



Education Committee - Board of Representatives

Michael Molgano, Co-Chair Andy Sklover, Co-Chair Mary Savage, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Wednesday, April 19, 2010
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Place: Democratic Caucus Room, 4th Floor, Government Center,
888 Washington Boulevard

The Education Committee met as indicated above. Present were Co-Chairs Molgano and Sklover and Vice Chair Savage and Committee Member Reps. Cerasoli, Layton, Wallace and Young. Also present was Clerk of the Board Summerville and Rep. Rauh; Jackie Heftman of the Board of Education; Josh Starr, Superintendent of Schools; and Damaris Rau and Amy Karwan of Stamford Public Schools.

Co-Chair Molgano called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. <u>E28.003</u>	REVIEW; actions taken after 1 year since the key findings of the independent study on SPS were reported by the Cambridge Group.	REPORT MADE

Co-Chair Molgano distributed two documents: an [agenda](#) for the meeting that listed areas for discussion and a [comparison](#) with the Survey document.

Dr. Starr introduced Ms. Karwan, the Executive Director for Performance Management and Accountability and Ms. Rau, a doctoral intern and a former principal in Greenwich. Dr. Starr commended Mr. Molgano for the extensive work he did in comparing the three documents, adding that his questions and comments were excellent.

Co-Chair Molgano stated that he would like to hear the milestones achieved, the next steps that are planned, and ultimately that this should lead to a strategic district improvement plan for improving student achievement.

Dr. Starr noted that:

- The Cambridge Report was done in December of 2008, and this is a broad look at what was going on then. The report is a guide, it is not an audit.
- Regarding IT, he does not have a dedicated person to oversee this area, and Stamford suffers from that. Dr. Starr referenced the tremendous things other districts are doing with IT and SPS is eager to target funds from a potential future grant.
- They are reducing the number of tracks; they started in the 6th grade and are moving to the 7th grade and in elementary and high schools with the goal to eliminate lower level classes.
- Teachers and administrators come together and talk about what is happening in the classroom and whether they are meeting expectations.
- DASH is a powerful technology tool that they are training teachers and administrators to use. Now that they have at least 2 years of data, test results can be looked at all the way down to an individual student's achievement from year to year.
- Communication has improved, but he emphasized that there is never enough communication. The website has both been praised and criticized, and because they don't have a dedicated web person, the City is very ably handling it for them, but its use is limited because of lack of staff.
- Regarding students with disabilities, the law states that before a child goes to special ed, you have to prove that you have done everything possible to prevent that. This typically involves reading issues. They are implementing a massive response to intervention at an early age. They are doing a lot of assessment now to determine who needs intervention, and that should help in this area.
- There is an RFP out for an audit/assessment of the special ed programs.
- A second Stakeholders' survey is being done so that they can compare it to the first. This survey is meant for all families and staff, so it is kept at a length that maximizes cooperation in filling it out.
- They have developed a collaborative process. They have a Systems Leadership Council, with members from the SEA, the SAU, Dr. Starr and 2 board members. They come together to deal with big, systemic issues in the district and they meet twice a year.
- They have the District Data Team, consisting of teachers and administrators – about 25 people. The State facilitates this group, and it is a required process. There is a team for each of the four core areas.
- They have a Professional Development Council made up of administrators that oversees all professional development.

The Committee then discussed in detail the comparison table that Mr. Molgano provided. Dr. Starr noted that:

- Special Ed – they want to catch issues early and address them early. The RFP will allow them to create a 3-5 year plan that mirrors the Strategic District Improvement Plan. Later on, they want to do one for ELL.
- They are beginning to plan for retirements. Stamford is 3rd in the State for administrators over 55 years of age. (As for salaries, Stamford is about 15th-20th on the list as of 2008-09). They have to follow union processes, and Stamford has a bottleneck of talented teachers that are looking to move into the administration area.
- Dr. Starr stated that SPS now has systems in place to improve student achievement. Next year they plan on bringing all the systems together, which will result in significant growth. The biggest problem is that there is too much data, and nobody knows what to do with it. First, you need to ask the right questions. Rep. Molgano suggested making use of canned views to wean users on the data.
- School autonomy is a complicated aspect. Some schools may do well with more autonomy and others less so. Dr. Starr referenced looking to increase autonomy once there is consistency across the district.
- The original strategic plan called for 80% achievement above goal. This was an ambitious plan, and the State is now requiring Dr. Starr to identify more realistic goals.
- Dr. Starr stressed the continual work to build effective Professional Learning Communities and stated it is more challenging in secondary schools than primary due to free period scheduling. {PLCs are evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine their effectiveness}
- Dr. Starr stated there can never be enough communication and they are continually working on increasing communication between Central Staff and the buildings.
- Dr. Starr did speak to school safety and reported all schools are safe. He also stated that safety related reporting could be better and that there are discrepancies in what's reported because of individual assessments by staff on the incidents that occur. Dr. Starr also mentioned recent procedural policies being enacted on bullying to address the issue as a zero tolerance behavior.
- In conclusion, Stamford's numbers are going in the right direction in regard to the achievement gap, and they are doing the right things.

Dr. Starr distributed an updated [budget presentation](#) and reviewed several of the charts on it that demonstrate the district's accomplishments including the long anticipated vertical ranking scale which allows measures to be taken on the same students as they advance to the next grades.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Molgano, Co-Chair