# Level 5 District Local Stakeholder Group Recommendations

**Submission Date: March 29, 2012**

The Local Stakeholder Group respectfully submits the following recommendations for the Superintendent/Receiver's consideration. The recommendations contained in this document were compiled and approved by the members of the Local Stakeholders Group, as designated and attested below:

| Name | Affiliation | Signature | Date |
|------|-------------|-----------|------|
| Mary Lou Bergeron | Superintendent's Designee | *Mary Lou Bergeron* | 3/29/12 |
| Jennifer Cooper | School Committee Rep. | *Jennifer Cooper* | 3/29/12 |
| Frank McLaughlin | Teachers' Union President | *Francis J. McLaughlin Jr.* | 3.29.12 |
| Juan Rodriguez | Administrator Rep. | *Juan P. Rodriguez* | 3.29.2012 |
| Anne Marie Stronach | Administrator Rep. | *Anne Marie Stronach* | 3.29.12 |
| Richard Gorham | Teacher Rep. | *Richard Gorham* | 3.29.12 |
| Douglas Sullivan | Teacher Rep. | *Douglas Sullivan* | 3/29/12 |
| Juana Espinosa | Parent Rep. | *Juana Espinosa* | 3/29/12 |
| Ana Javier | Parent Rep. | *Ana Javier* | 03/29/2012 |
| Aida Castro | Social Services Rep. | *Aida Castro* | 3/29/12 |
| Marianne Vesey | Social Services Rep. | *Marianne Vesey* | 3/29/12 |
| Peter Matthews | Workforce Dev. Rep. | *Peter Matthews Jr.* | 3/29/12 |
| Lane Glenn | Higher Education Rep. | *Lane Glenn* | 3/29/12 |
| Ashley Portorreal | Community Rep. | *Ashley Portorreal* | 3/29/12 |

**Executive Summary:**

The Level 5 District Local Stakeholder Group began its work on February 15, 2012 with an orientation as to the roles and responsibilities of the Local Stakeholder Group, which was provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. At the end of the orientation meeting, the group members immediately convened a short meeting to identify roles and to schedule a series of meetings. The group scheduled ten (10) three hour meetings to complete their work of reviewing the data and reports provided to them, gathering information from the stakeholders that they represent, and seeking other evidence as to the current reality in the Lawrence Public Schools in order to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations that will assist the Receiver and Commissioner in developing a Turnaround Plan, which will rapidly accelerate the achievement for all students in the Lawrence Public Schools. All meetings were open to the public and were purposefully scheduled at different times and on different days in order to provide greater opportunities for various members of the community to attend meetings.

To focus its work, the group decided to use the District Standards and Indicators as a framework for formulating recommendations. So, each standard was reviewed and members were asked to look at the data, evidence, and reports they received in order to identify issues, determine possible root causes, and make preliminary recommendations that would address these key issues to move the achievement of all students forward. This process allowed each member to give voice to their concerns, discuss the issues, and put forward recommendations. Once the group went through this process for each of the six district standards, a master list of every preliminary recommendation was generated for review by the group. From this preliminary list, the group then worked to assess each recommendation to determine if it was: 1) rooted in evidence; 2) related to the standards and indicators; 3) an action that would accelerate student achievement and success; and 4) an initiative that had already begun within the district. Using these criteria, the group members worked to consolidate common recommendations and then to prioritize recommendations that would provide the greatest leverage for the school district turnaround. As a result of our work over the past forty-five days, we are respectfully submitting the following recommendations for the development of the Lawrence Public Schools' Turnaround Plan.

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| **Six Requirements:** | | |
| a) Steps to address achievement gaps (LEP, Sped, low-income) | X | |
| b) Alternative ELL programs ("not withstanding chapter 71A") | X | |
| c) Financial plan for the district | | X |
| d) Steps to address social service and health needs ("ready to learn") | X | |
| e) Steps to improve or expand child welfare services and law enforcement ("safe and secure learning environment") | X | |
| f) Steps to improve workforce development services ("meaningful employment skills and opportunities") | X | |
| **District Standards and Indicators:** | | |
| **(1) Leadership and Governance** | | |
| a. Focused School Committee Governance | X | |
| b. Effective District and School Leadership | X | |
| c. District and School Improvement Planning | X | |
| d. Educationally Sound Budget Development | | X |
| e. Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention | X | |

**Problem Statements and Specific Recommendations:**

**A clear and unified educational vision has not been established for the district.**

1) Ensure that strategic planning process for the district is open and inclusive of all stakeholders and reflects a PK-14 philosophy and addresses PK-14 concerns.
2) Strengthen the implementation of current policies and procedures, including but not limited to: attendance, promotion and graduation requirements, course requirements, discipline, and school improvement planning/school leadership teams.
3) Redefine the image of the Lawrence Public Schools.
4) In collaboration with DESE, establish clear goals and procedures that will move the district as expeditiously as possible out of Level 5 Receivership.

**The school committee was ineffective in its role as a governing body.**

5) Clearly define and communicate the role of the school committee while the district is in Receivership.
6) Ensure completion of legally state mandated training for school committee members that will allow them to function as the democratically elected governing body of the Lawrence Public Schools.
7) Advocate for the school committee to use evidence/data in commenting on policy issues and student achievement issues.
8) Provide resources and other opportunities for school committee members to receive additional training and professional development about their roles and responsibilities.

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| **(2) Curriculum and Instruction** | | |
|    a.  Aligned, Consistently Delivered, and Continuously Improving Curriculum | X | |
|    b.  Strong Instructional Leadership and Effective Instruction | X | |
|    c.  Sufficient Instructional Time | | X |

**Problem Statements and Specific Recommendations:**
**The District's current Essential Learning Outcomes do not contain the components of a complete curriculum.**

1) Evaluate and revise existing curriculum documents so that they set clear expectations for the delivery of curriculum and instruction and result in a written articulation of the instructional program (curriculum, instruction, and assessment).

**At the Lawrence High School Campus, there is inconsistency in the implementation of common core curricula and student access to advanced academic offerings, which include advanced placement and dual enrollment courses.**

2) Address curriculum articulation between middle school and high school to bolster consistency in common course requirements, and curriculum implementation across the six high schools.
3) Provide greater access to high level academic coursework for all students.
4) Offer safety nets, such as: academic resources, tutorials, remedial and enrichment courses.

**There are clear, significant achievement gaps in mathematics and science.**

5) Fully implement science curriculum from PK-12 and ensure vertical articulation.
6) Redesign curriculum and delivery of instruction of mathematics PK-12 and ensure vertical articulation.

**There is a notable achievement gap between general education students and English Language Learners.**

7) Redesign ELL program and instruction to meet the specific needs of all the subgroups of ELL students based on their entry level abilities and ensure that both ELL and content area teachers are appropriately licensed and that adequate materials are provided.

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| **Family support is necessary for English Language Learners to be successful; although efforts are underway in different parts of the district to communicate effectively with families of ELL students, these efforts are inconsistent.**<br><br>8) Increase parent/family engagement around understanding of ELL education and U.S. educational expectations and provide opportunity for shaping ELL education in the Lawrence Public Schools.<br><br>**There is a notable achievement gap between general education students and students with disabilities.**<br><br>9) Expand programming and instructional options for students with disabilities to meet the specific needs of all subgroups of such students based on their abilities.<br>10) Ensure that both special education teachers and general education teachers are appropriately licensed and fully aware of IEP/IAP service delivery.<br>11) Provide appropriate classroom materials, assistive technology, staff, and other resources that will assist students in skill development and mastery.<br>12) Collaborate with families and students to develop a better understanding of the Special Education/504 process, IEP/IAP development and service delivery.<br><br>**Class size may impact student achievement.**<br><br>13) Evaluate current practices to ensure appropriate class sizes according to instructional needs. | | |
| **(3) Assessment**<br> a. Data Collection and Dissemination<br> b. Data-Based Decision-Making<br> c. Student Assessment<br><br>**Problem Statements and Specific Recommendations:**<br>**There is inconsistent use of data across the district to inform instructional decision making.**<br><br>1) Develop a robust formative assessment program, based on district improvement goals, that provides timely, relevant data to inform curriculum adjustment and instruction; and includes data teams system wide to standardize the use of data. | X<br>X<br>X | |

**Level 5 District Local Stakeholder Group Recommendations**

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| The district does not currently take sufficient steps to ensure that students and parents understand the district's formative and summative assessments and how they apply to individual student growth.<br><br>2) Ensure that district data, goals, and progress are communicated consistently to students, parents, school committee members, and the community at large.<br>3) Educate parents and students about the meaning of assessment data. | | |
| **(4) Human Resource and Professional Development**<br>    a. Staff Recruitment, Selection, Assignment<br>    b. Supervision and Evaluation<br>    c. Professional Development<br><br>**Problem Statements and Specific Recommendations:**<br>**The current professional development program does not strategically address the focused priorities of the district as a whole and schools individually.**<br><br>1) Provide resources for all staff to receive differentiated opportunities, which enhance professional practice, and then monitor effectiveness of implementation of professional development.<br>2) Expand teacher driven professional development related to district/school/content area goals and tied directly to student achievement.<br>3) Strengthen the existing mentoring program to support educators in their first three years of service.<br><br>**There is a significant turnover rate for teachers and administrators; especially in high needs areas (e.g. ESL, Special Education, Mathematics, and Science).**<br><br>4) Provide and promote appropriate incentives to attract and retain highly qualified and high performing teachers and administrators.<br>5) Encourage professional growth, development, and promotion from among existing Lawrence Public Schools staff.<br><br>**There has been inconsistent application of the district's educator evaluation system.**<br><br>6) Ensure that performance standards for all evaluators are clearly established, transparent, and consistently implemented across the district.<br>7) Ensure effective implementation of new evaluation educator system in a fair and transparent manner to support professional growth and student achievement. | X<br>X<br>X | |

6

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| **(5) Student Support**<br>    a.  Academic Support<br>    b.  Access and Equity<br>    c.  Educational Continuity and Student Participation<br>    d.  Services and Partnerships to Support Learning<br>    e.  Safety | X<br>X<br>X<br>X | <br><br><br><br>X |

**Problem Statements and Specific Recommendations:**
**The district has many community partnerships and some tools and methods for communicating with the community; however, these relationships and communications are insufficient and not systematically coordinated.**

1) Redesign programs for parent, family and community engagement to ensure participation and voice.
2) Improve communication and consistency of communication with families, including appropriate translation, and strengthen school PTOs.
3) Build bridges with non-profits and community agencies.
4) Educate staff about the community and cultures in order to better understand the students and families that are being served in the Lawrence Public Schools.
5) Build connections with business/industry to support students in career development/awareness.

**Aggregate attendance is consistent with state rates; however, chronic absenteeism is much higher than the state rate.**

6) Evaluate and consistently enforce policies and procedures for interventions with chronically tardy and absent students in grades K-12.
7) Garner community support regarding the importance of the connection between regular school attendance and academic achievement.

**The district continues to see a high rate of student dropouts in comparison to the state average, especially for male students and students with disabilities.**

8) Increase alternative routes to high school graduation (eg. dual enrollment, Diploma Plus, Evening Course Programming) to address the varied needs of students.
9) Expand mentoring and extracurricular opportunities designed to re-engage students in completion of high school.

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| **District data reflects a high rate of suspension/disciplinary incidents which result in loss of instructional time. The school district has a discipline code that is inconsistently implemented.** | | |
| 10) Implement Positive Behavior Supports district-wide which stress behavioral expectations, motivators, and supports. | | |
| 11) Require all staff to consistently implement the district's discipline policy. | | |
| 12) Re-introduce peer mediation groups/program. | | |
| **Many students are not adequately prepared for life beyond high school.** | | |
| 13) Implement a systematic guidance plan PK-12 to develop college and career readiness and prepare all students for high school and beyond. Ensure that implementation includes: use of community resources, educating families about the college process, partnerships with area colleges for readiness skills and dual enrollment, and expansion of academic and career mentoring programs. | | |
| **The district has a higher than average rate of transiency both within the district and from outside the district.** | | |
| 14) Ensure consistency of programs across the district and collaborate with community social service agencies to support incoming students and those who change schools, especially students in extraordinary circumstances. | | |
| **(6) Financial and Asset Management** | | |
|     a. Comprehensive and Transparent Budget Process | X | |
|     b. Adequate Budget | X | |
|     c. Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits | | X |
|     d. Cost-Effective Resource Management | | X |
|     e. Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance | X | |
| **Problem Statements and Specific Recommendations:**<br>**Due to years of deferred and unmet capital maintenance, not all current school facilities provide an appropriate academic environment for students.** | | |
| 1) Ensure that the needs identified in the annual school building report and capital improvement plan are prioritized and addressed. | | |
| 2) Give the school department the resources and authority to aggressively address deferred and unmet maintenance issues if the city is unable to do so. | | |
| 3) Create a "Pride Committee," comprised of students, staff, parents, and community members to support pride in facilities. | | |

| Key Areas of Turnaround Plan | Recommendation Made? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| **Funding for the schools at the minimum Net School Spending rate has not been adequate to provide the resources necessary for sustained educational progress.** <br><br> 4) Ensure appropriate funding for the educational program, including: staffing ratios as defined by best practice, classroom instructional materials, technology upgrades, and extracurricular activities. <br> 5) Continue to collaborate with the City to ensure a streamlined procurement process. <br> 6) Ensure transparency in the development of the budget at the school and district level. <br><br> **Current funding for transportation does not fully address all student needs.** <br><br> 7) Ensure that buses are not filled beyond capacity, have consistent behavioral expectations, and are safe/secure for students. <br> 8) Ensure adequate transportation so students can participate in after-school activities, including credit recovery. <br> 9) Ensure appropriate funding for transportation of students in extraordinary circumstances. | | |

## Glossary:

**Capital Maintenance** - Non-routine maintenance, which is a large scale investment (eg. HVAC upgrades, re-pointing of buildings, new roofs, etc.)

**504** - Section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Addresses the needs of students with disabilities, who do not require special education programming.

**Chapter 71A** - Massachusetts General Law related to the education of English Language Learners

**DESE** - Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**ELL** - English Language Learner

**ESL** - English as a Second Language

**IAP** - Individualized Accommodation Plan

**IEP** - Individualized Education Program

**LEP** - Limited English Proficient

**PTO** - Parent Teacher Organization

**PK** - Pre-Kindergarten (preschool)

**Note: Attached are copies of all agendas, meeting notes, and the preliminary list of our recommendations.**