

THE COMMISSIONER'S ROUNDTABLE FOR FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
April 20, 2017

I. Call to Order

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m. The meeting was held in the SERC Classroom at the State Education Resource Center at 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, Connecticut.

Members present:

Jeffrey Bianco, Co-Chair, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Connecticut
Paige Bray, Associate Dean for Research and Community Education. Associate Professor
of Early Childhood Education, University of Hartford
Jacqueline Coleman, Education Investments Officer, Hartford Foundation for Public
Giving (representing Sara Sneed, Director, Education Investments, Hartford
Foundation for Public Giving)
Mary Lou DiPaola, ESL Teacher, New Haven Board of Education
Clifford Dudley, Principal, Orchard Hills School, Milford Public Schools
Derby Egyin, Student, Windsor Locks High School
Mario Florez, Director of School Climate and Culture, Hartford Public Schools
Paula Gilberto, CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
Natasha Harris, Director of Workforce Quality Assurance, Urban League of Greater
Hartford
Jennifer Lussier, Parent Consultant, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
Nikitoula Menounos, Principal, Norwich Technical High School
Robert Smoler, President, Fairfield Education Association
John Taylor, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington Academy
Donna Thompson-Bennett, National Coordinator, National Parent Leadership Institute
Mirellise Vazquez, Executive Director, Tauck Family Foundation
Athena Wagner, Outreach Coordinator, State of Black Connecticut Alliance/CT Parents'
Union
Beresford Wilson, Assistant Director, FAVOR
Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Members absent:

Abie Benitez, President, Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and
Superintendents
Jeana Bracey, Director of School and Community Initiatives, Child Health and
Development Institute

Audrey Brown, Parent, African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP)

Elizabeth Brown, President, Waterbury Board of Education

Lisa Fair, Parent, Achievement First

Jennifer Falotico, Vice President for Membership, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association

Matthew Geary, Superintendent of Schools, Manchester Public Schools

Giancarlo Isotti, Student, Suffield High School

Aggie Kurzyna, Parent, CT Parent Power

Tamara Lanier, Chief Probation Officer, Connecticut Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division

Chemay Morales-James, Educational Equity Coach, My Reflection Matters & Bridge to Success

Bryan Randall, Personnel Officer, U.S. Naval Submarine Base

Tynima Toney, Parent Coach, Hartford Parent University

Guests:

Jennifer Benevento, AFT Connecticut

Ingrid Canady, State Education Resource Center

Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education

Pamela Charland, Connecticut State Department of Education

Ellen Cohn, Connecticut State Department of Education

John Frassinelli, Connecticut State Department of Education

Carol O'Donnell, Connecticut Council for Philanthropy

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education

Renee Savoie, Connecticut State Department of Education

Allan Taylor, Connecticut State Board of Education

II. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education, called the group to order. Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education, and Mr. Allan Taylor, Chair of the Connecticut State Board of Education, welcomed the group.

III. Important Emergent Issues in Education

A. *Connecticut's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan*

Ms. Ellen Cohn, Deputy Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education, discussed [Connecticut's Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Consolidated State Plan](#), which was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on April 3, 2017. Connecticut is now awaiting review of the plan by the Federal government.

Ms. Cohn highlighted the background and history of the ESSA and noted that an important change in the new law is a return of greater control to states. Connecticut's plan features a tiered, differentiated support system, directing resources to the districts where they are

needed most. The state will continue the work of implementing college- and career-ready standards and building expertise and instructional excellence among all teachers in implementing these rigorous standards. Ms. Cohn also noted that Connecticut's plan continues to support a holistic accountability system that meaningfully differentiates the performance of schools using 12 indicators that go well beyond test scores. This system has been used as a model for other states.

Members of the group discussed the accountability system and testing accommodations for students who learn differently. Commissioner Wentzell noted that the state's Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test is but one part of an accountability system that includes other measures of student growth.

B. Immigration Matters

Commissioner Wentzell discussed [recent correspondence](#) that she and Governor Malloy sent to superintendents regarding children's and families' rights in immigration matters. She said that for many families, schools are a safe and trusted environment and educators have a unique opportunity to provide families with tools for planning for potential immigration emergencies. She highlighted a new document for families, Family Preparedness Plan: Preparing Your Family for Immigration Enforcement ([available in multiple languages](#)), and asked members to share it with their constituencies.

C. Project with Philanthropy Partners

Ms. Russell-Tucker described a new project that is being discussed with the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, a project of the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy that comprises 14 funders from around the state. These funders are interested in partnering with the CSDE, the Office of Early Childhood and other state agencies to create a clear and useful definition, values and operating principles related to family engagement. Ms. Russell-Tucker said more information will be shared with the group as the project develops.

IV. Debrief and Summary of Previous Meetings

Ms. Ingrid Canady, Executive Director of the State Education Resource Center, reviewed the group norms that were established at the first meeting. The norms generated by the group included listening respectfully to understand others' opinions, respecting all voices as valid, being open to honest and real conversation that is fearless, and being willing to speak one's truth while respectfully acknowledging and embracing other views. Members agreed to add an additional norm to indicate when an issue has been sufficiently discussed and they wish to move on. The norms are intended to ensure that all perspectives in the room are heard and respected.

Ms. Canady reiterated that the work of the group is aligned with the [Connecticut State Board of Education \(CSBE\) Comprehensive Plan](#). She also reminded the group that their role includes acting as both an advisor and an ambassador for the group's work to advance family and community partnerships in Connecticut schools.

Ms. Canady referred to the work members did at the October 24, 2016, meeting regarding the CSBE Comprehensive Plan's priority of having great teachers and leaders who collectively

reflect the rich cultural diversity in Connecticut and who are culturally responsive instructors (p. 5). At that meeting, members reflected on the additional information they need in order to make informed recommendations about recruiting and maintaining diverse educators. They also discussed what they thought the CSDE should consider when taking action on this priority. Ms. Canady noted that discussion was continuing at the current meeting in response to members' requests for additional information.

V. Minority Teacher Recruitment

Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education, presented an overview of the CSDE Talent Office's activities to recruit and retain excellent educators and particularly minority teachers. She described the Office's professional learning continuum (i.e., attract and recruit, prepare and hire, induct, evaluate and support, and retain and extend). She identified specific strategies and actions intended to increase minority teacher recruitment. Dr. Barzee highlighted ongoing efforts to work with high schools and higher education institutions to interest young people in teaching, as well as efforts that focus on candidates seeking a career change. She noted that modernizing certification to meet contemporary workforce needs by creating greater flexibility and new certification endorsements is also important. The Talent Office intends to increase the current statewide percentage of racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse educators from 8.3 percent to 10 percent. This represents an increase of 1,000 racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse educators over the next five years.

Members discussed the root causes related to the shortage of racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse educators. Concerns were raised regarding students of color disengaging from education prior to graduating from high school, costs of higher education, and a culture in the teaching profession that may be unwelcoming to minority teachers. Members also discussed the importance of working with the Department of Labor to reach across employment sectors to recruit candidates.

Dr. Barzee identified promising practices including working with middle schools to interest students in teaching, creating pathways to teaching through articulation agreements between community colleges and state universities, and programs that provide alternate routes to certification.

VI. Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System

Ms. Canady informed the group that because of the robust discussion about minority teacher recruitment, the topic of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System will be moved to the following meeting. Group members were provided with a copy of the slides that will be used for the discussion on the accountability system and were asked to review them as homework.

VII. Next Steps

Commissioner Wentzell and Chairman Taylor both thanked the group for their participation in an important conversation. Members were asked to complete a form to indicate topics of interest they would like to see addressed at a future meeting. Ms. Russell-Tucker closed the meeting by telling the group that the intention of the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and

Community Engagement is to move the discussion into action steps, which will be the focus of following meetings.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on June 8, at 9:30 a.m. (location to be determined)

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.