

# Greenwich Public Schools Revised Racial Balance Plan



Approved by the  
Greenwich Board of Education  
June 17, 2014

Presentation to the  
Connecticut State Board of Education  
July 9, 2014

# Revised Racial Balance Plan

2

Plan Elements – Designed to support District achievement priorities and use voluntary movement to stabilize and improve racial balance

- 1 Accelerate achievement for all students & close gaps in performance among sub groups
- 2 Increase New Lebanon School magnet capacity
- 3 Establish new Hamilton Avenue School magnet theme
- 4 Market Western Middle School as a magnet school
- 5 Revise magnet guidelines and expand transportation options



# Background



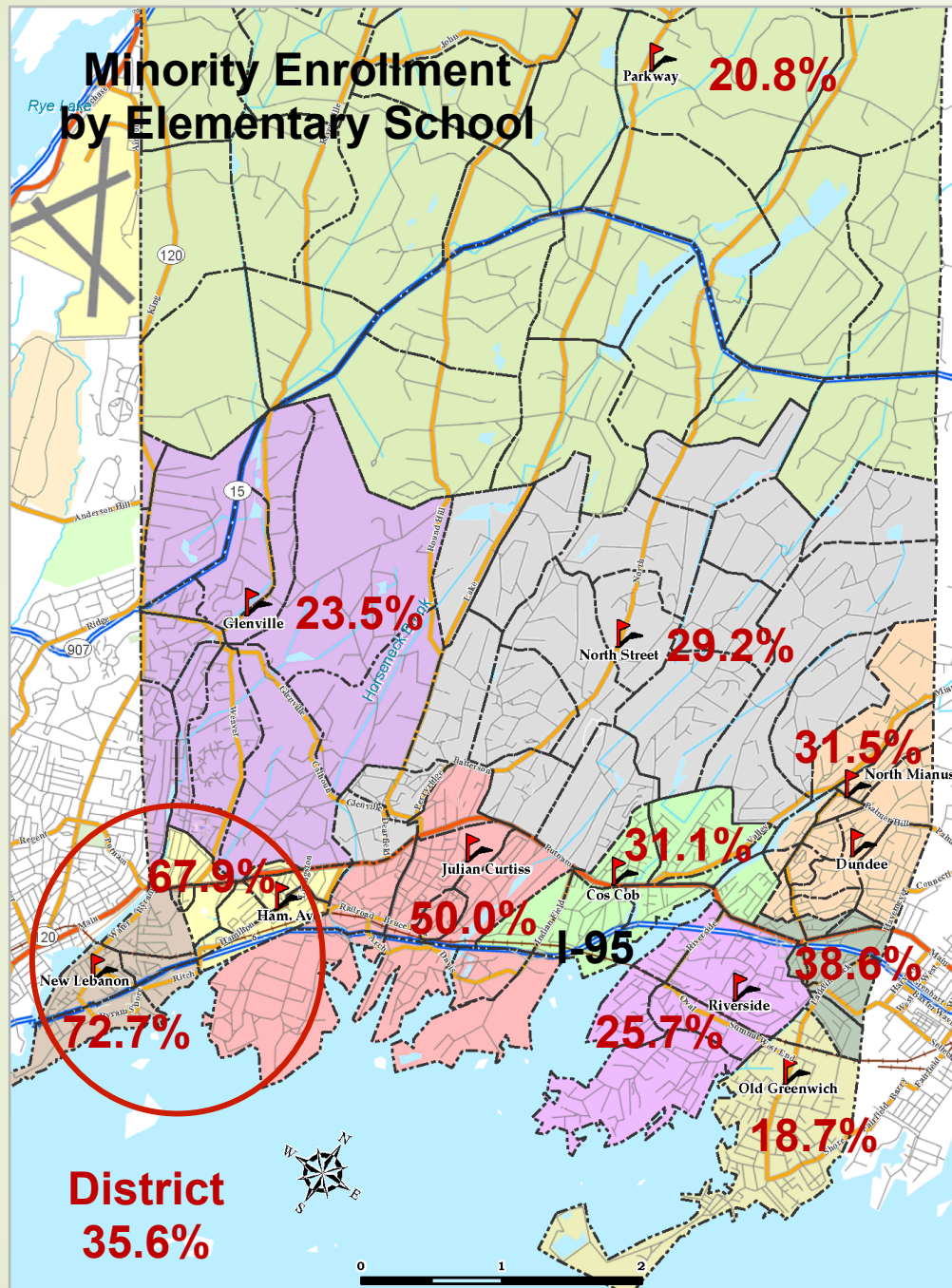
# Background

4

- 8,700 students at 17 schools
  - 1 high school 2,600 students (in compliance)
  - 3 middle schools (in compliance)
  - 11 elementary schools (9 in compliance)
  - 2 alternative high school programs
- Minority enrollment increased from 6% in 1980 to over 30% in 2012
- By 2012, almost one in five students did not speak English as their first language
- Significant community support for neighborhood schools
- New Lebanon School enrollment exceeds capacity
- Hamilton Avenue School has magnet capacity
- 27% of Greenwich students attend non-public schools, the majority of which attend 9 Greenwich independent schools

# Background

- The minority population is increasing in all eleven elementary schools, and it is disproportionately increasing in the southwestern corner of Greenwich.
- The percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch has doubled in the last twenty years.
- 60% of the elementary students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch attend either Hamilton Avenue or New Lebanon Schools
- Students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch historically perform at a lower level than their more advantaged peers.
- Under the new Connecticut Accountability System “High Need” students are defined as qualifying for free or reduced price lunch, lacking English proficiency or requiring Special Education services.



## Town Geography Impacts Solutions

- Given Town geography, elementary schools also function as community centers
- Traffic congestion along the primary east west route I-95 / Post Road corridor persists where most of the population is concentrated
- The majority of multi-family and low income housing is located in the southwest corner
- The two racially imbalanced schools, New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue, are geographically isolated
- The elementary schools with the largest excess capacity are at least 30 minutes away from schools cited as racially imbalanced
- Redistricting would
  - Require moving 22% of elementary population (900 students) to new schools
  - Disproportionately impact minority population
  - Greatly compromise neighborhood attendance areas
  - Be unsustainable beyond 2 years given shifting demographic patterns

# Current Racial Balance Plan (2007)

## ➤ New Lebanon School

- Began implementation of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program in 2007, authorized in 2010
- Currently, there are insufficient magnet seats available to offset the rapid increase of the minority population in the attendance area

## ➤ Julian Curtiss School

- Magnet program implemented in 2003 has reduced variance from the District minority average to within 15%

## ➤ Hamilton Avenue School

- First implemented a magnet program in 2001, revised in 2007
- The magnet program has stabilized variance from the District minority average although it is still at a level above the racial imbalance threshold

# Revised Racial Balance Plan Process & Progress-to-Date

- June 2012: Racial Balance Citation requiring revised plan
- October 2012: Charge to Superintendent to develop a plan that:
  - Increases academic achievement
  - Accounts for enrollment trends and efficient use of facilities
  - Improves racial balance among the schools
- November 2012 – June 2013:
  - February-May 2013 Intensive demographic analysis & options development (Milone & MacBroom)
  - Widespread community engagement (22+ public forums and online feedback mechanism)

# Revised Racial Balance Plan Process & Progress-to-Date

- July 2013: Progress Report to State BOE
- August – December 2013: Steps to revise the plan
  - Ongoing community engagement (12+ additional public forums and online feedback mechanism)
  - District parent survey (Metis Associates)
  - Residency verification to ensure accurate enrollment data
  - Plan options developed
- January 2014: BOE adopts option for revised plan
- February 2014 ongoing focus on achievement gap strategies
- June 2014: Revised plan submitted to State Board of Education



## Elements of the Revised Racial Balance Plan

# Plan Element 1

## Accelerating Learning

- Targeted efforts at narrowing the achievement gap began in 2003
- Schools with larger concentrations of students with High Need Factors\* receive higher per pupil funding
- The percentage of high needs students and students with multiple risk factors are increasing at Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon
- The level of student need at Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon is double that of the other nine elementary schools across all racial and ethnic groups

\*High Need Factors: Students receiving Free or Reduced Price Lunch, English Language Learning Services, and/or Special Education Services

# Plan Element I

## Accelerating Learning

- Students with High Need Factors achieve above predicted performance levels as compared to schools across the District and across the State
- The achievement gap in reading and math in grades 3-8 has narrowed by 18-20 percentage points since 2003-2004
- The achievement gap persists among subgroups, driven largely by high need factors

# Plan Element 1

## Accelerating Learning

- January 2014: Connecticut Center for School Change (CCSC) was retained by the District to audit current practices in four Title I schools: Hamilton Avenue, Julian Curtiss, New Lebanon and Western Middle Schools.
- The CCSC audit studied the impact of current efforts to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps and compared those efforts with best practices.

# Plan Element 1

## Accelerating Learning

### ➡ CCSC recommendations for consideration:

- Increase cognitive rigor demanded of students
- Strengthen data systems and data usage to track critical questions relative to accelerating learning
- Expand affordable, high-quality preschool
- Expand learning time beyond the normal school day and school year
- Improve and increase comprehensive parent and community engagement strategies

# Plan Element 1

## Accelerating Learning

### ➤ Next Steps:

- September 2014: Implement plans developed by each Title I school based on the CCSC audit
- 2014-2015: Focus professional development on cognitively rigorous instruction
- 2014-ongoing: District and school work groups to address CCSC recommendations

## Plan Element 2

16

# Expansion of New Lebanon School

### ➤ Expansion:

- Provides capacity for increased student population
- Increases the number of available magnet seats
- Brings the building up to District benchmarks
- Contingent on qualifying for 80% Diversity Schools Grant (C.G.S. 10-286h) and receiving local construction and funding approvals

### ➤ March 2014: Pre-Feasibility Study (KSQ Architects, PC)

- New Lebanon School is below District benchmarks in numerous site features including square footage, classroom inventory and all core common areas

## Plan Element 2

# Expansion of New Lebanon School

### ► Feasibility Study (Peter Gisolfi Associates):

- Study initiated June 2014
- Educational Specifications to Greenwich BOE Fall 2014

### ► Construction Timeline:

- Anticipated start date of July 2016, pending State approval of Diversity Grant and receiving local funding and construction approval
- Estimated 18-24 month construction window - completion January/June 2018

## Plan Element 3

# Establish New Hamilton Avenue School Magnet Theme

### ➤ 2013-2014:

- Chosen to be one of two schools to lead the District's one-to-one digital learning initiative

### ➤ 2014-2015: Theme identification process begins

- Leveraging the work with digital learning to support personalized learning and improved student achievement
- Improving magnet attractiveness outside Hamilton Avenue School attendance area
- Identification of magnet theme through an inclusive process with staff and community
- Aggressively market new theme beginning in January 2015

### ➤ 2015-2016:

- Implementation of new theme

## **Plan Element 4**

# **Promote Western Middle School Magnet Program**

- 2013-2014 Western Middle School is authorized as International Baccalaureate World School, the only Middle Years Program in the District
- 2014-2015 Promote Western Middle School International Baccalaureate - Middle Years Program to families across the District
- 2014-2015 Middle School magnet rules revised to encourage students at the International School at Dundee to continue their International Baccalaureate experience at Western Middle School

## Plan Element 5

# Revised Magnet and Transportation Guidelines

### ➤ Designed to encourage voluntary movement:

- Western Middle School becomes magnet school as of 2014-2015 school year
- Moratorium on new magnet students at New Lebanon School due to lack of capacity
- Priority lottery status for New Lebanon families applying to other magnet schools
- Transportation: BOE has authorized the administration to further explore options for providing additional transportation to magnet families attending New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue Schools

# Conclusion

## ➤ The revised plan is:

- Multifaceted
- Multiyear
- Sustainable

## ➤ It addresses the District's main challenges:

- High achievement for all students
- Facility utilization
- Racial imbalance

# Conclusion

## **It addresses accelerated achievement:**

- New magnet theme and middle school opportunities
- Students engaged in cognitively rigorous tasks
- Collaboration with External Partners

## **It addresses the need for an expanded New Lebanon School:**

- Facilitates its function as a magnet school
- Provides parity with other District elementary schools

## **It addresses changing demographics and honors neighborhood schools:**

- Voluntary movement
- Revised magnet regulations
- Transportation opportunities

# Conclusion

**The Board is confident of its plan as it is rooted in the following community values:**

- Preparing all our students today for the college and career experiences of tomorrow and to be responsible adults
- Increasing academic achievement to attract more magnet families
- Harnessing technology to accelerate and personalize learning to advance academic, social and civic outcomes
- Providing parity of space and resources for New Lebanon School students
- Respecting choice for all students and families
- Respecting preference for neighborhood schools and the sense of community they provide

# Thank you

- To State Board of Education Members,  
Commissioner Pryor and senior staff:  
Thank you for your time, commitment,  
and support of our efforts to revise our plan