

Meriden

What the district does well

- The superintendent and her leadership team have developed a culture of sharing and collegiality in the district, which school principals and staff appreciate.
- The support for mathematics is good; the curriculum is aligned to state standards, good professional development is building teachers' confidence and there are signs of improved achievement in elementary schools. Some effective action has also been taken to raise the expectations in high schools by eliminating several low-level courses and providing more challenging curricula.
- Actions to improve the curricula in English are beginning to bear fruit in improved reading scores but there is more to do to sustain improvement.
- The interim assessments provided by the district (the Meriden District Assessments) are valued by teachers and parents. There is more to do to ensure these make real impact on improving student learning and achievement in the classroom.
- The superintendent has established strong relationships with community leaders, which are benefiting schools.
- The considerable investment in improving school buildings provides attractive learning environments and conveys a strong message of valuing the community.

What the district needs to improve

- Improve the achievement of key subgroups of students, in particular Hispanic students, by:
 - Providing more focused tracking of progress and monitoring of these students;
 - Increasing their numbers in higher level classes, including college level and honors classes, in the high schools; and
 - Improving guidance systems to ensure they are actively enabled to raise their aspirations, and achieve success, in all schools.
- Improve the district strategic leadership by:
 - Providing a strategic plan which addresses all of the district's key focuses and makes clear how grant and general budgets are aligned to support the key priorities. As part of this, provide a clear rationale and plan for special education and bilingual programs throughout the district;
 - Making better use of data at a macro level to chart *cause and effect* in learning and achievement. This should include triangulating different types of data to build a picture – for example in regard to why subgroups are

underperforming. As part of this, carry out regular satisfaction surveys of key stakeholders; and

- Reviewing the roles and responsibilities of the district leadership team to ensure more equity in workload and better linking of finance and improvement outcomes. In addition, making team meetings part of the formal accountability process.
- Increase the effectiveness of the board of education by:
 - Reviewing the decision-making processes, with the district leadership team, so that the board can adhere to agreed policies and strategies, while continuing to be responsive to constituents and stakeholders;
 - Ensuring members have a range of means to keep them well briefed about the school improvement agenda, both within and beyond the district. As well as induction, this should include regular training, development of a curriculum committee or other means by which issues can be explored in some depth, and visits to schools; and
 - Engaging in an annual self-evaluation process which determines how far the board meets its own key objectives.
- Further improve the conditions for learning in the middle and high schools, by:
 - Reducing the numbers of suspensions and expulsions overall, and particularly of special education and minority ethnic groups;
 - Changing the attendance policy in the high schools whereby students can miss 29 classes before losing credit; and
 - Reducing the number of program tiers, or tracks, in the high schools and ensuring greater equity for all students in access to courses.
- Provide better oversight and accountability for pre-school students.