



Susan Bysiewicz
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

TO: Clerk of the Senate
Clerk of the House of Representatives

FROM: Office of Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz
Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education

DATE: September 23, 2022

SUBJECT: Report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap (“Interagency Council”)

Background

In accordance with Section [10-16nn\(b\)\(3\)](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes, this report serves as the annual progress report on the implementation of the Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF) Master Plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. This report was presented to and reviewed by the Interagency Council on September 16, 2022.

Focus and Activities

Since its [last report to the legislature](#) on July 26, 2021, the Interagency Council met five times, once on September 22, 2021; December 15, 2021; March 11, 2022; June 7, 2022; and September 16, 2022. Each meeting was structured with Interagency Council members leading discussions focused on the Results Statements and Policy Recommendations set forth in the AGTF Master Plan and the related subject matter selected for that meeting. This format has facilitated open, collaborative discussions across member agencies and kept the AGTF Master Plan as a focal point at every meeting.

During the September 22, 2021, meeting, member agencies reviewed the status of their work with respect to the Policy Recommendations for the following topics, and the respective Results Statements:

1. Inside the Schoolhouse: Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap
2. Inside the Schoolhouse: Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap – Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students
3. Inside State Government: Students in State Care

The meeting began with guest speaker, Erica Forti, Superintendent of East Haven Public Schools, sharing East Haven’s innovative use of school time and the summer months to

reconnect with students and recover learning loss. Following the presentation, Commissioner of Education, Charlene Russell-Tucker, led the discussions for Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap and Narrowing the High-End Opportunity Gap. Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, Vanessa Dorantes led the discussion on Students in State Care.

The presentations on each subject area were followed by robust discussions between Interagency Council members regarding potential avenues for inter-agency collaboration or legislative routes through which the recommendations could be alternatively addressed. Additional information is available in the recording and the minutes of the [September 2021](#) meeting.

The December 15th meeting commenced with a special presentation from Hedy Chang, Executive Director, Attendance Works. Ms. Chang shared a national perspective on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on student attendance and engagement, highlights from Connecticut's exemplary response, and findings from a national brief featuring lessons learned on attendance and academic achievement in remote and hybrid learning settings in comparison to in-person learning.

The presentation was followed by a facilitated discussion by Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker and agency staff on the Master Plan topics:

1. Chronic Absence
2. Reading
3. English Language Learners

As of the December meeting, the Interagency Council completed its review of all Results Statements and Policy Recommendations, as set forth in the AGTF Master Plan in 2014. Additional information can be found in the recording and meeting minutes from the [December 2021](#) meeting.

The March 11th meeting was led and co-facilitated by DCF Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes and Education Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker. The following member and guest agencies provided presentations on their agency's response to the need for additional children's behavioral health services because of the pandemic:

1. Department of Children and Families
2. State Department of Education
3. Department of Developmental Services
4. Department of Social Services
5. Department of Public Health
6. Judicial Branch

The importance of state agency collaboration and alignment of resources in response to the pandemic was represented in the presentations and subsequent discussion. Further details are provided within the [March 2022](#) recording and meeting minutes

During the June 7th meeting, member agencies participated in a facilitated discussion related to Educational Technology to Address the Achievement Gap. The presentation was facilitated by Doug Casey, Commission for Educational Technology, with Dr. Stephen Hegedus, Southern Connecticut State University, and Holly Williams from the Office of Policy and Management. Topic areas covered issues related to teaching, learning and using technology to address the achievement gap. Further details are provided within the [June 2022](#) recording and meeting minutes

During the September 16, 2022, meeting, member agencies reviewed this report. In addition, special presentations were co-facilitated by Office of Early Childhood Commissioner Beth Bye and Department of Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno and Deputy Commissioner Shante Hanks on efforts of their agencies to connect housing and childcare needs. Given the timing of this annual report, meeting minutes will be available on the website once finalized and approved.

Looking Forward

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz plans to continue robust discussion with member agencies concerning:

1. Program updates and measured progress with respect to existing programs;
2. Any new initiatives consistent with goals of the Interagency Council; and
3. Any proposed legislation relevant to the work of the Interagency Council and highlights the child's mental health bill that was signed by the Governor as a topic that should be in our report.

The remaining 2022 Interagency Council meeting is scheduled to take place on December 13th.

If you have any questions about this report or otherwise about the Interagency Council, please contact Laura Stefon, Connecticut State Department of Education, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, at (860) 713-6493.

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