



## NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Teaching & Learning Committee

September 21, 2022

Online

**In attendance:** Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Dr Abie Benitez (Co-Chair of Committee), Mr. Matthew Wilcox (Board Member), Dr. Iline Tracey, Ms. Keisha Redd-Hannans, Dr. Michael Finley, Ms. Viviana Conner, Dr. Paul Whyte, Edith Johnson, Lynn Brantley, Rosalyn Diaz-Ortiz, Robert McCain, Pedro Mendia Landa, Sandra Cates-Clark, Ellen Maust, Dina Natalino, Margaret-Mary Gethings, Pebbles Lacrosse, Peter Solomon, Jessica Haxhi

### 1. Welcome Statement

Dr. Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded us that this is a judgment-free zone where we make decisions based on evidence. He and Dr. Benitez, Co-Chair of the Committee, are both long-time educators. Dr. Benitez talked about how excited she is about the work the team will be doing together this year. Dr. Joyner asked Ms. Redd-Hannans to run the meeting and to move the Reading and Math Plans to earlier in the agenda. Mrs. Edith Johnson will be the timekeeper and Ms. Jessica Haxhi is the notetaker. Ms. Redd-Hannans noted that “we” together, will be collectively moving the district forward. She asked that Ms. Gethings be allowed to present her domestic overnight trip first so that she can go to K-8 open house. We will then move on to the Reading and Math plans after that.

### 2. What are the Domestic Overnight Trips for Board of Education approval?

*Ms. Sandra Cates-Clark asked the following two schools to present their trips.*

#### **Worthington Hooker School to Nature’s Classroom, Lakeside, CT**

Presented by Dr. Eden Stein/ Principal Margaret-Mary Gethings

Trip date: October 17-19, 2022

Ms. Gethings described the academic and social benefits of going on the Nature’s Classroom trip. It will build community outside of school and social media, etc.

Worthington Hooker completed request form:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KosyZGco8tQU1aHVmnCV\\_3L5HZOviEF8/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KosyZGco8tQU1aHVmnCV_3L5HZOviEF8/view?usp=sharing)

#### **Sound High School to National FFA Convention, Indianapolis, IN**

Presented by Pebbles Lacrosse / Principal Marc Potocsky

Trip Date: October 25-October 29, 2022

Ms. Pebbles Lacrosse presented. Students will attend the National FFA (Used to be Future Farmers of America - now just “FFA”) Conference. There are 7,000 members across the country. All Sound School students are members of the organization. This is a service-based organization and represents a networking opportunity for students. Students can see how others learn about agriculture. Two aquaculture and 2 agriculture students will attend, those who are part of the leadership cohort.

Sound School completed request form:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pk0ACFRSMOvOkPiMHipHsLIWriV-v4ej/view?usp=sharing>

**Dr. Joyner said that these trips will be moved to the Board for approval.**

Dr. Joyner asked that Dr. Tracey be able to recommend domestic trips to the Board for approval in the future.

**3. What are the Reading and Math Plans in New Haven Public Schools?**

*Ms. Redd-Hannans, Ms. Brantley, and Ms. Joyner will discuss the Reading and Math Plans for New Haven Public Schools.*

Ms. Redd-Hannans described how the Academics Department sees the “opportunities” in this work, which is approached with a “growth mindset.” She went on to discuss slides 1-4 posted here: <https://www.nhps.net/cms/lib/CT50000447/Centricity/Domain/29/OM%2021SEP2022.pdf>

Ms. Lynn Brantley discussed the Reading Plan for the district, beginning with slide #5 [from this slide deck](#). She outlined a comprehensive plan that includes parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, coaches, and administrators. Teachers and administrators will be trained to be experts in the “7 components of Reading.”

Ms. Monica Joyner discuss the math Plan for the district, beginning with slide #7 [from this slide deck](#). She noted that the 8 standards of Mathematical Practice can't necessarily be tested with one assessment. She went on to present slides #8-16. She made the point that teachers especially need to work on strategies for special education and multilingual learners because education programs do not give teachers enough training in those areas. K-5 teachers who have been implementing the “morning meeting” have given very positive feedback about its efficacy. Ms. Joyner talked about how she will be getting “buy in” from teachers and coaches across the district by including them in decision-making; however her “non-negotiable” is adherence to the curriculum.

Ms. Joyner also noted that there will be a focus on grades 6-8, with a roll-out of iReady (Grades K-5) and enVisions for the middle school grades. Schools where teachers teach both 5th and 6th grade may choose to have that teacher teach either iReady or enVisions. She will also encourage more parent involvement through parent nights and parent pointers so that families are able to create “mathematical thinkers” in their home. Ms. Joyner would like to see a focus on mathematical discourse in all grades and provide “Look fors” for administrators to use when observing. In terms of assessments, she would like them to have value for the student and the teacher while also fulfilling the requirements of the state. She described her belief that we need to focus on what students know and are able to do (student learning), versus teaching to one assessment. If teachers follow the curriculum, and the curriculum is well-done, then students will do well on any assessment. She suggested creating unit assessments that match the NHPS curriculum for better alignment, as well as a districtwide mid-term and final exam at the high school level. She is focused on thinking about “opportunities” this year. Ms. Joyner summarized the content on slides 14 and 15 [from this slide deck](#).

Ms. Redd-Hannans then shared the written handout that will be given when the Math and Reading plans are being shared (on pages 17-35 [at this link](#)). It summarizes the slides presented above and highlights the collective responsibility of many in the district for implementation and monitoring of the plan, such as school level leaders, coaches, etc. The handout also includes a list of the types of professional development that will be administered, with the timeline, outcomes, and audience detailed.

Ms. Redd-Hannans recognized Ms. Brantley and Ms. Joyner for delivering the Reading Plan and the Math Plans in a short period of time. Over 400 staff members have been engaged in discussion of the plan thus far, with much positive feedback.

Dr. Joyner noted that this was the most detailed and standards-based presentation he has seen in the district.

Dr. Joyner would like to see all of the content areas make similar presentations. He asked what the non-negotiables should be for the teaching of vocabulary in this district? He believes that direct instruction should be used to teach key vocabulary in all content areas, as well as vocabulary for general conversations. He said that we should have vocabulary lists for all languages represented in the system. He talked about how parents must also have access to and support vocabulary instruction in the home.

Dr. Joyner suggested that we must move toward a mastery learning mindset, across the content areas, with rubrics and models for student work, as non-negotiable. We need to be teaching students to achieve and succeed (not “not met”). He additionally agrees that progress monitoring is necessary.

Dr. Joyner noted that we should help the public understand the need for targeted intervention and differentiated instruction for students who do not arrive at school with the same set of skills as others. He also talked about the need for a robust professional learning academy, because teachers do not leave teacher preparation programs with the skill set they need for actual instruction. Professional development must be organic, needs-based, and non-negotiable.

The principal must be the instructional leader. In a previous Teaching & Learning Meeting, Dr. Joyner and Dr. Benitez had identified five key areas:

- how we use time; time is the currency of change
- whether or not we have materials of interest/meaning for students
- quality of instruction
- student response/family support
- classroom and school climate

Dr. Joyner asked that at the next meeting district leaders recommend an agenda of non-negotiable actions that impact everyone who has an effect on student achievement.

Dr. Benitez praised the theme of “opportunity,” seeing the obstacles that students face not as challenges, but as an opportunity. She applauded the plans and asked that the Committee consider “what are we doing differently?” (than we did before). WE want to be sure that we are doing things that really make a difference. Dr. Benitez appreciated Ms. Joyner’s interest in involving teachers and coaches in deciding some of the non-negotiables to create buy-in. She asked that the people who might be on the “outside” of decision-making be pulled into those decisions more.

Dr. Benitez asked, “How are we asking schools to look at their own building-level challenges (such as attendance, etc.) and then provide assistance to them for that specific challenge?”

Dr. Benitez went on to pose the following questions: How do we continue to train teachers to measure learning? We need to help teachers to figure out how they are going to differentiate so that students who are at different “zones of proximal development” can all be brought into the learning?

Dr. Benitez recalled that when she was a principal, they received training in how to assist teachers in their growth. She noted the importance of principals supporting teachers to improve their craft and asked how principals could be held accountable for being in classrooms. Finally, she congratulated Ms. Brantley and Ms. Joyner for including parents in the Reading and Math Plans.

Dr. Joyner asked that Ms. Redd-Hannans meet with the Curriculum Supervisors to discuss presenting at a future Teaching & Learning Committee meeting on how they are supporting writing, reading, and math.

Mr. Wilcox would like to see where the accountability is to report back to the Board or the public on how the plan is going. He would like the reporting/accountability dates to be noted on the plans. He also suggested that public libraries, New Haven Reads, etc. be included in the Reading Plan.

Mr. Redd-Hannans thanked Dr. Joyner, Dr. Benitez, and Mr. Wilcox for their feedback and expertise. She noted that the plans will also be presented at the Board of Alders meeting next week as well as at community meetings on September 29, October 4, 5, and 6.

Dr. Finley thanked Ms. Brantley and Ms. Joyner for the presentations. He asked how the high-leverage strategies that are being suggested in the plan will be “protected”? How do we protect instructional time, curriculum, etc.?

Dr. Tracey recalled when the Curriculum Supervisors shared the “Cycle of Continuous Improvement” in each content area. Dr. Tracey agreed with Dr. Benitez’s suggestion to highlight “what are we doing differently?” and “what are we doing to create a sense of urgency?” She noted that for some time we have had an “implementation issue.” We must monitor and inspect what we are doing. She noted that the results may not happen overnight, but this plan sets the foundation. Dr. Tracey noted that we must determine the “non-negotiables” for this year. She shared the grade-level expectations brochure that has been shared with parents.

Dr. Tracey agreed with Dr. Joyner about the importance of vocabulary development and the need to focus on it. She was pleased to see the emphasis on middle schools by Ms. Joyner, especially the 6th grade. She noted that any changes will take professional development and time.

## **5. Closing Remarks**

Dr. Joyner asked whether we are able to address the needs of this Committee in one 90-minute meeting per month. He would like other content areas to present on their subjects as well. He said that the template that Ms. Brantley and Ms. Joyner used this evening had worked well and would be appropriate.

Dr. Joyner noted that we need to address vocabulary instruction, reading across the content areas and writing across the content areas. He talked about the need to look at student work, and to address a “deficit mindset” in both students and teachers. We need to identify the “non-negotiables” and also involve all of the stakeholders.

Dr. Joyner asked Ms. Redd-Hannans to plan the next three meetings.

He thanked Dr. Benitez and Mr. Wilcox as well as everyone on the Committee.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 6:01.**

**The next meeting is scheduled for October 19, 2022.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Haxhi