

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting (Subject to Revision)
June 11, 2015

Call to Order

The Honorable Nancy Wyman, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. The meeting was held in Hearing Room 1E of the Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut.

Member agencies
represented by:

Melody A. Currey, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services
Evonne Klein, Commissioner, Department of Housing
Karla Lindquist, Public Policy Fellow, Department of Economic and Community
Development
Krista Ostaszewski, Legislative and Regulations Analyst, Department of Social Services
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
Stephen Tracy, Superintendent of Schools, Department of Children and Families
Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Guests: Miguel Cardona, Achievement Gap Task Force, Meriden Public Schools
Catherine Foley Geib, Court Support Services Division, Connecticut Judicial Branch
Steven Hernández, Achievement Gap Task Force, Commission on Children;
David Kennedy, Achievement Gap Task Force, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County;

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes from October 2, 2014.

Minutes were unanimously approved.

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

a. Cradle to Career, Collective Impact Support to Strengthen Outcomes for Children and Families

Merle Berke-Schlessel, President and CEO, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, David Kennedy, Chief Operating Officer, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County and Rina Bakalar, Consultant, presented the concept and theory behind Cradle to Career Collective Impact. It is a long-term effort that is led by the community around a specific framework of identified conditions and values. The goal is to improve outcomes for all children across the continuum (birth-25). It draws on a new way of working together that goes beyond collaboration. Vital to the success of this effort is the “backbone support” of a lead agency. In Bridgeport, the United Way is the backbone for this effort. The infrastructure includes a Core Leadership Team, Operations/Implementation Team,

looking at data and outcomes and subgroups with specific tasks. In Bridgeport, the focus is on Kindergarten readiness; early grade reading; middle grade math; high school graduation; post-secondary enrollment and post-secondary completion. Progress will be measured through the following lenses: 1) academic; 2) social emotional wellness; 3) health and 4) family strengthening/family support.

- b. ALIVE, DiLoretto Magnet School, Consolidated School District of New Britain**
Principal, Alejandro Ortiz, introduced the school's partner, David Johnson, Executive Director, Foundation for Arts and Trauma, for the implementation of ALIVE (Animating Learning by Integrating and Validating Experience).

ALIVE is an innovative program designed to help students, classrooms, and schools-as-a-whole become responsive, in the moment, to the effects of negative experiences on the educational mission. Through specialized stress reduction sessions, classroom-wide psychoeducation, and schoolwide early detection and screening, ALIVE aims to create an open conversation about the effects of stress, and link the students' lived experiences with curricular material. Indeed, ALIVE helps students see that their difficult experiences can be a source of knowledge, inspiration and even career choice, rather than only suffering.

Students attending the DiLoretto Magnet School are provided with a list of statements about how they will not be mistreated allowing them to understand when an action against them should be shared with a caring adult. This list is read/repeated on a regular basis. In addition, students correspond with Miss Kendra, a fictional figure who has suffered herself, about their feelings and experiences in their day-to-day life. These letters are read by trained social workers to provide early detection of potential trauma in a student's life. Parents are engaged as well to understand the purpose and intent of program.

IV. Achievement Gap Task Force Update

Miguel Cardona, Co-Chair, Achievement Gap Task Force

Dr. Cardona provided an overview of the history and intent of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap and its relationship to the Achievement Gap Task Force. He stressed the importance of the agency leaders working together to align priorities and resources. All improvements do not require legislation. Policies and practices at the agency level can be done with involving the legislative process. Issues to be considered go beyond just education and should be approached holistically. A holistic approach would include issues such as poor physical health; poverty; limited access to enriching experiences; absenteeism; early childhood education; disparate housing patterns; achievement gaps; hunger and mental health. "We all serve the same children." Dr. Cardona also provided an overview of the legislative efforts of the Achievement Gap Task Force. He concluded with a charge to develop next steps and action plans to support the work and to establish a shared vision in each of the agencies in order to promote sustainability.

V. Agency Updates on Master Plan Commitments

a. Raise the Grade

Stephen Tracy, Superintendent, Unified School District #2, Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Catherine Foley Geib, Court Support Services Division (CSSD), Connecticut Judicial Branch

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Interim Chief Performance Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

In response to their first step commitment to the Achievement Gap Task Force Master Plan, the three state agencies are partnering to implement the Raise the Grade legislation that was implemented in 2013 provided an update on their progress to date, challenges and next steps. It was noted that funding for this program is ending as of June 30, 2015.

Court Support Services Division

Ms. Geib presented that, to date, the CSSD has: established policy and automated procedures for education case planning; expanded educational supports/advocacy services; begun reviewing education delivery in all residential programs; and established a data partnership with CSDE and the Child Study Center at Yale University.

Next steps include: continuing the partnership and meeting monthly; focusing on truancy; and continued attention to school arrests, suspensions and expulsions.

Some of the biggest challenges have been: timely access to records; under credit students; and reentry from detention.

Department of Children and Families

Dr. Tracy presented that, to date, DCF has ensured that every child in care has a case plan that includes an education section. Every case plan is subject to an Administrative Case Review every six months. Social workers now have direct access to CSDE student data. In addition, Raise the Grade services all committed children through the acquisition of educational records as children come into care; provides educational recommendations to social workers for inclusion in Case Plans; and ensures continued support as requested.

Raise the Grade provided services to 480 of the neediest children including all of the previously mentioned services and also ensures that records are updated every six months; that there are updated recommendations and case consultations every six months. DCF staff participates in PPTs and other school meetings.

The three pilot programs in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven have focused on records acquisition and case plan recommendations for 100+ students in each city; with active intervention in the neediest cases. This pilot program concludes June 30, 2015.

Some of the biggest challenges include staffing: 3,183 children in care as of May 2015; 100+ children enter care each month and there are only 12 education consultants. Records acquisition also continues to be a challenge.

Connecticut State Department of Education

Mr. Gopalakrishnan reported that, to date, CSDE has entered into a research partnership with CSSD and Yale University to study the educational impacts of public school students who have become involved with the juvenile justice system (7-years of longitudinal education data). The outcome will be a real-time system to provide historical educational information on juveniles who are in detention or court supervision.

To support Raise the Grade, CSDE has been able to provide DCF with monthly individual student educational information (enrollment, subgroup membership, assessment, attendance) for all children in DCF care/custody as well as one-time student-level information including discipline and course participation/performance. The future plan is to automate all information and the entire process through the CSDE data warehouse. CSDE also provided analyses of these data to present an aggregate perspective of these students. This was shared with the Connecticut General Assembly and presented at the DCF-sponsored conference by CT Voices for Children.

b. Connecticut State Department of Education – Update on Chronic Absence

Diana R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer

Commissioner Wentzell addressed the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap. She is pleased with the work to date and her agency's focus on chronic absence. She remarked on the number of different areas of the agency were contributing to this meeting including: Turnaround, Student Supports and Performance.

Charlene Russell-Tucker presented progress made on the CSDE first step commitment to respond to the Master Plan, to reduce Chronic Absence. The data show that in 2012-13 11.5 percent (approximately 60,000 students) were chronically absent compared to 10.7 percent (approximately 56,000) in 2013-14.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be announced at a later date.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.