

**GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
Greenwich, Connecticut

Date of Meeting January 9, 2014

Title of Item: Facility Utilization and Racial Balance Update

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REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION OR PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION  
ITEMS

     Action required

  X   Informational only

Submitted By Ms. Barbara O'Neill

Position Board Chairman

I will be present at Board Meeting to explain if called upon

  X    
Yes

      
No

Synopsis of Proposal:

Recommended Action (if appropriate)

**Synopsis of Proposal:**

The purpose of this agenda item is to determine the Board's next steps in addressing facility utilization and racial balance challenges. The Board has undertaken an extensive effort over the past year to evaluate the alternatives to address the State's letter that Greenwich Public Schools are out of compliance with the State regulation on racial balance and the over-capacity issue at New Lebanon School.

The Board of Education, (BOE) at the October 24, 2013 meeting voted it was in their best interest to try to reach a mutually acceptable resolution with the State Department of Education (SDE). Based on conversations with the SDE, the State is expecting Greenwich BOE to respond to their request for an amended plan which may credibly be expected, at a minimum, to stabilize and, hopefully, to improve the statistics.

The Greenwich Board of Education has already voted on certain actions, which may comprise some or all of an amended plan. These actions reinforced the Board's commitment to support neighborhood schools, prioritize academic achievement and have a positive impact on racial balance

These decisions are:

1. Evaluate potential magnet themes at Hamilton Avenue School that develop an identifiable unifying theme supporting academic achievement. This modification will allow a sharper focus on achievement of all students and have the potential of attracting additional magnet students. The Administration is to complete this work by March 30, 2014.
2. Evaluate programs and services focused on the achievement gap and achievement for all students at New Lebanon, Hamilton Avenue and Julian Curtiss Schools. Programs to be targeted are: K-3 reading, technology to personalize instruction, data to drive instruction, programs to increase parent involvement and other strategies focused on achievement. It would be expected that this programming would make three of the current magnet schools more attractive for new magnet families. The Administration is to complete this work by March 30, 2014.
3. Add Western Middle School with its middle years International Baccalaureate program as a partial magnet school for all students in the district. Greenwich students have the opportunity to experience the IB primary years program at two of Greenwich's magnet schools New Lebanon School or International School at Dundee. The ability to continue this program into the middle years may encourage more families to choose to be a magnet family at both the elementary and secondary levels.
4. Evaluate renovation and/or expansion of New Lebanon School to create additional magnet seats, serve the increasing neighborhood enrollment and support a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment. As part of the study, consideration will be given to the impact of accommodating additional magnet students as well as the needs of the neighborhood students. If this action is part of an approved racial balance plan, then the project may qualify for 80% State reimbursement of eligible construction costs. The funding for the feasibility study is included in the 2014-15 capital budget. The Administration was also

asked to identify the short-term strategies to address over-crowding at New Lebanon School by February 20, 2014.

5. Evaluate the rules surrounding the existing magnet school program, including transportation, middle school assignment and lottery protocols. At the December 19, 2013 meeting, there was a discussion of the draft of the lottery protocol. The discussion concluded with a decision to have the administration re- look at the suggested revisions.

There were also some ideas discussed as possible additional elements if the Board believes it needs to augment strategies to address facility utilization and/or racial balance. These include modifying the current elementary choice options to some or all under-utilized schools, additional changes to the rules for magnet schools, and expanding preschool in under-utilized schools.

### **NEXT STEPS**

There are several activities underway to address academic achievement and the short term and long term impacts of over-crowding at New Lebanon School. The Board will have an opportunity to discuss this work in the coming months.

The BOE from the beginning of this process has affirmed it will make decisions that are in the best interest of our students and our District. The Board needs to determine its response to the State for racial balance. Based on Board decisions to date, the remaining options include:

1. To submit an amended plan or not
2. Submit an amended plan that asserts unique school status for New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue Schools and describes all approaches to address racial balance. These actions would include the existing and recently approved actions.
3. Submit an amended plan that asserts unique school status for New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue Schools and describes all approaches to address racial balance. These approaches would include existing and recently approved actions to address racial balance and would include an additional element or elements to those already decided by the Board. The Board needs to identify the goal for these additional elements (e.g., more opportunity for movement). If this is the selected path, it is suggested that the Board task the Administration with identifying alternate proposals using an inclusive process that involves parents and staff with its development.