Best Practices:
Bloomfield and Stamford shine on DPI

Chris Seymour
Reporter, CABE

When the state announced District Performance Index (DPI) numbers for school systems around the state in December, only two – **Bloomfield** and **Stamford** – managed to meet elementary and high school targets for their low-income populations.

According to officials in both districts, this achievement on the new state performance reports is due, in large part, to their ongoing analysis of individual student data by multiple data teams.

"What we have done deliberately is to use our testing [data] and analyze it on a continuing basis," explained Stamford Board of Education member and CABE City Representative **Dr. Polly Rauh**. "We have a district data team and we have a data team in each building and then at the grade levels. And they use it for action – it's not information for information sake. It's ok to know 'Johnny did this and he hasn't mastered that,' but what are you going to do about it? So they are regrouping continually and focusing in on what that data tells them. That's the key – you just don't do testing to accumulate the scores and send them to the state."

A District Performance Index (DPI) for the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) is "the test performance of all subjects tested in the respective assessment for all students in the district," according to the State Department of Education.

The DPI ranges in value from 0 to 100 points and Connecticut's ultimate target or a DPI is 88 because in a district with a DPI of 88 or above, students will have performed at or above the "goal" level on the majority of tests, says the SDE.
For example, among Stamford students who took the CMT in 2012-13 and were eligible for free/reduced lunch, the district met its DPI target of 65.5 by notching a 65.8.

In addition to data teams contributing to this success, Stamford has effectively utilized interventions along with—not in place of – regular instructional programs, stressed Rauh. "I think probably the biggest thing is that we have looked at interventions as not taking the place of the regular instructional programs but on top of it – it does not supplant," she stated.

"It enhances and we do a lot of after school and before school [interventions], but particularly after school, interventions for these youngsters. I'm talking about low income and any child who needs it."

Up state in **Bloomfield**, Superintendent **Dr. James Thompson** said meeting elementary and high school targets for his district's low-income populations is all part of a larger "vision" that was implemented about three years ago when he came to Bloomfield.

"In creating that vision we brought in our stakeholders and that vision allowed us to guide us into establishing four priorities: the first one has to do with holistic accountability; the second one is rigorous curriculum, instruction and assessment; third is positive school climate; and the fourth is parent and community engagement," explained Thompson, who has a reputation for transforming struggling school systems.

"And we have developed goals and strategies around those four priorities that really have led us in developing our work around reforming the district," added Thompson.

In Bloomfield, with respect to free/reduced lunch eligible students who took the CAPT in 2012-13, the DPI target of 56.1 was exceeded, as the district recorded a 63.6.

The superintendent added that his school system has "some very interesting programs" to help with its reformation. He continued, "One I am going to

highlight is extended learning…extended learning time happens to be an extended day as well as, we don't call it summer school, we call it the 'early start program' … this summer will be our fourth year." **Bethany Silver** – Bloomfield's Director of Assessment, Evaluation and Research – underscored that Thompson has been a big difference maker.

"Dr. Thompson's leadership team and really his vision is all about using low stakes benchmark assessments to understand where students are and to design and really create an actionable reporting process so that we can design instruction that meets every kid where they are and move them forward," she observed.

"So, regardless of the student's demographics, we are really looking at every learner and looking at what skill areas they have, what their strengths are, and trying to leverage those strengths to move them forward in other areas where they need to grow," continued Silver.

Thompson noted Bloomfield has "three distinctive data teams" that regularly analyze student data. "We have a district data team and their primary function is to develop and implement our district accountability plan; and we also have, at the school level … each school has its own respective school level data team and they have a similar function," explained Thompson, who also noted there is a data team for each grade level. "This is where the work really happens, at the data team meetings."

The data teams closely examine not only academics but also a host of other factors, according to Thompson. "And this is where they have an opportunity to take a very close look at the data; not just the academic data but also other areas: attendance, climate, engagement and all those things that have a tremendous impact on student achievement. That data is reviewed on a weekly or biweekly basis," he stressed.

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