

Connecticut State Department of Education
East Hartford District Review
Presented to the East Hartford Board of Education
February 4, 2008

Review Process:

Bill No. 8003, Sec. 32. Section 10-223e & Sec. 33 passed in July 2007 gives the State Board of Education (SBE) authority to require schools and districts in need of improvement, as defined by No Child Left Behind, to participate in an assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses in schools and districts. In October 2007, a team of two Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) consultants, led by two Cambridge Education associates, conducted a review of the district over the course of one week. Concurrently, other CSDE and Cambridge Education teams were conducting assessments in the schools (East Hartford High School, Langford Elementary, Silver Lane Elementary, and O'Brien Elementary). School and district team members were in touch daily to review findings; all evidence collected was triangulated to ensure that claims were only made when there were several sources of information that could substantiate judgments. The draft report was shared with the review team members, Superintendent and participating principals for a fact check to ensure that information and figures were accurate prior to the report being published.

The purpose of the district assessment is to answer the following questions:

- How well is the District doing now?
- What is the evidence that all components of the District's improvement plan and, where relevant, the District's restructuring plan have been implemented?
- What is the impact of the restructuring and improvement plans, and what evidence is there that the actions have resulted in improved student learning?
- What does the District need to do in order to continue to improve?

The key focus areas for the district review are as follows:

- Attainment, Learning, Teaching, Curriculum and Assessment
- Leadership, Culture and Accountability
- Management of Human and Fiscal Resources
- Operational Systems
- Stakeholder Engagement and Satisfaction

Each focus area is scored using the following categories:

- Basic Level/Needs Improvement
- Needs Improvement
- Meets Minimum Requirements
- Exceeds Minimum Requirements

East Hartford Domain Ratings:

- Attainment, Learning, Teaching, Curriculum, and Assessment: Basic Level/Needs Improvement
- Leadership, Culture and Accountability: Needs Improvement
- Management of Human and Fiscal Resources: Meets Minimum Requirements
- Operational Systems: Needs Improvement
- Stakeholder Engagement and Satisfaction: Needs Improvement

What the district does well:

- Teachers and principals recognize the need for change and believe that the district is moving in the right direction. There is a strong focus on improving achievement and an urgency amongst the district and schools.
- The District Improvement Plan has been collaboratively formulated by principals and district office staff and guides and informs strategies. Principals see a direct link between the District Improvement Plan and their own School Improvement Plans.
- The Positive Behavior Support program has been implemented throughout the district and has had a significant impact in a number of schools.
- Professional development hours have been increased, and teachers have additional time for collaboration within their school.

What the district needs to improve:

- Distribute leadership more widely, based on increased trust and shared responsibility, so that principals have a greater role in decision making and a level of professional autonomy commensurate with their school's performance.
- Strengthen communication between the district and schools so that principals and teachers have genuine opportunities to shape professional development strategies and curriculum initiatives.
- Review organizational structures to increase leadership capacity, particularly in elementary schools, so that accountability models are strengthened and curriculum improvement strategies have greater impact.
- Strengthen professional development in order to raise achievement in reading across all phases of schooling, with specific emphasis on diagnosing reading difficulties and expanding strategies to support individual students.
- Implement more rigorous evaluation strategies that focus specifically on measuring the impact of additional resources and interventions that are aimed at improving children's learning and/or wellbeing.
- The Board of Education must be more effective in discharging its public duties.

Areas in Need of Improvement	Current Strategies	Questions to Consider for Plan Revision
<p>Distribute leadership more widely, based on increased trust and shared responsibility, so that principals have a greater role in decision making and a level of professional autonomy commensurate with their school's performance.</p>	<p>The District Improvement Plan has been collaboratively developed by principals and District Office staff and is a living document that guides daily practice.</p> <p>There is a direct link between the District Improvement Plan and the School Improvement Plan of each school. Principals develop School Improvement Plans in collaboration with their staff.</p> <p>There is a sharp focus on priorities being linked to student achievement data, primarily based on the CMT and CAPT scores.</p> <p>There are regularly scheduled principals' meetings and round tables. Principals attend Administrative Council. In addition to professional development opportunities for leadership development, district-wide decisions are made at these meetings.</p> <p>An annual spring retreat for administrators provides leadership professional development and a focus for upcoming year.</p> <p>Principals set professional and school goals with the Superintendent annually.</p> <p>Budgets and professional development focus areas are submitted annually by principals.</p>	<p>What additional strategies should be included in the District Improvement Plan to distribute leadership more effectively, and to differentiate the degree of professional autonomy based on school performance?</p> <p>How can the District Improvement Plan be strengthened such that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Priority areas are more explicitly linked to resource allocations; and 2) Measurement and monitoring protocols are specified for examining the impact of interventions on student achievement measures, specifically for sub-groups?
<p>Strengthen communication between the district and schools so that principals and teachers have genuine opportunities to shape professional development strategies and curriculum initiatives.</p>	<p>The Superintendent has meetings with principals every two weeks and the agenda is jointly developed. These meetings are used as both an opportunity to complete specific tasks such as developing the District Improvement Plan, as well as for professional development.</p> <p>Changes to the teachers' contract were negotiated with the Union, which has resulted in two additional planning periods each week. As a result, there are increased</p>	<p>Are these meetings evaluated for efficacy relative to the stated purpose (e.g. getting more input from principals regarding professional development)? Do building administrators have the opportunity to give feedback about this method of soliciting their input?</p> <p>How can more input be sought from principals and teachers when designing and implementing the professional development program?</p>

	<p>opportunities for collaborative planning and assessment, as well as greater flexibility in providing school-based professional development.</p> <p>A sub-committee on professional development that includes broader representation within the district is being created.</p> <p>Principals and teachers participate in the development and/or revision of curriculum as representatives on summer and school-year curriculum committees.</p> <p>Principals, department heads, subject supervisors and literacy coaches set the agenda for early release professional development days (6) based on the needs of their school and provide recommendations to the district for the full day (4) sessions.</p> <p>Book study groups are led by building administrators and literacy coaches, as well as by district personnel.</p> <p>Making Standards Work (MSW) training was provided to 80 administrators and teachers who then rolled out the training to all staff. Staff worked to power and unwrap math, physical education/health, and fine and performing arts standards at the elementary level and all subject areas at the secondary level.</p> <p>Classroom Walk Through (CWT) and SET (a collaborative team approach to CWT) processes that involve building administrators, central office administrators and teachers in evaluating instructional programs jointly are in place. Recommendations for professional development and curriculum revision have resulted from this process.</p>	<p>How can current and newly-created communications vehicles provide expanded opportunities for principals and teachers to shape curriculum and professional development?</p>
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<p>Review organizational structures to increase leadership capacity, particularly in elementary schools, so that accountability models are strengthened and curriculum improvement strategies have greater impact.</p>	<p>Accountability models for principals have been established.</p> <p>Addressing the lack of a comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum package has been a major focus.</p> <p>Over the past three years considerable efforts have been made to ensure that there is a comprehensive curriculum package in the core areas of mathematics, English, science and social studies.</p> <p>Additional resources have been purchased in mathematics and reading which should provide the basis for a more consistent approach across schools.</p> <p>Representation on Curriculum Cabinet was expanded this year to include instructional resource teachers (IRT)/literacy coaches from the elementary schools.</p> <p>Meetings with literacy coaches are held monthly to review progress on curriculum and instructional program implementation.</p> <p>Additional meetings related to specific district initiatives and programs are also scheduled to provide ongoing PD to schools via literacy coaches and principals at the elementary level.</p> <p>Classroom Walk-Throughs are used to assess curriculum implementation.</p> <p>Meetings with literacy coaches are held monthly to review progress on curriculum and instructional program implementation.</p> <p>Additional meetings related to specific district initiatives and programs are also scheduled to provide ongoing PD to schools via literacy coaches and principals at the elementary level.</p>	<p>How can current accountability models be strengthened to increase leadership capacity across the District for improving curriculum, instruction, and student learning?</p> <p>How can the district ensure that curriculum materials are guiding and informing instruction and learning? What type of evaluation system can be implemented to examine impact on student achievement?</p> <p>How can new initiatives be introduced to ensure that teachers and principals have a clear understanding of the purpose of each element that makes up the total curriculum package?</p> <p>How can a cycle of review be implemented that links identified priority areas (e.g. the needs of identified sub-groups) to the curriculum?</p> <p>How can the district continue to ensure that implementation and quality monitoring processes, such as the Classroom Walk-Throughs, can be sustained given current resources and personnel?</p>
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<p>Strengthen professional development in order to raise achievement in reading across all phases of schooling, with specific emphasis on diagnosing reading difficulties and expanding strategies to support individual students.</p>	<p>The Superintendent has a clear vision for children and young people, which is sharply focused on improving learning. There has been a strong focus on professional development for principals and teachers.</p> <p>Principals have been strongly encouraged by district leadership to participate in the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). There has been a strong drive to improve the capacity of schools to monitor the achievement of subgroups of students. Principals generally feel more confident about data analysis and data-driven decision-making.</p> <p>Three schools did make AYP, and a further three reached safe harbor during the past year</p> <p>Systems to support students with special education needs have been strengthened. There is a range of high quality services to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of students. There has been a focused professional development program to increase the level of inclusion.</p> <p>Literacy coaches participate in all state training sessions on literacy strategies and provide professional development to staff.</p> <p>Individual reading plans are developed for students scoring below designated proficiency levels.</p> <p>READ 180 was implemented in grade 7, 8 & 9 for this year. Expansion to additional grades will be considered if spring evaluation data warrants.</p>	<p>How can the District Improvement Plan be strengthened to include expanded strategies for raising achievement in reading for all students and for identified sub-groups.?</p> <p>How are outcomes for students with disabilities, both academic and behavioral, being monitored as a result of various initiatives (e.g. inclusion, Positive Behavioral Supports, etc.)?</p> <p>How can the District build overall coherence among its many professional development and student intervention initiatives?</p>

Literacy coaches are directly involved with reading interventions, especially TLC, by assessing students, assisting in TLC lesson planning, observing TLC tutors and providing individualized professional development to these staff members.

The district Literacy Team works with new literacy coaches to provide training and support in TLC, Words Their Way, and other district programs.

DRA2 is implemented district-wide to assist teachers in assessing areas of student need for planning instructional strategies. There is on-going professional development for literacy coaches so that they can train new teachers and support previously trained teachers.

Analysis of DRA2 data by literacy coaches done in June 2007 was used to set a district focus on fluency for 2007-08. Materials and training using the state fluency module were provided at each elementary school.

Training in other areas, such as Effective Teaching Strategies, CRISS and Words Their Way, is also on-going.

Rosetta Stone was implemented in grades 6-12 for ELL students. Consideration is being given to expanding the program to the elementary level as the computer infrastructure and hardware can be installed. One elementary school is currently working with Rosetta Stone. Once the program is up and running at that school, it will be added at other schools.

Participation in Courageous Conversations and related professional development in culturally relevant pedagogy has begun.

Professional development on differentiating instruction and inclusion strategies has been provided. On-going technical assistance is being provided by CREC and

	SERC personnel in conjunction with PBS and Early Intervention Process (EIP).	
<p>Implement more rigorous evaluation strategies that focus specifically on measuring the impact of additional resources and interventions that are aimed at improving children’s learning and/or wellbeing.</p>	<p>The Positive Behavior Support (PBS) strategy has been implemented throughout the district and is having a significant impact in a number of schools.</p> <p>The SWIS data collection system has been installed to assess the implementation and effectiveness of Positive Behavior Support (PBS)</p> <p>Equity Framework has been developed and schools have participated in professional development on Courageous Conversations.</p> <p>There is an accountability process in place for all staff members and principals are being encouraged to document concerns so that there is a fair and transparent process in place to deal with poor performance.</p> <p>In general, schools use their budget for the previous year as a starting point. Meetings are then held between the superintendent, assistant superintendent, directors (HR, pupil personnel, facilities, business services) and each building principal. These meetings provide an opportunity to submit a case for additional resources, including any areas that may need urgent attention.</p> <p>District Assessment Plan data is reviewed by district staff and data team meetings.</p> <p>Pacing guides were implemented for the new <i>Growing with Math</i> program for grades K-2 last year and for grades 3-5 this year. On-going professional development on assessment has occurred both years. Evaluation surveys were collected from teachers and will be used to assess implementation and the pacing guides.</p>	<p>What work can be done to ensure that the PBS initiative is having equal benefit for students in various sub-groups? How will the new School-Wide Information System (SWIS) assist with this?</p> <p>How can the district ensure that all schools are effectively responding to the ethnic diversity within their community and are working to narrow the achievement gap for students from minority groups?</p> <p>How can this accountability process be made more rigorous and inclusive of both certified and non-certified staff? Is this process directly linked to outcomes and/or impact on children’s learning and well-being?</p> <p>How can the impact of resources be evaluated and incorporated into the annual budget-setting process? How can input from principals be evenly incorporated into budgetary decisions?</p>

	<p>Data collection procedures, including running records, Rally assessments, and Rigby P.M. Benchmark assessments, are used to assess student progress in intervention programs and for school and district instructional decisions to refine program implementation.</p> <p>DRA2 implementation K-6 is being expanded to grade 7 & 8, as appropriate for assessing intervention strategies for struggling students at middle levels.</p> <p>Professional development was provided on Common Formative Assessments (CFA) and Student Generated Rubrics. Teachers have developed common curriculum-based assessments.</p> <p>The implementation of the new student information system, E-School Plus, will facilitate improvement in evaluation efforts. It has student assessment modules that allow comparison data from state, district and school assessments to be measured along with attendance and discipline data. It also provides ready access to disaggregated data for sub-groups. Currently, district and building personnel are being trained in the use of this system.</p>	
<p>The Board of Education must be more effective in discharging its public duties.</p>	<p>The Board of Education is a member of and has received technical assistance from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE).</p>	<p>What vehicles can the Board of Education establish to undertake a full review of its current policies and practices to ensure that it is operating with the primary objective of improving outcomes for all students?</p> <p>How can the Board of Education ensure that it is perceived as welcoming and responsive by parents, students, district personnel and the community in general?</p> <p>What existing resources (e.g. Connecticut Association of Boards of Education) can the Board of Education access for assistance in developing a strategic plan to support the district in its efforts to improve outcomes for all students?</p>