

**NORWALK BOARD OF EDUCATION
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE
AUGUST 11, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Mike Lyons, Chair; Shirley Mosby

STAFF: Brenda Wilcox Williams, Director of Communications;
Joe Giandurco, Ponus Ridge Middle School

Other: Norwalk Acts: Anthony Allison, Mary Kay Lock.

Call to Order

Mr. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. and stated that members in attendance were as listed above. Despite the presence of a quorum the meeting was held as an information session with no votes or actions taken.

Review / Approval of Student Survey by Norwalk Acts

Mr. Lyons explained that the Committee has been charged with the task of previewing the Attitudes and Behavior Survey to be administered by Norwalk Acts. He asked Anthony Allison to provide an overview of Norwalk Acts.

Mr. Allison introduced Mary Kay Lock and gave an overview that Norwalk Acts, as follows:

- Norwalk ACTS is a diverse partnership of over 100 civic leaders, educators and organizations working collectively to achieve the mission of enriching and improving the lives and futures of all Norwalk's children, cradle to career.
- To ensure the success of all children in Norwalk, we are focused on results, improving upon what works, and changing what doesn't.
- We recognize that every individual and organization that impacts our children's growth, from cradle to career, is accountable, and that our collective voice is a part of the solution.

Mr. Allison summarized conversations with Dr. Rivera in line with the district strategic plan that established one of the key objectives was a survey to identify the needs of the district to pair up the resources that are being developed. He explained that the city is home to numerous community-based organizations that are dedicated to the well-being of children, families, and individuals living in Norwalk, and over the last ten years, Norwalk has experienced significant and rapid demographic change.

Ms. Lock reviewed the objectives of the survey and outlined the following:

- As students move through the education pipeline, they must obtain the academic, social/emotional, and health and wellness tools necessary to transition successfully to the next level.
- Through collaboration, alignment among key practitioners and strong data capability, the Norwalk ACTS is reviewing research and identifying best practices that are inclusive of cognitive, social/emotional and physical development, resiliency and the reduction or elimination of toxic stress.
- Family engagement and support to meet the needs of our diverse and most vulnerable children and families.

By determining what systemic changes are needed to instill and enhance these skills, this survey will address the following:

- Identify, analyze, and act upon the barriers and obstacles to college and career readiness
- Bolster and expand upon existing resources that support mental and social/emotional health
- Assist Norwalk Public Schools with the provision of Personal Learning Plans for every student in high school
- Create better communication platforms between the workforce, and high schools and college, to better define the relevant skills necessary, and to align and create pathways for college and career success

Mr. Allison explained the Search Institute survey logistics on how students and parents will participate in the survey noting that it will be hard copy for many reasons, including confidentiality. Key points of the survey are as follows:

- Target grades 7-12
- Anonymous Survey
- Letter and communications September-October

There was further discussion on the company surveys for other cities. It was agreed to have a link on the baseline reports for other cities for parents to read.

There was discussion on the specific survey questions. Ms. Locke explained that it was agreed to have this as a hard-copy method for confidentiality reasons and technology access approach.

Ms. Mosby expressed concern on the appropriateness of the questions and the ‘op-out’ options.

Mr. Allison reviewed the district protocols and outlined the purpose and intent of the survey is to develop a profile of student life and attitudes with outcome to serve in development of program initiatives. The survey would ask students about their comfort level, family life, and experiences with bullying, drug use, social behaviors and would be conducted in Norwalk’s three high schools and four middle schools.

Ms. Mosby explained her concerns that the questions be constructed in a way so as not to have bias and answers that are a result of the student just having a bad day. Mr. Allison assured that the survey company is very experienced with the questions that illustrate student behavior and attitude.

It was agreed that the Committee can delete questions on the survey prior to final approval.

Mr. Allison thanked the Committee for the questions and stated that these are all very good points and they all play an important role in student achievement, and views this survey as a positive thing for feedback from students. He outlined that Norwalk ACTS has been focused on building partnership infrastructure and capacity, convening qualified and committed cross-sector community teams, and collecting baseline data so that the membership can deliver on its stated mission.

He explained that the city is home to numerous community-based organizations that are dedicated to the well-being of children, families, and individuals living in Norwalk. Over the last ten years, Norwalk has experienced significant and rapid demographic change. Most notably, the percentage of families with children that qualify for free or reduced priced school meals has increased to over 50%; English is not the primary language in 42% of households; and more recently, Norwalk has experienced a surge in children entering the school system who are unaccompanied minors.

Mr. Allison explained that thousands of schools, coalitions, and organizations use Search Institute's surveys to help them answer these questions about young people in their communities, schools, and organizations. He outlined that these surveys are proven to:

- Focus on strengths, supports, and skills that young people need to succeed and overcome challenges.
- Measure intangible qualities that really matter for youth development and education.
- Provide easy-to-understand, actionable information results that can help engage others in your work and increase your impact in the lives of young people.
- Bring young people's own perspectives and experiences to the planning process

Ms. Lock reviewed the three-year strategic plan that established community outcome areas of focus which serves as the cornerstone of the survey objectives and outlined the following:

- As students move through the education pipeline, they must obtain the academic, social/emotional, and health and wellness tools necessary to transition successfully to the next level.
- In our baseline report, we present a snapshot of what Norwalk looks like today – its population as a whole and the students attending the Norwalk Public Schools. The data is both sobering and inspiring. It is sobering because it tells a story that is unacceptable for some of our children. It is inspiring because it will allow the Membership of Norwalk ACTS to separate the data into constituent parts, identify trends, and persistently align priorities, activities, and existing resources to support all of Norwalk's children at key points across the cradle-to-career continuum.

Mr. Allison reviewed the strategic planning team was introduced to the concept of Collective Impact and the Strive Together Cradle to Career Network. The underlying premise of Collective Impact is that no single organization can create large-scale, lasting social change alone.

There was a discussion about timing and administration. Mr. Allison explained that they are hoping for October timing in order to have a baseline report and action plan by December. He noted that they working on a preliminary outline to be presented at an upcoming full Board meeting.

Mr. Lyons asked for an outline to be written up and sent to him for review to be included in an agenda packet.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox, Telesco Secretarial Services