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Dianne Spence, Principal, Conte-West Magnet School**, talked about attendance of students and staff. A positive part is that there is greater staff attendance remotely. Most of their students are logging on, but some are still having attendance issues. She noted that all teachers are doing a very good job personalizing learning; they are using many ways to engage student at their level. Students can learn at their own pace because lessons are recorded and in Google Classroom. The individualized feedback on assignments is also specific and helps students to move forward. For the upper middle school levels, sometimes students are playing games until late in the evening. Teachers are making phone calls to home. Even in music and PE, teachers are able to engage students in lessons. As an administrator, Ms. Spence is trying to remove stress from teachers; they are working very long hours searching for materials, creating assignments, and grading. She has enjoyed the lessons she has watched and students are enjoying the lessons as well.

**Kathleen Mattern, Principal, Truman School**, noted the increased focus on social-emotional learning as a positive. Teachers are using the “Wellness Wednesday” lessons sent out by Typhanie Jackson, teachers are using daily technology-based SEL check-ins, there is virtual counseling by counselors, connecting families to services. They just did a survey with 3-8<sup>th</sup> graders. They said they miss the time with their friends.

**Rosalyn Garcia, Principal, Lincoln-Bassett School**, discussed the challenges of balancing the rigor with the relationship piece. They are doing a lot of social-emotional learning. She is seeing that a lot of ground was lost from March as she looks at her baseline data. She also praised how hard teachers are working, going above and beyond, doing more planning than she has ever seen. Looking at the data, she has started to develop coaching cycles, etc. A positive is that she can meet with teachers immediately, virtually. She would like to consider more about. How to balance rigor and relationships as they manage students, teachers, and families in ways they had not done in the past.

**Val-Jean Benton, Principal, Cooperative Arts & Humanities Magnet School**, agreed with everything other principals had expressed. She is doing family meetings on a daily basis to keep them engaged. They were challenge because they are a performance school, so they purchased “Adobe Creative Suite” which allows them to still do virtual plays, field trips, etc. They were able to purchase a license for every student so they are able to both engage within it and create with it. They are able to use it

with music, theater, dance, etc. classes. They were able to meet recently with a Grammy-award winner.

**Robert McCain, Principal, Barnard Environmental Magnet School thanked Dr. Joyner for his support.** He thanked Ms. Keisha Hannans for bringing in LINCspring; he said it has been a game-changer for professional development. The implementation of 1-1 devices have been great and the applications and software provided by the district have been excellent. His coaches have provided snow day activities using different apps, measuring snow, etc. The opportunities with remote learning are limitless. The SEL program brought in by Ms. Jackson has allowed them to capitalize on relationship building with students. Another opportunity is in building relationships with parents. They are giving out awards virtually to students and parents, turkey giveaways, toy giveaways, etc. It is a great opportunity because they are getting to know families better.

They are doing something called “Conditional formatting” using Google sheets to indicate to students whether an answer is correct or not. There is also an opportunity in redefining the roles of who is able to work with special education students, English learners, etc. One challenge is working with new teachers whom have never taught before. He is meeting with them regularly to make sure they are doing well. English learners and special education students require teachers to be “extra clever” in what they do so that they can meet their needs.

**Dr. Joyner** commented that remote learning is enhancing instructional leadership. Administrators are able to work with teachers fairly quickly in key areas. He mentioned the book “Kids don’t Learn from People They Don’t Like.” Much like a doctor’s “bedside manner,” he believes there is a “deskside manner” with teachers. He also noted the importance of relevant content and, if not immediately relevant, teachers must show relevance of content to students’ cultures. He went on to note that each Principal has their own unique challenges at their schools, as was evidenced today.

**Dr. Joyner** talked about students in our schools with “unearned disadvantages.” He noted that the greatest contribution to this country is people like our Principals, the medical professionals, police, and fire personnel. He explained that takes a long time for people to realize that things have changed and adjust to those changes. There are a number of people who have not made the shift to realize that schools need to be different right now. He noted that people don’t realize the challenges schools face.

**Mr. Conaway** asked what remote learning could look like when we come back to school.

- Mr. Stephenson of Riverside noted that some students who were disengaged are truly shining in the remote environment. Students who might be distracted in school are doing very well. He noted that remote learning has also resolved some suspension issues.
- Ms. Garcia noted that remote learning lends itself to high school more than elementary school because students can learn independently. Younger students are better served in the building, although the ability to access learning when they are not in the building is good for special circumstances.
- Ms. Spence explained that personalization for staff has also been beneficial. She praised the number of resources that the district has provided, such as SEL resources and professional development, so teachers have more individualized learning.
- Mr. Cordero agreed that we should continue to capitalize on remote learning when we are back to school through blended options for all different situations. He noted that there are no suspensions so far this year. For Fair Haven, he is thinking that there might be challenges with students bringing devices to and from school; they might look at having a device at home and a device at school. He noted that we can invest much more time now observing teachers and attending meetings without distractions.

- Ms. Brunson said that she thinks that all we have learned will help with preschoolers because those who cannot get to school could potentially still access content. She highlighted that Head Start and Women United donated supplies for every student at Dr. Mayo so they could be engaged. They also have partners in Clifford Beers; if they see something happening in the home during remote learning, they can offer support to parents.
- Dr. Whyte mentioned that at the high school level, remote learning works well with mastery-based learning programs. Right now, we have remote learning because we are under an executive order. We will have to figure out what remote learning will look like after that expires and we return to “seat time” measures in our district. The district will have to consider how we can incorporate lessons learned and new ideas about mastery-based learning.

Keisha Hannans praised the Principals for their dedication and hard work. She noted that they are being patient with their staff, seeing what they need, and meeting them where they are.

Dr. Joyner expressed his appreciation for the administrators, central office personnel, and supervisors for their hard work and outstanding leadership.

Ms. Coleman requested that, when we go back, there is ample advance notice so that they can prepare the schools and the teachers. Mr. Conaway and Dr. Joyner asked Ms. Coleman to put together a specific proposal. There was a discussion of two-weeks, with some time for teachers to come in before students.

**3. How do teachers use culturally relevant pedagogy to ensure students are expanding their vocabulary and reading a robust range of texts?** *Ms. Brantley will provide an overview of culturally relevant vocabulary instruction and independent reading and how NHPS supports teachers during implementation.*

Ms. Brantley presented the slides [linked here](#) about how vocabulary is instructed in ELA and all NHPS subject areas. Please see the slides for content, which include links to lessons that use “Collaborative Classroom” instruction and Read 180 instruction. It also reviews how vocabulary is taught across subject areas and how students set independent reading goals. Ms. Brantley noted how schools have done a great job getting books to students during remote learning, either the actual books or online books. She noted the importance of using culturally-responsive vocabulary across the content areas in all grades. The ELA department is currently working with Ms. Carolyn Ross-Lee and Ms. Velazquez to discuss culturally-relevant pedagogy and are now revising curriculum. They are going to emphasize critical analysis and social justice and ensure time for independent reading every day. She ended the presentation with an explanation of how they are monitoring implementation and evidence of learning.

Dr. Joyner said that he was impressed by the presentation and noted that all of the presenters have been very skilled. He asked that Central Office staff also have the opportunity to respond to the questions about remote learning in a future meeting. He noted, “When you are born behind in the race of life, you have to run faster,” explaining that we need to look at psychological learning, teaching students a sense of self, sense of agency; poverty doesn’t prevent you from being successful and responsible.

**4. What are the implications of the new Policy on Race and Equity on teaching and learning?** *Ms. Velazquez, Ms. Ross Lee, the Curriculum Supervisors, Mr. Mendia, and Ms. Jackson will discuss the programmatic shifts that will take place through the end of the year 2020 and beyond.*

Ms. Velazquez thanked Carolyn Ross-Lee for her 19 years of dedication to New Haven Public Schools. All of us have been touched by her work and have enjoyed collaborating with her.

Dr. Sherban mentioned the many areas that Ms. Ross-Lee has worked in here: Assessment, Climate Office, Title IX Coordinator. She is happy for her to move forward in her career, but she will be sorely missed in New Haven.

Carolyn Ross-Lee announced that she will be moving to a position with Hartford Public Schools.

Ms. Velazquez noted that Ms. Ross-Lee has been instrumental in the Policy on Race and Equity work. She expressed thanks to the group and encouraged us to continue the DELT work.

## **5. Closing Remarks**

Mr. Conaway noted that he would like to have a panel of Assistant Principals, as they play a major role in schools as well.

Dr. Joyner asked Ms. Velazquez to say final remarks and she thanked Ms. Ross-Lee again.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 5:59.**

**The next meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2021.**

**Future meetings 20-21: Jan. 20, Feb. 17, Mar. 17, Apr. 21, May 19, Jun. 16**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Haxhi