



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teaching & Learning Committee

March 17, 2021

Online

In attendance: Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Matthew Wilcox, Dr. Iline Tracey, Ivelise Velazquez, Keisha Redd-Hannans, Dr. Paul Whyte, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, Lynn Brantley, Dr. Richard Therrien, Rosalyn Diaz-Ortiz, Ellen Maust, Dr. Michele Sherban, Patricia Melton, Angela Brunson, Paul Camarco, Lisa Pietrosimone, Leslie DePriest, Joanne Wilcox, Marisa Asarisi, 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 and shared his gratitude for all educators during this unprecedented time in history.

2. How is the district supporting teachers and students as we engage “in-person” learners and “remote” learners? *A panel of Assistant Principals will join the meeting to share their perspectives.*

Ms. Velazquez welcomed the Assistant Principals to the meeting and noted the topic of the discussion. Paul Camarco, Assistant Principal, Truman School: The story of the work of the district has been technology, how quickly it has been put together, how much help the IT department and help desk has done, and how they have helped students and families to get online with hot spots, etc. He also highlighted the technology support for staff. He noted that teachers have done a great job learning how to implement the hybrid model. As a district, we have been supportive of students, teachers and families, and they have supported us back.

Marisa Asarisi, Assistant Principal at Davis Academy for Arts & Design Innovation Magnet School, agreed with Mr. Camarco and noted that the technology support and offerings have been a “gamechanger.” Applications such as IXL, Kami, and “Go Guardian” are some of their favorites. Teachers feel supported with their asynchronous Wednesdays. In hybrid, everything takes a lot longer, such as breakfast in the classroom, mask breaks, etc. Teachers are very grateful for asynchronous time on Wednesdays. They also appreciate the Wellness Wednesdays and other resources that teachers can just take and use right away, from many departments. They are working hard at Davis to make sure school feels as much as possible like it usually does with Junior Honor Society, etc.

Angela Brunson, Assistant Principal at Wilbur Cross High School, talked about contacting their disengaged students. They have learned that students have a number of reasons for disengagement: COVID in the home, students who are working, etc. They are doing as much as possible to keep students engaged, especially the seniors.

Daniel Wajnowski, Assistant Principal at Wilbur Cross High School thanked Central Office staff for all of their support. He appreciates the flexible scheduling, such as Wellness Wednesdays. They have been

able to us that time for a book study at Wilbur Cross. They have also been able to hold support meetings for families/students during the Wednesday times.

Leslie DePriest from East Rock Community Magnet School, highlighted the teachers as the real “rock stars” of the situation. Teachers do feel supported by the district with the hot spots, web cams, etc. as others have noted. The web cams improve in-person instruction. Teachers express that hybrid learning is like “learning to be a teacher again.” It is also double the work, so they appreciate the Wednesdays for asynchronous learning and preparation. Some teachers suggest that the district should have a “remote academy” so that students who want to remain remote could be taught by a dedicated group of teachers. Teachers like the social-emotional focus, but they would like some more support with how to deliver it effectively. They also feel there should be more accountability for parents on helping students to stay engaged. Ms. DePriest noted that district leadership has been responsive and Assistant Principals have been more involved in meetings and decision-making this year. She also noted how wonderful the vaccination program has been.

Lisa Pietrosimone, Quinnipiac School Administrative Coordinator, talked about how her school is all-remote because their building is closing at the end of the year. She noted that support from the district for the families and teachers has been great. At Quinnipiac, they are doing a lot of checking in with families and holding family events so that they can stay connected, even though they are closing. She noted that technology is helping families and students to stay connected. Teachers have learned that remote teaching can be very innovative with JamBoard, Pear Deck, breakout rooms, etc. She noted that paraprofessionals have also been key to the success and motivation of their teachers and students. She uplifted the success of the Day of Hope and Caring and how important it was for her students and families. At Quinnipiac, they hope to keep that “motivation” going strong until the end of the year.

Dr. Joyner recalled his years as an Assistant Principal. He mentioned that Dr. Tracey has also worked at every grade level, which makes her well-suited to leading now. He asked the group to talk about the challenges to leading now and what it is like for new teachers this year.

Mr. Camarco noted that new teachers often have a lot of technology skills which allow them to succeed in this environment, while some of the veteran teachers had to learn all new skills. He also uplifted “Go Guardian” because teachers can see exactly what students are doing on their screens and make attempts to re-engage them if they are off-task. Instructional leaders are doing a lot of teaching technology to their staff. He is seeing that other members of the family, besides just students, are also using the school devices, so that brings technology to the whole family. He suggested that we offer a technological literacy class to families in the future.

Angela Brunson agreed with Mr. Camarco’s comments. She too sees how it has been a challenge for some veteran teachers. She encourages her teachers to make the lessons very interactive, even if student cameras are off, such as random check-ins during the class to make sure that students are engaged.

Dr. Joyner taught a class at Hill Regional Career High School with teacher Gary Aurora few weeks ago. Dr. Joyner noted that, as a child, he might have been ashamed of his home on camera. He talked about his own teaching experiences and noted that sometimes it is important to ask students questions you know they can answer, to build their confidence. He asked what the district is doing to identify students in the bottom quartile to offer them summer programs. He offered a “shout out” to the teacher, Mr.

Aurora at Hill Regional Career, who was teaching African-American and LatinX History. He uplifted how Mr. Aurora clearly cared about his students and how important that is.

Dr. Joyner went on to state that we can only offer the quality of our teaching; then, there is the response of the students and the family support. We only control the quality of our teaching and our relationships with students. We need students to match this commitment.

Ms. Asarisi of Davis Academy talked about how her leadership team looks at data and does progress monitoring every two weeks. They just looked at data comparing performance last year winter to this year winter and there are significant differences. Teachers are concerned that they are not “getting through the content” the way they normally would be. She thanked the Curriculum Supervisors for helping teachers to navigate through these challenges.

Mr. Wajnowski expressed that he hoped that we could start re-thinking how we assess students. Many teachers are doing more frequent check-ins with students with the new technologies. He noted that we have students with lots of skills that might not match the assessment tools that we have.

Dr. Joyner concurred that students should be able to use a variety of assessment tools, such as project-based learning, a science experiment, etc. He referenced W. James Popham, psychometrician. We need to look at students as “producers” versus whether they can get things correctly on a true/false or fill-in-the-blank test. He suggested that a Committee could look at assessment to determine whether the assessments we are currently using are measuring what we want to, and whether we can implement assessments that encourage students to be more like producers, performers, etc., incorporating a range of skills.

Dr. Tracey noted that she does not want teachers to get bogged down in testing right now. She said that we should focus on social-emotional and how much students can apply what they have learned, not on how they do on a standardized test. She expressed how we need to get focused on the “3Rs” again, focus on helping students to feel that they are “worth it” and let learning “be fun again.” She uplifted all of the hard work of the teachers and administrators. Dr. Joyner thanked her for her comments, as Superintendent. He reiterated that it is important for the schools to focus on fundamental skills like literacy and numeracy, and especially with the lowest quartile students.

3. How are we a building career ladder to grow leaders in New Haven? *Ms. Tessa Gumbs-Johnson will present information about the district’s collaboration with the Wallace Foundation.*

Ms. Gumbs-Johnson thanked Ms. Keisha Redd-Hannans for entrusting her with the project she will describe and for Dr. Whyte with his assistance as well. She presented a series of slides describing a year-long professional learning “Leadership Academy” program for principals and assistant principals in collaboration with the Wallace Foundation through UCONN. The program will focus on school planning, culturally responsive leadership, data analysis, coaching, providing actionable feedback, etc.

Dr. Whyte explained that this is part of a leadership development system that will build our leadership pipeline. It is part of UCONN’s 092 leadership program. According to the Wallace Foundation research, school leadership is one of the most impactful pieces of student and school success.

Ms. Redd-Hannans noted the importance of offering professional learning for administrators as they often become just “managers” once they are in the Assistant Principal or Principal role.

Ms. Gumbs-Johnson will send the information out for April 13, 2021. She expressed how much she has learned working with the Wallace Foundation this past year.

Dr. Joyner asked what specifically would be the focus work for Assistant Principals. Ms. Gumbs-Johnson explained that they will look at a problem of practice at each of their schools and use that as a context for them to develop the skills of the standards.

Ms. DePriest asked if it would be a requirement of the program that the Assistant Principal and Principal should attend together, but it was clarified that is not the case.

Ms. Redd-Hannans noted that administrators will be encouraged to use the “brain trust” of the people in your building to address the real-world problem that is a “problem of practice” in your building.

Dr. Tracey explained that this program is a part of the districtwide professional learning, and will enable Assistant Principals to also develop their ability to be instructional leaders. She emphasized the importance of continuous professional learning at all levels.

Ms. Gumbs-Johnson will send out information this evening about an informational session on April 13, 2021 from 1:00-3:00 PM. The session will include both NHPS participants and administrators from around the nation.

Dr. Joyner expressed that he is happy that Ms. Gumbs-Johnson is back in New Haven and that she has done a great job with limited resources.

4. What do grades tell us about how students are learning after the first and second quarter?

Dr. Sherban shared data on grades in the first and second quarter, showing how many courses students have failed in grades 6-8 and 9-12. (Please see attached PowerPoint). Compared with last year, there are large increases in the number of students failing courses in every grade level.

Of the students who have failed more than 5 courses in marking period 1 and 2:

- 27% are in grade 9
- 25% are in grade 10
- 17.6% are English Learners
- 18.8% are students with IEPs
- 82% qualify for free/reduced meals
- 47.8% identify as Hispanic/Latino of any race
- 44.3% identify as Black or African American
- 62% identify as male (30% Hispanic/Latino, 27% Black)

Dr. Joyner asked about the attendance figures on the students who have failures. He also asked what we are planning for programmatic interventions. Dr. Sherban did not have the attendance analysis currently, but conjectured that many are the students who do not attend classes.

Dr. Tracey said that Ms. Joseph-Lumpkin will share data at the Board Meeting on student attendance, which mirrors some of the data presented here. She explained that this year, it is not about whether students have a device or the opportunity to be in classes, so we need to identify why students aren't

attending. Dr. Tracey talked about how we are planning to leverage the funding in the ESSER II grant to deal with learning loss, recovery, and acceleration.

Dr. Joyner highlighted that there is a problem, country-wide, with people not adjusting their expectations for how school is operating in the pandemic. He named all of the services we are providing to students, such as health and mental services; yet the school system is only judged by standardized test scores. He expressed the need to convince people that we are doing everything we can, and under duress.

Dr. Tracey thanked the members of the press for being at the meeting to hear the data presentation. She noted that sometimes data mining and collation takes time and she appreciates their patience.

Dr. Joyner noted how, as with those who are successful in the media, it is essential for students learn the language of “intellectual discourse” for success in life. We need to ask students and parents to match our commitment to student learning. He said, “Education is a gift and you should accept it and embrace it.”

Dr. Tracey thanked the Assistant Principals for sharing their experiences. She wants to “shift the script” and focus the district on teaching and learning, as well as social-emotional learning.

5. Closing Remarks

Dr. Joyner thanked everyone again.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 6:00.**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2021.

Future meetings 20-21: May 19, Jun. 16

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Haxhi