

New Haven Public Schools

Reginald Mayo, Ph.D.
Superintendent



January 13, 2012

Ms. Cheryl Resha, Education Manager
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education
Connecticut Department of Education
165 Capital Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

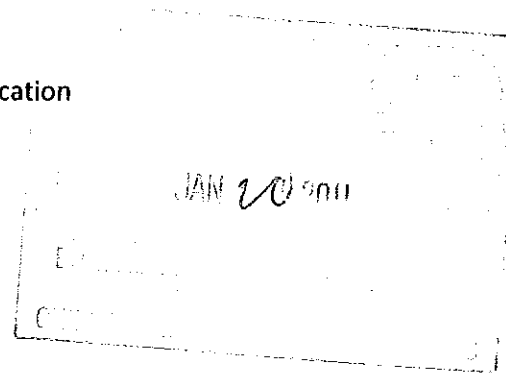
Re: School Governance Councils

Dear Ms. Resha:

We were shocked to receive your letter dated December 22, 2011 informing us that no New Haven Public Schools qualified for the "similar school governance council" model pursuant to your interpretation of P.A. 11-135. It is our position that New Haven as a district has adopted a similar model, that the district as a whole has been using this model since 1976, and that this exempts all New Haven Public Schools from the requirement of establishing school governance councils. We are writing to appeal your finding on several grounds.

First, we contest your contention that individual schools in New Haven must establish their eligibility to be considered a "similar model" on a case by case basis. As you know, P.A. 11-135 exempts schools under the jurisdiction of a local or regional Board of Education that has adopted a similar school governance council model on or before July 1, 2011. We believe the first point of analysis is whether the New Haven Board of Education has adopted a similar school governance council model on or before the effective date of the statute.

New Haven has been employing the School Development Program school governance model designed by Dr. James Comer of Yale Child Study since 1976. The model is completely integrated into the operation of most New Haven Public Schools, including schools that have been designated as "in need of improvement." Attached you will find a description of the Comer Model that includes the SPMT Constituency Group (membership). As you can see from the attached description, the model SPMT membership aligns perfectly with the membership requirements outlined in P.A. 11-135.



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P.A. 11-135 also requires that **“such school governance council model is being administered at such school at the time such school is so identified as in need of improvement or so designated as a low achieving school.”** Please also note that the use of the Comer model – particularly the School Planning and Management Teams (SPMTs) is specifically enumerated in New Haven’s teacher’s contract, and has been in place in every school in the district for decades (including at such time that any New Haven School was identified as low performing or in need of improvement). Attached please find copies of the New Haven Federation Teacher Agreement which stipulates that an SPMT needs to be in place in all schools. (Article XVII Cooperative Educational Planning, Sections 4 and 5).

Second, even if you were to evaluate eligibility on a school by school basis, we contest your finding that the “similar model” used by our individual schools was insufficient to meet the eligibility requirements. While we acknowledge that the Comer model in general, and SPMTs specifically are implemented with different degrees of integrity across the district (which we believe would also be the case should SGCs be put in place), we do not believe that this impacts in any way New Haven’s qualifications for exemption. For example, there are several schools that you denied based on the fact that one or more members of the governance body required by statute were not currently participating on the SPMT. That does not nullify the fact that the Comer MODEL calls for participation of all stakeholders enumerated in the statute. *What you have identified is a need to improve implementation of the model, but not that the model employed does not meet the criteria.* We believe that our schools and our stakeholders would be better served by the State and the District spending time ensuring that schools have all the required stakeholders participating in their existing framework rather than throwing the entire model out and starting from scratch. We further believe that with additional training and technical assistance we could improve the implementation of the Comer model across the district.

Third, in your letter you outline three requirements for a school to be accepted as a “Similar School Model”: Duration, Membership, and Current Use.

Duration: As outlined above, New Haven clearly meets the duration requirement. The Comer method was adopted for use in all New Haven Public Schools prior to and during the time each was designated as in need of improvement or as a low-achieving school.

Membership: As outlined above and evidenced in the attached Comer materials, SPMT membership clearly conforms to the list of persons/positions identified in the statute. We strongly assert that the SPMT model clearly aligns with the form and intent of the statute. Additionally, in your materials you state in order to be deemed a “similar model” that parents must make up fifty percent of the total number of members of the council. We strongly disagree. We refute that subsections 5(g)(2)(A) or (B)

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apply to districts exempted from developing SGCs. Subsection 5(g)(1)(C) clearly defines the required membership of a "similar model." The membership as outlined in the following sections only applies to those districts implementing traditional SGCs.

Current Use: The Comer model was adopted and is currently used in all New Haven Public Schools as of July 1, 2011.

We respectfully request that you reconsider your denial of our application. Please let us know what further steps we need to take to effectuate this appeal.

Sincerely,



Reginald Mayo, Ph.D
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education
Rep. Andrew Fleischmann, Chair, Education Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Associate Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education
Dr. James Comer, Yale Child Study Center
Judy Carson, Program Manager, School-Family-Community Partnerships, Connecticut State Department of Education
Imma Canelli, Assistant Superintendent, New Haven Public Schools

Encl.

Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

CHILD STUDY CENTER

Comer School Development Program

Comer School Development Program

100 York Street, Suite 1A
New Haven, CT 06511Tel:
203.737.4000
Fax: 203.737.1023

Print

How It Works

Like the operating system of a computer that allows the software to do its specialized work, the Comer Process provides the organizational, management and communication framework for planning and managing all the activities of the school based on the developmental needs of its students. When fully implemented, the process brings a positive school and classroom climate, stability, and an instructional focus that supports all of the school's curriculum and renewal efforts.

Click English or Spanish for an illustration of the model.

Three structures comprise the basic framework on which the Comer Process is built:

The **School Planning and Management Team** develops a Comprehensive School Plan, sets academic, social and community relations goals, and coordinates all school activities, including staff development programs. The team conducts critical dialogue around teaching and learning and monitors progress to identify needed adjustments to the school plan as well as opportunities to support the plan. Members of the team include administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents.

For more information about the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT) and the SPMT subcommittees, please see the following chapters from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*:

The School Planning and Management Team (SPMT): The Engine That Drives the School by Miriam McLaughlin, Eve Ennis, and Fred Hernandez (Chapter 3, pp. 25-39)

The School Planning and Management Team (SPMT) Subcommittees: Where the Work of the Comprehensive School Gets Done by Malcolm N. Adler and Jan Stocklinski with contributions by J. Patrick Howley, Sherrie Berrien Joseph, Comer Staff of the Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland (Chapter 7, pp. 77-95)

The **Student and Staff Support Team** promotes desirable social conditions and relationships. It connects all of the school's student services, facilitates the sharing of information and advice, addresses individual student needs, accesses resources outside the school, and develops prevention programs. Serving on this team are the principal and staff members with expertise in child development and mental health, such as counselors, social workers, psychologists, education teachers, nurses, and others.

For more information about the Student and Staff Support Team (SSST), please see the following chapter from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*:

The Student and Staff Support Team and the Coordination of Student Services: "Nine Different People Were Helping a Child" by William T. Brown and Sherrie Berrien Joseph (Chapter 11, pp. 127-147)

The **Parent Team** involves parents and families in the school by developing activities through which they can support the school's social and academic programs. This team also selects representatives to serve on the School Planning and Management Team.

For more information about the Parent Team, please see the following chapter from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*:

Families as Partners: Parent teams and Parent/Family Involvement by Sheila Jackson, Nora Martin, and Jan Stocklinski (Chapter 10, pp. 105-126)

All three teams adhere to the following three guiding principles throughout their work:

No-Fault Problem Solving—Maintains the focus on problem-solving rather than placing blame

Consensus Decision Making—Through dialogue and understanding, builds consensus about what is good for children and adolescents

Making Decisions: Reaching Consensus in Team Meetings by Michael Ben-Avle, Trudy Raschkind Steinfeld, and Jan Comer, M.D., M.P.H. (Chapter 17, pp. 185-190)

Collaboration—Encourages the principal and teams to work together

This framework places the students' developmental needs at the center of the school's agenda and establishes shared responsibility. Concerned adults work together to provide students with the developmental activities that may be a

AGREEMENT

between

**THE NEW HAVEN BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

and

**THE NEW HAVEN FEDERATION
OF TEACHERS, LOCAL 933
AFT, AFL-CIO**



July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2014



SECTION 2. A city-wide committee shall be established to which all proposals for changes in curriculum and all proposals for innovative programs shall be submitted for review and comment before requests for funding are made. When feasible, such submissions shall be made prior to the request for funding. This committee shall be composed of ten teachers, seven to be designated by the Federation, and five administrators; not more than five such meetings for this committee shall be held on released time. All proposals shall be implemented first on a trial basis, and final implementation shall include careful consideration of the evaluation of participating teachers. Additionally, proposed changes in school, grade or programmatic organization may be reviewed by this committee.

SECTION 3. In support of Cooperative Educational Planning, the parties hereto presently support the concept of a Teacher Resource Center to be developed at any school and if staffed, shall be staffed by a certified teacher. The Cooperative Educational Planning Committee shall develop in discussions with the Superintendent the schedule the Resource Center will be opened, it being understood that continued support for the Center will be dependent upon use by the teachers.

SECTION 4. An SPMT shall be established in each school to assist in determining and implementing the educational goals for each school. It is understood that as professionals, teachers should be encouraged and expected to participate in a process which will provide opportunities to meaningfully discuss the methods and scope of the educational and programmatic plans for each school and department. In addition to assisting the determination of the educational goals, the SPMT will also assist in the determination of the curriculum needs, budgetary needs and student assignments for each school.

SECTION 5. The SPMT is a representative body consisting of teachers, administrators, parents, and sometimes students. Each constituent group selects its representatives to serve on the SPMT. The SPMT will make recommendations in matters pertaining to the budgetary, programmatic, staffing and curricular needs of the school.

ARTICLE XVIII

AMENDMENT TO THIS AGREEMENT

SECTION 1. With regard to matters not covered by this Agreement, the Board agrees to make no change in existing policy affecting mandatory subjects of bargaining without prior consultation with the Federation.

SECTION 2. Negotiations with respect to changes in or additions to the provisions of this contract (except matters relating to the salary schedule and/or the benefit provisions stated herein) shall be initiated at the written request of either party. The negotiating committees shall meet (unless otherwise agreed) within four (4) days of the receipt of such request and shall continue to meet until (1) the matters being

negotiated have been resolved by agreement, or (2) an impasse has been reached and mediation procedures under Section 10-153 of the General Statutes of Connecticut have been invoked.

ARTICLE XIX

DURATION

SECTION 1. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith in an effort to secure a successor agreement in accordance with Public Act 76-403, and to commence such negotiations not later than the first of November of the year preceding the termination of this Agreement, upon written request of either party, filed two (2) weeks before the date negotiations are requested to commence.

SECTION 2. This Agreement shall become binding and effective as of July 1, 2010 and shall remain in full force and effect until June 30, 2014.

SECTION 3. In the event that the Board and the Federation fail to secure a successor Agreement as provided in Section 1 of this Article prior to the above expiration date of this Agreement, the parties may mutually agree to extend this Agreement for any period of time, provided that any such Agreement reached is retroactive to the expiration date of this agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereunto have caused to be executed by their proper officers, hereunto duly authorized and their seals affixed hereto as of the date and year first above written.

Witness:

NEW HAVEN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

By: _____

Its President

Date:

Witness:

NEW HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

By: _____

Dr. Reginald R. Mayo

Date:

By: _____

Mayor John DeStefano

Date:

AGREEMENT

between

**THE NEW HAVEN BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

and

**THE NEW HAVEN FEDERATION
OF TEACHERS, LOCAL 933
AFT, AFL-CIO**



July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2010

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereunto have caused to be executed by their proper officers, hereunto duly authorized and their seals affixed hereto as of the date and year first above written.

Witness:
NEW HAVEN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

By:
Its President

Witness:
NEW HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

By:
Its President