

December 9, 2016

Superintendent Tommy Chang
Boston Public Schools
2300 Washington Street
Roxbury, MA 02119

Dear Dr. Chang,

We, the members of the Brighton High School Local Stakeholder Group, are pleased to submit our recommendations to you for the Brighton High School Level 4 turnaround plan.

Over the past 45 days, we have met five times, reviewed a large volume of data from school, district, and state sources, received input from more than 40 stakeholders, and engaged one another in a set of inquiries and deliberations. In addition to our formal meetings, each of us has also heard, informally and in writing, from individuals or groups eager to share their views with us. All of this input has influenced our thinking. As the turnaround work continues, we strongly encourage you to remain in regular communication with Brighton High stakeholders, both to share information about next steps for the school, and to benefit from their thinking.

Our work has led us to recognize and acknowledge the significant assets of the school and its school community. We believe future improvement efforts should build on Brighton High's strengths, and we have created our recommendations with that asset-based approach in mind. We have also identified areas for growth, and we address them in the recommendations.

We recommend that Brighton High School use the Transformation Federal Intervention Model to create a turnaround plan with these goals:

- **Strengthen school culture** through an assets-based approach that fosters a growth mindset, encourages student leadership, and improves the facilities.
- **Strengthen academic supports for students to close achievement gaps**, offering multiple pathways to graduation and increasing access to rigorous and enriching academic opportunities, in and out of school.
- **Address the whole child**, by advancing the social and emotional health of all students, building a culture of family voice, increasing student access to resources, and adding family engagement, social work and psychology staff.
- **Prioritize professional learning** that meets the school's instructional needs, improves teachers' Tier 1 teaching strategies, forges a skill-building culture among teachers, builds faculty mastery of social and emotional learning, helps educators and students form stronger relationships, learns from best practices, and builds cultural and linguistic capacity.
- **Rethink the use of time** to maximize impact on student learning, focus teacher time on instruction, create more planning time, optimize class

offerings and resource use, increase student learning opportunities, extend student learning time, and consider a school-within-a-school model.

- **Address the resource gap**, by committing the resources needed to meet the needs of Brighton High School students, making sure the weighted student formula works as intended, and building stronger partnerships, closely aligned to the school's vision, which can generate new resources.

We also see, quite clearly, that Brighton High School's capacity to improve is tied to critical systemic factors within the district. District systems that have had negative impacts on the school include a student assignment policy driven by the limited number of truly comprehensive, "open to all" BPS high schools, coupled with significant enrollment declines, including at Brighton High School. These have produced a drop in funding even as the intensity and amount of students' needs continue to grow. Identifying these systemic impacts is not about making excuses: we believe that the school can and must provide top-quality educational experiences for *all* Brighton High School students. We also believe that powerful, school-level changes are more likely to take place when problematic district systems are addressed.

Thank you for considering our recommendations as you determine the next steps for Brighton High School. We know that you share our deep concern for the future of Brighton's students, families and educators, and we wish you every success in your efforts to help the school make good on its extraordinary potential and promise.

Sincerely,

The Brighton High School Local Stakeholder Group:

Will Austin, Boston Schools Fund

Karen Coyle Aylward, Teacher, Brighton High School

Emily Bozeman, Headmaster, Brighton High School

Nuri Chandler-Smith, Dean of Academic Support and College Pathway Programs,
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Hardin Coleman, Vice Chair, Boston School Committee

Dan Cuddy, Senior Career Specialist, Boston Private Industry Council

Shella Dennery, Director, Boston Children's Hospital Neighborhood Partnerships,
Boston Children's Hospital

Bridget Driscoll, Teacher, Brighton High School

Michael Dwyer, CEO, Brighton Marine Health Center

Lwam Gidey, Student, Brighton High School

Trinh Nguyen, Director, Mayor's Office of Workforce Development

Melissa Quiñones, Parent, Brighton High School

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of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)

Brighton High School Local Stakeholder Group Recommendations to Superintendent Chang

December 9, 2016

We advocate that BPS adopt the Transformation Federal Intervention Model for the design of the Brighton High School turnaround plan. This model will allow BHS to evaluate and build on strengths of the existing faculty and maintain a faculty with appropriate ESL licensure and SEI endorsement.

I. Strengthen school culture.

A. Build on existing strengths, apply an assets-based approach, and focus on practices and structures that develop a positive culture for learning and growth.

1. Recognize the many strengths in the school, and use an assets-based approach to build on them. These include the intelligence, aspirational energy, and goodwill of the students; students' and families' diversity and multilingualism; the high levels of achievement that some students attain; the strength of students' many communities and families; the skills and commitment of the current faculty; the power of relationships between students and staff; the success of various BHS programs; and the effectiveness of some of the school's current partnerships.
2. Acknowledge that the school's instructional strengths are not uniformly distributed, but exist in "pockets" of competence or mastery throughout the building. Build on these pockets of skill to achieve high levels of success across the board.
3. Identify and disseminate successful practices that are already driving achievement, and develop new practices that are needed for greater student learning.
4. Foster an environment of educator engagement, excitement and inquiry into teaching and learning, through which the faculty demonstrates the power of an adult learning community, while modeling these practices for all students.

B. Introduce the idea of developing a growth mindset, and apply the core teaching and learning principles developed by Carol Dweck to the work of Brighton High School.

1. Embrace the idea that all students and all adults can grow, develop new skills and capacities, achieve at ever-higher levels, and meet and exceed high standards. Reject the idea that intelligence and learning capacity are fixed in any individual.
2. Adopt a dedicated approach to learning and development that recognizes the power of focused effort and treats outcomes as data for future efforts.
3. Offer students, staff, families, and partners access to mindset training and support.

4. Implement routines and practices across the school that can help a growth mindset flourish.

C. Build a stronger culture of student voice, agency, and respect.

1. Find compelling, student-led ways to engage students fully in the school, so that they experience BHS as a place where their voices are heard and their ideas are taken seriously.
2. Utilize existing sources (e.g. district surveys of student perception) and develop others to gather student input on a regular basis, and incorporate this input into school decision-making.
3. Develop the elements of school culture needed for students to feel like they can take risks and engage in critical thinking.
4. Work with student leaders to identify ways to develop a more academic and learning-centered student culture.

D. Improve the school facility to support a culture of teaching and learning.

1. Make the facility more welcoming for students and parents. The building provides a critical foundation for the school's culture.
2. Partner with community leaders and organizations to get ideas and support for facilities improvements and repairs.
3. Reallocate the space currently occupied by the BPS recycling center for a purpose that is educational and supportive of Brighton High's students.
4. Improve available technology in the building, so that students can make full use of computers, networks, online resources, science and technical resources, etc. [See also Recommendation V.A.3., addressing a related challenge with security cameras.]
5. Resolve any deferred maintenance and repairs to improve safety and remove barriers to learning; address the specific facility recommendations in the 2015 NEASC report.

II. Strengthen academic supports and programming for students.

A. Embrace a set of rigorous instructional and academic supports, and focus them on closing gaps in student learning.

1. Make an explicit link between students' higher scholastic achievement and the need for heightened social and emotional learning capacity within the school. The link between academic success and social emotional learning should be explicit, clear, and routinely addressed by students, faculty and families.
2. Leverage the instructional skills and successes of current individual BHS faculty members to help their colleagues.

B. Create alternative pathways for graduation.

1. Develop pathway programs to accelerate learning of students who are behind, older students, and students who have not thrived in traditional settings.
2. Design an approach to support over-age students who need to pass the MCAS in order to meet graduation requirements.
3. Offer increased opportunities for dual enrollment.
4. Develop a clearly articulated Response to Intervention (RTI) structure that brings together behavioral and academic resources for students.
5. Recognize that the re-engagement center online credit recovery approach works for some students, but not all. Identify or develop additional credit recovery approaches for BHS students.
6. Explore alternatives that include a combination high school/career pathway, a model in which high school leads directly to an associate's degree and a career opportunity. [See Charlestown High School and the New York City Public Schools models.]
7. Explore the creation of a leadership pathway program for students interested in building experience in service learning, project coordination, and other leadership work. [See Section V of this document, which addresses the scheduling and time-related challenges posed by some of these ideas.]

C. Add academically-enriched courses, and in-school and out-of-school program offerings.

1. Increase access to rigorous and enriching academic opportunities, including AP courses in Physics, Chemistry and Biology, electives, extracurricular offerings, and other options, with the goal of increasing students' exposure to college-level work.
2. Add more academic and social learning clubs during the school day and/or after school. Offer more science-related opportunities after school.
3. Partner with organizations that can commit resources that will have positive impacts on students' learning.
4. Continue to teach workplace skills within an academic environment, as modeled by the school's existing school-to-career partnership with the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC).

III. Address the whole child, and advance students' social and emotional health.

A. Enrich academic curriculum and teaching practices with increased social and emotional supports for students, especially including behavioral health supports.

1. Ensure that social and emotional learning opportunities are embedded in curricula and in daily teaching practices.

2. Reassess current outside behavioral health partners to best align resources with BHS student and school needs.
3. Evaluate the existing school commitments to social and emotional learning and behavioral health programming, and determine which of the school's programs (e.g. PAWS, PBIS, Restorative Justice, others) warrants a more focused and intensive effort.
4. Reassess and eliminate conflicting, duplicative, or half-implemented current efforts, and focus on an aligned approach that can help establish school-wide consistency in adult and student practices.

B. Empower and engage parents as advocates and learning partners by building a stronger culture of family voice, agency, and respect.

1. Change the perception of what it means to be an engaged parent. Provide families with a wide variety of opportunities to participate in the Brighton High community.
2. Develop a deeper understanding of the current needs of BHS parents. Study and understand barriers to family participation in existing opportunities at the school. Use these data to develop effective strategies to engage families as partners in students' learning.
3. Create a dedicated staff position for family engagement.

C. Using new engagement staff capacity, develop more effective family outreach strategies.

1. Leverage existing strengths to broaden family engagement in the school. For example, build on existing family engagement in sporting events and student performances to enhance engagement in activities related to students' academic learning.
2. Support teachers with more comprehensive approaches to family and parent engagement. Develop school capacity to offer teachers, parents, and students access to tools or services not currently being utilized.
3. Share information about student academic performance with parents using methods that might also increase overall communication. Utilize Office of Engagement expertise and best practices from other BPS schools.

D. Provide multiple avenues for students to access resources.

1. Boston has many nonprofits to help provide resources to students; target programming that is most closely aligned with the BHS approach.
2. Using additional staff capacity identified in item E below, create an organizational framework and protocol for efficient referrals that goes beyond the guidance counselor or social worker.
3. Collaborate with partners to develop innovative solutions for increasing resource access, including but not limited to technology (e.g. adopt an app that high school students and their families could use for navigating resources).

E. Define clear roles and responsibilities and provide sufficient staffing in guidance, social work, and school psychology.

1. Minimize guidance staff's non-guidance duties so they can focus exclusively on helping students to plan their college and career paths and access related resources.
2. Add more social workers and school psychologists to the BHS team in order to provide sufficient staffing for essential student support activities, such as addressing family needs, working with parole officers, identifying homeless shelters and services for students, mental health resources, and other support services.

IV. Engage faculty in prioritized professional learning.

A. Closely align professional development (PD) with the instructional needs of the school.

1. Ensure that teachers have access to PD that improves their Tier 1 instructional strategies.
2. Adopt schoolwide instructional strategies across the curriculum, where appropriate.
3. Embed PD within the school day.

B. Apply recent research on BHS teaching practices to develop a more powerful culture of teacher skill-building and mastery, and of peer learning.

1. Building on the recent observational data and research provided by peers, Harvard observers, and the school's formative Monitoring Site Visit Report classroom observation data, address the areas of faculty learning and development that are most likely to result in improved academic outcomes for students. These skills include:
 - a. Asking students to do the academic "heavy lifting" and struggle cognitively, rather than coming to their aid too quickly.
 - b. Assigning higher-order tasks that require student discourse.
 - c. Providing learning objectives, directions, and other information in language and by methods that students can understand.
 - d. Making learning relevant for students and identifying practical applications of learning.
2. Explore collective learning opportunities for faculty members that have the potential to substantially improve outcomes. Build on past Brighton High experiences, such as when -- at the request of their colleagues -- all BHS ELA teachers voluntarily sought and secured dual certification in English as a Second Language (ESL).
3. Explore ways to increase the frequency and intentionality of teacher-to-teacher learning and exchanges. Create authentic opportunities for teachers to jointly focus on sharing instructional strategies, solving student learning

challenges, and sharing best practices.

C. Build BHS faculty skills and mastery of social emotional learning (SEL) practices.

1. Engage all educators in a strong, consistent program of adult learning that allows them to explore their own experiences with social and emotional learning and skill development, and educates them about how students' social emotional issues may impact their learning in the classroom.
2. Provide professional development around social emotional learning and best practices to support students. As needed, engage an outside organization to provide expertise in this area.
3. Track the impact of social and emotional programming and interactions; leverage this information to revise/enhance social emotional learning programming and professional development.

D. Build BHS faculty skills in forging relationships with students and in supporting students emotionally and practically.

1. Foster strong relationships between students and teachers. In the words of our student member, Lwam Gidey, "Good relationships make a good environment for learning."
2. Help staff master instructional practices that regularly demonstrate a strong sense of regard for student ideas and input, and find ways to incorporate student ideas into teaching and instructional practices.
3. Develop clearer strategies about what teachers can do to respond effectively to behavioral issues in the classroom while keeping instruction going.
4. Develop clear strategies for how teachers can simultaneously assist high-needs students while also supporting other students in the classroom.

E. Learn from best practices, and incorporate them into Brighton High's turnaround plan.

1. Learn from best practices within BHS, at other BPS schools, and at schools outside the district. Incorporate these practices into the Level 4 turnaround plan for Brighton High.
2. Develop a body of common expectations and practices among Brighton's teaching staff. Use the foundation of common expectations and practices to allow teachers to adapt to their students' needs.
3. Develop a culture of peer observation.
4. Achieve a balanced approach to professional development as a core driver of turnaround success. Recognize two key elements of this work: PD is essential to a successful turnaround, and the amount of additional PD hours must be manageable, reasonable, and sustainable. The plan must allow for critical teacher practices that directly impact daily student learning (providing extra help, parent outreach, assessing student work), and avoid the unintended consequence of diverting grant funds towards stipends and away from pressing student and school needs.

F. Increase the cultural and linguistic capacity of the BHS faculty.

1. Engage the full school community in well-designed cultural competency training.
2. Add faculty who reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students.
3. Increase the capacity of the school to translate into multiple languages.
4. Develop a plan to ensure the success of students who arrive at Brighton High with limited English language skills.
5. Implement specific, research-based strategies for supporting ELLs in other content areas in addition to English Language Arts (ELA).
6. Provide professional development in culturally sustaining practices in order to enhance student learning and build stronger faculty-student relationships.

V. Rethink the school's use of time in order to dedicate more time to strategies that directly impact student learning.

A. Develop staffing assignments and allocations that allow teachers to focus their time on instruction.

1. Minimize teachers' non-teaching duties that detract from their instructional focus and preparation.
2. Allocate additional non-teaching staff to provide coverage for administrative duties, including but not limited to security coverage for doors and exits, and bathroom duty.
3. Utilize technology to reduce the need for human coverage of administrative duties (e.g. updating the school's camera system could allow one staff member to monitor all building doors). [See Recommendation I.D.4. for related ideas.]

B. Schedule more time for common planning, embedded in the school day.

1. Dedicate more time to common planning (e.g. more time than the current one common planning period per week).
2. Dedicate additional time for more strategies that support teachers' instruction, including but not limited to peer observation, horizontal and vertical planning, and lesson preparation.

C. Plan for new approaches to the use of time, so as to increase learning opportunities.

1. When developing Brighton High's schedule, use students' learning as the chief driver of start and end times, instead of focusing primarily on logistical issues.
2. Perform a course audit to optimize class offerings and resource use.

3. Look thoughtfully at the schedule to determine how BHS wants to use and manage the day. Research best practices to assist BHS in structuring the school day.
4. Consider models for an extended time schedule that could utilize staggered staff schedules to add student learning time (e.g. different start and stop times for staff members). Consider piloting a model at the beginning of the turnaround plan, and fine-tuning the model over the life of the turnaround plan.
5. Incorporate enrichment learning activities into the expanded learning time.

D. Promote student learning that takes place outside of classrooms and traditional school hours.

1. Consider piloting a school-within-a-school model, which could:
 - a. Offer students a set of alternative learning pathways that allow them to work, raise children, and address other responsibilities while also allowing them to be successful at school.
 - b. Consider competency-based learning as one alternative approach to meet the needs of students who are juggling multiple responsibilities. Tap into the expertise of BPS schools already doing this work (e.g. Boston Day and Evening Academy, Dorchester Academy).
 - c. Consider adopting a school strategy supporting students who would benefit from doing their learning, and producing their work, outside of the norms of seat-time and classroom hours.

VI. Identify and address the resource gaps and capacity limitations of the school's current budget and existing partnerships.

A. Increase the resources available to Brighton High School, so as to adequately address the needs of its current student body.

1. Address the gaps between the investments recommended by the LSG and the school's current budget allocation. Ensure that the weighted student formula works for Brighton High School.
2. Identify ways to build long-term capacity for responding to the needs of the whole student within the core school budget.
3. Recognize that the turnaround process is not solely about resources. The members of the LSG are very clear: the changes needed at BHS are by no means solely financial or resource-related. We keep our chief emphasis on the improvement of teaching and learning practices, and of student experiences.

B. Re-evaluate the school assignment process to ensure that ELLs, high needs, and special needs students have the opportunity to attend any high school.

- C. Follow the example of other Level 4 schools that have successfully engaged in turnaround work, by ensuring that all BHS partnerships, old and new, are closely aligned with, and actively advancing, BHS's turnaround priorities.**
1. Assess Brighton High's current partnerships and the resources they provide to the school. Enhance partnerships that are having positive impacts on student learning. Explore additional/alternative partnership opportunities that can bolster student learning. Reduce or eliminate partnerships that do not expressly support turnaround goals.
 2. Create partnerships with companies that have social responsibility platforms that provide grants for schools and internships for students.
 3. Work with BHS's existing partners (e.g. Private Industry Council, Brighton Marine Health Center, Boston Public Health Commission, local universities) to expand on successful prior work and identify new resources and partnering opportunities.