



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Learning & Teaching Committee

October 21, 2020

Online

In attendance: Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Mr. Conaway (Board Member), Ivelise Velazquez, Dr. Paul Whyte, Lynn Brantley, Carolyn Ross-Lee, Pedro Mendia Landa, Sandra Clark, Dr. Richard Therrien, Ellen Maust, Medria Blue-Ellis, Dr. Michele Sherban, Pamela Augustine-Jefferson, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, Tracey Philpot, Sheryl Coe, Claudette Kidd (Clifford Beers), Brian Zahn, Emily Hays, Jessica Haxhi

Students in attendance are listed below.

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. Dr. Joyner is Chair for the meeting, Ms. Velazquez is the Host, and Mr. Conaway is the Timekeeper.

2. What are we doing to revise and improve the curriculum to ensure all students are empowered?

Humanities Curriculum: Black and Latino Studies and Social Justice: Sandra Clark, Supervisor of Humanities and Social Studies

Ms. Clark gave an update on the Social Studies Department work on the African American & Latinx Studies. She reviewed the legislation that was passed in July of 2019 requiring “all public schools in Connecticut to include African-American, Puerto Rican, and Latino studies in their curriculums by 2021-22 school years. Legislation also requires high schools to offer a black and Latino studies course in the 2022-23 school years.” The State Educational Resource Center (SERC) is developing a full-year one-credit course on African American/Latino History. Schools must use the course developed by SERC, slated to be completed in December, and cannot create their own curriculum for the course. Ms. Clark is working on the Committee with SERC on this course development. Schools may offer the course as early as fall 2021 as a pilot; Ms. Clark is interested in asking for approval to offer the course in New Haven Public Schools during the pilot.

Ms. Clark is providing professional development on implementation of the topics and courses. The goal of the curriculum is to “help students to acquire skills for problem-solving, effective decision making and thinking critically about important issues that have had a negative effect on our society.” She sees these curricula as promoting a climate of trust, empowerment, and building student confidence. She provided a list of the content in schools now that address African-American, Puerto Rican, and Latino studies in both high schools and K-8 schools, including courses and special programs such as Discovering Amistad, CT Women’s Hall of Fame monthly assemblies, IMPACT Social Studies and African American & Latinx History courses. Ms. Clark said that some implementation would require some funding; she would like to see e-books, etc. that could be shared with students and staff electronically.

Dr. Joyner expressed that it is unfortunate that the schools/districts cannot create their own curriculum as New Haven would be able to generate a high-quality offering and have done this work in the past. He asked that Ms. Clark be on the agenda for next meeting as well and he will send her some questions in the meantime.

2. How are our community of learners and families managing in this new paradigm?

Remote Learning Update - Panel of Students, Ms. Ivelise Velazquez

Dr. Therrien introduced the students from ESUMS, commenting on what a great job ESUMS teachers and students did with the shift to remote learning.

Kendall Michele Washington – ESUMS 8th grader

Enjoys the hands-on learning at the school, so the change to online learning was difficult. In remote, she enjoys the casual, safe environment where she can wear casual clothes and move about her house. She also likes that she can quickly join a Meet if she is running late and eat healthy food at home. Technical difficulties happen often throughout the day (WIFI, etc.). ESUMS has given out a lot of laptops, paperback books, etc. She likes that ESUMS gives 5-minute breaks in which she can handle technology issues. There has been a lot of homework and it takes her a long time to complete. Some teachers are doing a lot to make classes interactive and she likes that she can get content a variety of ways.

Some of her teachers are “disengaged” and not having many online classes. Wednesdays are her favorite with the half-day structure and the “Global Learning” class. She is worried about transportation and bussing, spacing in classroom, lunchtime and dismissal and cleaning.

Edward Mathews – Betsy Ross 6th grader

His favorite class is Mr. Chris’ class because he loves his theater class. He used to have difficulty pronouncing his “Rs” but now he is doing very well. He enjoys the games in class that develop their acting skills. He has never been to Mr. Chris’ physical class, but he loves the virtual class because students are encouraged to play games that teach them how to work together and solve problems.

Adele Bidon – ESUMS 11th Grader

Remote learning has its ups and downs. The work load is what most students talk about. She wants all teachers to know that students have work in other classes as well. She is concerned that they have very little time in their personal lives. She plays violin, plays hockey and is a Seamen recruit but often has to focus on her studies. She thinks people may prefer to stay at home when we go back to school, due to their health. She thinks that when we are back at school, teachers should be more flexible about the work, when there are technology issues, etc. She thinks going back to school will be easier because it will be easier to understand when it is hands-on.

Reyek Masoperh – ESUMS 12th grader

He expressed that remote learning has not been easy for teachers or students, but it has greatly improved this year. He had taken courses at UNH which allowed him to transition easily. The coursework has been a lot.

Distractions are a reality of remote learning; some students don’t have an environment that is conducive to remote learning or may have to care for younger siblings. He loves the flexibility that comes with remote learning. He commended NHPS for preparing teachers for remote learning in a short amount of time. Teachers face challenges because they are not tech-savvy. Technical issues often interrupt learning. He thanked the district for providing Chromebooks and hotspots. In remote learning, assessing students understanding of concepts is difficult because students don’t participate or ask questions. Students find building relationships difficult and it could

Some students are becoming “passive observers versus active participants.” Even if they complete assessments, they may not be able to apply skills. Students want to come back but they are worried about health concerns and the future. Some of his peers say they have acquired organizational and time management skills in remote learning. Students are looking for ways to adjust to the new experience. He expressed that the district can compare remote learning to in-person with this experience.

Abby Gerry – Sound School 9th grader

Abby is disappointed that she can't do the hands-on learning that she enjoys at Sound, but she likes staying safe. She likes everything being posted on the screen and she likes the ability to re-watch lessons. She doesn't like staring at a screen and sitting all day. Abby likes to be able to talk to her classmates and finds it hard during remote. She had shadowed at Sound and had loved being on the water, in the open air, and that is not possible now. She feels that the work is way too much and she feels that the teachers don't realize how much work they are giving the students.

Ken Mathews introduced 4 students on behalf of the Math Department.

Jorge Rodriguez – John S. Martinez 8th grader

He expressed that online is difficult. Teachers try their best, but it is difficult for teachers to balance live teaching and online assignments. Students aren't able to get their questions answered in time sometimes. He really wants to go back to school. Most students want to go to school to see their teachers and friends but they are worried to catch the virus and get their families sick. He is debating whether to go back to school or not.

Moses Stewart -Hillhouse 12th grader

He has already applied early decision to Harvard University. He takes AP Calculus. He has been enjoying online learning because it has allowed him the time to take more online college courses. He thinks his AP courses may not be on course to finish by the end of the year; teachers have to keep pushing assignments back if students don't complete them. He is concerned that students don't have ways to get questions answered/get tutoring sessions, etc. For the most part, his experience has been positive.

Angel Rivera - John S. Martinez 8th grader

Remote learning has been alright for him but when there are internet problems, he can't hear, the Wifi makes them get “kicked out” of classes, etc. and that is very difficult. For him, the work load is fine; similar to in-person school. He also has health concerns about keeping his family safe from COVID-19, but he would really like to go to school to see his teachers and classmates.

Marangelie Colon - Columbus Family Academy

She expressed that this year is much better than last year. They didn't have as many live classes and sometimes had trouble getting in touch with teachers. Last year was much more about handing in assignments just for a grade, versus learning content. Now, they are grateful that they can do classes on Meets. Her Art teacher, Ms. Sands, is great about knowing that everyone is at different levels and that some students aren't as confident in their work as others. She loved the copycat project in which students could use various household items to copy famous artwork by Hispanic artists. She was very appreciative of the work her teacher has done in general, and complimented the work of all teachers.

Kayson Maciel-Andrews – ESUMS - 7th Grader

Kayson agreed with the other students about the difficulty in the transition to remote learning. He said the amount of work they were being asked to do during remote learning and as homework was a lot. Now he has a balance between his work and his after-school activities. He is most concerned about connection issues which can cause students to be marked absent from class or not be able to participate in class.

Lihame Arouna – Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School 11th grader and Board of Education Member
She and Anthony Fiore, the other student member on the Board of Education, did a survey of students which she shared. [The results are linked here](#). The first question asked students to rate remote learning on a scale of 1-5; the majority of answers were “3.” Student comments revolved around technical issues, screen time issues, whether they are learning as much online. When asked whether students felt they had “access to a trusted adult” 88% answered “yes.” The final question asked what social issues in the community they would most like the student council to be working on. Many issues were noted, with the top two being “Anti-racism” and “Black Lives Matter.”

Adrian (via chat)

Online school is pretty easy but I would really like to interact with my peers and teachers.

Dr. Joyner commented on how enjoyable and important it was to hear from the students and that it reinforced the need to have all voices heard on this Committee.

3. What are we doing to ensure that we continue to engage in productive conversations about equity? Productive Conversations about Race Protocol, District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) Update on the new Policy on Race and Equity

Ms. Carolyn Ross-Lee summarized the upcoming activities for the DELT Team:

- They have applied for a Nellie Mae Grant to support this work.
- They have had the first reading for the District Equity Policy at the Board Meeting and the second one will be next week.
- There has been training with the Language Arts Coaches and the Curriculum Supervisors to get everyone on the same page to do the work effectively and constructively.

Mr. Conaway thanked the students for their presentations. He expressed that “we hear you” and that he appreciated their sharing openly. He noted that it is a tough decision to go back to school, but the Board of Education is working hard to make the right decision.

5. Closing Remarks, Dr. Joyner

Dr. Joyner talked about how ecstatic he was about this meeting. He has always been proud of the talent in New Haven and was extremely impressed with the students at the meeting this evening. He noted that “the reason you get an education is to improve yourself and your community.” He emphasized that the work Ms. Ross-Lee is doing is so important because the best work is when people put aside their differences and work for the greater good.

- **Dr. Joyner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:57 PM.**

The next meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Haxhi