



**NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



**NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
TRANSITION TEAM  
2018-2019 REPORT**

**Dr. Carol D. Birks, Superintendent**

## MESSAGE FROM DR. CAROL D. BIRKS, SUPERINTENDENT

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Dear New Haven Learning Community,

I am excited to share our Transition Report. This document is the product of a process that has engaged numerous New Haven stakeholders, including both internal and external experts. When I became your Superintendent, I promised that I would engage our learning community in taking a fresh look at our strengths, our potential, and our areas of growth. In order to build a collective vision that will enable New Haven to be the best urban public education system in the country, it is essential that we ask ourselves hard questions about what we do well, what needs improvement, and what we should reimagine.

Our schools have served many children incredibly well, yet not all of our young people have graduated with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers. Our potential is boundless, however, we must face hard truths if we want to realize our shared dreams for our children.

The transition process focused on these areas:

1. Learning and Teaching,
2. Talent Management and Development,
3. Family and Community Engagement,
4. Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness, and
5. Equity and Access.

We convened approximately 70 internal and external experts on five teams to examine each area for strengths, needs and recommendations. Each team, led by outside and internal District and community experts, conducted interviews, analyzed data, and drafted a report. I asked three exceptional thought leaders to serve as Tri-chairs and we engaged a national education organization to coordinate and facilitate the overall process and write this report. As you will see in this document, each of the areas are interrelated. Yet the teams considered distinct aspects of each domain. By having various people with multiple perspectives involved, we were able to gather a wealth of insights into our current status and desired future. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the members of my Transition Team who are listed at the end of this Transition Report for their time, commitment, and contributions.

The Transition Report is a beginning. It is meant to serve as the foundation for community conversations and strategic planning. The Transition Report asks many of the tough questions that we need to face if we are going to truly transform New Haven Public Schools and provides recommendations that we must consider – as difficult as some of those choices may be to incorporate into our practices.

I am deeply committed to engaging all parts of the community in a collective effort to ensure that each and every one of our children graduates ready to embrace the future. [she removed the sentence here] I am grateful for the support that I receive from Mayor Harp, the New Haven Board of Education, administration, faculty, staff, families and community as we continue to implement our shared vision for our school District.

Your Superintendent,  
Carol D. Birks, Ed.D.  
*Superintendent*

## LETTER FROM THE TRI-CHAIRS

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We are honored to present the findings and recommendations of the transition report to Dr. Carol D. Birks, the New Haven Board of Education, and the community at large. The transition team, comprised of internal and external experts in the field of education as well as school and community partners, engaged stakeholders to assess the current state of the district to provide recommendations for how to support student learning, enhance partnerships with families, promote equity and excellence, and increase district capacity for efficiency and effectiveness.

Transition committee meetings commenced in April 2018 wherein team members conducted focus groups and interviews, and reviewed New Haven policies, data, and current practices to gather information to shape the short- and Long-Term recommendations included in this report. The compilation of data is meant to support Dr. Birks' vision of as she refines the district's strategic plan, collaborates with the Board of Education and community stakeholders, and cultivates an environment within the district to accelerate student success.

The following five organizing content areas were the focus of the evaluation:

- Learning and Teaching,
- Talent Management and Development,
- Family and Community Engagement,
- Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness, and
- Equity and Access.

We hope this report serves to inform how the district might move forward to create learning opportunities for our diverse student body that are equitable, inclusive, and importantly involve parents as we strive for excellence in teaching and learning in New Haven Public Schools. As tri-chairs, we are grateful for the opportunity to be active participants in this effort.

On behalf of the transition team, we thank you for the honor of serving in this capacity. To everyone who participated in this process, we send our deepest gratitude. We are filled with hope and an abiding belief that the next chapter of New Haven Public Schools will be one in which we are all working collaboratively to radically improve the educational experience and outcomes of our students.

Nadia L. Ward, Ph.D.

Edward Fergus, Ph.D.

Ms. Nitza M. Diaz

*Transition Team Tri-Chairs*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## BACKGROUND

New Haven is home to the second largest public school system in the state of Connecticut. New Haven Public Schools is an institutional pillar that has proudly served the community for many years and has at times been the catalyst for setting the standard and model for educational reform in public education.

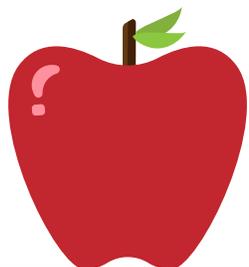
The New Haven public school district boasts a student population of more than 20,000 spread across 49 schools that include 29 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 7 high schools, and 4 transitional schools. It is also important to note that New Haven has one of the state's largest interdistrict magnet schools of choice program, attracting a high number of students from neighboring suburban districts who seek high-quality educational options. This reality raises interesting opportunities and challenges about equity and excellence for all students.

Dr. Carol D. Birks assumed the leadership of the school system in March 2018. Despite its many achievements, like many urban school districts, New Haven Public Schools still faces many challenges, including issues of equity throughout the system, significant financial constraints, and gaps in student opportunities and achievement levels, just to name a few.

## OVERVIEW

This transition report is the culmination of observations, document reviews, analysis, and engagement with various constituents of the New Haven community. It provides insights into the strengths and needs of the system, in addition to the hopes and dreams of the district's employees and stakeholders in the wider New Haven community. It serves as a road map for the vision and direction for the next level of work under the leadership of Dr. Carol D. Birks, and a foundation for strategic planning. The purpose of establishing the Superintendent's transition team was to set a positive tone, ensure a successful entry into the district, build community relations, and develop trust, transparency, and partnerships to support Birks' efforts in making deliberate and thoughtful decisions for the students and families of New Haven Public Schools.

Individuals with a wide range of backgrounds, including parents, educators, and community leaders, were assembled to support the assessment of current structures, policies, and practices to analyze the current state of the district and make recommendations for the work moving forward. The transition team was comprised of five focus committees charged with engaging a myriad of external and internal stakeholders to establish and build meaningful partnerships, identify critical areas of need and emerging trends, and offer recommendations. The concentration of these focus groups were (1) Learning and Teaching, (2) Talent Management and Development, (3) Family and Community Engagement, (4) Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness, and (5) Equity and Access.



## THEMES: AREAS OF WORK AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through the transition committees' research and engagement, these common themes quickly emerged as areas of work and opportunities that required attention in order to meet the needs of New Haven Public Schools' students, families, and the community:

- Develop and implement effective systems and processes that promote coherence, effective communication, cultural competency, data-driven practices, and a positive culture and climate—to emphasize a renewed focus on learning and teaching for students and adults.
- Create and refine structures, policies, and practices that support the equitable distribution of resources across all schools and for all students.
- Institute and actualize policies and strategies that diminish or eliminate bias and result in more systemic and effective partnerships with families and communities in a common learning agenda.
- Promote innovative and equitable recruitment efforts, create talent pipelines, and develop a strategic retention and total rewards plan—to include an integrated approach to performance management that is aligned to relevant and ongoing professional development and a fair and transparent evaluation system
- Strategically design and implement effective operational and efficiency systems and practices—that re-evaluate resource allocation mandates, strengthen an equity-based approach to budgeting, improve the management and oversight of grant funding, and create avenues for further efficiencies –to meet the needs of the district at large.
- Engage in courageous and in-depth discourse about the benefits and challenges of the district portfolio strategy and the choice program and process, including financial cost implications and impact on student experiences and outcomes.
- Develop, adopt, implement, and monitor the district's equity policy and plan that deal with equity broadly—addressing the needs of all students, particularly the most vulnerable populations.
- Engage in central office transformation work that realigns roles and duties so that the central office is better positioned to serve the needs of school-based leaders, staff, and students.

## CONCLUSION

This executive summary provides a glance into the full transition report. The report is intended to (a) serve as a guide and (b) comprehensively articulate the immediate and Long-Term challenges that need to be addressed while building on the strengths of the New Haven Public Schools. The transition committee crafted its findings and recommendations, as well as considerations for the Superintendent and Board of Education to set conditions for success—in acknowledgment of the sense of urgency to bring about positive changes in the experiences and outcomes of the students served by the district, so that together, educators, schools, families, and community partners are better equipped to achieve equity and excellence.

# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: LEARNING AND TEACHING

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The charge of the Learning and Teaching Committee was to review the current instructional practices and challenges in New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) in order to identify and define the existing learning and teaching needs through data analysis and focused discussions with curricular supervisors, instructional leaders and teachers, and to provide recommendations for improvement that directly impact the instructional core and lead to student success.

## FINDINGS

### Learning and Teaching Strengths

The NHPS has made investments in developing a set of documents and resources that are aligned to expectations from the Connecticut Department of Education, and to serve as the blueprint to inform learning and teaching decisions and practices. These resources include (but are not limited to): curriculum overviews, evidence of learning and teaching indicators, and cross-curricular mastery-based graduation competencies. While past and present efforts have established a baseline foundation that can be built upon, there is much room for improvement to ensure alignment and coherence, consistent implementation, equitable practices and resource allocations, and more deliberately targeted supports for students and adults. New Haven's geographical position and historical legacy of pioneering innovative changes make it so that the district boasts a unique and well-equipped mix of current and potential partners within the city and state who can strategically organize themselves around a common agenda to radically impact the state of learning and teaching in positive ways.

### Learning and Teaching Challenges

1. Lack of a continuous improvement system that allows for effective and reliable data collection, analysis, and review to facilitate data-driven instruction aligned to student needs.
  - What is the district's continuous improvement process (i.e., Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle, etc.)? Is it known and used with fidelity within schools, across schools, and throughout the central office?
  - How does the school improvement planning cycle of action integrate with (a) the district's overarching strategic plan, (b) curriculum guides, (c) formative and summative assessment scopes and sequences, and (d) the monitoring and review of multiple sources of data through cycles of inquiry that systematically inform everyone of what students' and adults' learning needs are, and then drive decisions and practices?
2. Inadequate supports to serve NHPS' most vulnerable populations when it comes to learning and teaching.
  - A review of climate survey data and student performance data reveals persistent gaps between multiple major subgroups of students, including students of color, students with disabilities, and students whose primary language of communication is not English.
  - It is unclear the degree to which the district has adopted and is consistently implementing an integrated, multitiered system of

academic and social-emotional supports and interventions to effectively meet the diverse needs of every student. This lack of clarity also raises questions about the degree to which learning and teaching rely on student-centered approaches, as well as the use of data-informed decision-making at all levels of the district.

- Lack of clarity about what it means to engage in culturally competent learning and teaching emerged as an area of great concern across focus areas within the transition team and conversations with stakeholders. On separate occasions, different students shared the following reflections: “I wish we had more teachers who knew how to relate and manage students with very different backgrounds,” “I always get tapped for opportunities like this one; I am excited that maybe we will finally get to a place where my teachers see the unique value of each kid that they teach,” “I really think that we sometimes act up because we are bored and can’t connect to what the district wants us to learn; it really doesn’t seem to apply to our lives.”
3. Inconsistency in what is espoused and what gets enacted – curricular practices, assessments, professional development, portfolio strategy, etc.
    - For example, teachers within focus groups expressed a desire for more targeted and job-embedded supports that align to their own learning needs and the needs of their students. This gap in access and opportunity to meaningful and timely professional development support seems inconsistent with the explicitly stated practices the district made in multiple academic curriculum overviews and presentations reviewed by the transition team.
    - Overall, interview and focus group participants (including content supervisors, school-based

administrators, and classroom teachers) assert that the district does not provide sufficient and rigorous instructional resources that are aligned with the Connecticut core standards. This assertion is incongruent with the information found in the district’s written plans and curriculum guides.

4. Lack of coherence.
  - There are coherence and implementation gaps between instructional programs, actual instructional practices, supportive materials that are available (for teachers, leaders, and families), accessible resources (including technology), professional development offerings, and the use of the Connecticut Teacher Evaluation system.
  - The concept of bounded vs. loose autonomy within the district’s portfolio model is a recurring topic of discussion that yielded more questions than answers. For example, school leaders and teachers expressed an inconsistency of resource allocations, expectations, and practices across schools (i.e., how instructional support personnel are assigned and managed, etc.).



## SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

The Learning and Teaching Committee members approached most of their work and discussion through the lens of the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Coherence Framework.

The framework—which places students, the content of their learning, and teachers at the center of everything—was developed to help people recognize and attend to the connections between various aspects of their school systems.

The following points summarize what the transition team deemed as essential aspects of the next level of work pertaining to Learning and Teaching:

- To **create coherence and alignment** around “what we do” to accelerate and advance student outcomes.
- To **clearly define effective instruction and joyful learning** and articulate our beliefs around teaching and learning using a common language to facilitate those conversations.
- To **explore the relationship between the intended curriculum**, implemented curriculum, and attained curriculum and determine gaps and causes.
- To **provide clear guidance and expectations for effective teaching** and identify exemplary

practices that, when implemented with consistency and fidelity, will increase student achievement.

- To **align professional learning, curriculum and instruction, and teacher evaluation** with the expectations outlined in the district’s framework and create the conditions for organizational success.
- To **support high quality teaching** as measured and monitored by the Connecticut Teacher Evaluation system.
- To **create the conditions for high-quality, personalized learning experiences for every child**, in every classroom, across every school in NHPS with consideration of the developmental psychology of each individual child.

### Short-Term Recommendations (within one year)

1. Organize a cross-functional team of teacher leaders, administrators, students, parent leaders, and other partners (higher education, philanthropy, community leaders, etc.) to:  
(a) review the current vision, mission, values, and priorities, and (b) develop a campaign strategy to rekindle an unwavering focus on high-quality and joyful learning and teaching that centers students’ voices, experiences, and outcomes as the utmost priority.
2. Deeply review, identify, and inventory learning and teaching gaps and misalignment between standards, expectations, available resources and supports, current practices, and actual outcomes. This evaluation will include curriculum maps, pacing guides, formative/summative assessments, monitoring rubrics, professional development plans/offerings, student performance data, etc.
3. Inventory all technology-based instructional equipment and software and determine the degree to which they are (a) accessible to all



students and schools, and (b) adequate and effective for 21st-century student-centered and blended-learning approaches and opportunities.

4. Engage the appropriate staff in the review and revision of roles and functions within the central office that directly support learning and teaching in schools.
5. Conduct a scan of the landscape to identify exemplars and promising practice in learning and teaching within and across all types of schools. Then, launch a storytelling campaign to share narratives of the good work that is happening.

### Long-Term Recommendations (within three years)

- 1.1. Commission/conduct a curriculum and academic audit – to review the instructional program, practices, curriculum, and support materials for evidence of effectiveness in

improving student achievement and access and outcome gaps between all student populations.

2. Assess and redesign professional learning systems and capacity for meeting the developmental needs of principals, teachers, and central office staff; then, ensure that professional development is job-embedded, differentiated, and aligned to (a) student achievement needs, and (b) culturally responsive practices.
3. Align professional learning, curriculum, instruction and teacher evaluation with the expectations outlined in the district’s strategic plan (to be created) and cultivate the conditions for organizational success.
4. Develop and implement effective systems and processes that promote coherence, effective communication, data-driven practices, and positive culture to include continuous improvement/data system, Human Resources (HR), talent management system, etc.

## IMPLICATIONS

Suggestions for the Superintendent	Suggestions for the Board/Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a practice of focusing on one or more aspect(s) of learning and teaching in every weekly cabinet or senior leadership meeting.</li> <li>• Cultivate learning-focused partnerships with strategic partners at the local, state, and national levels.</li> <li>• Develop and share a vision for adult learning that supports student learning goals throughout the district.</li> <li>• Articulate and steward the expectation that learning and teaching is <u>everyone’s</u> duty – and help people see themselves in the work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update Board policies, regulations and laws so that the Series (6000) focus on “instruction” are explicitly focused on learning and teaching.</li> <li>• Provide a healthy balance of support and accountability to the Superintendent’s vision for learning and teaching.</li> <li>• Establish clear interests and priorities for the Board regarding teaching and learning.</li> </ul>

# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: TALENT MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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The charge of the Talent Management and Development Committee was to learn about the systems and processes in New Haven Public Schools for recruiting, hiring, onboarding, supporting, and evaluating employees, and to make recommendations for how the district can recruit and retain the best and brightest educators and support staff. Additionally, it is important to understand and clarify the roles and responsibilities of those tasked with recruiting, hiring, supporting, and evaluating staff.

## FINDINGS

### Talent Management and Development Strengths

The Talent Management and Development Committee identified several strengths. The employees in the Office of Talent Management, Human Resources, and Labor Relations are hard-working and understand the importance of human capital as a driver for student achievement. They want to support all employees in the district and are interested in making the applicant experience a more positive one. They realize that beyond their commitment and current efforts, the district has much room to grow when it comes to nurturing talent and growing people—so that these efforts indeed translate into more positive outcomes for all groups of students.

Many interviewees noted that they appreciate the diversity of the district's students and families. Staff also acknowledged that there are great people working for NHPS and their colleagues are committed to making a difference for students – the focus on supporting students motivates them to come to work every day.

### Talent Management and Development Challenges

1. *The processes for recruiting and hiring employees are unclear.* Many of the staff members who were interviewed reported inconsistencies in hiring methods. Additionally, most staff, particularly school-based staff, were hired late, a few days before school opened or after school began. This practice of hiring late occurred even when a candidate applied for a position early in the spring.

Most often, interviewees noted that they heard about vacancies through word of mouth or by knowing someone in the district, rather than through formal job postings. Many interviewees reported that there are no clear procedures around key HR processes that ensure having a strong, deep, and diverse pool of candidates. Being able to hire candidates in a timely manner and executing an intentional and focused mentoring program for all staff, especially new employees, ranked high on interviewees' lists of concerns as well. Employees from all job categories reported similar experiences in the hiring and onboarding practices. Staff also indicated that having a diverse workforce that represents the demographics of the student population is important and should be included in the hiring goals of the district.

2. *HR lacks adequate integrated HR information systems and technology.* The Applicant Tracking System (ATS), Applitracks, is not used to its full effectiveness. Many processes are paper driven, which leads to the inability to generate trustworthy and precise data to help drive the

district's human capital strategy. Frequently, HR receives recommendations for hire from principals and hiring managers without potential candidates completing the necessary application process through Applitracks.

3. *The Talent Management, Human Resources, and Labor Relations staff shared that there is significant capacity (human and material) and technology challenges in the department that impact their ability to meet deadlines and automate processes.* Additionally, the current organization of the department is not structured to be efficient or strategic. The different units work in silos and there is not a systemic approach to supporting human capital efforts in the district.
4. *There are significant concerns about the quality and quantity of substitute teachers.* Uneven substitute fill-rates across the district, chronic employee absenteeism, and the lack of qualified substitutes to provide high-quality teaching in the instructor's absence has become increasingly disruptive to learning. Data collected and reviewed throughout this process revealed an average fill-rate of 65% for substitutes, which is significantly below a best practice fill-rate of 95%. Substitutes are not positioned or trained to provide the consistent and quality instruction of a high-quality effective teacher. Moreover, when other staff have to pitch in due to employee absenteeism, it impacts the ability of all employees to fulfill their responsibilities on behalf of students. Paraeducators are frequently assigned to fill in for teachers due to lack of coverage, which leads to missed sessions on successive days with students who require support. The reduction in classroom support staff has impacted the work of other classified staff and their ability to carry out their job responsibilities.
5. *There is not a consistent staffing model to support equitable resource allocations to schools.* Some schools have assistant principals, while others have teacher coaches or alternative instructional leadership positions. These positions seem to be assigned on a case-by-case basis rather than having a standardized staffing model that supports equity so that students have highly effective teachers and leaders, especially in high-needs schools.
6. *A number of representatives mentioned the lack of quality support for new employees to the district,* which complicates the work they have to do. New teachers and principals are often in "survival mode" in their first year. The financial costs associated with teacher turnover can be substantial. While we know there are a number of reasons that employees separate from school districts, a nurturing and supportive work environment, competitive compensation packages, and professional learning opportunities contribute to the retention of high-quality employees. Based on analysis from employee wellness and engagement surveys, 81% of respondents reported feeling high to moderate stress levels on the job. Fifty percent reported that the stress negatively affected their ability to perform their duties well. Twenty-Three percent said they had missed work due to stress. When teachers were asked if they were given enough time to complete their work, 89% said they sometimes or rarely had enough time.
7. Another major challenge relates to performance management and professional learning. *The district lacks a clear, integrated approach to a fair and transparent performance management and evaluation system.* While most teachers and school-based administrators are evaluated each year and participate in some form of profes-

sional learning, other employee groups are provided little professional learning and rarely are evaluated. The current evaluation system does little to define highly effective teachers and principals, as very few teachers and principals are rated below standard. Oftentimes, the implementation of the evaluation process is seen as a compliance action, rather than a process that supports employee development and growth. Although principals reported feeling positive about more frequent visits from their supervisors, they indicated that the evaluation system is executed inconsistently.

There was consensus that the current state of professional learning is not aligned to performance feedback or professional growth and development. Employees talked about “random acts of professional development.” Additionally, there is little differentiation in how professional learning is executed. Staff shared that they rarely provide input about their professional learning. Those interviewed reported that the quality of professional development depended on the effectiveness of an employee’s supervisor. All staff reported that in the past there were additional ways to reward and recognize staff. Due to changes in leadership and budgetary constraints, recognition programs have become limited.

Support staff and the central office noted that there is essentially no implementation of performance evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Support staff reported that there are no standards that they are evaluated against, and many reported that they have never been evaluated in their positions. Support staff also reported not being invited to participate in professional learning activities.

## **SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Area 1: Improve and streamline all HR processes from application to onboarding of employees**

Staff in Talent Management, Human Resources, and Labor Relations work hard and are doing their best to address employees’ needs; however, they are stuck in outdated and nebulous processes and compliance activities that prevent their ability to support schools effectively while operating strategically. With a growing number of human resource challenges, including staffing shortages and competition from surrounding districts, NHPS should refine their hiring practice and procedures to: 1) increase recruitment and marketing efforts to hire the highest quality employees, 2) focus on retention strategies, and 3) differentiate their support for novice and veteran employees.

#### **Short-Term Recommendations (within one year)**

1. Redesign and streamline the application and hiring process to ensure the availability of a sufficient hiring pool of high-quality candidates for selection by principals in early spring. The district should look at how schools could receive preliminary allocations in order to project vacancies and begin the hiring process earlier. The HR team should process map the recruitment and hiring process, from posting a position to onboarding an employee, and the deployment of staff to individual school sites. They should also identify and stop processes that inhibit a positive hiring experience for candidates. Moreover, the hiring team should review the current use of the Applitracks system and redesign the workflow to ensure that this automated applicant tracking system is used to its full potential. Many school districts in the United States use Applitracks and there

are a number of best practices that can be garnered by learning from other districts. By using Applitracks appropriately, candidates can be tracked, vetted and qualified for hire, so high-quality candidates are not lost to other school districts.

2. Implement a strong recruitment effort to attract qualified and highly skilled candidates to NHPS. In the short term, this recommendation calls for a district's deliberate effort to cultivate a positive climate to highlight NHPS as a great place to work. Recruitment efforts should focus on hard-to-fill positions and implementing practices that promote a diverse and inclusive hiring pool of candidates. A simplified application process allows for efficient screening of candidates. It is imperative that NHPS makes a concerted effort to recruit and hire teachers early. At least 80% of teacher and principal hiring should be completed by June 1 for the next school year to ensure that schools are 100% staffed for school opening. The district should offer "open contracts" for teachers in hard-to-fill areas, thereby securing the highest quality teachers. To maintain a steady supply of teachers, NHPS should consider grow your own and teacher pipeline programs to train interested and qualified candidates.
3. Organize HR departments under a system-level leader to support the continuum of human capital services: recruitment, retention, performance and evaluation, employee relations, and professional learning programs. Structure the organization by key services and functions to carry out each HR component. These functions include: staffing services to schools and offices, labor relations, benefits and compensation, employee leave management, specialized centers of expertise for induction and retention, and professional learning and performance management. These units should work together, and in partnership with principal supervisors and school leaders,

to ensure adequate support for all employees from the beginning to the end of their careers in NHPS. This reorganization of the department will require additional HR staff, particularly to support the staffing functions and training of staff to work collaboratively and strategically.

4. Work with the finance department to implement a position management process that assigns positions to budget codes. Currently, there are too many positions that are not tied to a budget code. Along with the work to initiate a position management process, convene a cross-functional team comprised of school-based employees, central office staff, and union partners to develop a standardized, coherent, and equitable staffing model where allocations are based on student enrollment, and instructional and operational priorities.
5. Build structures of collaboration with employee unions. This is important as HR processes are reviewed to make the candidate and employee experience a positive one. It is important to work together to review each employee agreement to identify areas that can facilitate hiring timelines, transfer procedures, and placement processes. It is also important that employee unions work together with managers to continue to build a supportive and nurturing work environment for employees.

### **Long-Term Recommendation (within three years)**

1. Create and implement a multiyear, research-based induction and mentoring program for all employees. Research shows that strong induction support for all staff has been linked to improved student achievement and increased retention rates. HR should work in partnership with Academics and other departments to guarantee a support plan for new hires. Additionally, collaborating with

community stakeholders will support new employee transfers and their transition to NHPS. The induction and mentorship program should emphasize how staff engages families and communities to support student achievement.

2. Audit current data indicators to determine the prioritization of metrics to be used internally with HR staff and externally with principals and stakeholders, including community stakeholders. Create an HR Data Team to establish guidelines for how to access and disseminate human capital data to drive best practices. This team should determine how HR data are collected, disaggregated, and disseminated to principals, hiring managers, and stakeholders for use with planning, strategizing, and decision making. Key data should include the following: who is in the applicant pool, number of vacancies, performance evaluation data by job location and family, and turnover and retention data by school and position type. Whenever possible, the HR department should develop indicating metrics and goals related to understanding the diversity of the workforce and workforce deployment. HR data should be disaggregated by effectiveness, race, gender, and high- and low-need schools.
3. Implement a Substitute Teacher Project to improve the substitute fill-rate through improved systems that enhance recruitment and incentive pay. Consider hiring a permanent substitute for each building or offering incentives for substitutes who regularly take jobs in order to ensure better fill-rates for the district. Additionally, provide an orientation and continuous training for substitutes to assist them with classroom management strategies. Not being able to fill daily substitute jobs directly affects student achievement as well as the work of paraeducators and other support staff.

4. Identify clear goals and objectives for the Talent Management, Human Resources, and Labor Relations Department that contribute to the accomplishment of the district's goals. The department's work must become more strategic than transactional. The department should be organized to support schools in all areas of human capital, including recruitment, selection, support, evaluation, and retention. All HR roles should be clarified, and responsibilities delineated to support practice areas adequately. It is important that employees know their roles and responsibilities and the impact of their work on others. HR should review, update, and appropriately classify all job descriptions to ensure alignment with the work and needs of the district.

## **Area 2: Improve Retention of High-Quality Staff**

Retaining high-quality staff is a key component to improving student achievement. Once districts hire well, it is imperative that school districts keep great teachers and staff employed. New teachers who are hired in a timely fashion, placed in appropriate settings, and receive a comprehensive induction are more likely to remain in these roles longer. The best retention strategies are tied to professional development learning programs. Professional and personal growth and working in a supportive culture are often rated higher in satisfaction than compensation as reasons for staying in an organization. Retention of highly effective staff is not only a HR function, but the responsibility of the whole district to support and nurture excellence. It is incumbent on the school district to put purposeful strategies in place to keep great staff.

### **Short-Term Recommendations (within one year)**

1. Work with schools and offices to create a district-wide Retention Plan that focuses on

support for highly effective employees and provides career paths for staff. Review turnover data by work site yearly. It is essential to understand the key drivers of employee turnover and retention. Differentiate the Retention Plan by school and work site. Consider providing incentives for high-needs schools to retain staff.

2. Institute a consistent, automated exit interview process and use this data to inform recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies. Currently, the exit surveys have a poor return rate.
3. Make filling out exit surveys a requisite for transitioning out of the district, possibly making receiving the last paycheck contingent upon completing the exit survey. Hold focus groups with employees to obtain ongoing feedback and input about why employees elect to stay in NHPS. Many staff reported liking their jobs. Obtaining input from those who are committed to the district will assist in developing support for employees.
4. Institute a strong recognition program for staff that celebrates employees who devote their time, skills, and energy to support and improve student achievement. Employee recognition is a major component of a strong workforce and demonstrates the value of employees in the district. NHPS should not only ensure that there are district-wide employee recognition and retirement appreciation programs, but each work site should create ways to recognize staff for their contributions and commitment to the district.

### **Long-Term Recommendations (within three years)**

1. Create leadership pathways for employee groups by promoting a culture of learning and development. NHPS staff should be

informed of promotion opportunities in the district. These career pathways would include substitute and paraprofessional development as well as implementing a grow-your-own or teacher pipeline program. Teachers should have opportunities for advancement and be able to stay in the classroom. It is also important to have an internal district pipeline and leadership development program for assistant principals, principals, and central office administrators. Additionally, opportunities for advancement for support staff should be available. All these avenues help keep high-quality staff employed with NHPS.

### **Area 3: Ensure an Integrated Approach to Performance Management and Professional Learning**

Performance Management is the systematic process for managing employees' individual and collective performance toward achieving the organization's goals and mission. A comprehensive performance management system should include:

- Clearly articulated performance standards for each position/role,
- Observation and evaluation performance timelines,
- A defined professional development growth and learning track for each job group,
- Aligned professional development to work responsibilities, and
- Opportunities for promotion.

### **Short-Term Recommendations (within one year)**

1. All employees should have the opportunity to be supported by a Performance Management System with objectives, standards, and supports that are implemented consistently

and with transparency, and in a manner that helps all employees grow. In order to ensure that there is a clear and transparent system, a cross-functional team should be created to review the current evaluation processes and to ensure that all employees receive feedback and support on their performance. This team should be comprised of a multi-stakeholder group that represents all employee groups. Important partners in this endeavor are the employee unions. Make the evaluation system a true system of professional growth where a low rating is a signal for the employee to receive support to improve performance. Consider broadening the data used in the evaluation to include a 360-degree process. The current systems should be reviewed and revised to ensure there is an integrated approach to supporting all employees. For some employee groups, a Performance Management System may need to be created. The Gallup employee satisfaction survey is another potentially useful resource that can be explored by the district, especially as it thinks about performance management, culture, and climate at scale.

2. Professional Learning should be tied to each employee's role and responsibilities. Professional Learning should not only include feedback on performance, but also the opportunity for the employee to give input on what processes will help them grow. Professional Learning should reflect best practices in teaching and learning and help adults with varied interests and learning profiles build capacity. Professional Learning should be coordinated and embedded into the daily work of each employee. It is important to engage all staff in having input into their learning and development. Professional Learning should be customized and differentiated for the needs of both novice and veteran employees.

### **Long-Term Recommendations (within three years)**

1. Leave management and employee absenteeism are challenges for the district. Significant employee absenteeism impacts the use of substitutes and influences student achievement. Higher teacher absenteeism is highly correlated to lower student achievement; therefore, it is important to manage both day-to-day and longer-term absences. Regular employee absentee reports should be created and disseminated to supervisors. Incentives for employees with good attendance should be implemented. A deeper look at how professional development days impact attendance should be reviewed. The district should hold student learning time sacred by scheduling professional development in the afternoons, after school, and in the summer months. Moreover, the district should also analyze other factors (i.e., district-wide transitions, challenges or tensions within governance and leadership units, etc.) that impact employee morale and practice, and contribute to employee absenteeism.
2. Develop an evaluation system for support staff that provides them with the opportunity to get feedback on how they are performing. Create a cross-functional team with representatives from various job types and union leaders to develop the system. Additionally, pay special attention to the growth and development of support staff. Oftentimes, professional learning opportunities occur when support staff are not working. Many support staff have responsibilities to support instruction and need to learn about new curriculum and instructional practices. Other support staff are in positions where there are one or two people in that position for the district. They do not have opportunities to network. It is important that all staff have growth opportunities.

## IMPLICATIONS

Suggestions for the Superintendent	Suggestions for the Board/Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop strategic Superintendent’s advisory councils with various groups of employees (teachers, principals, paraprofessionals and substitute teachers, central office classified staff, school-based classified staff) to maintain a pulse on the health of the system from each group’s perspective.</li><li>• Engage system leaders in learning about central office transformation that promotes stronger collaboration among HR practitioners, principal supervisors, and school-based administrators so that HR and talent development/management functions and practices are truly aligned to the needs of schools and students. For example, create and implement professional development opportunities to build the capacity of principals, principal supervisors, and hiring managers to be strong human capital managers.</li><li>• Tap into external partners and models of best/hopeful practices – for example: Urban Schools Human Capital Academy, Gallup Employee Satisfaction surveys/resources, lessons learned from districts that have made considerable progress in this area (i.e., Highline Public Schools, etc.).</li><li>• Establish clear roles and responsibilities for system leaders’ oversight of talent management functions—engage them in setting clear deliverables and metrics for improvement.</li><li>• Review policies, procedures, and regulations and make appropriate recommendations to the Board for changes where appropriate.</li><li>• Review staffing and professional learning that supports talent management and make changes where appropriate. This review should include a human capital data management report that is presented by the human resource/talent management leaders.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leverage Board members’ networks and community relationships/trust to support the district’s efforts to engage in community-wide conversations about educator shortage, particularly in hard-to-staff areas and high-need schools.</li><li>• Serve as thought and strategic partners to the Superintendent in policy development/revisions that pertain to employees as well as labor relations.</li><li>• Revise and adopt new policies where appropriate.</li><li>• Establish Long-Term vision for talent management and allocate commensurate resources to achieve that vision.</li></ul> 

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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The charge of the Family and Community Engagement Committee was to review and analyze data, systems, and processes, including climate data, perceptual data, standards, and strategy and structure for engaging families and community. It is hoped that in its next level of work, NHPS will partner with families and communities in more effective ways that are linked to learning outcomes and that leverage all strengths and knowledge in order to implement a comprehensive system of engagement that supports the needs of students.

### FINDINGS

The Family and Community Engagement Team's approach used a social justice lens with equity at the core. This lens necessitates beliefs, policies, practices, and systems that provide each and every student with what they need to succeed. Under this premise, equity and equality are not synonymous, and the next level of work calls for understanding the root causes of inequities so educators, schools, the district, and families and communities are better equipped with the knowledge, tools, and resources (i.e., each other) needed to counter structural, social, and educational injustices, together. The analysis of engagement in NHPS focused on how to leverage access, agency, advocacy, and collective action to transform culture and impact systemic change. The approach was grounded in the research-based premise that students do better when their families and communities are actively engaged in partnership with schools. The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships provided guidance for the analysis of district and school engagement practice and supports.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships was developed by Karen L. Mapp and Paul J. Kuttner (2012) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education as a guide for schools and communities in the creation and implementation of their family engagement strategies, policies, and programs. It is not a "blueprint," but rather, "a compass, laying out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement."

### Family and Community Engagement Strengths

1. There is a cadre of schools and school leaders who are engaging families in ways that embrace them as partners. It is important to capture the practices implemented in these schools and understand the set of beliefs and conditions that are facilitating these successful efforts so that they can be adapted and scaled throughout the system.
2. There is a number of strongly involved families and active citywide PTO and School Planning and Management Teams (SPMT). Many stakeholders within the city and district seek to grow that base so families and communities have a stronger voice in the decisions that are made in the design and implementation of the learning and teaching agenda.
3. Engagement with focus groups and interviews revealed that there are strong community partners connected to NHPS that want to deepen their partnerships to support students, families, and schools.

## The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships



## Family and Community Engagement Challenges

1. Two or three major themes from information review:
  - The **current environment does not provide equitable access for effective engagement across NHPS** and there are few active structures to support family agency and develop parents as strong advocates for their children and NHPS.
  - Family and community engagement is not clearly defined in NHPS. There are **no clear expectations or standards to guide and measure effectiveness**.
  - Current structures are focused **more on performing tasks and support than building capacity for systemic engagement**.
2. Two or three major themes from focus groups/interviews:
  - Respondents reported that **relational trust between families, communities, and NHPS is at a critically low level** and there are **few opportunities for families to strengthen their advocacy skills**.
  - While there are pockets of effective practice in the district, **family and community engagement efforts are largely inconsistent**. Respondents reported that most schools do not have welcoming, inclusive cultures and school leaders are not always accessible to parents.
  - **Deficit mind-sets, bias, and systemic racism are barriers** for both student achievement and family and community engagement.
  - There is a need for NHPS to **embed trauma-informed practices** in the work with both families and students.

Many of the points that emerged during conversations with stakeholders—especially as it pertains to deficit mind-sets, bias, systemic racism, and

trauma-informed care—were also directly aligned with the analysis and conversations that were happening through the Equity and Access Committee as members explored the topic of equity through various angles and perspectives. This supports the belief that family and community engagement is about systemic equity, opportunity, and access linked to learning and that families and communities must be full partners in the work at hand.

## SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Family and Community Engagement is not work that should happen in siloes or exist as an afterthought. Instead, it should be directly linked to learning and integrated in work that happens at all levels of the system, from classrooms to curriculum development and professional learning, to how central office functions are designed to serve students and families.

The transition committee charged with Family and Community Engagement identified opportunities that create a fertile ground for the next level of work:

- The Connecticut State Department of Education is developing specific guidelines and supports for family and community engagement. The resources available include the State Board of Education Position Statement and Policy Guidance, as well as the CSDE's evidence-based practice guides, with specific guidelines pertaining to student/family/community engagement.
- The leadership transition phase within the school system provides an optimal opportunity to reorganize and align structures, systems, and strategies into a more coherent approach to building partnerships with families and community partners, including faith-based organizations and others

## Short-Term Recommendations

### Near Term (within six months)

- ***Institute a System-Wide Survey and Processes to Generate, Analyze, and Use Perceptual, Culture, and Climate Data.*** These data should be a meaningful part of the profile of each school and the district as a whole. These data, which represent the perceptions and experiences of adults and students, should be collected, analyzed, and used regularly to inform decisions about the teaching and learning environment. Therefore, the district must:

- Adopt a user-friendly Parent, Teacher & Student Climate survey, aligned to standards, to gather data on perceptions both at the school and district levels and utilize data to support growth and for accountability.
- ***Develop and Adopt Standards, Structures, and Strategies for a Systemic Approach.***
  - Reorganize the district structure and approach to family and community engagement to ensure clearly defined expectations and supports for engagement at the school level, consistency in engagement practice across schools, expectations and protocols for community partners, supports for building the capacity of both school staff and parents to partner, and systems to monitor and publicly report progress.
  - These standards, in addition to communication standards, should comprehensively support the inclusion of English language learners (ELLs), families whose secondary language is English, and monolingual speakers to ensure consistency across all communities and stakeholders.

### Short Term (within one year)

- ***Develop and Adopt Standards, Structures and Strategies for Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist Practices.***
  - Develop ongoing anti-racism and anti-bias

training in school communities across NHPS and embed principles into professional development framework.

- Adopt a set of standards that clearly define expectations for welcoming all families into the school community, engaging families in support of student learning.
- Establish effective structures and policies (or refine existing ones) for including families and community partners in decision making, and collaborating deeply with community and faith-based partners.
- ***Develop a District-Wide Family and Community Engagement Action Plan that Mirrors the District's Strategic Plan (to be developed).***
  - Engage staff, students, families, and a broad and representative spectrum of community partners in the design of a Family and Community Engagement action plan that is aligned to the district's strategic plan. This Family and Community Engagement action plan should be grounded in research, national standards, and best practices while directly addressing the contextual realities of New Haven. The action plan should articulate a clear vision, goals, values, definitions, strategies, and outcomes that the entire system will organize itself around when it comes to the work around district, school, family and community partnerships.
- ***Design a Communications Infrastructure.***
  - Develop a comprehensive communications plan that leverages technology, with clearly defined protocols and expectations for consistent, open, two-way communications at both the district and school levels. Additionally, NHPS must ensure transparency and culturally appropriate communications and practices to engage all NHPS stakeholders.

## Long-Term Recommendations

### Long Term (within three years)

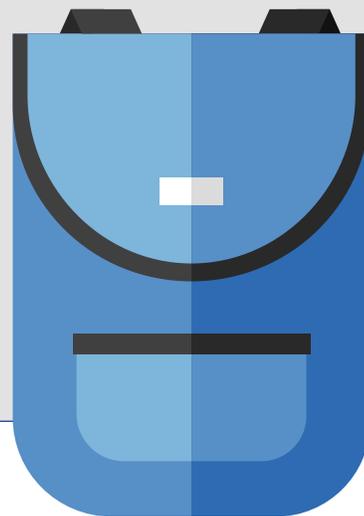
- *Strengthen Standards, Structures, Strategies, and Practices for Ongoing Capacity Building, Support, and Accountability.*
  - Develop a system of support and accountability for school leaders and staff to meet NHPS expectations that is reported publicly,

such as a quarterly school report card or performance dashboard that includes family and community engagement and partnership indicators.

- Establish and sustain, in partnership with the community, a parent-driven vehicle that builds the capacity of parents to navigate NHPS, support learning at home, and become strong advocates and leaders for their children and NHPS.

## IMPLICATIONS

Suggestions for the Superintendent	Suggestions for the Board/Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate a clear commitment and vision for family and community partnerships as an essential lever for improvement.</li> <li>• Establish clear roles and responsibilities for system leaders who oversee the family and community engagement work.</li> <li>• Champion the development of a comprehensive action plan/framework for improving family and community engagement effort.</li> <li>• Create clear professional learning, accountability, and support for improving family and community engagement (including resource allocation</li> <li>• Maintain a pulse on the health of the system through bimonthly or quarterly engagement with the Superintendent Parent/Family Engagement Council (TBD).</li> <li>• Revise and recommend appropriate policies, procedures and regulations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear interests and priorities to guide the Superintendent and senior leaders.</li> <li>• Develop Board framework and shared expectations for the Board’s role in community engagement and partnerships.</li> <li>• Revise/adopt policies where appropriate.</li> <li>• Approve the allocation of necessary resources.</li> </ul>



## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCIES AND EFFECTIVENESS

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The charge of the Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness Committee was to analyze the extent to which resource allocations (time, talent, funds) are strategically and successfully used for instructional and operational/administrative purposes that impact students' experiences and outcomes, so that each and every student in NHPS is served equitably and set up for success.

### FINDINGS

School system resources are much more than the dollars allocated to schools, central office, and programs. Time, talent, and funding are generally considered to be the three areas to examine when looking to make operational improvements that also enable increased efficiencies. The NHPS is no different from other school districts that are attempting to create operational efficiencies that lead to improved services and better outcomes for students. Yet, it is unusual for school systems to find increased efficiencies by reducing central office administrative costs, which tend to be lean in the first place. If NHPS wants to reduce the overall size of its budget, the only significant approach will be to reduce the number of schools and commensurate staff. If the Board and community want to continue the current portfolio model with small schools, the major area of work is to allocate resources according to needs. That being said, there are some potential areas where efficiencies can be created in the pursuit of improved teaching and learning that will produce greater student achievement.

The Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness team submitted a report based on interviews with stakeholders and a review of financial data. Below,

that report is expanded upon with recommendations for resource allocation and suggestions for other areas to be examined.

### Operational Efficiencies and Effectiveness Strengths

1. The site-based budget and recent fiscal presentations to the Board of Education and Board of Alders as well as public Town Hall meetings, staff meetings, and publication of agendas and fiscal updates online represent a good start to the process of increasing a focus on organizational efficiencies and effectiveness as a lever for improvement.
2. The district has been quite successful at leveraging grant funds for many of the necessary and cost-effective operational upgrades. Examples include grants such as the State Security Grant, SBAC Technology Grant, the School Construction Grant, and capital investments in energy programs that have enabled the reshaping of security systems district-wide, the installation of Wi-Fi at all schools, network refresh and phone replacement, one of the largest school construction programs in the country, and an LED light replacement program that has saved millions in utilities.
3. Data analysis and interviews revealed many foundationally sound investments in infrastructure, cost-effective energy systems, and technology. There is also a successful history of grant awards and projects that have made it easier to bridge fiscal shortcomings through grant funds.

## Operational Efficiencies and Effectiveness Challenges

**Resource Allocation** – From a big picture vantage point, the most essential question that NHPS faces regarding resource allocation is the ongoing commitment to the portfolio model of schools, most of which are small. Allocating resources equitably and transparently within a portfolio model is a complex undertaking, as each school has a distinct program. Clear guidance and policies are necessary so that the public understands how general and grant dollars are being distributed, as well as how teachers and staff are being assigned to schools. The absence of such guidance in NHPS is an area that requires immediate attention. Increased efficiency and transparency can be attained if NHPS were to move toward a more unified approach to the delivery of instruction. The Superintendent, Board of Education, and the New Haven community should spend considerable time discussing the cost considerations that are associated with a portfolio model.

**Funding** – There is no doubt that NHPS faces a significant challenge regarding funding. When Birks assumed the superintendency in May 2018, the district was in the midst of reconciling an approximately \$19-million deficit. There are few ways to create more efficiencies that will result in an expense reduction of that size; reduction in staffing is the main consideration NHPS will have to make in order to rightsize the district. School-by-school budgeting data reveal a wide discrepancy in per-pupil funding among schools. NHPS needs to develop a standard approach to budgeting based on average employee salaries, student needs, and adherence to the portfolio model.

All of the numbers below are based on 2017 enrollment and the 2018-19 site-based budget, pulled from the NHPS website. There are 24 schools with enrollment of fewer than 500 students, 16 with fewer than 750 students and

three with more than 750 students. While small school environments have some benefits, given the student achievement challenge in NHPS, there is no correlation between greater student achievement and small schools. Given the massive investment in new buildings and interdistrict magnet schools, as well as a robust intradistrict choice program, changing the footprint of NHPS is a gargantuan task, before even considering the politics and community dynamics of such an effort. Regardless, NHPS leaders and the community must fully recognize that they have to pay for the model that has been chosen.

## SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Reevaluate Resource Allocation Processes & Mandates** – NHPS can, with its current allocation of resources, make adjustments through an equity lens. The per-pupil expenditures (PPE) throughout NHPS varies considerably. For example, among nine high schools, the average PPE is \$9,133. While five of nine high schools spend between \$8,300 and \$8,600 per student, one spends \$7,800, while two others spend \$11,300 and \$12,300. The school with the highest percentage of white students and the smallest percentage of students on free/reduced-priced meals has the largest PPE, although the school with the second-highest PPE has the largest population of students receiving free/reduced-priced meals.

The PPE range at PK-8 is also considerable. While the average is \$7,235, the range is from \$5,568 to \$9,152. Schools that have less than 25% free/reduced-priced meals spend, on average, \$6,811 PPE, while schools with 26-50% spend \$7,420 and those with 51%-75% spend \$7,111. The one school that exceeds 75% FR/L spends \$8,717 PPE. When PPE is analyzed according to other demographic considerations, further equity questions emerge. For example, the average PPE

for the 16 schools with fewer than 10% ELLs is \$7,312. The five schools with 10-20% ELLs spend \$7,387, yet the two PK-8 schools with between 30-40% ELLs have an approximately \$1,700 PPE difference (\$8,717 and \$6,967). This disparity is apparent for the two PK-8 schools with 42-43% ELLs, spending approximately \$7,000 and \$5,500, respectively, and the two with more than 50%, both of which have a PPE of approximately \$6,600. This recommendation strongly aligns with insights provided by the committee that focused on Equity and Access, as they advocated for deeper dives into disparities experienced by various subgroups and the development and implementation of an equity policy to address these inequitable realities.

***Strengthen an Equity-Based Approach to Budgeting*** – Since NHPS presents site budgets based on actual, rather than average, salaries, it's quite likely that variances among schools reflect teacher salaries. This should also be viewed through an equity lens, and we recommend that further analysis be conducted to determine teacher experience according to school. There is research that correlates teacher experience with student achievement, thus, NHPS should determine whether teacher assignment policies comport with an equity-based approach to budgeting. NHPS must take a very hard look at how personnel are assigned among and within schools. Systems organized around equity take a strong stand on assigning the most effective professionals according to student needs, meaning that the strongest/most skilled teachers and administrators are placed in schools with the highest needs. Systems that abide by these beliefs also invest heavily in customized professional learning so that educators have the skills required to meet student needs.

Many personnel who work in schools, particularly instructional coaches, are listed in central office program budgets. This gives the impression of an over-resourced central office. While coaches can be a powerful tool to address student achievement, the

district should take immediate and strategic steps to measure their effectiveness. Given the portfolio model and the lack of centralized support and accountability, we recommend a thorough review of these positions with the potential reassignment to schools according to need. Every teacher-level position within the central office should be reviewed to determine whether they'd be more effective if placed in schools. If they remain in the central office, a system of evaluation, supervision, professional learning, and accountability must be established to ensure they're meeting the needs of schools and students. There is also a question regarding the allocation of central office positions among offices. For example, at the time of this transition process, the physical education and bilingual departments each have two coordinators and supervisors, respectively, while other content areas have one. The Office of School Support has four directors and one principal. These types of positions may be necessary, but in order to maximize their effectiveness they must be aligned with the needs of schools. In addition, the \$5.6 million budgeted for itinerant teachers needs to be examined for alignment to school needs. It will likely take at least one, if not two, budget cycles to realign all of the central office positions.

***Overhaul Management and Oversight of Grant Funding*** – Another critical question confronting NHPS is the management and oversight of grant funding. While NHPS has successfully acquired grant funding to support various initiatives, sustainability and management are not clear. Since there is no clear oversight of individual grants, and a good number have recently expired or will do so soon, it is essential that NHPS immediately conduct a multiyear projection of how those grant-funded positions will be subsumed into the general operating budget. It is also essential that there is clear support and accountability for grant compliance. We recommend that a cabinet-level administrator be given responsibility for all grant funding and programs.

*Collaboration with the City of New Haven* – Many jurisdictions in Connecticut have increased collaboration between school system and city agencies as a way to streamline operations. Through interviews, we learned of a number of short- and Long-Term projects that the Board of Education and city are engaged in to streamline processes related to personnel management, accounts payable and purchasing, among others. Leveraging the value-add of in-kind partnerships with the city, particularly in the area of utilizing the existing MUNIS system and planned upgrades to the fullest with fidelity, is long overdue and a project worthy of committed focus. Reducing paper and streamlining policies, protocols and data reporting, will increase efficiency, be more cost effective, and allow for more consistent and fact-based reporting and tracking of revenue and expenses while freeing up staff to engage in more proactive fiscal management and support of core needs of the district. We believe that this same collaborative approach that is being used on the MUNIS and procurement processes, and which we saw evidence of in some of the other internal successful programs (i.e., planning, stakeholder/community involvement, and other best practices) can also be deployed strategically in a number of other areas including transportation and website redesign, to name two examples.

***Create Avenues for Further Efficiencies*** – by reviewing and systemizing the following areas:

- **Medicaid reimbursements.** According to the site-based budget document, a little more than \$350K is budgeted for Medicaid reimbursement. While additional dollars may appear in other budgets, in our experience, many urban districts do not have the infrastructure, support, and accountability to make sure that all eligible costs associated with student 504s and IEPs are actually being reimbursed. We recommend that NHPS review comparable reimbursement rates

for similar Connecticut districts and designate a central line of responsibility for the process.

- **Workers compensation.** According to the site-based budget document, \$230K of the food service budget is workers' comp. While this number may reflect the reality of the current state of claims, we recommend that NHPS immediately conduct a thorough review of training and supervision for food service and custodial staff – those who are in-house, part-time or contractual. In addition, clear guidance and training should be given to teachers and paraprofessionals regarding the appropriate rules for displaying instructional materials.
- **Information technology.** This area needs to be reviewed for software upgrades and/or implementation of new systems that will increase efficiencies, especially in purchasing, accounts receivable/payable, and Human Resources (see Talent Management section for more on HR). In addition, hardware replacement cycles should be clearly established and adhered to, as should purchasing guidelines. While schools should be given some flexibility for purchasing hardware and software according to the needs of their instruction program, efficiencies in purchasing and repairs can be made with centralized processes.
- **Transportation.** Given the portfolio approach and the number of schools, transportation is an enormous cost that the school system bears. The most immediate recommendation is for NHPS to assume responsibility for routing buses. The Board and Superintendent should immediately review all transportation policies and then start routing buses accordingly. The service provider should not have the authority to determine what services should be provided; that is a school system responsibility.

- Special education outplacement. The equity and access team addressed issues concerning students with disabilities. Given the significant tuition costs associated with placing students with disabilities out of NHPS, there should be a regular review process to determine if students can be better served through in-house programs.
- Custodial overtime. While this is a common aspect of school operations, it requires ongoing oversight and policy alignment. We recommend doing a thorough review of all policies, contractual agreements, work order data, and personnel agreements to ensure that work

is being completed in a timely and efficient fashion. In addition, investments in preventative maintenance and upkeep are essential to avoid larger costs in the future.

- Athletics. The \$1 million budgeted for athletics, non-personnel, should be reviewed.
- Health insurance. Through collaboration with labor unions, every effort must be made to reduce health care costs through preventative approaches, smoking cessation efforts, and incentives for health/wellness (and disincentives for smoking).

## IMPLICATIONS

Suggestions for the Superintendent	Suggestions for the Board/Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear lines of accountability for all operations responsibilities.</li> <li>• Review policies and procedures and make recommendations to the Board for changes where appropriate.</li> <li>• Establish clear processes for collaboration with the city and the state.</li> <li>• Work with the community to develop a Long-Term vision for the portfolio model, including an equity-based resource allocation approach</li> <li>• Engage city and state elected officials in pursuit of additional state funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear interests and priorities for the Superintendent’s oversight of operations and resource allocation.</li> <li>• Review and adopt new policies, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Work with the Superintendent to establish process for engaging community in Long-Term visioning process.</li> <li>• Engage city and state elected officials in pursuit of additional state funding.</li> </ul>



## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: EQUITY AND ACCESS

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The charge of the Equity and Access Committee was to explore the structures, policies, and practices that enable exclusion, inadequate resources, and bias in the school district.

As has been noted before, conversations about equity emerged in all five focus areas explored during this transition process: Learning and Teaching, Talent Management and Development, Family and Community Engagement, Operational Efficiencies and Effectiveness, and, of course, Equity and Access. This made evident the fact that equity is a through line of work that permeates every aspect of NHPS and must be urgently attended to so that student experiences and outcomes are radically transformed.

In thinking about this goal of equity and access in the district, the committee decided that its work would focus on seven areas: equity generally, choice process and programs, English language learner programs, talented and gifted programs (TAG), Advanced Placement (AP), special education programs, and discipline. The depth of analysis conducted, the breadth of conversations captured, and the detailed nature of this section are representative of the urgent and essential nature of this work.

### AREA OF FOCUS: EQUITY GENERALLY

The district does not have an equity policy. The policies that come closest are the Nondiscrimination Instruction Program policy (Policy 6121) and the Grouping policy (Policy 6152), both of which were adopted on August 14, 1995; moreover, there is no indication that either policy has been revised since then.

- The nondiscrimination policy provides that the district should “avoid discriminatory actions” and that the district should “seek to foster good human and educational relations which will help to attain . . . equal rights and opportunities for students and employees in the school community . . . [and] equal opportunity for all students to participate in the total program of the schools.”
- The Grouping policy recognizes that placement in “instructional groups, classrooms, and programs of study, has a significant impact on their educational and social development.” The policy provides that no grouping or placement “is best for all children” and that the district should follow four principles when making grouping decisions, including the principle that “[s]tudents can learn much more from students whose skills and interests are different from their own in heterogeneous groups.” The policy provides that grouping and placement decisions “should be flexible, and they should be reviewed regularly to test their appropriateness.”

In the summer of 2017, the State Education Resource Center invited the district to participate in an opportunity to develop a racial equity policy and plan to ensure racial equity. The district accepted the invitation and formed an equity leadership team, which consists of district teachers and administrators, a community service representative, and a corporate/philanthropic partner.

### Strengths

- The district has an equity leadership team, which has a goal of developing a racial equity policy and plan.

## Opportunities

- The district does not have a policy or plan that deals with equity broadly – equity for all racial/ethnic groups, for gender, for students eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), English language learners and students with disabilities.

## Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- With input from the district’s equity leadership team, the Board should adopt a policy that deals with equity broadly – equity for all racial/ethnic groups, for gender, for students eligible for free and reduced meals (FARMS), ELLs and students with disabilities.
- The district should review its nondiscrimination and grouping policies to ensure that they are consistent with the law, best practices, and the district’s equity policy.

## Long-Term Goals (within three years)

- The district’s equity leadership team should develop an equity plan that deals with equity broadly – equity for all racial/ethnic groups, for gender, for students eligible for free and reduced meals (FARMS), ELLs and students with disabilities for the Superintendent to review and revise consistent with the district’s equity policy.
- The district should consistently implement its equity plan and monitor progress on established indicators and measures of success.

## Area Of Focus: Choice Programs & Process

The district uses a choice process to assign students to its schools. According to the district’s 2018-19 School Choice Guide, the district uses choice because it “is a proven strategy used to raise academic achievement and foster culturally diverse school communities.” The guide states that choice

provides families the opportunity to select a school from a range of school options “that best fit[s] their child’s academic needs.” At the elementary/middle school levels, the options include 10 magnet schools, 10 neighborhood schools, 11 interdistrict magnet schools, one ACES (Advocacy, Commitment, Excellence, Service) magnet school, one magnet/charter school, and three charter schools. Each of the schools has “its own unique sets of themes and programming.” At the high school level, there are two comprehensive high schools, one magnet, seven interdistrict magnet schools, two charters, one vocational school, and one ACES school.

The district uses a wide variety of strategies to provide families information about the programs and themes at each school and the application and placement process. This includes school expos where schools have booths staffed by administrators, teachers, parents and students who provide information about schools; the School Choice Guide, which is available in hard copy and on the district’s website and which provides information about the schools and the choice process; a district choice website with information about schools and the choice process, and staff at the Placement Office, who are available to assist families with the choice process and provide information about schools.

The district uses a computer program to assign students to schools “because the number of applicants is greater than the number of available seats in some schools.” The computer program considers the ranked choices of families and certain preferences, including a neighborhood preference, a neighborhood only preference, a sibling preference, and a sibling preference when siblings are applying together. Students who are not placed in one of their choices are placed on the waitlist. For New Haven residents, the waitlist expires at the end of the first marking period, which is in early November.

The district receives additional state funding for its interdistrict magnets -- \$7,085 for each suburban student and \$3,000 for each district student – to reserve at least 25% of the seats in each interdistrict magnet school for students from surrounding towns. The State Department of Education (SDE) recently put the district on notice that most of its interdistrict magnet schools were out of compliance with the state diversity goals and that four schools would receive financial penalties if the racial/ethnic enrollment in these schools did not improve for the 2018-19 school year. According to the SDE, 10 other schools will have financial penalties if the racial/ethnic enrollment in these schools does not improve by October 2021. The SDE reported that only two of the district’s interdistrict magnets met the state diversity goals, Betsy Ross Magnet and Engineering & Science University Magnet.

For many years, the district has been successful in applying for and receiving federal magnet funds – Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) – to support its magnet schools. Currently, the district is receiving MSAP funds and the magnet schools that the MSAP is supporting include John S. Martinez Sea and Sky STEM School, West Rock STREAM Academy, Bishop Woods Architecture and Design Magnet School, and Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy for Global Awareness.

The Equity and Access Committee conducted a focus group to get feedback on equity issues. The issues identified by the focus group that relate to choice programs and the choice process include:

- Parents receiving a placement to a school being told by a principal that their child might not receive the services that the child needed, such as ELL services, if their child attended the school because the school had limited services compared to another school;
- High school magnet programs having fewer ELL programs than non-magnet high schools;
- Most of the magnet schools not being located in Latino neighborhoods;
- Neighborhood and magnet schools not having bilingual programs;
- Parents receiving placement to a school, but being discouraged by the school from attending the school because the child may have specific needs, such as behavior challenges;
- Parents making choices based on the perceptions and reputation of the schools rather than on data and other information about the school; and,
- The district not providing transportation to an elementary school that is one of the highest performing schools in the district so that students who live on the other side of town and who lack the means of transportation do not have access to this school.

### Strengths

- The district has been successful in being awarded MSAP funds to support its magnet schools.
- The district offers a range of neighborhood and magnet schools for parents/guardians to choose for their children to attend.
- The district has developed a choice guide and a website to provide information to parents about the choice process and programs available at schools.

### Opportunities

- The selection process is confusing to many parents/guardians.

- The district continues to place students from the waitlist in empty seats until the end of the first marking period. This means that students may start in one school at the beginning of the year and move to another school many weeks into the school year, which may have an impact on their achievement for that school year.
- There is a need to review the ELL programs offered in each school to ensure that ELL students have equitable access to magnet and neighborhood schools and that the programs provide the support necessary for such students to be successful in their school of choice.
- There are limited data for families to make informed choices about the schools that they would like their children to attend.
- School staff may be discouraging families from selecting a school because a program is not available or because the student has behavior challenges.

### Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- The district should review and revise, if necessary, criteria for the selection process to ensure that it is inclusive and transparent.
- The district should, in consultation with principals, establish a protocol for determining the instructional/program capacity of each school.
- The district should review placement of ELL programs to ensure that there is equitable access to bilingual programs, particularly at the magnet schools.
- The district should evaluate the pros and cons of eliminating the waitlist for schools at the end of the first two weeks of the school year and ensure that the “no show” procedure is enforced.

### Long-Term Goals (within three years)

- The district should consider, based on demographic study and the instructional/program capacity of each school, the feasibility of converting to a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade configuration.

### AREA OF FOCUS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

**State ELL Requirements.** State law requires districts to identify students who require ELL service and to provide students who have been identified as English language learners with ELL programs so that they can achieve English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing to enable them to achieve the same academic performance as students whose first language is English. According to the State Board of Education’s (SBE) Position Statement on the Education of Students Who are English Language Learners, the Connecticut SBE “believes that high-quality, comprehensive and effective English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are essential to acquire English language proficiency and academic proficiency for students who are English language learners (ELLs).”

Connecticut law defines ESL and bilingual education programs as:

- ESL programs are those that are taught only in English with the goal of assisting ELLs to achieve a level of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing that will allow ELLs to master the same content and meet the same academic performance standards expected of students whose first language is English.
- Bilingual education is a program that: (a) Makes instructional use of both English and an eligible student’s native language; (b) enables eligible students to achieve English proficiency and

academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills, including critical thinking, so as to meet appropriate grade promotion and graduation requirements; (c) provides for the continuous increase in the use of English and corresponding decrease in the use of the native language for the purpose of instruction within each year and from year to year and provides for the use of English for more than half of the instructional time by the end of the first year; (d) may develop the native language skills of eligible students, and (e) may include the participation of English-proficient students if the program is designed to enable all enrolled students to become more proficient in English and a second language.

### **The district's ELLs and the district's ELL**

**Program.** Policy 614L.31, which was adopted on August 14, 1995, and does not appear to have been revised, is the district's English language learner policy. The policy provides that the district shall annually determine the number of English learners, classify them "according to their dominant language and report them to the Board of Education." The policy requires the Superintendent to develop a plan of bilingual education for ELLs if there are 20 or more ELLs in a school "who would be helped in developing mastery of the English language through a bilingual program."

For the 2017-18 school year, 16 percent of the total enrollment in the district are ELLs. There are 74 languages spoken by ELL students. Eighty-six percent of the ELLs speak Spanish.

The district offers four ELL models of instruction – Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) in grades K-8, Dual Language PreK-6, English as a Second Language (ESL) support 6-8 and ESL K-12. For the 2017-18 school year, self-contained TBE is provided at six schools – Clemente (7-8), Fair Haven (3-8), Hill Central (K-3), Martinez (K-2), Strong (K-3), and Truman (K-6). Dual Language is offered at Columbus Family Academy

(Pre-K-5), John C. Daniels (Pre-K-5), Clinton Ave (K-3), and Fair Haven (K-2). ESL Support is offered at 29 schools. ESL is implemented at Betsy Ross (6-8) and at all of the high schools.

The Equity and Access Committee requested enrollment data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, special education and FARMS, for the last three years and was provided data for the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years. Using the 2016-17 year data for the percentage of ELL enrollment in each school, the committee analyzed the data to determine if there were concentrations of ELL enrollment in certain schools and schools with low percentages of ELL students enrolled.

- The committee found that, for the 2016-17 school year, there were seven schools that had more than 30% ELL enrollment, including Fair Haven with 56.5% ELL enrollment, Truman with 51% ELL enrollment, Columbus with 43.9% ELL enrollment, Martinez with 42.5% ELL enrollment, Hill Central with 37.9% ELL enrollment, Clinton with 35.9% ELL enrollment, and Strong with 32.3% ELL enrollment.
- In contrast, there were 12 schools that have five percent or less ELL enrollment, including Davis with 1.2% ELL enrollment, Engineering & Science with 1.2% ELL enrollment, NH Academy with 1.7% ELL enrollment, Lincoln-Bassett with 2.4% ELL enrollment, Edgewood with 3.0% ELL enrollment, Cooperative Arts with 3.1% ELL enrollment, LW Beecher with 3.4% ELL enrollment, Sound with 3.6% ELL enrollment, Betsy Ross Arts with 4.5% ELL enrollment, King-Robinson with 4.5% ELL enrollment, Hill Regional Career with 5.2% ELL enrollment, Metropolitan with 5.2% ELL enrollment, and Wexler-Grant with 5.7% ELL enrollment.

There was concern expressed that there are not sufficient seats in the TBE program for ELL

students in magnet programs. Of the TBE schools, three are neighborhood schools – Fairhaven, Hill Central (partial programming), and Truman -- and three are magnet schools – Clemente, Martinez, and Strong (partial programming). Of the four dual language schools, three are neighborhood schools – Columbus, Clinton Avenue, and Fair Haven -- and one is an interdistrict magnet – Daniels. Given the fact that four of the ten TBE/dual language schools are magnets, it does appear that there could be limited seats in the magnet schools.

The committee heard concerns about the availability of information provided to families about the district’s ELL program services and the options that families had to select bilingual programs and services. It was not clear to families where to find this information and how to access support for making decisions about bilingual services and programs.

Like many other school districts, New Haven Public Schools struggles with a shortage of certified bilingual and ESL teachers. To assist in addressing this shortage, the district has developed and implemented its own program in collaboration with ACES to support teachers who are interested in becoming certified bilingual and ESL teachers and currently has its third cohort in the program, which consists of approximately 60 teachers, the majority of whom are ESL. However, teacher placement is not determined by the program supervisors.

## Strengths

- The district offers students the opportunity to earn a seal of biliteracy.
- The district has experience offering dual language programs.
- The district has developed its own program for teachers to earn bilingual and ESL certification.

## Opportunities

- The district offers dual language programs at only four schools – Columbus Family Academy (K-5), John C. Daniels (Pre-K-5), Clinton Avenue (K-3), and Fair Haven (K-2), but Clinton Avenue only offers the program for grades K-3 and Fair Haven only for grades K-2. Given the experience of the district with dual language programs, it has the opportunity and experience to expand the grade levels at Clinton Avenue and Fair Haven and offer the program at additional magnet and neighborhood schools.
- There is a lack of grade-level continuity in the self-contained TBE and dual language programs at most schools offering the services.
- There are schools that have very low percentages of ELLs and those that appear to have high concentrations of ELLs.

## Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- The district should review the types of programs in each school and the percentages of ELLs enrolled in each school to determine whether there is equitable access to ELL programs in each school, including in magnet and neighborhood schools, and then develop a plan to eliminate any issues identified regarding equitable access.
- The district should review the information and support available to families about ELL services and programs, and develop a plan that includes a variety of strategies to make families aware of services and programs available—including special supports (i.e., orientation) for ELL families who are new to the district.
- The district should review its bilingual-bicultural education policy to ensure its compliance with state law.

## Long-Term Goals (within three years)

- The district should ensure that there are ELL experts in every school to support teachers and ELLs.
- The district should review the availability and quality of programs offered at all grade levels in each school and develop a plan to ensure that there is continuity and vertical alignment across grade levels as students grow and learn.
- The district should expand the number of dual language programs in its schools.
- The district should develop a pipeline to increase the number of teachers with bilingual certification through partnerships with universities and by providing incentives for paraprofessionals and teachers.

## AREA OF FOCUS: TALENTED AND GIFTED PROGRAM

**District TAG Program.** The district has a Talented and Gifted Children Program policy (Policy 6172.1), which was adopted on August 14, 1995 and does not appear to have been updated. The policy states that the district should provide “gifted and talented [programs] that include a broad spectrum of learning experiences which increase knowledge and develop skills necessary for the student to function successfully in society while encouraging students to excel in areas of special competence.”

According to the district website, the TAG program: is a district-wide program for academically gifted students with one TAG teacher currently assigned to each elementary and middle school one day per week to provide instruction for identified TAG students and enrichment for a number of other students.

The district website includes district guidelines for the TAG program. The guidelines provide the State Department of Education’s definition for a gifted and talented student as one “(1) possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of very superior intellectual, creative or specific academic capability and (2) needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the regular program. . . .” The guidelines indicate that state law and regulations require that districts identify talented and gifted students, but the state law and regulations do not require that districts provide “any specific level or type of service to students so identified.”

**Identification Process.** The district provided the committee with a document entitled “Identification Process.” The document states that “[unless a student is already in TAG, every student in the district in grades 3-7 is available for potential inclusion in the TAG program for the following fall when they are 4th-8th graders.” According to the district, it uses a “multi-criteria process” that includes “gather[ing] for each 3rd-7th grader in the district:” the fall Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) results; a list of all students identified as advanced math students and teacher recommendations from “any teacher in the district who provides direct service to any 3rd-7th grader.” The district “further evaluate[s]” a student with the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test, which measures verbal, quantitative, and spatial reasoning ability and yields a verbal and nonverbal scores producing a school ability index – if the student has a proficient or above score on the SRI “and/or” is on “the advanced math list “and/or” has a teacher nomination.”

**SPARK Program.** The district has received a UConn Javits grant that focuses on “early identification and intervention with students in grades K-2 who show early promise.” The program is known as the Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids (SPARK). The grant is a five-year grant that began in 2015. The

“treatment schools” in SPARK are Clemente, Fair Haven, and Jepson. The “comparison schools” are Clinton, Conte West Hills, and Hill Central.

**Project LIFT.** The district also has received a UConn Javits grant that is to provide professional development opportunities for teachers in grades 1-3. The grant is a two-year grant that begins in 2018 and is called the Learning Informs Focused Teaching (LIFT). The district is in the process of determining the number of schools to be involved. LIFT has a number of goals, including improving “teacher preparation and practice for developing high potential, particularly in students from underserved populations,” and implementing “instructional practices that may encourage and develop students’ advanced potential.”

### **Enrollment and Demographics of TAG**

**Program.** At the district level, the number of students in the TAG program has increased over the last three school years from 493 students in 2015-16 to 608 in the 2017-18.

- Over the three years, the number of students has increased, but there is a disparity between the number and percentage of males and females in the TAG program. For example, in 2017-18, the percentage of males in the TAG program was 44% compared to the percentage of females in the TAG program, which was 56%.
- Over the three years, the number of students who are eligible for free and reduced meals (FARMS) who are in the TAG program has increased, but there is a disparity between the students eligible for FARMS who are in the TAG program, as compared to the students eligible for FARMS in the district. For example, the percentage of students eligible for FARMS in the TAG program in 2017-18 was 33% and the percentage of students eligible for FARMS in the district was 56%.

- Over the three years, the percentage of Asian, African American and Hispanic students in the TAG program decreased slightly and there was a disparity between the percentage of each of these racial/ethnic groups and the district-wide percentage for each of these groups. For example, for the 2017-18 school year, the total enrollment for the elementary TAG program was 608. The districtwide racial/ethnic composition of students participating in the elementary TAG program was as follows: 23% African American, 25% Hispanic, 41% White, 8% Asian, and 1% Two or More Races. This compares with the total district elementary enrollment, which was 38% African American, 45% Hispanic, 13% White, 2% Asian, and 1% Two or More Races.
- From 2015-16 to 2017-18, the number of special education students in the TAG program increased from 4 to 6 and the number of ELL students in the TAG program increased from zero to seven.

For the 2017-18 school year, only six of the 30 elementary schools had an enrollment in the TAG program of more than 40 students. These schools, many of which have low percentages of students eligible for FARMS, had TAG enrollments as follows:

- Hooker, which had an enrollment of 112;
- Betsy Ross, which had an enrollment of 54;
- Davis, which had an enrollment of 50;
- Mauro-Sheridan, which had an enrollment of 48;
- Nathan Hale, which had an enrollment of 43, and
- Edgewood, which had an enrollment of 42.

For the 2017-18 school year, 13 of 30 elementary schools had 10 or fewer students. Of the 13 schools, two elementary schools – Troup and Lincoln – had the lowest enrollment with two students enrolled in each school. Three of the schools – Columbus, Quinnipiac, and Wexler – had five students in

each school. Truman had six students and Brennan Rogers had seven students. Three schools – Clemente, Clinton, and Fairhaven – each had eight students and three schools – Celentino, Hill Central, and Martinez – each had 10 students.

There are very few ELL elementary students enrolled in the TAG program for 2017-18. Only six elementary schools have ELL students enrolled in TAG programs.

Similarly, the district had a small number of elementary special education students enrolled in the TAG program for 2017-18. Only six of the elementary schools had special education students enrolled in TAG programs.

## Strengths

- The TAG program offers enrichment programming for students who have high potential, but who have not been identified as TAG using the identification process.
- The district is implementing the SPARK program, which focuses on identifying and providing interventions for K-2 students who can potentially be identified for the TAG program beginning in grade 4.
- The district is implementing Project Lift, which will provide teachers in grades 1-3 in selected schools, the opportunity to engage in professional development that will assist them in learning and implementing strategies for developing students with high potential, particularly for “students from underserved populations.”

## Opportunities

- The district’s screening and identification process does not reflect best practices for screening and identifying students for the TAG program.



- The district does not provide sufficient resources to the TAG program in order to have a comprehensive TAG program at each school to support TAG students and those who have potential. For example, the district only assigns one TAG teacher to each elementary and middle school one day per week; this is not adequate staffing to meet the needs of TAG students and those who have potential.
- The committee requested data so that it could determine whether there were disparities in enrollment, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, special education, ELL, FARMS, and gender, for the TAG program at the district-wide level and at the school level. The data were provided, but they were not readily available in a form and format for the committee to determine easily whether there were disparities. The committee reviewed the data provided and found disparities in enrollment by race/ethnicity, special education, ELL, FARMS, and gender at the district-wide level and at the school level.

## Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- The district should review its TAG policy to ensure that it is consistent with state law and best practices and that it requires equitable access for all students.

- The district should revise the screening and identification process for the TAG program, with the goal of increasing enrollment in the program for all students, particularly African-American, Hispanic, and ELL students, and those with disabilities, and to provide more equitable access for all students.
  - The revision should include giving a universal screener to all 3rd-grade students. In selecting the universal screener, the district should consider and select an instrument, such as the COGAT, which is available in English and Spanish and which provides verbal, nonverbal and quantitative scores.
  - In addition, the district should use a standard protocol that identifies giftedness in all student populations to be completed by all 3rd-grade teachers and all teachers should be provided professional development regarding how to complete the protocol, including professional development in recognizing giftedness in all populations, particularly underserved populations.
  - The district also should develop profiles for each 3rd grader that includes the results of the universal screener, the standard protocol completed by teachers, and other relevant data, such as scores on academic assessments.
  - The district should establish a TAG Identification Committee to review the profiles of students and to determine participants in the TAG program. The Identification Committee should be racially and ethnically diverse and should include district staff at the central office and school level, including staff with ELL and special education expertise.
- The district should create a parent/professional advisory committee to provide input to the Superintendent on the TAG program.

## Long-Term Goals (within three years)

- The district should develop TAG enrollment data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, special education, ELL, FARMS and gender, for the TAG program at the district-wide level and at the school level in a form and format that can be utilized readily by central office and school-based staff to analyze and determine whether there are any disparities in the district data and the school-by-school data. The district should provide professional development for central office staff and school-based staff on how to analyze the data, draw conclusions regarding the data and develop strategies for addressing any disparities at the district level and each school.
- The district should consider expanding the SPARK program to additional schools.
- The Equity and Access Committee recognizes that the district is just beginning to implement the LIFT Project and is still in the process of identifying the schools that should be involved in this professional development effort. The committee encourages the district to consider providing the opportunity for as many teachers as possible to participate in the LIFT Project.

## AREA OF FOCUS: ADVANCED PLACEMENT

From 2015-16 through 2017-18 – while the enrollment in AP courses in each high school has not increased, the total district enrollment in AP courses increased from 890 students to 951 students. Over this same period, the number of African-American students enrolled in AP courses decreased from 327 to 290 and the number of Asian students enrolled in AP courses decreased from 65 to 56, while the Hispanic student enrollment increased from 277 to 355 and the White enrollment increased from 212 to 255. This data shows a lack of intentionality to increase underserved populations enrollment in AP.

The number of students eligible for FARMS who enrolled in AP courses over the three years varied from 444 in 2015-16 to 538 in 2016-17 to 477 in 2017-18. The district reports that it has the highest number of students eligible for FARMS in the state enrolled in AP courses.

Similarly, the number of ELL and special education students varied over the three years. The number of ELL students taking AP courses for 2015-16 was 34 and the number increased to 78 in 2016-17, but it decreased to 71 in 2017-18.

In 2015-16, the number of special education students in AP courses was 10 and the number increased to 14 in 2016-17 but decreased to 12 in 2017-18.

For the three years – 2015-16 through 2017-18 – the percentages of African-American and Hispanic students enrolled in AP courses have been disproportionate compared to their district-wide percentages. For example, in 2017-18, 30% of the students enrolled in AP courses were African American, as compared to the percentage of African-American students enrolled in the district, which was 38%. Similarly, for 2017-18, 35% of the students enrolled in AP courses were Hispanic, while the district-wide total Hispanic enrollment was 45%.

The percentage of students eligible for FARMS enrolled in AP courses over the three years was 50% in 2015-16, 58% in 2016-17 and 50% in 2017-18. This enrollment compares to the percentage of FARMS enrollment in the District, which was 56%.

For the 2017-18 school year, all of the high schools had AP courses. Cross had 18 AP courses, which is the highest number of AP courses, followed by Coop, which had 14 AP courses, and Career, which had 13 AP courses. Hillhouse had

11 AP course, ESUMS had 10 courses, and HSC had 7 courses. The fewest number of AP courses were at HSC and Sound, which each had three AP courses, and MBA, which had two AP courses.

Generally, the total enrollment in AP courses in each the high schools for the 2017-18 school year varies by the number of courses offered at each high school. Cross had 256 students enrolled in AP courses, which was the highest number of students enrolled in AP courses and NHA had 22 students enrolled in AP courses, which was the lowest number of students enrolled in AP courses.

Similarly, the total number of AP exams taken by students for the 2017-18 tended to correspond to the number of AP courses offered at each high school. For example, the number of AP examinations taken at Cross was 484 compared to 27 exams taken at NHA.

The district reports that all AP teachers have been “College-Board trained.” Over the last three years, 57 teachers have taken the training and the district has spent approximately \$20,000 to support this training.

The district administers the PSAT to all 8th-grade students. The results of the PSAT data allow the district to identify students who have the potential to take AP courses. Principals are not required to use this data to identify students with the potential to take AP courses. However, the State Department of Education notified parents of students with AP potential and encouraged them to advocate for their children at the school level.

In interviews, the committee heard that some schools limit the number of AP courses offered because they do not want to track students. The committee also learned in interviews that there is “open access” to AP courses. A question that remains is how students are guided and supported

in understanding and taking full advantage of the AP courses available to them, and how equipped (in knowledge, expertise, and cultural competence) the adults working with them are to provide the needed supports.

### Strengths

- The district has supported professional development for AP teachers and all AP teachers have completed College Board AP training
- The district administers the PSAT to all 8th-grade teachers, which provides data that can be used to identify students who have the potential to take AP courses.
- The district reports that students have “open access” to AP courses.

### Opportunities

- The committee requested AP data, so it could determine whether there was equitable access to AP courses and AP exams taken, including whether there were disparities in AP enrollment and AP exam taking based on race/ethnicity, special education, ELL, FARMs and gender. The district provided the data requested but it was not readily available in a form and format to determine whether there was equitable access in AP enrollment and AP exam taking.
- The district does not require principals to use AP data to identify students who have the potential to take and successfully complete AP courses.
- The district does not have a plan to ensure that students in grades K-8 are prepared to take AP courses.

### Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- The district should require that all high school principals use the AP Potential data to determine what students should enroll in AP courses.
- The district should ensure that principals do not limit the number of AP courses offered in their respective schools.
- The district should make clear that increasing access to and enrollment in AP courses for all students is a priority, particularly for any groups that are underrepresented.
- The district should develop and implement a plan to inform parents about AP courses and the benefits of their children participating in those courses. This plan should include strategies to make sure parents of students who are underserved and/or underrepresented are provided information to encourage them to enroll their students in AP courses.

### Long-Term Goals (within three years)

- The district should develop AP enrollment and AP data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, special education, ELL, FARM and gender, at the district level and for each school in a form and format that can be utilized readily by central office and school-based staff to analyze to determine disparities and to develop strategies to address disparities in the district and by school. On a regular basis, the district and each school should review and analyze the data, determine whether there are any disparities, develop strategies to address such disparities and monitor implementation of strategies implemented.
- The district should continue providing professional development for AP teachers and should expand professional development opportunities to other teachers.

## AREA OF FOCUS: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Policy 6171(a) is the district's special education policy, which was adopted on August 14, 1995. There is no indication that it has been revised since 1995. The policy acknowledges that the district is "to provide a comprehensive plan for compliance with all requirements of federal and state law for the education of all individuals with exceptional needs residing in or attending school" in the district. The policy also notes that "the plan [should] be in harmony with the school district's financial abilities, with the availability of special facilities needed and the availability of trained and certified personnel."

The district has experienced a steady increase in the number of students with disabilities from 2,305 in 2010-11 to 3,196 in 2017-18. In addition, the percentage of SWD in the district has increased from 11% in 2010-11 to 14% in 2017-18.

The director of student services reported that there is overrepresentation of African-American and Latino students in the population of SWD at the district level. This overrepresentation is consistent with what many other districts struggle to address. The district is implementing strategies to reduce this overidentification and overrepresentation and the strategies include focusing on Tier 1 instruction.

The percentage of SWD enrolled in each school varies from a low of 6.8% in 2017-18 to a high of 64.3% in ASPIRE. For the 2017-18 school year, there were 10 schools that had above 14% -- the district average of 14% SWD -- and 30 schools that had below 14%. The schools with the highest percentages of SWD in 2017-18 were ASPIRE with 64.3%; Riverside with 45.3%, New Horizon with 31.5%, and HSC with 24.2%. Of the 30 schools with below 14% of SWD enrolled in 2017-18, there were six schools with below 10%. These schools were Hooker with 6.8%; Engineering & Science with 8%; Martinez with

8.2%; Woodward with 8.3%, Hill Regional Career with 8.6%, and Conte-West Hills with 8.8%.

Based on the committee's analysis, SWD tend to have a higher rate of absenteeism in many schools as a percentage of the total enrollment in each school. For example, for the 2017-18 school year, there were 23 schools that had an absentee rate of 20% or more and 10 of the schools have an absentee rate of 30% or more. In the 2017-18 school year, the schools with the highest absentee rate were New Horizon with 96.2%, Wilbur Cross with 49%, and Hillhouse with 47.6%.

During the focus group conducted by the committee, interviewees expressed two concerns about resources for programs for SWD. The first concern was that there were inequitable resources for programs for SWD in some schools. The committee was not able to determine the extent of this concern because the district was not able to provide the committee with data so that it could analyze the resources provided for programs for SWD in individual schools. The second concern was that the district did not have sufficient resources to provide adequate resources for programs for SWD.

### Strengths

- The district recognizes that there is overrepresentation of African-American and Latino students in its programs for SWD and is implementing strategies that it believes will reduce this overrepresentation.
- The district is working with schools on school culture and social-emotional learning practices that are meant to serve SWD well, while also reducing overidentification of students as potentially having a disability.

### Opportunities

- The district has the opportunity to review and address overrepresentation of African-American and Latino students in programs for SWD.



- The district has the opportunity to determine why the number and percentage of SWD has increased since 2010-11.
- The district has the opportunity to engage in more in-depth analysis and reflection as to why the percentage of SWD in some schools is above the district-wide average for SWD and why the percentage of SWD in some schools is below the district-wide average for SWD so as to determine whether it should expand, refine, and improve programs in schools to ensure equitable access and excellent services for SWD.

### Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- The district should review its special education policy to ensure that it is consistent with state and federal law and that there is unquestionable clarity that there should be equitable access to schools and programs for SWD.
- To address the legitimacy of the eligibility of SWD, the district should conduct a random

sample of the files of SWD to review the eligibility of SWD with the goal of reducing students of racial/ethnic and other historically underserved/marginalized groups that are overrepresented.

- The district should address the schools that have 10% or less SWD and those that have more than 14% SWD by reviewing the placement of programs for SWD to ensure that there is equitable distribution of SWD across all of the district's schools.
- The district should provide anti-bias and culturally responsive professional development for teams identifying SWD.

### Long Term Goals

- The district should create space in schools, such as Oasis Rooms, for students with behavior challenges, including students who are not SWD.

- The district should review the absentee rates of the SWD population in its schools and develop strategies for reducing the absentee rates.
- The district should review its allocation of resources for programs for SWD in each of its schools and develop strategies to reduce any inequitable allocation of resources.

## AREA OF FOCUS: DISCIPLINE

The Office of Youth, Family and Community Engagement analyzed discipline data and found that, like other school districts, the suspension and expulsion rates for African-American and Latino students are disproportionate compared to other students in the district. As a result of this analysis, the district developed five goals, which include:

1. Disrupting traditional exclusionary practice in our schools by ensuring that our culture and policies reflect a restorative philosophy.
2. Increasing student school attendance, boosting student achievement opportunities and reducing student misconduct using Youth Stat interventions.
3. Finding and implementing research-based approaches to school discipline without compromising the learning opportunities or safety of the school community as a whole.
4. Teaching school staff better skills in behavior management and student discipline through professional development.
5. Reducing the likelihood of future unemployment, court involvement, and other negative outcomes with high societal price tags.

The district implemented a number of strategies to work toward achieving these goals. This includes a number of schools implementing Restorative Practices as an alternative to suspensions and expulsions. The district has a partnership with the

New Haven Federation of Teachers to support schools in providing professional development for Restorative Practices. It was reported that implementation of Restorative Practices is not consistent at each of its schools and the level of competency in trained staff varies among schools.

In addition, the district revised its Code of Conduct. The main goal of the revised Code of Conduct is to reduce suspensions and expulsions “as a default response to misbehavior.” The Board has not yet adopted the revised Code of Conduct. The strategies include alternatives to expulsion hearings, a moratorium on out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for pre-K to grade 2, and a quarterly review of expulsion and suspension data by school.

## Strengths

- The district has a revised Code of Conduct that focuses on restorative practices as an alternative to suspensions and expulsions. However, this Code of Conduct has to be adopted by the Board of Education.
- The district has provided the opportunity for professional development for Restorative Practices to its schools.
- The district has implemented a quarterly review of suspension and expulsion data by school.

## Opportunities

- Despite the implementation of a number of strategies, there remain disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates for African-American, Latino, and other historically underserved populations of students, as compared to students of other racial and ethnic groups.
- While the district has a revised Code of Conduct, the Board has not yet adopted it.

- The district has committed resources to professional development to schools for implementation of Restorative Practices, but schools do not implement the practices with a high degree of fidelity.

### Short-Term Goals (within one year)

- The Superintendent should recommend to the Board the adoption of the revised Code of Conduct.
- Central office and school-based staff should review discipline data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, special education and ELL, on a monthly basis to determine trends and issues in each school in order to develop and implement strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions, and to address disproportionalities in various types of disciplinary actions.

### Long-Term Goals (within three years)

- The district should implement a multitier approach to disciplinary practices at all schools that includes engaging, rigorous, and culturally responsive learning experiences, systemic use of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), Restorative Practices, social and emotional learning, and mentoring and coaching to support these practices.
- The district should implement professional development on structural racism, as well as anti-bias and culturally responsive practice in all schools.
- The district should examine the practice of undocumented suspension and should implement strategies to ensure that this practice is eliminated.

## IMPLICATIONS

Suggestions for the Superintendent	Suggestions for the Board/Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear equity and access goals for the entire system, central office departments and schools; monitor and publicly report regularly on these goals.</li> <li>• Establish a community engagement plan and infrastructure to involve stakeholders in increasing equity and access.</li> <li>• Develop and implement an ongoing and consistent scope of learning for senior leaders on the topic of equity.</li> <li>• Engage educators, community partners, and others with relevant expertise in designing and implementing ongoing professional development on topics related to equity.</li> <li>• Create/revise equity framework and commensurate policies, procedures, and regulations.</li> <li>• Recommend equity-based budget to the Board.</li> <li>• Allocate resources according to needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish interests and priorities to guide the Superintendent.</li> <li>• Establish clear vision and strategic goals.</li> <li>• Revise/adopt policies where appropriate.</li> <li>• Allocate resources to promote equity and access in accordance with the Superintendent’s recommendations.</li> <li>• Develop a scope of learning for the Board on the topic of equity.</li> <li>• Engage community leaders, and local and state elected officials to promote a new vision for equity and access, and to acquire new resources in support.</li> </ul>

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

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Productive change efforts require that those who engage in the improvement work set and cultivate conditions that facilitate learning, execution, and success. In order to enact the recommendations made in this transition report, we believe that Birks and her team have put in place the following conditions:

**Champion a strong call to action by creating a sense of urgency** that builds on the vision that many already support, while also building on a legacy and tradition of good work and success that New Haven has historically known. It's important that New Haven educators, the community, families, and students see and find themselves in the work they are being asked to join and accomplish.

**Engage in deep and sustained learning about equity and related topics and issues.** This includes establishing clear definitions and shared language around equity work and what it means about the school district's core values, policies, beliefs held by people, and practices.

**Create alignment between the district's vision/practices and state and national standards, policies, and mandates** to help people manage the complexity of potentially competing priorities. Birks must maintain a pulse on what alignment, coherence, accountability at all levels, and transparency look like. This alignment often requires difficult and honest conversations with those who hold power or are seen as key influencers; however, it also yields greater clarity and transparency about decision making and accountability.

**Manage expectations because change efforts take time.** The urgency to bring about change, especially when there are issues that people deeply care about, such as the lack of equity, can often be met with a great degree of impatience and frustration. It's important that (a) the Superintendent and her team spend adequate time with the Board, school leaders and staff, and families and communities to come to a shared understanding of the district's various priorities, and the rate at which various challenges will be attended to. It is equally important that everyone is clear on the what, when, why, how, and by whom of progress measurement on the district's goals and priorities.

**Cultivate the joy of learning in the process.** The path to system and school improvement is challenging and paved with roadblocks and bumps along the way. Birks and her team must model and promote an attitude of learning, for both adults and students, throughout the process, as the implementation of the recommendations outlined within the report will inevitably experience many ups and downs. It's in the act of doing, reflecting, and capturing lessons learned about successes and challenges that insights are garnered to refine strategies and actions, further improvement, and sustain transformation.

**Make sure those most impacted by the challenges that New Haven Public Schools are tackling have significant roles and voice** in defining the problems, making decisions, and driving the change.

## CONCLUSION

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Once again, we want to publicly thank all of those who contributed to the writing and evolution of this transition report. That includes district employees, community partners, students, and experts from the field of education. We thank all the members of the community who have willingly and eagerly shared their stories and insights since the beginning of Dr. Birks' tenure as Superintendent.

Many will say that the report contains nothing new, that the picture that it paints is one that the beautiful city of New Haven has lived for quite some time now. Like the great sociologist James Baldwin articulated, "not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." For many of us, the findings in this report, while not new, are a reminder of the challenges and opportunities that have for too long impacted the experiences and outcomes of our students. For others, the transition report represents a new impetus for change, an urgent call to action. Either way, we look forward to facing these challenges TOGETHER, in order to drive the kind of transformation we want to see throughout our school system.

Perhaps the greatest work facing Dr. Birks, the school board, school leaders, staff, families, elected officials, and the community at large is the process by which New Haven Public Schools embraces equity so that each and every child or young person

has access to the opportunities and supports they need and deserve to experience success in school, college, career, and life. Equity—the notion of giving each child what they need and ensuring that the most vulnerable and underserved students and families are especially given more adequate supports, access, and opportunities—is a term that runs as a theme across all five focus areas within the report. We also believe that the work of equity requires changes in beliefs, mind-sets, and practice (i.e., content, pedagogy, adult learning, engagement, policy making, resource allocation, discipline, special education, services for speakers of other languages, and much more).

While we know that Dr. Birks is equipped with the knowledge and skills to serve as the leader of the district, we also know that the next level of work that includes (a) conducting critical and honest conversations about the content of the report in multiple and varied spaces within the district and community and (b) engaging in strategic planning for the next three to five years requires the efforts of the entire New Haven collective. The district is fortunate to have a solid foundation of dedicated staff, committed leadership, and an active community. PDK and the tri-chairs have been honored to assist Dr. Birks in this transition process as she champions and paves the way for a new reality, one in which everyone strives to achieve equity and excellence on behalf of all of New Haven's students.

## TRANSITION TEAM MEMBERS

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