



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teaching & Learning Committee

January 20, 2021

Online

In attendance: Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Mr. Conaway (Board Member), Matthew Wilcox (Board Member), Ivelise Velazquez, Dr. Paul Whyte, Alan Gibbons, Ann Brillante, Cristina Ryan, Cynthia Clampitt, Doralis Sanders, Ellen Maust, Katarzyna Kwolek, Melissa Martinez, Michael Soares, Patty Gonzalez Garcia Gantenbein, Richard Therrien, Rocio Barahona, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, JoAnne Wilcox, Alondra Seda Martinez, Lesly Mellado, 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 to this conversation about multilingual learners. We conduct our meetings respectfully; we are not looking to find fault, but solutions. He asked Ms. Velazquez to facilitate the meeting today.

2. What is the vision/mission and strategies applied by the Multilingual Learners department? Why the term Multilingual Learners? *Mr. Pedro Mendia-Landa and the department will provide an overview with specific emphasis on supports during the remote and hybrid models.*

Mr. Mendia-Landa thanked everyone for their work in supporting students during the remote and hybrid models. In this meeting, he will discuss the beliefs of the department, program goals, population, program options, and strategies given to educators across the district regarding remote teaching and learning. They will also present the additional considerations that the district and the department need to undertake in order to meet the needs of multilingual learners and teachers.

In the past, the government referred to students as “Limited English Proficient.” In the past 10 years, the federal government and the state have referred to students as “English Learners.” In order to recognize students’ many abilities, Mr. Mendia-Landa is proposing that they are now called “multilingual learners.” He notes that they are actually “culturally and linguistically diverse students.” He is accompanied in the presentation tonight by Supervisor Rosalyn Diaz-Ortiz, Katarzyna Kwolek, and Cristina Ryan. In addition, a panel of educators and community members will speak later. Mr. Mendia-Landa and the members of the department then presented the attached slide show (see nhps.net Teaching and Learning Page).

3. How are our schools addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities of remote learning to serve Multilingual Learners? *A panel of students, parents and educators will address the question.*

Patty Gonzalez Garcia Gantenbein, Assistant Principal at Clinton Avenue, former Instructional Coach, and former Bilingual Teacher emphasized the many years of work and positive influences in the areas of dual language and bilingualism/biliteracy; she noted that they were able to change mindsets around how long it takes to learn a language. It takes far longer than 30 months to learn a language fully and

learn both social and academic language. Thinking has shifted from a “subtractive model” where Spanish was being taken away or eliminated, to an “additive approach;” now, they look at what language students already have and add to it. This is the fastest way for students to learn. She expressed how far the department has come in recognizing Biliteracy and multilingualism and offered her support for future initiatives.

Rocio Barahona, Hill Central Teacher, Bilingual Teacher for 17 years in New Haven. She works with first graders; they need all kinds of foundational skills, not only English learning. She does a lot of differentiation because all students are at different levels. Her classroom is a “safe environment” where first language speaking is acceptable. Students gain confidence in English as they begin to speak. In their biliteracy model, they use English and Spanish to build literacy and math skills. Students are proud to be both biliterate and bilingual.

Michael Soares, K-8 ESL teacher at Fair Haven, 18 years in New Haven has taught at Hill Central Supports students in all classrooms: ESL, bilingual, newcomer center. The Newcomer center was created in 2013 to support new English learner students. There are two teachers in the newcomer center. Up to now, approximately 340 students have come through the center, speaking 25 languages. They focus instruction in 4 domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and implement the CELP standards. They collaborate often with the SSST team, Clifford Beers, IRIS, Yale Child Study, supporting students and families and making sure they have access to resources. The staff try to learn phrases in the languages of the families and welcome them to the school with open arms. He encouraged everyone to watch for these students as future Valedictorians and leaders in the community.

Katarzyna Kwolek, English Learner Department Coach. In ESL classes, instruction is entirely in English. Native language support tutors also help students access content and understand differences in language and culture from their native ones. There are also sheltered content classes, usually at the high school. The ESOL teacher may provide support or content may be delivered by a teacher who uses research-based instructional strategies to support English learners.

Ann Brillante, Assistant Principal, International Academy at Wilbur Cross High School talked about the high school perspective. She noted that students have more urgency to learn English quickly when they arrive at the high school level. Some are also processing trauma. Many are working and their families are reliant on them or they are here independently from their families.

Cynthia Clampitt, Sheltered Content Teacher, Wilbur Cross High School talked about the Sheltered Content model at the high school. They use language so that students have equitable access to the content over time for academic success. It is visual, hands-on, and focuses on language structures that students need for that subject and other content areas. The teachers value what students bring to the classroom. The classes are very diverse, even among the Spanish-speakers. They use the Connecticut CELP standards to design instruction. At Cross, they have a strong English Learners team led by Mr. Alan Gibbons. They plan together, keep track of students, and build relationships with families. They also go into other academies and support students and teachers who need assistance there. They use the LAS Links test to gauge student progress. They honor student experiences and how they can enrich the Cross community. Ms. Clampitt co-teaches with 3 other teachers (remotely currently). She also teaches a writing seminar directly to students to support writing skills being developed in other classes. She attended the English Learner Teacher Institute at NHPS, which included many other content area teachers, and she believes will positively impact instruction in the district for English Learners.

Mr. Alan Gibbons, Sheltered Content Teacher, Wilbur Cross High School, noted that the department philosophy is to train teachers so that all teachers have the tools necessary to respond to student needs. There are a number of students who have interrupted education. For example at Cross, they created a basic math course especially for those students.

Alondra Seda Martinez, student at Metropolitan Business Academy. Ms. Martinez is from Puerto Rico and she came to New Haven when she was 6 years old. She attended East Rock Magnet School from first grade, and was identified as an English Learner since then. Now, she receives pull out ESL services for 30-45 minutes twice per week. She says the teacher is good, kind and understanding; she wishes she could meet with her every day. The program has provided her with key language skills for school and to succeed in society. It also has helped her to identify her own historical personal identity and cultural connection. She enjoys interacting with classmates from other countries and learning their cultures. Remote learning has been difficult; she has a cochlear implant. She misses interacting with her classmates and teachers, but she tries to show up every day and be on time so she doesn't miss anything. She tries to complete all of her work on time.

Melissa Martinez, mother of Alondra Marie Martinez (previous speaker) The ESL program has been a blessing for her and both of her children. She is pleased that her child can connect to a teacher who she can relate to from her heritage. In terms of any language challenges her child is facing, the program supports. In terms of remote learning, there have been some challenges, but she encourages them and she hopes they can come back to school.

Lesly Mellado, Parent, John C. Daniels, Dual Language Program. She thanked everyone tonight for being there. She thanked everyone for having the dual language program for her children. She feels it is very important for her children to have this program to know both languages in a fluid way, in addition to reading and writing them. She had the opportunity to watch them during remote learning. She noticed how teachers were handling remote learning. She was extremely happy and thankful to them. She knows it hasn't been easy for the teachers and parents, but "God has given us some strength." She knows we are going to move forward. These programs (dual, ESL, bilingual) have been very important to her child's life. She has two children in public school and one in college and she sees how these programs have helped them.

Ms. Diaz-Ortiz noted that supports that have been provided to teachers to support multilingual learners during remote/hybrid instruction.

Mr. Mendia-Landa talked about the next steps that we need to take as a district to support multilingual learners. These steps are in direct alignment to the NHPS Strategic Plan. Please see the slide titled "Additional Considerations" in the attached slide show.

Mr. Conaway noted that the organization chart was very helpful, as well as the panel discussion. He recalled his days at Cross when the program did not have as much structure. He commended the Wilbur Cross staff for building a strong program. He also thanked the parents and students for presenting. He encouraged everyone to continue to keep building the program.

Dr. Joyner noted that this topic requires a considerable amount of time and he would like to revisit it again. He noted the poverty, trauma, and language differences are challenges for students. He talked about a "linguistic pecking order." He noted that French used to be *the lingua franca*, but Swahili may

have been looked down upon. The children that speak these languages face the same hurdles that their countries face. New Haven can't be compared to places that do not have these hurdles.

Dr. Joyner noted that all NHPS departments need a website so that we can tell our stories to the public. This is a cultural, political, social, and moral movement. He doesn't think we are staffed adequately nor have the learning materials necessary. He believes it is important that people students have people from their heritage, but kindness also transcends heritage.

In terms of the Newcomer Center, Dr. Joyner commented that in a country where people are demonizing immigrants, what Mr. Soares and the others are doing is some of the best work that can be done. It needs to be highlighted. He also noted the importance of student voice. We need to create the best teaching and learning environment possible for students and staff. Students have to match our commitment and take advantage of the resources that they have. He told a story of his mother walking 6 miles to school each way to a school that ended in 7th grade, showing great commitment. He emphasized that we need to act as if every student in the system is valued. Children who speak language as a dialect also have a problem if they have not learned academic English. He said that the English Learner Department team is "heroic" and an "all-star team." He asked that Ms. Velazquez find a way for us to discuss more and generate support for what needs to be done.

Mr. Wilcox thanked all of the presenters, especially the parents and students. He invited everyone to think about how these turns into fundable projects. From the list of priorities, he suggested that they be divided into years and proposed so that they can look for public, state, private means to fund them.

Dr. Joyner thanked everyone and his colleagues on the board. He noted that private individual philanthropists might also be willing to donate, to the Newcomer Center, for example. We must do everything we can to assist the new Administrator (Biden) in moving the country in a new direction.

Mr. Conaway concurred with what had been said by Dr. Joyner and Mr. Wilcox.

4. How is the district organizing to support the new Policy on Race and Equity on teaching and learning? *Ms. Velazquez will provide an update on the work of district/school teams to examine and dismantle inequities.*

Ms. Velazquez explained that the Equity training began this past week with 240 people invited and 200 joining. There are more activities planning in the coming months, funded by the Graustein Foundation. Schools and teams from the schools, as well 80 students (SOAR program) and advisors will be trained. The DELT Team, the Executive Team, and Dr. Tracey are included in next steps and meetings. There is a high level of commitment. There are conversations around culturally-relevant curriculum and instruction. All departments will begin to review practices and policies using what they are earning and have learned in the training. She noted that Equity work takes many people and that it will involve everyone in the district.

Ms. Velazquez agreed that there should be a presence on the NHPS website about the Race and Equity work.

5. Closing Remarks

Dr. Joyner thanked everyone again.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 5:54.**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2021.

Future meetings 20-21: Mar. 17, Apr. 21, May 19, Jun. 16

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Haxhi