



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teaching & Learning

Committee

April 13, 2022

Online

In attendance: Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Mr. Matthew Wilcox, Dr. Iline Tracey, Dr. Michael Finley, Ms. Ivelise Velazquez, Ms. Keisha Redd-Hannans, Edith Johnson, Rosalyn Diaz-Ortiz, Robert McCain, Pamela Jefferson, Sandra Cates-Clark, Ellen Maust, Justin Harmon, Sarah Miller, Heather Wachter, Jessica Haxhi

1. Welcome Statement

Dr. Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded us that this is a judgment-free zone where we make decisions based on evidence. He reiterated that we have a set of structures in place to discuss teaching and learning. The role of the Board is as policy-makers, not administrators. He noted that any achievement by students in any education system is the result of “everyone in the life” of that student. He discussed “who is responsible” for the education of the student. We have a “collective responsibility to develop the hearts and minds” of the students, emphasizing that it cannot all be the responsibility of the teacher. He noted that we need to work collectively for solutions. We need to use “no-fault problem-solving” to find solutions to the problems of the system.

2. What does the end of year data, school by school, tell us about the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning? Ms. Velazquez and the content area supervisors will share and discuss preliminary school by school data for the 2021-2022 school year, with specific consideration for how the pandemic impacted student outcomes.

Ms. Velazquez reminded the Committee that the data had already been presented at the Board meeting and reviewed the slides. ([slides can be found here](#)). Notes:

- The state has not yet released state data so comparisons are not possible. We can only look at New Haven.
- SBA data showed that 23% of students were at a score of 3 or 4 in ELA; 12% of students achieved those scores in Math.
- Last year, only a small percentage of students took the test in-person; the state will not be using it to do comparisons.
- Dr. Joyner wondered if it makes sense to look at the correlation between attendance (teacher or student) and student achievement. He also noted that there may have been significant issues last year due to the pandemic and it had been difficult to create good school experiences.
- Dr. Joyner suggested that we present data from schools that are doing well and look at the driving forces behind that achievement - student and staff attendance, student behavior, etc.
- Dr. Tracey and Dr. Joyner discussed the fact that we had so many staff absences this past year; one day, there were 600 teachers absent; supervisors and other teachers covered classes. Instruction was significantly disrupted due to these absences. Dr. Tracey summarized that the year was extremely difficult for schools.

- Dr. Joyner also discussed the importance of teacher attitudes and dispositions on student academic outcomes.
- Mrs. Johnson talked about the variance between different classrooms. She agreed with the differences, and also noted the students who are in special education, multilingual learners, etc.
- Ms. Redd-Hannans talked about how each data point has a “story.” We need to ask what the background of each data point - who is the student, who is their family, what do they need, etc. We need to work as a team to determine what is best for students and support each other as we help them to achieve.
- Dr. Baker noted that, from the Title IX perspective, students need support that is “outside of education but inside the education building.” Through Title IX, we need to be providing supportive measures based on complaints that have happened and to support students so that they can function in the classroom. When we have students in crisis who are moving from one school to another, we need to make sure that the Principals of those schools collaborate to support the student.
- Mr. McCain talked about how he has always felt that it was his responsibility, as an educator, that his students were reading, doing well in math, etc. He reiterated that teacher-student relationships impact whether students do well. In his past school, he used data to see how students were doing, hold teachers accountable, and make changes.
- Dr. Joyner summarized the discussion to now. We do have a crisis that is influenced by many other crises in the country currently. We have to do our best to create an institute that tries to overcome it. For emerging adolescents and adolescents, when do we ask them to have more responsibility for their learning? He asked Mrs. Johnson to comment on how we go about asking that of students.
- Mrs. Johnson talked about how difficult a question this is to answer. It depends on the student. Some students respond to adults talking with them; others would respond to other adolescents who are older giving them advice. She could share single stories, but there is no “magic” that works with every student.
- Dr. Joyner mentioned the importance of finding student interests and differentiating for those interests. It can be used to motivate them and encourage them to be a part of the school. He went on to summarize:
 - We all own the crisis. Historic events and social turmoil have profoundly impacted all of our institutions.
 - We are better off embracing a no fault problem solving mindset.
 - There is a correlation between behavior, hard work, and achievement.
 - We need to work on developing more of the effective practices that are working at some schools.
 - Social emotional forces are profoundly evident in the challenges that we see. We need to restore “civility” to the Board environment, school environment, and city environment.
- Mr. Wilcox asked where there will be a discussion of the next steps regarding the data and achievement issues. He would like to see school-by-school data so that they can do comparisons across schools, etc.
- Dr. Joyner explained that it will take more time than might be expected to create a plan and have a significant impact on the scores.
- Mr. Wilcox reiterated that having a plan with targets would be very useful.
- Dr. Joyner asked what kind of a document Mr. Wilcox would like to see in terms of a plan for next steps.

- Mr. Wilcox described a document that outlined next steps, with spots to add upcoming professional learning, schedule, meetings, targets, etc.
- Dr. Tracey explained that the “how” is even more important than the “what.” We need to be looking at implementation, providing support, providing feedback, focusing on small group instruction. We need to know the needs of the specific students and move from there. The past year was extremely difficult for everyone. This year, we will be very supportive of staff, help students to see how parents can support their children, etc.
- Dr. Tracey noted that the state passed laws about reading programs that the districts must have in place. We will have to incorporate that program into our plan moving forward as well.
- Dr. Joyner agreed with Mr. Wilcox that we need to be proactive about letting everyone know what the plan is and what we are doing; we also need to conduct a needs analysis, then have school-specific plans. He asked for plans in the following areas:
 - Schools develop their plans based on their specific needs.
 - District develops a plan that includes what supervisors, administrators, hiring, the Board can do to support.
 - Ensure that there is a plan for students who are in social-emotional turmoil.
- Dr. Tracey reminded the Committee that everything we do is based on the needs of the students in front of us and that we are equipping the teachers with the tools and resources to support the students in front of them.
- Dr. Tracey noted that we will need “tiered support” targeting the schools who are most in need of support.
- Dr. Joyner related it to “differentiated support” of school buildings, much like differentiated supports for students in the classroom.

3. What are the policy priorities for teaching and learning? Ms. Velazquez will share two policies that will be reviewed, discussed and sent to Governance for consideration: Advanced Coursework and Grading Policy.

- Mrs. Velazquez mentioned that we will be working on the following two policies between this meeting and next and will discuss at the next meeting:
 - state mandated policy for advanced coursework
 - grading policy

4. What guidance has been shared from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) regarding comprehensive reading programs? Ms. Brantley will share updates from the CSDE and describe next steps in response to the state legislation on reading.

- Ms. Velazquez shared the 10-point literacy plan that has been developed. As part of that, they will make sure every school has the data at their fingertips around the state tests. [See page 1 of these slides.](#)
- She mentioned the state mandates around reading programs this coming year and the need to monitor progress, as well as our own internal progress monitoring cycle that was begun last year. She emphasized that progress monitoring would not be for “gotcha” but to see where more supports need to be put in place.
- For the coming school year, Ms. Redd-Hannans will be helping to create a system for input and focus groups.

- Ms. Brantley thanked Dr. Joyner and others on the Committee for their support. She noted that this Committee could be very powerful as a place to discuss this work. Ms. Brantley encouraged everyone to, in the spirit of the Comer Model, work together on these current challenges.
- Dr. Joyner mentioned that Dr. Tracey is interested in returning all schools to the Comer Model, providing more training, and making sure that all schools are following the program faithfully.
- Dr. Tracey discussed her own adherence to the Comer Model. There will be more training from Dr. Faye Brown this year to assist in a tiered approach for schools that need to restore their systems and structures. She also noted that we need to nurture students' learning environment as well as staff supports.
- Dr. Joyner emphasized that if we must help students see the value and importance of education, attending school, character, etc.. He also noted that we need a consensus statement on what we view as reading. Students must be exposed to critical thinking, even in the lower grades. One of our public relations challenges is understanding what we consider reading.
- Dr. Tracey summarized that we will do this for our children, with all of the needs they have, we will work for them to make them successful. We must be careful of a "blame game," we must understand the elements of reading. Everyone is involved in this work - not just the homeroom teachers. Reading and learning must be fun!

5. Closing Remarks

Ellen Maust reminded the group of theater performances that are being held at Fair Haven School this week. They are the culmination of a two-week intensive program in which students who were struggling readers achieved greater fluency, engagement, and excitement as they learned their scripts.

Dr. Joyner noted that literacy is one of the most important concerns, and was in the Civil Rights movement as well.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 6:05.**

The next meeting is scheduled for August 17, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Haxhi