



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Learning & Teaching Committee

May 20, 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-Landa, Carmen Rodriguez, Erik Patchkofsky, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, Jessica Haxhi Kristina Denegre, Joan Robinson, Mandy Bonz, Kyle Miller, Kelly Inga, Lori Beutel, Sheryl Coe, Jessica Atnes, Margaret Hughes, Karen Lorde, Patricia Abdur-Rahman, Rosa Velasquez, Mindy Schwartzman, Erin Salzano, Courtney Sutherland, Lisa Pietrosimone, Kristina Polaski, Brenna Roberts, Kate Liphart, Melanie Rodriguez, Holly Smith, Monica Abbott, Shanequa Sturgis-Nash, Rocio Barahona, Kathy Blodgett, Beth Hicks, Erin Connolly (National Geographic Learning), David Svedlow (National Geographic Learning), Brian Zahn

There were a total of 60 participants online, including school personnel and math coaches. Note that all names may not have been captured here.

Dr. Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Joyner welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for attending, especially the math coaches and teachers.

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

- Ms. Hannans described the “Road Map Back to School” Teams that are already meeting and planning for the 2020-21 school year. The teams include administrators, central office personnel, school leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians. There are five teams: Wellness, Operations, Instruction, Technology, and Governance. We are anticipating a non-traditional start to the 2020-21 school year. The Instruction Team is specifically to work on hybrid learning, assessment and professional development. They are working on a survey to go home to families soon about possible varied schedules and start times.
- Erik P. described decisions currently being considered by Athletics for the fall. There may be a modified or shortened season. It might be that teams would play less games in only towns that are close by, in order to reduce the amount of time on busses, etc. Students in athletics would potentially be clustered in terms of which days they would attend school. Dr. Joyner expressed his concerns about how athletics will be difficult to run safely in the absence of comprehensive testing. Mr. Patchkofsky noted that NHPS will follow any guidelines put out by the State of Connecticut and/or Connecticut Department of Education.

3. International Trips Update

- Ms. Haxhi presented the International Trips Update as delineated in the materials attached for this meeting. The members of the committee concurred with her recommendations of moratorium on approval of international trips for SY 2020-21 for now, with these exceptions:
 - Allow the three re-scheduled trips to stay on-track for travel in April 2021 and revisit decision in January 2021 (Wilbur Cross to Costa Rica, Hill Regional Career to Costa Rica, and The Sound School to Greece/Italy).
 - Re-consider possible summer 2021 travel for student groups in January 2021, with possible trip approvals in February 2021.

It was mentioned that the Board of Education may be adopting an updated pandemic policy that would also influence decisions on field trips.

4. Functional Behavior: Role in s

- Dr. Joyner expressed concerns about student behavior and how it affects their learning.
- Dr. Joyner and Mr. Conaway are working on a tool that will help teachers to help, support, and facilitate student behavioral challenges.
- They reviewed the document attached to the materials for this meeting called “Functional Behavior Assessment.” Mr. Conaway mentioned how the return to school would have to include a focus on social-emotional wellness of students.
- Dr. Joyner summarized that student behavior has been a challenge in many schools. Every student in the class has different needs, dispositions, etc. In studies in which he has been involved, the biggest area of concern for teachers was student attention and cooperation. He described how government programs often attach funding to academic achievement. He mentioned a number of studies and programs related to students’ behavioral and cognitive development.
- Dr. Joyner expressed that New Haven needs to focus on providing the resources that teachers need to be effective, with a school environment safe and orderly, so that teachers can teach effectively. He noted the need to help and support students who are struggling as well.
- Dr. Joyner commented that the school district needs to have a common glossary and understanding of terms related to students such as “whole child” or “anger management issues.”
- Dr. Joyner and Mr. Conaway will continue to provide reading resources, as well as meet with Dr. Tracey and a task or committee to address student behavior.
- Ms. Hannans noted that Ms. Jackson, Ms. Samberg-Champion and others have been working on the social-emotional component of the Strategic Plan. She suggested that an update be provided at a later date on that section of the Plan, perhaps for the June Teaching and Learning.
- Dr. Joyner noted that an assessment of the current reality is where this work should begin. They would like to see systemic application of initiatives across the district. He requested that the team working social-emotional learning should contact him after the meeting.
- Mr. Conaway reminded that the challenges of distance learning will also have to be taken into account.

5. Math Curriculum

- *Please see PowerPoint included in the materials for this meeting.*

- Mr. Mathews described the process that was undertaken to choose a new math program (text and ancillary materials) due to the fact that the current edition of *Math in Focus* will be out of print soon.
- There were 6 “finalist” programs that his committee evaluated based on a variety of points such as their alignment of instruction to the text, ease of student use, readability, cultural responsiveness, using technology while teaching, etc. Overall rankings were also considered.
- They piloted *Big Ideas*, *Eureka Math*, *Ready Math*, and *Math in Focus* (current text, new edition) throughout the district this year and surveyed teachers on similar points to those mentioned above. Dr. Tracey has also asked that Mr. Mathews survey teachers again as to whether they would like a change or keep the current *Math in Focus* text. Most teachers expressed that they did not like *Math in Focus* and would like to adopt a different text.
- The two programs that were top choices among the committee and those who piloted are *Eureka Math* and *Big Ideas*.
- *Big Ideas* offers a 6 year time frame for approximately \$1.2 million. Please see attached PowerPoint, slide #22 for pricing details.
- *Eureka’s* program is for 2 years and is approximately \$1.9 million.
- Mr. Mathews shared some research about each of the programs on slides #23-24.
- He outlined the “pros” and “cons” for *Eureka* math and the “pros” and “cons” for *Big Ideas*. Please see slides #25-29.
- Mr. Conaway noted that *Big Ideas* is a clear teacher preference and the price difference in 2-years versus 6-years is important. He also noted that the technology piece and alignment to Common Core is essential.
- Dr. Joyner expressed that he supports the tool that teachers and math coaches believe is best for teachers and the students.
- Ms. Hannans noted that it would be best to hear from the teachers who have engaged in the work and utilized the texts.
- Dr. Joyner noted that cost must be considered. He asked Dr. Tracey to mediate the process and bring the decision either to this board meeting or another.
- Educators from Clinton Avenue School and Hill Central discussed their experiences with the texts.
- Christine Burgos from Hill Central expressed that she likes how *Big Ideas* connects to music and fluency. It helps to connect to parents by having a telephone app. It worked well for parents of English learners and students liked the puppets, etc.
- Margaret Hughes from Clinton Avenue noted that students surpassed their targets for state assessments using *Eureka*. They noticed that students were better able to talk about their “math thinking” and the level to which it encouraged oral descriptions of math thinking was supportive for English Learners. Teachers became more confident in their understanding of concepts and skills in Common Core math as well.
- Beth Hick, the math coach at Hill Central co-taught using *Big Ideas* for two weeks. Students were engaged in the lesson. Every lesson is very user-friendly and includes real-world “dig ins.” Each chapter contains an overview for teachers about what conceptions students might have about each concept. It also has many resources; almost more than teachers can use.
- Dr. Joyner noted that the decision should be grounded in a cost-benefit analysis for the school district, guided by what most teachers feel is the best choice and any research available on the efficacy of the program. It also has to consider English Learners, our budget situation, and additional resources beyond the textbook itself.
- Mr. Conaway reminded that student user-friendly(ness) should also be a key consideration.

- Dr. Therrien invited participants to share comments and experiences with the two texts via email to be forwarded to the Superintendent and the Board members.
- Dr. Joyner asked Dr. Tracey to make a recommendation in consultation with Mr. Mathews and the math department team.
- Mr. Conaway thanked everyone who assisted with the presentation, the Committee, and the pilot.

6. Policy Discussion: 6000 Series of Board Policies

- The 6000 Series is all of the policies related to instruction. Mr. Therrien noted that the Board may need to make a specific decision on the Homework Policy as the policy provided by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) has two options which also include a time-per-day suggestion.
- Ms. Jackson described the process that the Governance Committee is using to look at Board of Education Policies, many of which are outdated.
- The Governance Committee recommends that the Board approve all of the 6000 series model policies that the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) has provided first so that everything has updated regulatory language. Then, groups of five to six policies at a time could be presented to Committee to be revised if necessary.
- Dr. Joyner commented that he would like to expertise of teachers, principals, support staff. In accordance with Dr. Tracey's contract, she recommends policy to the Board. Dr. Joyner would like Dr. Tracey's policy priorities.
- Mr. Conaway said that any outdated policies should be updated and that the Board should follow what Dr. Tracey and her team recommend.
- Mr. Wilcox also noted that CABE has multiple versions of certain policies. Each policy would have to be looked at to determine which policy would apply to New Haven as a large district and ensure that the policies that are recommended are ready to be implemented immediately.
- Mr. Conaway concurred that there should be a priority of policies to approve.
- Dr. Joyner recommended that Dr. Tracey submit a list of policies to approve, prioritized, with timelines.
- In terms of process, Dr. Joyner asked that when policies are being considered, the stakeholders who are using or would be affected by the policy be consulted.
- Dr. Tracey reminded that many policies are from 1995 and that the curriculum audit also mentioned that many of the NHPS policies are old.
- Mr. Wilcox noted that while Teaching & Learning should consider many of the policies, any policy should go through the Governance Committee. He also mentioned the fact that any policy that will be approved may need a plan for how it is going to be rolled out and clear.
- Dr. Joyner will work with Dr. Tracey and Mr. Conaway on a checklist for policy adoption and roll-out. Ms. Jackson will be receiving an electronic copy of the 6000 series and will work with Teaching and Learning staff for adoption.

7. The Future of Teaching & Learning and Inclusion of Building Staff

- Dr. Joyner said that he and Mr. Conaway are interested in making sure that teachers and building staff have a greater voice in matters of teaching and learning.
- Dr. Therrien had approached the teachers' union (NHFT) and the administrators' union (SAA) to ask if they could appoint a representative to attend the Committee.
- Dr. Joyner mentioned that all stakeholders should have representation.

- Dr. Tracey reminded that Supervisors are 12-month employees, so they are able to attend this (evening) meeting, but other staff might not have the time.
- Dr. Joyner asked for a meeting with Mr. Conaway, Dr. Tracey and Mr. Wilcox (if available) to discuss the potential for changes to ensure more staff voice in decisions.
- **Mr. Conaway made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 PM. Mr. Wilcox seconded the motion.**

The next meeting is scheduled for June 17,2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Haxhi & Richard Therrien