

AGENDA

ITEM #3

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Hartford Board of Education Minutes of Workshop Meeting – Tuesday, January 16, 2007 MHIS Conference Center – 260 Constitution Plaza

I. Opening

A. Call to Order – roll call / Moment of Silence

At 5:47 p.m. Ada Miranda, First Vice Chair called the meeting to order. Judith Fagan, Support Administrator for the Board administered the roll call and a quorum was present.

Present:

Honorable Mayor Eddie A. Perez, Chair (at 6:00 p.m.)
Ms. Ada Miranda, First Vice Chair
Mr. David MacDonald, Secretary
Mr. Israel Flores
Ms. Elizabeth Brad Noel
Ms. Sharon Patterson-Stallings
Ms. Pamela Richmond
Mr. Luis Rodriguez Davila
Superintendent Steven Adamowski

Absent:

Ms. Andrea Comer

A. Report from the Superintendent

Dr. Adamowski indicated that this would be the second session of three initial planning sessions. At the first session data was reviewed that provides a core for benchmarking progress and a basis for improvement. There would be a brief review of Workshop I as a preface to this session.

Key measures reviewed at the first session

- 3rd grade reading, 4th grade math, 10th grade science,
- Graduation rate as determined by cohort progression as opposed to state reporting methodology – 29% students moving from 9th to 12th grade, Adult Education graduating more students than comprehensive high schools.
- Post secondary participation rate relative to the State
- Characteristics of successful urban school districts to align with a theory of action – Managed Instruction, Performance Empowerment and Blended Model. Contextual factors in the school district would be best suited to the Blended Model.
- Using a Blended Theory of Action, a school improvement matrix was developed to differentiate each school on the basis of performance. An index score of each school was measured and a statistical methodology was used for creating a single matrix to place each school into a relative rate of improvement category. Using the balanced Theory of Action, schools that are in the proficient category (would have greater autonomy, programmatically and operationally); schools that are moderate or have demonstrated no change (would have defined autonomy --a set of choices to follow to build capacity for improvement) and schools that are declining (would need focus on intervention, reconstitution or replacement--an attempt to build a stronger portfolio schools for the public).

Dr. Adamowski indicated that at this session there would be a number of things to be defined relative to a policy framework and a premise to marry the theory of action to an organizational plan -- how the district could not maintain a dual system of magnet schools and non-magnet schools, over time. The notion of an all-choice school system with two types of choice schools, inter-district and intra-district and how it may be accomplished will also be looked at.

At the first session a number of parameters for small school strategy and the issue of grade configuration was reviewed also a number of levers and issues.

Ms. Noel commented that the district has not necessarily followed the NCLB guidelines and she wondered if there was legal pressure to follow those guidelines for schools that have not been meeting them to incorporate in the plan of action.

Dr. Adamowski replied that it is more aligning the NCLB requirements with the District's accountability plan. Title I is now called NCLB and is entering its 7th year of reauthorization. The District has a number of schools that have not met AYP for the sixth year and redesigning those schools will need to be done. If the State was enforcing the NCLB law and the District was following the law, the schools that are in the 5 and 6th years would have been redesigned in the fourth year of not meeting AYP. Dr. Adamowski further stated that this would be one of the topics that need to be addressed, since redesigning, reconstituting and replacing so many schools are a big undertaking and beyond the District's capacity to do all at once. A decision has to be made on how much can be done given the capacity and time. Dr. Adamowski pointed out the number of schools on the school improvement matrix that has missed AYP consecutively, as being the schools to begin with initially.

Ms. Patterson-Stallings asked what is being done for the special needs students. Dr. Adamowski replied that special needs students are a subgroup within each school that is not making their AYP target. Ms. Stallings stated that on the school improvement matrix certain schools are in the middle however their special needs students are doing poorly at the AYP level.

As a follow-up, Mr. Flores asked if the District is doing anything differently from a financial standpoint for special needs students. Dr. Adamowski replied that he will be proposing to the board that the District move to a system of weighted student funding which would assign resources to students on the basis of need, and give resources to schools based on the number of special needs students they have. Currently, schools have an uneven playing field, with a high number of special needs students in different schools that can become a burden in terms of school achievement. If students brought their resources with them this would change the situation and schools would strive to meet the needs of that population of students.

Ms. Richmond indicated that there are a lot of community resources in the Hartford area willing to contribute to the district in terms of complementary activities but the district has not done a good job of connecting with those resources. This would especially help students who are in need of complementary learning activities. Dr. Adamowski indicated that Ms. Richmond's point is notable in looking at the large percentage of the school budget that is devoted to support services which are outside of the academic program and not the district's field of expertise. Coordination and ability to focus will be a key to accomplishing these services.

Workshop 2 - Policy Framework and Planning – Mission, Vision and Strategy

Dr. Adamowski stated that Mission, Vision and Strategy are things that have to be nailed down in terms of board policy-- to have marching orders to move with speed and resolve in implementing a strategy.

Roles and Responsibility of a board and District leadership within that framework.

On the basis of the first workshop, Dr. Adamowski will recommend a set of measures as a basis for performance targets and evaluation and how it fits into a quarterly planning and assessment cycle. The big implications for long term goals and what may be the initial reform agenda representing the low hanging fruit.

Dr. Adamowski indicated that the current mission statement for the District is vague, not measurable and problematic in aligning resources. He will be suggesting a more focused and measurable mission, vision and strategy statement that the board will be able to refine to make their own.

Mission - why you exist

Vision - picture of the future

Strategy - to develop a long term goal

PROPOSED MISSION STATEMENT

"Hartford's system of schools exist to provide all students with access to participation in a global economy through attainment of academic standards of the State of Connecticut and readiness for post-secondary education."

All of these elements define the school system's existence around things that are measurable and that are directly related to the imperatives of getting students to the same level of attainment in reading, math and post secondary participation, to close the gap with students in the rest of the State.

Dr. Adamowski spoke about the importance of having a vision that is set by the leaders because the long term goals cannot be done without a vision.

PROPOSED VISION STATEMENT

"From a bureaucratic, dysfunctional, low performing school system, to a system of high performing, distinctive schools of choice. The attainment of Hartford students in reading, math, science and college readiness will be reflective of the high educational outcomes of the State of Connecticut."

This is building on the work of the first session in terms of theories of action, how the context factors would affect our environment at this time and how we could not maintain a dual system of magnet and non-magnet schools.

PROPOSED STRATEGY STATEMENT

To create a system of high performing distinctive schools of choice, the District will employ a 'balance' theory of action of reform governance linked to the organizational structure of an 'all choice' system of schools.

Dr. Adamowski read a more detailed description of the strategy statement and indicated to board members that it would be relatively easy to put these three elements into board policy to set annual and long term goals that will also be a basis for the Superintendent's accountability.

Mr. Flores asked why would the District not focus on the managed theory of action when there are only two schools meeting State goal? Dr. Adamowski replied that there is baggage in that area and if the other schools could have figured out how to improve performance to meet the

State goals they would have done so by now; those schools will need to be directed how to do it in detail. The managed theory is also at odds with choice schools which are already a large investment in the District. Secondly, the District has been following a managed instruction theory of action with Success For All (SFA), but does not have ownership of their work which is essential for success. The performance empowerment approach is not recommended because it would create a lot of failure in the context of this District.

Dr. Adamowski asked the board to refine the mission, vision and strategy for adoption

Role of the Board of Education – (This would lend itself to board committee structure)

- *Set direction* by defining the system's mission, vision and strategy.
- *Determine key measures* of success.
- *Approve and resource long term goals* (3-5yrs.) and *short term objectives*.
- *Evaluate progress – have a transparent system*.
- *Offer the public a portfolio of high performing schools. – what schools will be added and replaced and what will they be replaced with.*

Role of District Leadership

- *Set standards and measures.*
- *Build capacity of schools to meet standards.*
- *Ensure equity of resources on the basis of need - funding each child in a weighted manner.*
- *Align systems to achieve measurable outcome following a theory of action that is affirmed.*
- *Ensure accountability for results. – have a working plan that gives the capacity to intervene in school, and a design framework for redesigning and replacing schools. Which gives the Basis for redesigning central office.*

Ms. Noel commented that areas of success are not shared. She used the Success for All Program as an example. Dr. Adamowski agreed that he has heard the same remarks across the district and this could easily be addressed through leadership development, network of schools and sharing information on a systematic basis.

Recommended Measures

1. **3rd Grade Reading (Early Literacy)** – Benchmark is at third grade reading. This is the point where students make the transition between reading to learn and learning to read. Students are presently at a 15% level of state goal and this would be the number one lever.
2. **4th Grade Math** – good place to measure early numeracy.
3. **5th Grade Writing** – writing in 5th will need to be juxtaposed with science in 8th grade.
4. **8th Grade Science** – 1 year away
5. **10th Grade CAPT** – in a cohort study only 10% of the total population of students passed the CAPT. (of the 29% students who graduate in four years, only 25% passed the CAPT at a proficient level)
6. **Percentage of Cohort graduating in 4 to 5 years** - in a standards based system it is equally as important for a student to meet the standard in four or five years and go on to college. It is more important to meet the standard than how long it takes.
7. **Post-secondary Admittance 4 yr./2 yr. Institutions**
8. **Improvement of School Performance** – the ability to get schools out of the lower category of the matrix and develop successful schools.
9. **Client Satisfaction** –develop client satisfaction survey to benchmark, this would be one year away and could be contracted out.

Chairman Perez asked for elaboration on District data collection capabilities over the next three years. Dr. Adamowski replied that Central Office has good capacity in this area. State reported data is received from the state. Cohort reporting is through the District's own formulated system and very careful documentation and cross checking will be needed to use the information as a measure. Client satisfaction could be contracted out.

Mr. MacDonald asked about the rationale for breaking down CMT's in four different measurements. Dr. Adamowski replied that it would be difficult any other way to hold individuals accountable for measures. Also it is a more simplistic way to explain to parents.

Mr. MacDonald wondered if this could be done by just looking at the overall scores of the CMT's between the third and eighth grades, as opposed to breaking it down by subject areas and number of students that meet proficiency on all areas of the test. This could be a way to reduce the measures. Dr. Adamowski agreed that this could be done by grade level and by school.

Mr. Flores indicated that a formula could be used to measure #8 – Improving School Performance --instead of considering it a measure. Dr. Adamowski replied that the purpose of the index formula is to do just that. When a school moves vertical up or horizontally to the left it implies that the school has improved. The capacity is already in place for this measure.

Chairman Perez asked about mobility and equity and how it will affect some of the measures. Dr. Adamowski replied that there is a mobility rate of about 28% which is slightly lower than other school districts and 10% in the schools of choice. Mobility tends to be concentrated in the same geographic areas of the city, which should influence transportation zones. Whatever is the level of revenue, it can be assigned equitably through a weighted student formula.

Ms. Miranda asked if changing the structure of the budget will be a prerequisite to implementing this measure. Dr. Adamowski indicated that baseline data is already available to begin tracking the measures. However, the schools capacity to meet the measures is increased when the playing field is leveled. It will take about two years to position the budget.

Ms. Richmond asked if the District moves to a financial model to apply more resources where the need is greater; does it mean that the local school administration would be able to do better in terms of size of the budget and be able to plan and measure accordingly. Dr. Adamowski stated that within full autonomy or defined autonomy a school could project its enrollment and budget and make their own decisions.

Ms. Richmond suggested that it would be a good idea to add one more math prior to high school to help students progress. It would help students who are off track to get on course for high school. Dr. Adamowski agreed that this could be done in 7th grade.

Mr. MacDonald made a recommendation to compile the entire CMT performance. Dr. Adamowski indicated that there would be no state comparison to compare the District and the imperatives to compare the District's level of attainment with the state's. However, the District could set their individual goal of attainment.

Ms. Miranda asked Dr. Adamowski to describe the process he has gone through so far with school principals to define the proposed measurements and strategy. Dr. Adamowski stated that he has already met with principals and is doing continued school visits. He has found that principals are more interested in their capacity for meeting goals of student achievement and a desire for greater district support in fewer areas.

How are measures translated into targets

- To look at imperatives- where we are now in relation to state averages – could the gaps be closed in five years.
- Where we are relative to AYP and NCLB – to align will need to make up ground that has been lost in the last six years.

Targets will be revisited at the next session.

Quarterly Planning / Assessment Cycle

- February 2007 - Develop initial reform agenda
- April 2007 - Develop Long Term Goals and Achievement Targets – Assuming that mission, vision and strategy is already translated into board policy, also achievement targets done- Administration could then suggest a set of long term goals.
- July 2007 - Develop management objectives for 2007-08 at the Board Superintendent Retreat. Assess initial reform agenda and assess 2007-2008 results – review achievements

This will work into a normal cycle--

- October 2007 - 1st Quarter Review of 2008-09 Objectives
- January 2008 - 2nd Quarter Review of 2008-09 Objective Review / Adjust long term goals
- April 2008 - Develop Objectives for 2009-10
3rd Quarter Review of 2008-09 Objectives – develop in conjunction with the budget
- July 2008 - Assessment of 2008-09 Targets and Objective Adjustment of 2009-10 Targets and Objectives – degree to which targets are met and the accomplishments

This type of calendar will keep control of events.

Implications for Long Term goals

- Must address the cross-cutting issues of teacher quality, school leadership and time
- Need a long term ‘choice plan’
- Must have a District Accountability Plan that includes a system for school intervention and redesign – what is the method for doing this if done by ourselves or will have a diverse provider model. This has to be thought out as an approach.
- Need a school governance/parental involvement model
- Must reform/realign district leadership and support
- Must have a plan and strategy for early literacy
- Must have a plan and strategy for high school redesign

What Can We do Now (An initial Reform Agenda)

1. **Calendar** – fewest days of school instruction prior to test taking – increase number of days prior to state testing. (2 year calendar)
2. **Identify / develop capacity to introduce Scientifically-Based Reading Programs** – there are a lot of scientific based programs. Identify other approaches and build capacity to present to schools as a viable option.
3. **Implement Phase I of Central Office Redesign** - senior management and department head levels.
4. **Differentiate High School Diploma** – students who passed the state test and who took a college ready curriculum would have that designated on their diplomas. The district would begin with University of Connecticut course requirements as a standard for college readiness.
5. **Redesign study of comprehensive high schools**; redesign/facilities study of Hartford Public Schools – Need outside help due to very little internal capacity in this area. Hartford Public High is not designed for a comprehensive high school and does not lend itself to smaller school communities. It is proposed that a national expert be brought in for assistance.
6. **Update Facilities Master Plan (School organization parameters)** – Affirm and approve parameters and grade configurations etc. The district is flying blind relative to end result of the facilities plan, knowing that there is an end game for choice schools. This will need to move forward within the next month as far as school size and location.
7. **Planning process for 2008-09** - school redesigns should be relative to NCLB and the district's accountability plan. This will require one year lead time for planning. The American Federation of Teacher (AFT) is discussing a Pilot School Model which is a viable plan. Community input and choice will be necessary.
8. **Development of object-functional/school budget for 2007-08** – It will be important to convert objects to cash and distribute on a weighted per student basis. A portion of the budget should be organized by-school for the 2007-08 Budget.
9. **Reallocate/Repurpose Title I – NCLB funding** – to allow schools to have discretionary funding and acquire the experience in allocating their funds and supporting their own programs.
10. **Redesign district assessment program** – Some of the assessments that are being administered are less relevant than others. There should be a minimum of assessments that are more meaningful. An assessment is necessary in the fall.
11. **Design/Implement internal/external suspension programs** – Have to be designed and integrated under the attendance program.
12. **Implement changes in Adult programs** – Redesign gradually to a school for adults as opposed to an alternative route for high school students.

Dr. Adamowski is hoping that this can be formalized by April as an initial agenda

Chairman Perez asked about the discipline and safety issue in the schools. Dr. Adamowski replied that having an orderly environment is an enabling, cross cutting issue and the majority of schools that he has visited have been an orderly environment. This could be addressed in the intervention and redesign projects.

Ms. Noel asked the Superintendent to look at the Ted Seizer Coalition of Essentials regarding the redesign of high schools, a successful program at Weaver that was started by staff. Dr. Adamowski stated that different methods can be used to achieve what the research base is in three areas; rigor, relevance and relationships. There are three or four successful models nationally that could be looked at to increase rigor in a closer relationship with teachers and students and that each has relevance for students to be able to see what they are doing in the context of interest beyond high school.

Ms. Miranda stated that one item to be added is the revamping of student support services.

Mr. MacDonald asked for elaboration on the need for a school governance/parental involvement model listed under the long term goals. He further stated that there has been a long standing school governance policy in the District that has been successful where it has been properly implemented and believes successful models could be looked at and included on the initial reform agenda.

Dr. Adamowski stated that as the district reaches the point where schools have more autonomy to make budgetary and programmatic decisions, a governance model where teachers and parents can come together to help make decisions will be necessary.

At 8:00 p.m. Ms. Miranda moved to go into executive session to discuss issues related to the redesign of Central Office and personnel. Ms. Noel seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

At 9:10 p.m. the board members returned from executive session and a quorum was present.

At 9:11 p.m. the meeting was adjourned.