

NHPS Leadership Selection

BOE Meeting – July 27, 2015



Following ongoing discussions about how we can accelerate the pace of change and more dramatically improve student achievement across New Haven, tonight I am asking the Board of Education to approve a series of key appointments to reorganize my leadership team. These changes are designed to reflect my and the board's priorities, better aligning the NHPS organization with our student achievement goals and strengthening our ability to support schools and meet student needs. Each of the changes below includes the priority area addressed, a summary of the action, an explanation of the current state, and the rationale for the action. The appointments reflected here will be on a blue sheet addendum.

Note that projecting out the full impact of hiring on my central office leadership team, including the additional positions still to be filled (i.e. College & Career), the overall cost of my leadership team will increase by only ~\$7,000 over *this year's cost* - which is ~\$15,000 less than would have been the case if last year's leadership had simply stayed in place, receiving their contractual increases. These cost savings are realized mostly through consolidation and, in some instances, elimination of positions.

More broadly, although this runs counter to the local narrative, compared to peer districts New Haven has a thin central office. This is particularly true in comparison to peer districts nationally (ERS data), where our central office is literally half the predicted size. In comparison to other Connecticut districts where we have data (Bridgeport, Waterbury, Hamden), our central office spend is 18% less on a per-pupil basis. Meanwhile, we know from feedback from principals that some of our service levels from Central Office are not where we would like them to be – strengthening the argument that in addition to strong management and systems, we may simply need increased investment in targeted areas. Put simply, we need to have a Central Office that can support schools at a higher level than is currently possible with leaders spread thin across 48 schools. This plan, and the other capacity building that will follow, works toward that goal.

I would also like to touch upon a matter that continues to be rightly raised both internally and externally – that is the question of minority hiring and the importance of having diverse leadership that reflects the richly diverse student population of our district. I have attached a document that shows the demographic breakdown of leadership hires (i.e. Administrators and Executive Management) since I have taken office as superintendent. I believe this record of leadership hires shows my commitment to promoting strong, talented minority leaders. I expect the decisions I make this year to continue that positive momentum.

Interviews are ongoing regarding the Director of Instruction/School Support roles. Those hires, and any additional administrative and leadership hires at the school or central level will need to follow quickly from these appointments to be sure that schools and the district are ready for the start of school. I look forward to putting this new organization in place. At the end of the day, my goal, as the board put it in my evaluation, is to ensure “that organizational change and student progress...go hand in hand.”

Summary Action: Hire Lola Garcia Blocker as Chief of Staff for NHPS

Current State: An important overall challenge for the district is the alignment of our many different offices and initiatives, and our responsiveness to concerns and stakeholders both internal and external. This is reflected both in the Board of Education’s feedback, in the central office survey, and in anecdotes from around the district. Alignment of organization and tracking of issues is typically a Chief of Staff responsibility.

Action: At the June 8th board meeting, the board approved a Chief of Staff posting, which reflected my strong sense that organizational alignment and responsiveness needed the full time focus of someone with the authority of a Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff positing was open for a week, and from a pool of 6 candidates, a hiring committee recommended two finalists to me, one internal and one external. Dr. Garcia Blocker is my selection, and I have recommended the external candidate to our Director search.

Dr. Garcia Blocker has experience as a principal across the K-12 system, including seeing significant gains in her time as principal of Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School. In recent years, she has done an exemplary job leading the district’s College and Career work, significantly strengthening both our college going and college persistence, not to mention support to student transitions within the K-12 system. She is well respected by her peers, knows the NHPS system, and is highly organized in her leadership. She was a student in the New Haven Public Schools, and is now a parent of a student in NHPS.

Priority: Integration and Alignment of Youth, Family and Community Efforts
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Summary Actions:

- a) Hire Gemma Joseph Lumpkin as Chief of Youth, Family, and Community Engagement
- b) Hire Adriana Joseph as a Deputy Chief of Youth, Family, and Community Engagement
- c) Consolidate related functions from around the organization

Current State: It has been a priority since the start of School Change to align the work of the district with youth, family, and community efforts in the wider community. However, doing so effectively has been an ongoing organizational challenge, reflecting overlaps and gaps not only between NHPS work and outside organizations, but also overlaps and alignment challenges within the organization. To be sure, we have made significant progress in engaging community around School Change efforts, and I believe reorganization will allow us to deepen and expand engagement of family and community and tie efforts more closely to student impact. The actions below, I believe, will build a stronger, more unified, and more aligned organization to support the learning of students.

Action A: Hire Gemma Joseph Lumpkin as Chief of Youth, Family, and Community Engagement

At the June 8th Board meeting, the board approved the posting for the Chief of Youth, Family, and Community Engagement, which I described at the time as a combination of our former Wraparound position with the Youth Development and Community work that has continued to exist in other parts of the organization. A hiring committee reviewed 10 applications, interviewed 4, and recommended two finalists to

me. I am appointing Gemma Joseph Lumpkin as the leader with the best combination of skills to accomplish the difficult work of aligning youth, family, and community.

Ms. Joseph Lumpkin has been with the district since 2010, and in that time can claim credit for some of the most difficult and important policy successes that the district has achieved. This includes the construction of our Leadership Development programs, which significantly contributed to the pool of high potential leaders, and have frankly enabled us to succeed and gain momentum through the significant transitions of school-level leadership in recent years. Since the mayor and I took office, Ms. Joseph Lumpkin has spear-headed the development of our nationally recognized YouthStat program to engage those students most disconnected from school and closest to violence in the street – at the end of the day I believe this program, along with the efforts of the New Haven Police Department, helps to explain why violence has remained stable in the city, while it has been climbing in peer communities around the state and the country. She has worked with the teachers union to begin bringing restorative practices to the district, and has helped to build attention and emphasis on the academic and career needs of disengaged students. And she has significantly and quickly built the teamwork and capacity of the District’s truancy officers and youth development workers.

Action B: Hire Adriana Joseph as a Deputy Chief of Youth, Family, and Community Engagement
Adriana Joseph was, as of December, a contract employee working with then Chief of Wraparound Sue Weisselberg. When Ms. Weisselberg departed, Ms. Joseph was designated the interim Chief and she did an exemplary job continuing the efforts of the office while the office was short-handed. During that time, I have decided to reorganize the way NHPS approaches “wraparound” and am bringing Youth Engagement under the same umbrella as Family and Community, as I strongly believe all of the work we do must connect more concretely to student outcomes. As a talented and knowledgeable leader, with the ability to work with many stakeholders and a good understanding of intergovernmental relations in New Haven, Ms. Joseph will strongly support the Office of Youth Family and Community Engagement as deputy chief. She is also a leader among the ranks of project managers that I have endeavored to build at NHPS (i.e. more junior staff, with high potential to be senior leaders some day and the attitude and ability to move significant projects).

Action C: Consolidate related functions from around the organization within the office of Youth, Family, and Community

The district’s current work on youth, family and community issues includes many different components that are currently oddly placed given the shifting nature of NHPS organizational priorities and constraints over time. Under the umbrella of Youth, Family, and Community Engagement, I intend to consolidate both people and functions that can better work together on these important issues, rather than from their scattered locations in the current organization chart.

Priority: Organize for More Coherent and Integrated Support to Schools
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Summary Action: Build network teams or pods, cross-functional groups of central office staff from multiple offices with responsibility to facilitate and support the needs of the same group of schools.

Current State: The 2013-14 Central office survey¹ makes clear that central office support to schools is not strong enough. Only 57% of respondents agreed that the district was effective in “supporting schools in achieving the schools goals” – one of the lowest summary ratings on the survey. This finding is confirmed by principals and leaders throughout the district. My sense of the organization is that silos and specialization reinforce a fragmented and compliance-oriented mindset, and interfere with the sorts of teamwork and collaboration necessary to support unique school needs. Meanwhile, the Directors of Instruction receive very positive feedback for their work in School Support, while working across a very large caseload of schools and straining to both provide in-school support and to represent schools in important policy discussions.

Action: The heart of a renewed school support agenda will be network pods, composed of cross-functional staff who take on responsibility for coordinated support to the unique needs of our different schools. The teams will be led by the Directors of School Support, rechristened from their current Director of Instruction title, whose functional responsibility will continue to emphasize the evaluation and development of principals. With 4 directors, the schools will be in clusters of 11-13. Staff from the various key functional offices will be assigned to the teams. See the attached chart for a visual representation of how the cross-functional teams will be organized. The teams will go in place for the fall, supported with leadership coaching and system development from Cambridge Associates and the Center for Great Schools Partnership. My sense is that, while bumps in creation will be inevitable, this model will result in significantly improved support to schools.

Our search process for Directors of School Support is ongoing – we have a number of excellent internal and external candidates of different ethnicities and genders. A panel of principals is participating in the process, along with central office staff.

Additional Actions

Making these appointments still leaves some vacancies to fill (i.e. College & Career, Directors, ELA and Reading). I will also be recommending to the board specific actions to build the capacity of our Data Analysis, our IT, and our ELL support. I look forward to those appointments and our continued discussions.

¹ The 2014-2015 Central Office Survey is forthcoming: it is currently being collated and reported.