

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
January 21, 2016

Call to Order

The Honorable Nancy Wyman, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held in Hearing Room 1A of the Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut.

Member agencies
represented by:

Jeffrey R. Beckham, Staff Counsel and Director of Communications, Department of
Administrative Services

Michael Carone, Legislative and Regulations Analyst, Department of Social Services

Leah Grenier, Principal Budget Specialist, Office of Policy and Management

Evonne Klein, Commissioner, Department of Housing

Christopher Leone, Superintendent of Schools, Department of Children and Families

Bonnie Koba, Arts in Education Program Manager and Director of Higher Order Thinking
(HOT) Schools, Department of Economic and Community Development

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer, Connecticut State Department
of Education

Robin Tousey-Ayers, Health Program Associate, Children and Youth with Special Health
Care Needs, Department of Public Health

Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Guests:

Steven Hernández, Achievement Gap Task Force, Commission on Children

David Kennedy, Achievement Gap Task Force, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County

Kari Sullivan, Connecticut State Department of Education

Louis Tallarita, McKinney-Vento State Coordinator, Connecticut State Department of
Education

Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Elaine Zimmerman, Achievement Gap Task Force, Commission on Children

I. Welcome and Introductions

The Honorable Nancy Wyman, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut

II. What Can Happen When “Outside the Schoolhouse” and “Inside the Schoolhouse” Partner

Preventing and Ending Homelessness in Connecticut

Evonne Klein, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Housing

Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Louis Tallarita, McKinney-Vento State Coordinator, Connecticut State Department of
Education

Commissioner Klein provided an overview of the current efforts in Connecticut to prevent and end homelessness. Priorities include ensuring access to affordable housing in all municipalities and working collaborative to close the achievement gap. She reported that Connecticut is a recognized national leader in the preservation, rehabilitation and creation of affordable housing and is leading the way nationally in preventing and ending homelessness. Connecticut is making real progress through systems change and engaging partners. There are victories to celebrate including:

- lowest number of homeless in Connecticut since the first count in 2007;
- unsheltered homelessness is down 32 percent since 2013;
- real progress toward ending veteran homelessness; and
- chronic homelessness has decreased by 21 percent since 2014.

Connecticut is recognized by the federal government as the first state to end chronic homelessness of veterans and is on track to end all chronic homelessness.

Lisa Tepper Bates followed with a snapshot of homelessness in Connecticut and an in-depth overview of the systems change being made to further reduce the numbers.

Louis Tallarita presented on the barriers to education for homeless children and youth. He also provided an overview of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Under this act, schools have an obligation to identify homeless students and provide support and services that help them be successful in school.

III. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes from October 15, 2015

Minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Dr. Diana Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), previously known as No Child Left Behind. Dr. Wentzell provided an overview of the major components of ESSA and the projected federal timelines of implementation. ESSA helps to ensure an equitable high-quality, educational opportunity for all students by:

- Empowering state and local decision makers to continue to develop their own accountability systems and refine their own systems for school improvement.
- Holding all students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers.
- Continuing to require annual, comparable statewide assessments, so that parents and educators have the information they need to make sure children are making progress, while encouraging review and elimination of unnecessary tests.

Commissioner Wentzell provided additional information on greater level state flexibility and updates on federal grant funding.

V. Achievement Gap Task Force Update

Steven Hernández, Achievement Gap Task Force, Commission on Children
David Kennedy, Achievement Gap Task Force, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
Elaine Zimmerman, Achievement Gap Task Force, Commission on Children

An update of successes in the past year was provided by Elaine Zimmerman that includes a comprehensive reading plan and reading director at the CSDE; professional development plan for reading in partnership with teachers; minority recruitment legislation; funding to support English language learners; and strengthened mental health prevention and intervention services. There will be an AGTF bill every year until 2020.

David Kennedy reflected on the history of the AGTF Master Plan and the need to “refresh” it after two years to include: alignment with new ESSA and engaging business partners in the work.

VI. Upcoming Legislative Report Requirements

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education, Chief Operating Officer,
Connecticut State Department of Education

Charlene Russell-Tucker provided a status report and next steps for the Interagency Council’s annual report. CSDE has collected information from most of the member agencies and will share a draft report in the near future. She also provided a snapshot of the council’s work to date and reflected on all that has been shared. The council has provided a great opportunity for the member agencies to learn from each other, align the work and become more efficient.

In addition, Public Act 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism, requires the publication of a Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan in consultation with this council. CSDE is pleased to have engaged Attendance Works to help us with this plan and to put it on a fast track to completion. Stakeholder meetings are planned to secure feedback from parents, teachers and partner agencies. The goal is to have the plan ready for review at the next meeting in April.

Elaine Zimmerman shared with the council that the AGTF would like to invite a national speaker to Connecticut for an event on the ESSA and the achievement gap. She plans to discuss this with CSDE in order to coordinate the date and to have the event co-sponsored by the AGTF and the council.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on April 7, 2016, at 3 p.m., at the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Room 307A.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.