



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teaching & Learning Committee

April 13, 2022

Online

In attendance: Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Dr. Abie Benitez (Board Member), Dr. Iline Tracey, Ms. Ivelise Velazquez, Dr. Paul Whyte, Dr. Viviana Conner, Ms. Keisha Redd-Hannans, Dr. Michael Finley, Rosalyn Diaz-Ortiz, Dr. Richard Therrien, Sandra Cates-Clark, Ellen Maust, Sarah Levine, Kelley Dearborne, Donna Levine, Chris Willems, Jessica Haxhi

1. Welcome Statement

Dr. Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. He greeted everyone and reminded the group that this Committee is a “no judgment zone.”

2. What graduation diploma will be available to all New Haven students in June 2022?

Dr. Paul Whyte and the high school principals will discuss the use of a New Haven district wide diploma for students who meet minimum requirements.

Dr. Whyte described the challenges that students are having to fulfill graduation requirements during these pandemic times. New Haven had always had a higher level of graduation credit requirements than the state. With this current proposal, if a student does not meet the 26-29 credit graduation requirements of their high school, then as long as they meet the **state** minimum requirements, they would receive a New Haven Public Schools diploma.

Greg Baldwin talked about how much his school, New Haven Academy, had to adjust their schedule when we went to remote learning. Now, there are students who mathematically cannot complete their 28-credit requirement in the time they have. The 25-credit requirement, however, is attainable to students.

Derek Stephenson, the Principal of Riverside Academy, noted how much this proposal “makes sense.” He believes that the alternative is more dropouts and more challenging behaviors for students who have to stay extra year(s) while under-credited.

Dr. Therrien noted that the state science requirement is now a 3-credit requirement. There is an issue with not having a Chemistry teacher at Riverside. He asked if students can still get in their 3 credits. Mr. Stephenson discussed the challenges of meeting the needs in this area.

Dr. Joyner asked what special tools and resources are needed in special situations like this. Mr. Stephenson talked about the need for an appropriately qualified Chemistry teacher.

Dr. Tracey noted that, in the past, there was a credit recovery program to help students to get caught up and get their credits.

Dr. Joyner asked that Mr. Stephenson, Dr. Tracey, and the Curriculum Supervisors problem-solve around

the specific challenges of students such as those at Riverside.

Ms. Haxhi asked if the requirements will change for the Class of 2023, for which there is a one-year world language requirement. Dr. Whyte said he would make a note of that.

Proposed Motion for Board: Approve the proposal that as all New Haven Schools exceed the State of Connecticut minimum standards, and given the unusual circumstance the pandemic years 2020-22 has presented, the administration is requesting that each New Haven school permit any student to graduate from high school who has satisfactorily completed a minimum of 25 credits, according to the following:

- A. A minimum of ***twenty-five credits***, including no fewer than:
 - a. Four (4) credits in **English**, including composition;
 - b. Three (3) credits in **Mathematics**
 - c. Three (3) credits in **Social Studies**, including at least one-half credit in Civics and American Government.
 - d. Not fewer than three (3) **Science**
 - e. One (1) credit in **Physical Education**
 - f. One (1) credit in **Fine Arts; or Vocational Education**

- B. Any student meeting the above requirements minimum of ***twenty-five credits***, but achieving fewer than the number of credits prescribed by their specific high school will receive a “NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS” diploma instead of their specific school diploma.

- C. This request would be for the 2022-2024 graduation only.

- D. The graduation policy will be referred back to the Teaching and Learning Committee for a full policy review and action to update the current graduation requirements.

3. How will we review and approve international and domestic trips moving forward? Ms. Jessica Haxhi will describe the process for review of international trips and Ms. Sandra Clark will explain the process for review of domestic trips.

Ms. Haxhi proposed that the International Trips approval process that normally would take place this May for the April 2023-Summer 2023 school year be delayed until October of this year. That would allow us to revisit the feasibility of international travel in September and decline to allow trips if necessary. If allowed, schools could submit trips by October 1, 2022, for vetting by Ms. Haxhi and then approval at the October Teaching and Learning Committee meeting.

There was discussion about whether the current process should continue as to whether the trips should go before the Teaching and Learning Committee for approval before going to the Board; or, whether Dr. Tracey could bring the trips directly to the Board.

Ms. Clark introduced the Domestic Overnight Trips process and thanked Cari Strand and the staff at High School in the Community for putting together a comprehensive packet for their trips for approval:

Cari Strand presented three proposed trips for High School in the Community:
Providence, RI from June 7-9, 2022, for Juniors and some Freshmen

Boston, MA from June 8-9, 2022, for Freshmen
Washington, D.C. trip from June 9-10, 2022, for Juniors

Dr. Joyner and Dr. Tracey asked if this trip is approved by the Title I funds.

Dr. Viviana Conner noted that the school should be sure to link the trip to academic goals and ensure that they describe how the trip benefits students who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

Ms. Clark went over the Proposed Overnight Domestic Trips Approval Process document, asking everyone to note that the process next year will ask schools to get their trips approved in September, October, and November for the whole year.

Dr. Tracey reminded everyone to check in with Dr. Maritza Bond that overnight trips are still allowable.

Dr. Joyner asked that Title I is designed to help improve academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Dr. Joyner asked that a summary of Title I be given to Board Members with the packet.

4. What are the provisions in the new reading legislation? Ms. Velazquez will discuss the plan that will be followed in the coming year to ensure we build the capacity of teachers to teach reading to all students.

Ms. Velazquez showed the new reading legislation that went into effect last summer in Connecticut (please see [materials](#), page 1-3). It established a *Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success* and a *Reading Leadership Implementation Council* who will provide guidance on the legislation.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is requiring that, as of the 2023-24 school year, we “implement a reading curriculum model or program for grades pre-kindergarten to grade three.” Ms. Velazquez said that we have been preparing for this so that we would have a year to look at it and pilot it before it is required.

It is possible to ask the Commissioner of Education for an extension if there is not enough to fund such a program.

The state will be putting out a list of recommended materials/programs by this summer. If we want to ask for a waiver to use something different, that is also possible.

The model that the district implements must be evidence-based and be focused on competency in a number of areas (please see [materials](#), page 2)

Ms. Velazquez described the implications for New Haven Public Schools and proposed that we:

- In June of 2022, host a reading symposium to get a broad understanding of what the research says, what we already have, and data on reading with what we have.
- Identify which instructional methods and materials we will use from July 1, 2023.
- Identify the specifics of our plan with data and focus groups.
- Continue to build the capacity of teachers on how to reach reading effectively and develop our call to action.
- In the fall of 2022, host professional development on research on the teaching of reading.
- Await the release of Reading Research training modules in the Winter of 2022/23.

- In the spring of 2023, host another Reading Symposium and release the NHPS Draft Plan for a comment period.

Ms. Velazquez talked about the factors that will be considered as we move forward with this process. Building the capacity of teachers will be a large part of the process.

Dr. Joyner noted that everything we do is a work in progress. We need to discuss the role that families play as well. Helping students to achieve at high levels in reading, speaking, and thinking is about language development. He talked about the importance of behavior in the classroom and the “great I laM: interest, attention, and memory.” We also must understand that our students come from a multilingual network, including dialects within the languages. He emphasized that we need to do a public relations effort to help everyone to understand that. We should have a cadre of expert teachers to help choose materials and “guiding principles” to refer to as we choose materials. He noted that it is a community responsibility, including parents and families, to help teach students to read and think - not just the work of the schools.

Dr. Benitez emphasized the importance of looking at different approaches to literacy. In her dissertation, teachers showed that the Zone of Proximal Development for each student was different. Therefore, students were not all in one place, needing one approach. If we continue to teach a program or an approach, and not the child, then we will not succeed.

Dr. Tracey concurred with what Dr. Benitez said and reiterated that we need to ensure that teachers have a “toolbox” of strategies to teach the many students in our classrooms. Dr. Tracey wants to elevate reading and literacy in our school system. It will be essential to train the staff not just in the “what” of reading, but in the “how” of reading.

Dr. Joyner reiterated that we need to control “interest” by choosing materials that are highly engaging to students. He also described the success he had with adult and family volunteers in the school in which he worked in New Haven.

Ms. Maust agreed with Dr. Joyner’s statements about interest and described how excited students are to read their lines to learn plays or choral pieces. She noted that all teachers of all subjects also need to know about reading instruction.

Dr. Joyner asked that we identify the guiding principles behind our material choices and educate the public about the challenges of teaching in our district. Then, talk about what could help overcome these challenges: parental support, cooperation of students, artistry of teacher, tapping into the teachers who are teaching well to train the other teachers.

Ms. Velazquez noted that the Committee will return to this topic in May. She asked that members read two articles that she had put in the chat: [How the Science of Reading Informs 21st Century Education](#) and

Dr. Tracey described that she is a child of heavy dialect; she was discouraged by her teachers from speaking Patois in school. Her classroom was an open classroom in the shape of the cross and she had a slate for writing, but she learned from her teachers.

Dr. Tracey talked about how many parents teach their child to read before they attend school. It is a matter of exposure; families can expose children to words in their daily lives, read to them, etc. The teaching of reading does not need to be made so complex. Dr. Tracey emphasized the need to train teachers to build up their capacity to meet the needs of all the different children in their classrooms.

5. What is the next step for policy #6000, Statement of Policies Related to Teaching and Learning? Dr. Joyner will facilitate a second conversation about the proposed language in preparation for a submission to the Governance Committee

This item was tabled for the next meeting.

6. Closing Remarks

Ms. Velazquez asked that we save the date of August 8th and 9th for the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Conference.

Dr. Therrien announced that Dr. Erol Lee, Seventh Grade Teacher of Engineering at ESUMS, passed away. He recognized what a wonderful and caring teacher he was.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 6:09.**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Haxhi