



THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN



BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION
ON READING REPORT



2017

TONI N. HARP, MAYOR

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CITY OF NEW HAVEN

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON READING

Mayor

Toni N. Harp

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Dr. Margie Gillis and Jerry Poole

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FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

We want to commend Mayor Harp in putting forth a ten-point plan intended to address and boost reading and literacy in the city of New Haven, which included the creation of a Blue Ribbon Reading Commission. The major tasks assigned to the Commission were to ‘identify gaps and best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in New Haven’s public schools’ and, recommend ways to get families and community organizations involved in improving students’ and adults’ reading skills.

As the co-chairs of the Commission, we believe that one’s ability to read is extremely important and the foundation of learning; and, literacy is the language of opportunity. As such, literacy is a necessary condition for a productive and engaged life.

To ensure that every child in the City of New Haven can read and for New Haven to become ‘the city that reads,’ the support and buy-in of many New Haven residents throughout the city is needed. In addition, the New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) must make a concerted effort to strengthen the connection of schools in the district with the community in order to best utilize the vast array of services and resources available to New Haven students and children, from birth through adulthood. In addition, coordination between the New Haven Public Schools, community organizations, and outside-of-school programs that provide services to children before they enter school and once they enter NHPS is essential.

We are heartened to have met many passionate and knowledgeable individuals in our capacity as co-chairs of the New Haven Blue Ribbon Reading Commission, who want what’s best for the New Haven community. We are hopeful that the recommendations in the following report provide a cohesive list of actionable items that can bring the New Haven community together to improve reading outcomes for all our citizens.

Finally, we want to thank Mayor Harp for providing us the opportunity to play a role in such an important initiative, and members of the Commission and consultants for their time, energy, and vision.

Margie Gillis, Ed.D.
Co-Chair

Jerry Poole
Co-Chair

MISSION STATEMENT

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Reading, a component of Mayor Harp's ten-point plan for continuing educational improvements in New Haven Public Schools, has been established with the goal of making New Haven 'the city that reads'. Mayor Harp is zeroing-in on reading because it is the foundation of learning and literacy and serves as a necessary condition for a productive and engaged life. The Commission will also help identify gaps in curriculum, instruction and assessment within New Haven Public Schools, and recommend best practices to strengthen district wide reading PK-12. The Commission will identify and assess city-wide challenges that contribute to illiteracy and recommend strategies to increase reading from early childhood through adulthood.

METHODOLOGY

Mayor Harp convened the reading commission in December 2015, and named and launched six sub-committees. These sub-committees included experts with scholarly and field-level knowledge of and experiences with reading in New Haven. Spanning the range from ages zero to adult and from schools and community based organizations to the public library, the sub-committees are: early literacy, grade-level reading, adult education, English Learners, reading disability, and parent and community. The boundaries between sub-committees are permeable. That is, several focal areas share a common research base or data sources, and, for the purposes of New Haven's Reading Commission, a few individuals were members of more than one sub-committee.

Each sub-committee met, surfaced key questions, obtained and analyzed data, and drafted committee reports. In Fall 2016, sub-committees drafted reports synthesizing information on the status of their focal area in New Haven. Supported by consultants Dr. Sarah Woulfin, Kelvin Roldán and Evelyn Mantilla, the committee collated reports and facilitated conversations across sub-committees to promote the cross-pollination of ideas as well as to surface similarities and differences in structures, systems, and practices across levels and organizations. These conversations enabled sub-committees to better understand data in their area, comprehend areas of overlap, and refine recommendations for improvement.

Aligned with scholarship on organizational improvement, this report attends to major structures (e.g., resources, departments, formal program), people (e.g., leaders, teachers, families), practices, and evidence of effectiveness in the domain of reading. The report discusses areas of strength and weakness across New Haven to guide decision-making and future work with regard to reading.

Furthermore, this report intends to provide a frame so that various constituents can communicate in a productive manner to improve reading-related outcomes. We note that, taken together, this can benefit the health, welfare, and productivity of the population of both New Haven and, more broadly, Connecticut. In sum, this document provides a roadmap for improving reading instruction, achievement, and outcomes to ameliorate the city's economic and social conditions.

NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2015-2016 District Performance Index (DPI) (State of Connecticut Department of Education)

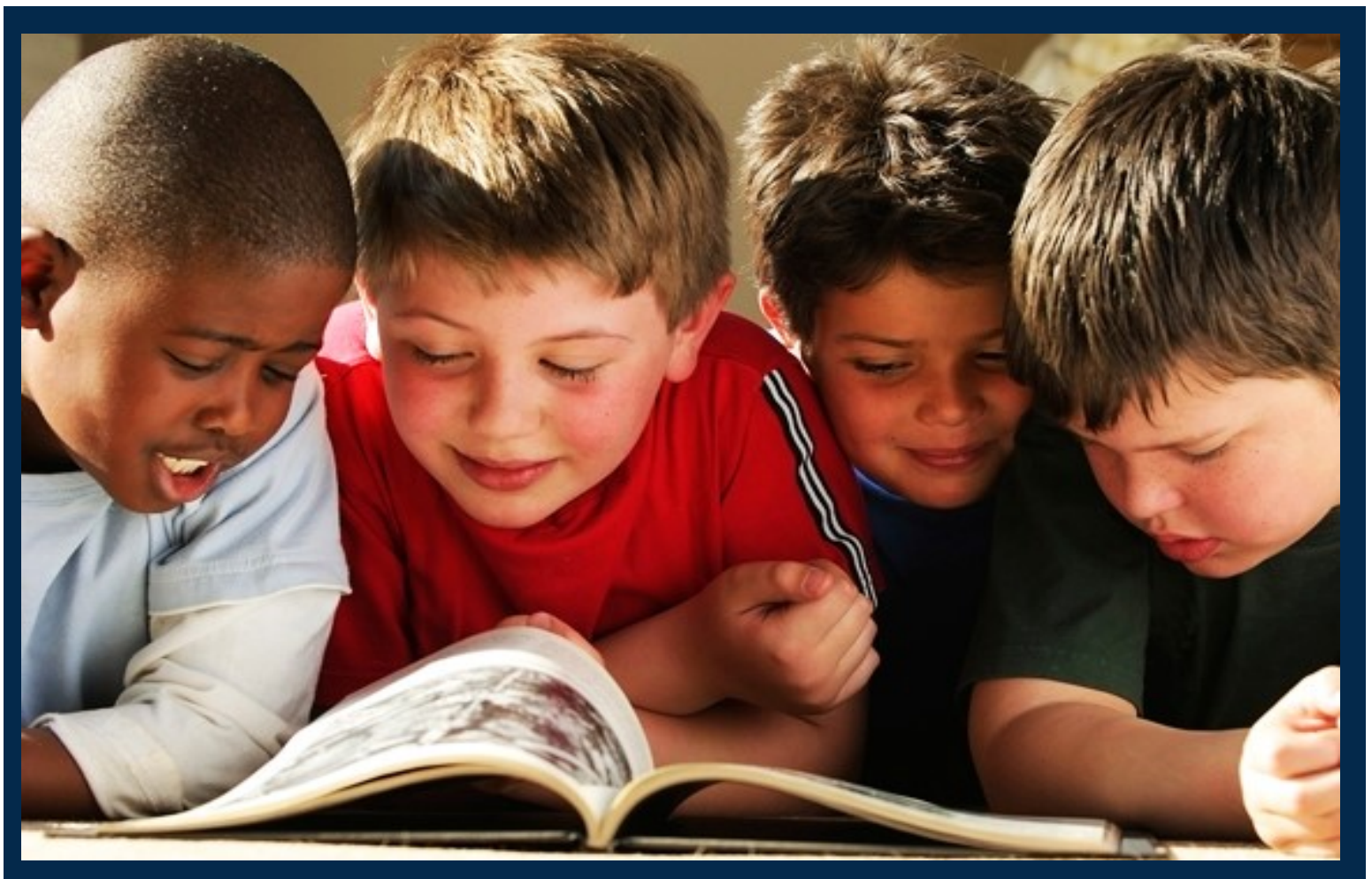
| | English Language Arts | | Math | | Science | |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Count | DPI | Count | DPI | Count | DPI |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | - | - | - | - | 10 | - |
| Asian | 190 | 78.2 | 190 | 73.8 | 81 | 65.7 |
| Black or African American | 3,986 | 53.5 | 3,980 | 45.1 | 1,659 | 41.0 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 4,147 | 55.9 | 4,166 | 48.5 | 1,704 | 43.1 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | - | - | - | - | 0 | N/A |
| Two or More Races | 45 | 63.5 | 45 | 51.1 | 14 | - |
| White | 1,366 | 69.9 | 1,363 | 61.0 | 570 | 58.0 |
| English Learners | 1,660 | 49.8 | 1,658 | 44.4 | 578 | 36.0 |
| Non-English Learners | 8,124 | 58.9 | 8,109 | 50.4 | 3,460 | 46.3 |
| Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals | 6,045 | 53.6 | 6,035 | 45.9 | 2,386 | 41.1 |
| Not Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals | 3,739 | 63.4 | 3,732 | 55.0 | 1,652 | 50.3 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1,563 | 41.5 | 1,553 | 34.6 | 699 | 33.8 |
| Students w/out Disabilities | 8,221 | 60.4 | 8,214 | 52.1 | 3,339 | 47.2 |
| High Needs | 6,915 | 53.1 | 6,903 | 45.5 | 2,740 | 40.6 |
| Non-High Needs | 2,869 | 67.6 | 2,864 | 58.6 | 1,298 | 53.9 |
| District | 9,784 | 57.3 | 9,767 | 49.4 | 4,038 | 44.9 |
| State | - | 67.7 | - | 61.4 | - | 57.5 |

The State Department of Education defines the District Performance Index (DPI) as “the average performance of students in a subject area (i.e., ELA, Mathematics or Science) on the state summative assessments.” Ranging from 0-100, the DPI is disaggregated by student group.

The state DPI target is 75. The data shows that there is a performance gap between New Haven Public Schools and the State of Connecticut in all subject areas.

In English Language Arts, Black or African American students are performing 14.2 points below the state average and Hispanic or Latino students are performing 11.8 points below the state average. English Learners and Students with Disabilities present with the most significant gaps. English Learners are performing 17.9 points below their peers across the state while the performance gap for Students with Disabilities is 26.2.

In contrast, with a DPI of 69.9, New Haven Public Schools’ White students are outperforming the state by 2.2 points. And, the internal performance gap is most noticeable between Asian students and other student groups. With a DPI of 78.2, Asian students are outperforming all students in the district and across the state. But, given the relatively small number of Asian students, that gap is not as statistically significant as the gap between White students and Non-High Need students, and their peers.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Systems Level Recommendations

In response to Mayor Toni Harp's vision to make New Haven a reading city, the Blue Ribbon Commission worked collaboratively to produce this report. The report is not intended to be an exhaustive inventory or an evaluation. Rather, it documents the various perspectives and experiences of committee members.

Sub-committees addressed a variety of issues, employed different methods, and accessed multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative data to surface recommendations to improve reading in New Haven. Yet, despite these differences, there are common themes that emerged across the sub-committees' recommendations:

1. **Establish culture of improvement focusing on reading.**

In order to make New Haven a reading city, the Commission determined that there is a need to establish a culture supporting meaningful change. These cultural changes should include leadership for learning, clear and consistent communication, and an explicit focus on equity. This would take the form of a joint compact between the Mayor and Superintendent regarding policy and aligned resources in support of a reading agenda.

2. **Strengthen and enhance infrastructure for change.**

Focused on the need to harness fiscal as well as human capital, the Commission recommends bolstering the infrastructure for change. There is a demonstrated need to concentrate on accountability systems, including data collection/analysis and evaluation. These structural changes would be supportive of improvements to reading instruction, programs, activities, and outcomes. We underscore the need for quantitative and qualitative data on the implementation and impacts of multiple reading-related initiatives in the city. We note that infrastructure connecting Birth-to-Three, Pre-K, and the elementary school system has the potential to yield critical improvements. Finally, this infrastructure would assist with creating shared understandings amongst stakeholders of goals, priorities, initiatives, and expectations.

3. **Establish citywide coordination of reading policy, programs, and resources.**

The members of the Commission on Reading strongly encourage the creation of a central point of coordination of programs and activities affecting reading across New Haven, the district, and community-based organizations. Sub-committees are consistent in their belief that there is great work taking place across the city but that to maximize the investments in and realize the full potential of those efforts, there is a need for true coordination and leadership. This can be accomplished through the creation of a cabinet-level position, reporting directly to the mayor, charged with leading reading policy, research, development, and communication across the city.



REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

In the following section, we summarize reports from the six sub-committees. Each report begins with an overview of the particular area, presents evidence on New Haven's current strengths and areas of opportunity, and concludes with action-oriented recommendations for city and district leaders to improve literacy outcomes for children, youth, and families.

EARLY LITERACY

Overview

The Early Literacy sub-committee focused on the structures and activities related to supporting literacy development in early childhood, which it defined as birth to grade 3. Thus, this sub-committee was charged with probing a critical period in children's development as readers and learners. This sub-committee devoted attention to the state of early childhood learning opportunities in New Haven, the alignment of preschool with NHPS' K-12 schools, and the challenges faced by parents in obtaining quality literacy education in the city.

Within New Haven, there are approximately 4,400 infant/toddlers without an opportunity for a regulated early care and education experience. Children are enrolled in a range of Pre-K programs, with approximately 50% in municipality and 30% private, and approximately 20% not enrolled. Due to poverty levels and exposure to violence, many of New Haven's youngest children are often times exposed to multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). As defined by the Center for Disease Control, Adverse Childhood Experiences include abuse (emotional, sexual or physical) and household dysfunction (poverty, divorce, alcoholism, addiction, mental illness). These experiences have been shown to significantly impact a child's ability to learn and her/his ability to succeed in school and later in life, thereby necessitating an assortment of supports and interventions.

Landscape

According to a report developed by New York's Bank Street, New Haven's School Readiness programs are stronger than its Magnet and Head Start Programs. This report also asserted that individual teachers in the pre-K system are functioning at high levels. The sub-committee notes that multiple private programs (e.g., Calvin Hill, Leila Day, Friends Center for Children, Creating Kids, Bethesda, Community Nursery School) understand and enact high quality early childhood pedagogy.

The sub-committee highlights strengths with regard to the district as well as other educational organizations. Firstly, the district is willing to shift in a child-centered direction and is examining the potential role and opportunities of play-based learning. The district is also proceeding with a phonics initiative to strengthen its current balanced literacy program. In terms of assessment, monthly running records will provide actionable information to teachers to supplement data from standardized tests and progress monitoring assessments. Taken together, these assessment results can drive teachers' instruction, including their differentiation of instruction, to benefit student

academic outcomes. Secondly, there are a host of partners with expertise and resources, such as Bank Street, Trust for Learning, Early Steps, Read To Grow, NH Reads, and NHFPL.

At the same time, the sub-committee acknowledges weaknesses, organizing them by whether they relate to issues of leadership, curriculum/instruction, capacity building, family engagement, and Social Emotional Learning and Trauma Informed Care. In terms of leadership, there is no Early Childhood Supervisor, and Prek-8 Programs are without ECE leadership. Additionally, the city does not have a universal vision for early childhood curriculum or instruction and, as a result, there is low clarity across the district and various providers regarding what and how children should develop literacy skills. This sub-committee also points out that there is a lack of a comprehensive professional development (PD) plan and that PD time is not properly targeted towards early childhood literacy.

The sub-committee notes that there is not a formalized system to support family partnerships and, despite efforts to create relationships with families, the community, and parents, there is a lack of connectedness. This could be, in part, due to language barriers preventing school-family communication. Finally, the sub-committee tied facets of early childhood education with the domain of social emotional learning and trauma informed care. In particular, they surfaced the fact that the city lacks a system for navigating high levels of toxic stress in young children. Furthermore, they underscore the current lack of understanding around the influence of toxic stress of young children's developing brains and future academic outcomes.

Key Recommendations

The sub-committee puts forth several recommendations to improve the quality of early childhood education and to strengthen the connections amongst Birth to Three, preschool, elementary schools, and families. First, stronger partnerships should be formed between birth-five, the city, and private entities. Second, K-3 teachers and leaders should engage in additional professional development to be adequately prepared to support and accelerate the literacy learning of children who may not have received quality early childhood education.

1. Create a Citywide office of early childhood (Birth to 3rd grade) in partnership with New Haven Public Schools.
2. Add structure to the programs serving children from birth to age 4.
3. Revise the pre-K curriculum to include a scope and sequence that aligns with foundational skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency).
4. Develop a long term professional development plan with a pipeline from educator preparation to ongoing, contextualized professional learning opportunities for teachers and leaders.
5. Develop a plan for family & community engagement with attention to cultural responsiveness to serve all children and boost their development as readers.



GRADE LEVEL READING

Overview

The Grade Level Reading sub-committee concentrated on the systems and activities associated with reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment in grades 3-12. Accordingly, the group assessed current practices in NHPS affecting students' reading/writing/English Language Arts (ELA) learning to follow the Early Literacy sub-committee.

The Supervisor of NHPS' Reading Department, literacy coaches, curriculum facilitators, READ 180 facilitators, and library & media services personnel all engage in work to strengthen reading instruction and achievement in grades 3-8. In terms of initiatives, Scientific Research-based Initiative (SRBI) operates within all schools. Many schools are participating in READ 180 and Achieve 3000. The Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program is also implemented at the school level. And three elementary schools are involved with Reading Recovery through Yale University. District leaders run curriculum, instruction, and assessment sessions to foster ongoing professional learning on issues of reading.

Landscape

The Grade Level sub-committee depicts strengths and areas of opportunity at two levels: grades 3-8 and grades 9-12. Throughout, they attend to the nature of research-based, standards-aligned curricula as well as support systems for educators to improve reading instruction and achievement across grade levels.

For grades 3-8, a few highlights of promising practices were the workshop approach to reading, CORE reading to support students, and peer-supported learning. The existing curriculum includes comprehensive essential questions and lists academic vocabulary. This curriculum does provide time for teachers to teach creative units. They also note that many texts are available for independent reading with support materials.

The sub-committee also exposed positive practices in New Haven's high schools. They stated that teacher autonomy and choice were positive conditions. They note that, in classrooms, students are expected to read entire novels. They also mention that writing tasks have become more sophisticated with an emphasis on argument writing. They state that the ideas of units are engaging, rigorous, and inquiry-based. The sub-committee acknowledges that this form of literacy curriculum for high schoolers necessitates high quality professional learning opportunities for teachers and leaders.

There exist several challenges related to reading instruction in grades 3-8, including a potential need for more structure at the lowest grade levels, including a scope and sequence of skills for teachers to cover in particular grades. They also point to gaps in schools' phonics programs as well as in teachers' knowledge and skills with regard to phonics instruction.

The sub-committee also notes that the current curriculum under-represents the Common Core Standards' strands for critical literacy and speaking & listening. They also point to the need for deepening systematic instruction in digital technology, including formal exposure to digital texts and other media. The committee recommends further collaboration with library/media specialists and an audit of each school's current library-media staffing and possible needs. In addition, to promote implementation of the district reading program, all teachers should have access to a qualified and experienced reading specialist and/or instructional coach.

The Grade Level subcommittee enumerates obstacles to realizing quality ELA instruction within the district's high schools. First, with regard to curriculum, the existing curricular materials do not specify a plan for below-grade level readings, and there is a pressing need to clarify how to assess and intervene with below-grade level readers in order to accelerate their progress and ameliorate long-term outcomes. The curriculum should also embed the teaching of multi-document reading as well as other forms of text, including digital materials, films, podcasts, etc. Though the curriculum lists multicultural texts, additional steps could be taken so that students engage with representative literature. The curriculum could also benefit from adding a coherent scope and sequence for teaching vocabulary, grammar, and writing conventions.

In the area of teacher development and support, there is a pressing need for reading specialists at the middle and high school levels. These specialists could observe or co-teach lessons and could serve as thought partners as teachers design and enact interventions for below grade level readers. Finally, all teachers, regardless of grade levels, should be involved in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and/or Lesson Study groups to encourage continuous improvement as professionals and collaborate with other teachers around literacy-related issues.

Key Recommendations

The Grade Level subcommittee put forth short, intermediate, and long term recommendations for improving reading in grades 3-12. These recommendations ask that district and school leaders, as well as teachers and community partners, collaborate to design new curricular systems for teaching and assessing ELA skills and to find ways to build the capacity of educators in schools. In particular, these recommendations involve ensuring alignment between K-3 and 3-8 with regards to curriculum, scope and sequence, instructional approach, assessment, and professional development.

Short Term

1. District and school leaders should structure and design quality professional development so all NHPS teachers who are expected to teach reading in their classrooms, receive professional learning opportunities on research-based intervention strategies using existing classroom materials, such as Collaborative Strategic Reading or the Strategic Instructional Model.
2. District and school leaders should ensure that all teachers participate in quality Professional Learning Communities and lesson plan study groups.

3. District and school leaders should ensure that grade-appropriate reading specialists are available to assist all classroom teachers on a weekly basis.
4. District and school leaders should make the curriculum more accessible to parents and community partners.
5. District and school leaders should utilize technology to provide parents with tips and updates on how to support students with the curriculum.

Intermediate Term

1. District leaders should develop a comprehensive scope and sequence for literacy skills including grammar and vocabulary as part of the grade 3-8 curriculum.
2. District leaders should develop a comprehensive scope and sequence of writing strategies, grammar and sentence combination techniques as part of the grade 9-12 curriculum.
3. District and school leaders should leverage the existing teacher evaluation platform to explicitly observe classroom literacy instruction. This can include lesson observation, feedback from instructional managers, and alignment of teacher Student Learning Objectives (SLO) to the district's performance assessment.
4. District and school leaders should develop and administer assessment tools and performance tasks that explicitly focus on reading. Currently, most performance tasks are writing tasks that require students to draw on and synthesize multiple readings.

Long-Term

1. District leaders should develop a more user-friendly curriculum document for Grades 3-8, which may be similarly structured as the Grades 9-12 curriculum.
2. District and school leaders should ensure that New Haven Public Schools content area teachers receive greater support in meeting the literacy standards of the CCSS. For instance, there could be Tier 1 classes that partner with a content area teacher and a literacy teacher/coach.
3. District leaders should design enrollment systems that allow for greater student enrollment across schools to increase elective and Advanced Placement (AP) offerings.
4. District leaders should explore the possibility of students earning credits outside of the classroom. Efforts should be made to work with community partners so the city of New Haven becomes "the campus."
5. District and school leaders should work with the community to develop a citywide reading event for 11th and/or 12th grade students. This could be done in conjunction with non-profits, arts organizations, churches, and community colleges.



READING DISABILITY

Overview

The Reading Disability sub-committee attended to the systems, programs, and methods for diagnosing and serving children with reading disabilities, and this topic intersects with issues of pre-K-12 literacy instruction, special education services, and healthcare. The sub-committee considered processes for both assessment and remediation and the capacity of district and school personnel to equitably and effectively address children's reading disabilities. In addition, they examined the status of RTI (Response to Intervention), also referred to as SRBI, in NHPS. Finally, they considered the ties between city departments, community-based organizations, and other institutions in New Haven and CT which concentrate on reading disabilities and that could provide supplemental services to these students.

Landscape

Under the director's leadership, the special education department is making a concerted effort to ensure that students with reading disabilities are identified appropriately. Phonemic awareness and phonics are now being explicitly taught in general education classrooms (i.e., Tier 1). This should help decrease referrals to special education that are the result of inadequate instruction in foundational skills. The department is also working toward a coherent and aligned process for assessing students and ensuring quality services. Once identified with a reading disability, each student's progress will be monitored regularly and adaptations will be made if adequate process is not made.

The district's schools have adopted a variety of programs to remediate students with reading disabilities, such as READ 180. The district has instituted an SRBI platform to be used prior to identifying students for special education services or IEP meetings. This system includes information on potential supports and interventions matching particular gaps in reading. The district's approach to eligibility and progress monitoring could be further systematized, and inquiry is needed on schools' implementation of various steps to remediate reading disabilities.

However, based upon student outcome data and observations of how students are identified, it is clear that federal and state policies are inconsistently applied throughout the district. It is likely that the lack of coherence is the result of inconsistent support and inadequate professional development (PD). PD should focus on building teachers' knowledge of the foundational skills and include embedded support in the classroom so that teachers can apply their knowledge. In addition, teachers who instruct students in inclusive settings – that is, classrooms that include both general education and students identified with reading disabilities – should co-teach in ways that support all students. At present, there are classrooms that include special education teachers, general education, and paraprofessionals in the same room and in order to maximize the effectiveness of the instruction, the teaching must be well-coordinated.

In the case of students with reading disabilities, it is imperative that student data is disaggregated across schools to determine where the greatest needs are in terms of providing support for both

students and teachers. In addition to student outcome data, the department has initiated a plan for observing special education practices that will focus on the quality of instruction and where the greatest needs lie for embedded coaching.

Finally, teachers should administer diagnostic assessments to students with reading disabilities to determine their learning profiles and individual learning needs. Students should be grouped for services based on their particular needs. Aiming to meet the needs of each and every student with reading disabilities, the department is striving for a consistent, transparent and intensive approach to specialized instruction that varies upon the nature of the reading disability.

Key Recommendations

The Reading Disability sub-committee put forth three recommendations related to eligibility, programming, and educator expertise. These recommendations request that district and school leaders formulate, refine, and fully implement systems and methods to better service students with reading disabilities.

1. District leaders should develop and enact a clear, consistent, transparent, and fair district-wide approach for determining eligibility for special education services for students with a specific learning disability in reading. The district's eligibility process and procedures would span identification, assessment/evaluation, placement, progress monitoring, and exiting.
2. District leaders should develop a clear, consistent, and transparent district-wide process for developing and implementing individualized education plans (IEPs) that are individualized, intensive, reflect research-validated instruction, and are aligned with classroom reading instruction and other school wide reading supports (e.g., RTI/SRBI). By strengthening the IEP process, the district can raise the likelihood that all special education students receive appropriate, efficacious services that meet their needs.
3. District and school leaders should ensure that special and general education teachers (including paraprofessionals) have expertise specific to a variety of reading disability profiles so that they can deliver effective interventions. This would involve additional professional development around issues of dyslexia and other literacy-related disabilities.

This will require that all personnel receive ongoing training and support. These capacity building efforts would develop the knowledge and skills of educators fulfilling a range of roles and who work with students with specific learning disabilities in reading. Furthermore, these efforts could also influence the quality of reading instruction experienced by all students in the district's schools.

ENGLISH LEARNERS

Overview

The English Learners (EL) sub-committee focused on structures, accountability and best practices to improve outcomes for EL students. The group recognizes that there are several challenges impeding progress for EL students; however, there are also pockets of good practice that are promising for the future. Particularly noteworthy are the Dual Language programs currently implemented in four schools: Fair Haven, Columbus School, Clinton Avenue School and John C. Daniels School. In addition, recognizing the need to increase its focus on EL students, the district has proactively pursued increasing the number of certified bilingual teachers and most recently appointed a leader with a strong EL background.

Landscape

According to Connecticut State Department of Education data, EL students in New Haven, when compared to overall district measures, underperform in most measures. The 2014-15 and 2015-16 District Profile and Performance Reports provides important insight on the educational landscape of New Haven English Learners. The chart below provides a summary of the District Performance Index (DPI) measures. It is worth noting that Connecticut's DPI target is 75.

| Summative Assessments | NHPS Students | | NHPS English Learners | | NHPS White Student Population | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 |
| ELA | 55.8 | 57.3 | 47.2 | 49.8 | 68.9 | 69.9 |
| Math | 46.0 | 49.4 | 40.0 | 44.4 | 58.5 | 61.0 |
| Science | 44.7 | 44.9 | 46.4 | 36.0 | 58.1 | 58.0 |

In addition to the abovementioned academic performance issues, there are state policy concerns that impact districts across the state. The state of Connecticut is experiencing a shortage in bilingual educators and New Haven continues to experience the problems associated with this shortage. There are currently 42 bilingual educators in New Haven and at least 4 of them are working without the proper certification. The district is proactively addressing the shortage through the establishment of a cohort of teachers for Alternative Route to Certification in TESOL/Bilingual education.

In the area of school design and curriculum, the school district has made a concerted effort to establish Dual Language programs. According to research, Dual Language programs, particularly in districts with large populations of a single linguistic and cultural background, appear to be the most effective programs. Of the four programs in the district, the Columbus School's program appears to be having a discernible impact on student Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment performance. The district has also established a New Arrivals Center at Fair Haven School. In spite of these positive steps, there appears to be no clear EL curriculum or pedagogical approach to English language acquisition.

Finally, the district is not adequately staffed and resourced to address the needs of EL students. Central Office does not have enough capacity to fully support the needs of the faculty and therefore EL students. The EL office is composed of one administrator and two other individuals. In addition, schools that carry a Dual Language designation or large number of EL students receive less funding than other high needs schools. One school, for example, uses high school students to act as tutors for newly arrived students. This can be an effective practice but only if students are receiving proper adult guidance and support.

Key Recommendations

English Learners are the fastest growing group in the United States. It is estimated that by 2025 one out of every four public school students will be an EL student (National Education Association). EL students are typically treated as one homogenous group when in fact this student population is diverse in many ways, including language, ethnic background, and educational experiences (Dahnke and Roldan, 2016).

Delivering quality programming to EL students is not just a function of good teaching (Grant and Wong, 2007). Research tells us that, on average, it takes 5-7 years to reach mastery level in academic English. In addition, the complexity of the Common Core State Standards, which demand that students master complex literacy skills and acquire high-level concepts, require specific teacher training that honors the linguistic and cultural needs of EL students (Dahnke and Roldan, 2016). As such, the committee presents the following recommendations to improve the quality of EL instruction and services.

1. Provide adequate funding and support for English Learners.
 - a. Establish a Cabinet-Level position focused on the needs of EL and bilingual educators.
 - b. Provide equitable funding in support of EL students.
2. Create incentives to increase the number of bilingual educators.
3. Focus on and increase the number of Dual Language programs.
4. Provide culturally responsive professional learning to bilingual educators and content-area teachers
that honors the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of EL students.
5. Create a family and community engagement plan focused on EL families.
6. Adopt Common Core-aligned supplemental curriculum (e.g. Middlebury Interactive Languages) to meet the diverse needs of English Learners.

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Overview

The Parents and Community sub-committee reviewed the research, searched for national best practices and examined the local New Haven context. As an organizing principle, the members strongly agree with and endorse the overwhelming evidence citing the invaluable role of parental involvement in enhancing and supporting their children's literacy. Literacy activities conducted at home can positively influence development in the areas of oral language, vocabulary, print awareness, comprehension, and children's values related to reading (Steward and Goff, 2004).

Currently, New Haven has a strong base of concerned, involved citizens willing to be part of a greater effort in support of Mayor Harp's vision to make New Haven a reading city. However, current efforts are disjointed and conducted in silos. The sub-committee believes that New Haven Public Schools is well-positioned to serve as a significant partner in a city-wide effort.

Landscape

The City of New Haven has several organizations and efforts focused on providing access to books and improving literacy skills. Efforts range, for example, in size, target population and age, time of year (e.g., summer vs. school-year), and in-school and out-of-school programming. New Haven Reads, Ready for the Grade, and the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read are just a small sampling of the many programmatic efforts across the city. In addition to New Haven Public Schools, organizations like New Haven Public Library, the Jewish Community Center and Literacy Volunteers provide some form of coordinated service. There is a clear need for coherence and coordination among the many efforts in the city with a focus on family and community engagement.

Engaging and involving families is paramount to the success of the mayor's vision. Numerous studies have been conducted regarding the effects of parents hearing their school-age children read at home, most of which have demonstrated positive outcomes (Hannon, 1998). When parental involvement programs involved real reading and included enjoyable and easy-to-use activities that provided a connection between school and home, children reported reading more often at home in their free time (Morrow and Young, 1997). Any future effort that seeks to promote reading and increase literacy in New Haven, must carry a clear and focused parental component.

Key Recommendations

Building on previous successful efforts, the sub-committee divides their recommendations into short-term and long-term strategies. There need to be concerted efforts on communications and coordination, which is the focus of the recommendations.

1. Establish web and social media presence. Early in 2016, the sub-committee established a presence on Facebook for the Reading Commission. The mere presence of the page and very little effort, has galvanized the support of hundreds of individuals. The sites can be utilized to share, publicize and solicit community involvement in literacy events. In addition, these sites could serve as a hub for promoting existing programs/activities and as a research repository.

2. Enlist community partners. New Haven, as mentioned above, has significant civic capacity. There is a need to channel and focus their efforts in support of the mayor's vision. Organizations and individuals can be tapped for financial support, volunteer opportunities and expertise.
3. Create coordinated New Haven Reads Campaign utilizing social media and other available means. There is a need to bring the many existing and future efforts under a single umbrella. There are many organizations running programs that support literacy. There is a potential synergy that is not being maximized. A coordinated campaign in multiple languages will ensure that we are reaching New Haven's diverse population.
4. Establish a single point of coordination for literacy activities. As the city's single most important literacy-focused asset, New Haven Public Schools is well-positioned to serve as a leader in literacy activities across the city. This could take the form of creating a literacy roundtable where PTOs, community-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, etc., can come together to plan and implement a coordinated literacy strategy for the City of New Haven.

ADULT EDUCATION

Overview

The Adult Education sub-committee focused on the policies and structures needed to fulfill the mayor's vision for New Haven. To that end, the sub-committee reviewed national and local data and developed a series of recommendations that leverage existing resources, increase adult literacy and lead to improved employment rates, civic engagement, and personal fulfillment in life and society.

Grounded on research, the members support a system where there is a focus on improving the literacy rates of adults. Literate adults, for example, will better support their children with homework and communicate with school staff. Although unsure if there are enough resources to support the needs of adult learners, the group strongly believes that an immediate priority is greater coordination across literacy activities/programs and dissemination of information regarding where and how to access resources for adult learners.

Landscape

Reading involves many concurrent and progressively difficult skills that increase in complexity - from learning letter sounds and phonemic awareness - to comprehension of written information. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) estimates that 4.6% to 25.8% of New Haven County residents have literacy levels below basic - 5th grade reading level. In New Haven, more than 17,000 adults do not have a high school diploma. A cursory evaluation of the adult learning system in New Haven reveals that services are functioning in silos, are not well-organized, and are not engaged in a collaborative approach to tackle low adult literacy. Even with resources available, there are often barriers for adults to access necessary reading supports.

Key Recommendations

The sub-committee selected to focus on a few high-impact, achievable recommendations that it believes will yield the most significant benefits over the long-term. The members believe that the following priorities will assist adult learners in improving their literacy.

1. Establish adequate policies and practices in support of adult literacy.

There is a need for a planning process that focuses on job-readiness reading and helps adults become self-sufficient. Asset-mapping would help the city drive improvements in accessing literacy resources. This will help ensure that the appropriate logistical and fiscal infrastructures are in place in support of literacy improvements.

2. Maximize educational and community resources already in place.

There are existing infrastructure and resources that are underutilized. Adult education programs remain the default access point for educating adult learners of low literacy. However, adult education teachers are not reading teachers. One approach might be to hire reading teachers to deliver literacy instruction in these programs. Another approach could be to increase funding and access to Literacy Volunteers.

Other community resources should be incorporated appropriately to support the efforts of the primary literacy support agents. As an example, social emotional learning, life skills, stress management, and financial literacy, health literacy, reading and English-speaking skills for job-readiness, may be sponsored by partnering community agencies.

3. Create a means to improve awareness of literacy resources in the community.

In order to reach out to the community to offer resources, it is important for the city to coordinate and consolidate the available directory of resources. Following this compilation, the City should expect that a campaign will be necessary to publicize the availability of quality programs and resources.

Thoughtful, intentional campaigning and community canvassing will help to identify and welcome adult learners to access available supports to improve their reading. This effort should also be culturally and strategically informed to tackle the stigma associated with low literacy levels.

4. Establish Performance Measures and Success Indicators.

It is important to establish a means to measure the effectiveness of these efforts. Some potential performance measures are CASAS/Lexile scores, reading evaluations and intensive reading programs for adults, a referral tracking system, and SBAC scores. Additional success indicators may include increased partnerships, decrease in unemployment/underemployment, and the creation of programs that remove barriers to access, such as, childcare and access to transportation.

Reading is a Human Right!



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