



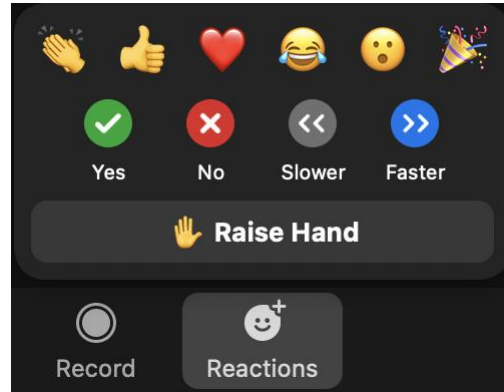
CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

***The Commissioners' Roundtable  
for Family and Community  
Engagement in Education***

**January 26, 2022**

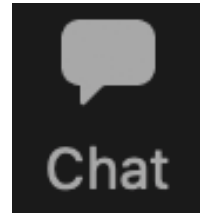
**1:00 to 2:30 p.m.**

# Interacting with Our Zoom Meeting



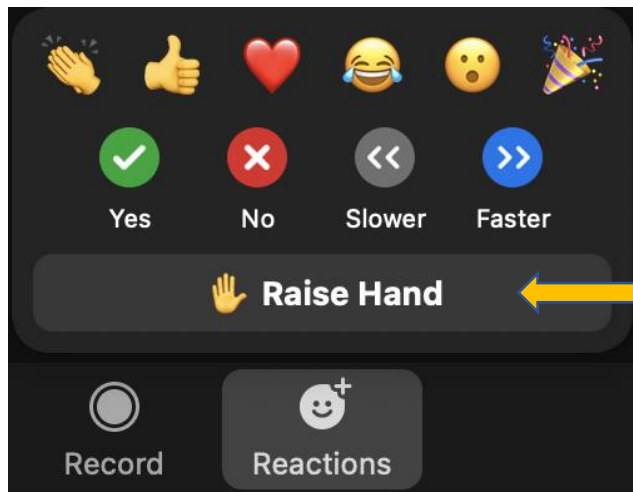
Use **reactions** to share your feelings with the speaker and other audience members.

# Interacting with Our Zoom Meeting



To ask a question of our panelists:

Open the Chat panel and type in your question.



If you'd like a chance to unmute your microphone and ask a question:

1. Click the **Reactions** icon, and then
2. Click the **Raise Hand** button.

When you're called on by the facilitator, you'll be able to unmute your microphone. *If you're using Interpretation, please submit your questions using the Chat panel!*

# Agenda

## Welcome and Introductions

John Frassinelli, Division Director, School Health, Nutrition, Family Services & Adult Education

Ingrid Canady, Executive Director, SERC

## Emergent Critical Issues in Education

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner

Desi Nesmith, Deputy Commissioner

John Scianimanico, Strategic Initiatives and COVID 19 Advisor, Office of the Governor

Dr. Gladys Labas, Director of Equity and Language

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer

John Frassinelli, Division Director, School Health, Nutrition, Family Services & Adult Education

## Listening to Roundtable Members

## Discussion Wrap-up and Charge to the Roundtable from Commissioner Russell-Tucker



# Our Group Engagement Norms

**As members of the Commissioners' Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education, we have agreed to:**

- Be willing to speak our truth (even the hard truth) while respectfully acknowledging and embracing other views
- W.A.I.T. (Why Am I Talking?)
- Be open to honest and real conversation that is fearless (“Say what you want, not what you think others want to hear”)
- Be active listeners
- Listen respectfully to understand others' opinions
- Ensure that all voices are valid and respected, making it critical that we hear from everyone in the room
- E.L.M.O (Enough Let's Move On)



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# Emergent Critical Issues in Education

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner

Connecticut State Department of Education

January 26, 2022

# The State of Education in Connecticut

With Education Commissioner  
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker

Livestreaming on YouTube & CT-N  
**Monday, January 31, 2022**  
**5:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

For students, parents, and members  
of the education community and public

Submit your questions beforehand  
at <https://serc.info/stateofed>



# Health and Safety Updates

- ❖ Updated guidance for schools regarding quarantine, isolation, testing and return to activities
- ❖ Vaccinations:
  - ❖ Ages 5-11 Years:
    - ❖ At least 1 dose: 109,000 (39%, up from 34%)
    - ❖ Fully Vaccinated: 78,000 (28%, up from 22%)
    - ❖ 648 Clinics have been scheduled for this age group
  - ❖ Ages 12-17 Years:
    - ❖ At least 1 dose: 211,000 (79%, up from 75%)
    - ❖ Fully Vaccinated: 190,000 (71%, up from 67%)



# Health and Safety Updates

- ❖ **Test Distribution since December 31, 2021**
  - ❖ **1,420,000 to K-12 Students and Teachers**
  - ❖ **164,000 to Early Childhood Providers**
  - ❖ **11,000 to K-12 Bus Drivers**
  
- ❖ **Mask Distribution**
  - ❖ **First Distribution to Municipalities - 5 Million N-95 Masks (prioritized for schools, first responders)**
  - ❖ **Second Distribution direct to K-12 Schools - 422,000 N-95 Masks**



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# **FAFSA Challenge Overview and Call-to-Action**

Desi Nesmith, Deputy Commissioner

John Scianimanico, Strategic Initiatives and COVID 19 Advisor, Office of the Governor

Connecticut State Department of Education

January 26, 2022

# Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Overview

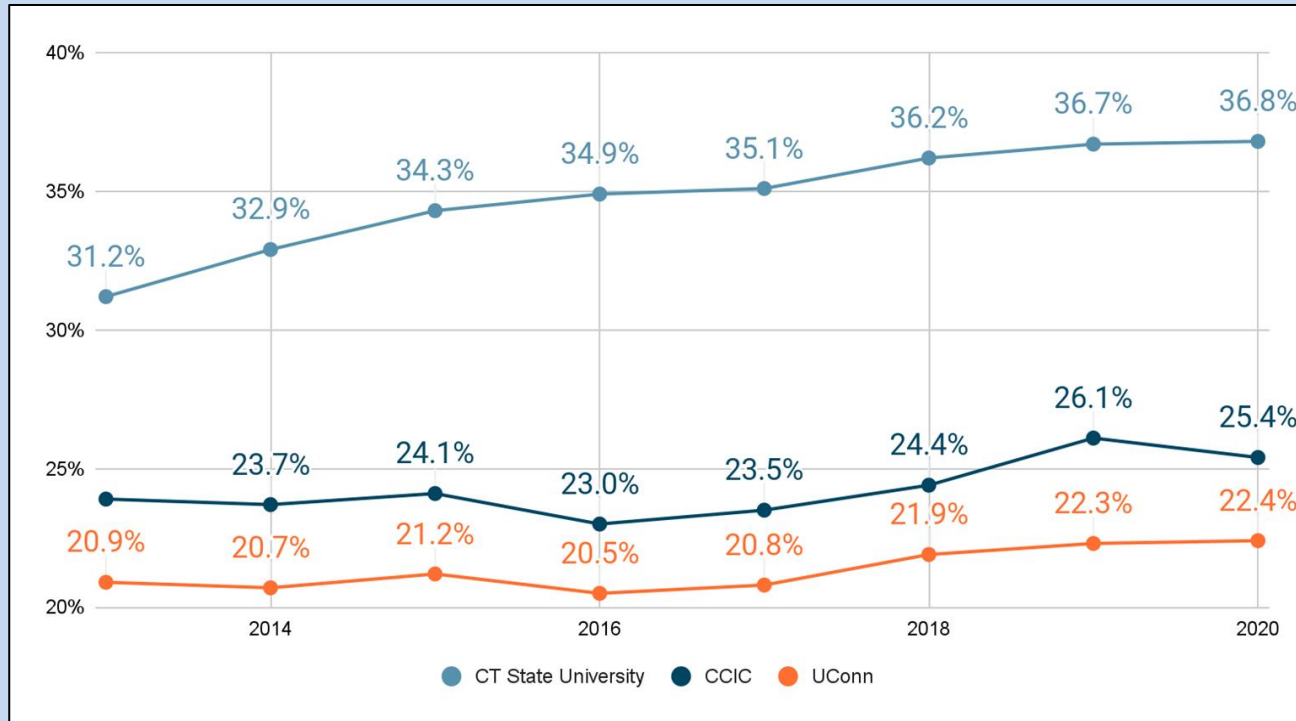
- ❖ FAFSA is administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid
- ❖ After filling out the CT students can receive up to \$20,000
  - ❖ Federal grants (Pell Grants, work-study, loans), most college-based aid, and state grants like Roberta Willis Scholarship Program
- ❖ Per the National College Attainment Network, there is an 84% increase in likelihood of postsecondary enrollment associated with FAFSA completion



# Why is the FAFSA so important for Connecticut students?

A growing share of Connecticut students rely on Pell Grants, or federal grants reserved for students who display exceptional financial need, to finance their higher education.

Percentage of Undergraduates Awarded Pell Grants at CT 4-year Institutions, by Sector

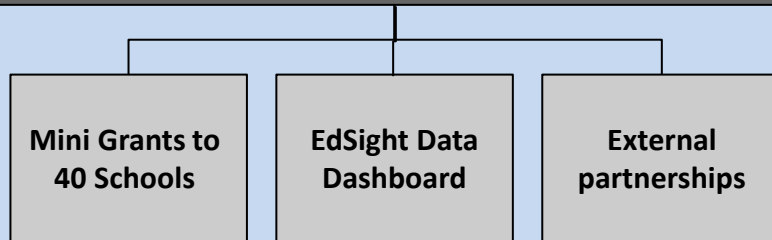


And there are likely more who could benefit. Research shows that one-third of the students who do not file a FAFSA would have been eligible for a Pell grant and other need-based aid.

# 2021-2022 Connecticut FAFSA Challenge

## Vision

### FAFSA Challenge Program

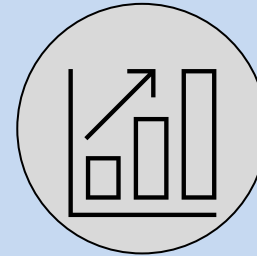


**Mini Grants:** Each school receives between \$5,000 - \$12,000 to implement innovative strategies and incentives for students to submit a FAFSA

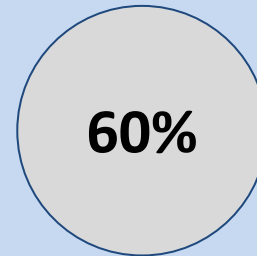
**Data Dashboard:** Thanks to a partnership with OHE, CSDE posts FAFSA weekly completion rates on a district, school, and, through a secure portal, individual level

**External Partnerships:** CSDE established partnerships with the RISE Network, CTCollegeBound, and the College Advising Corps to expand capacity for and deepen knowledge of FAFSA completion strategies in high-need schools.

## What success looks like

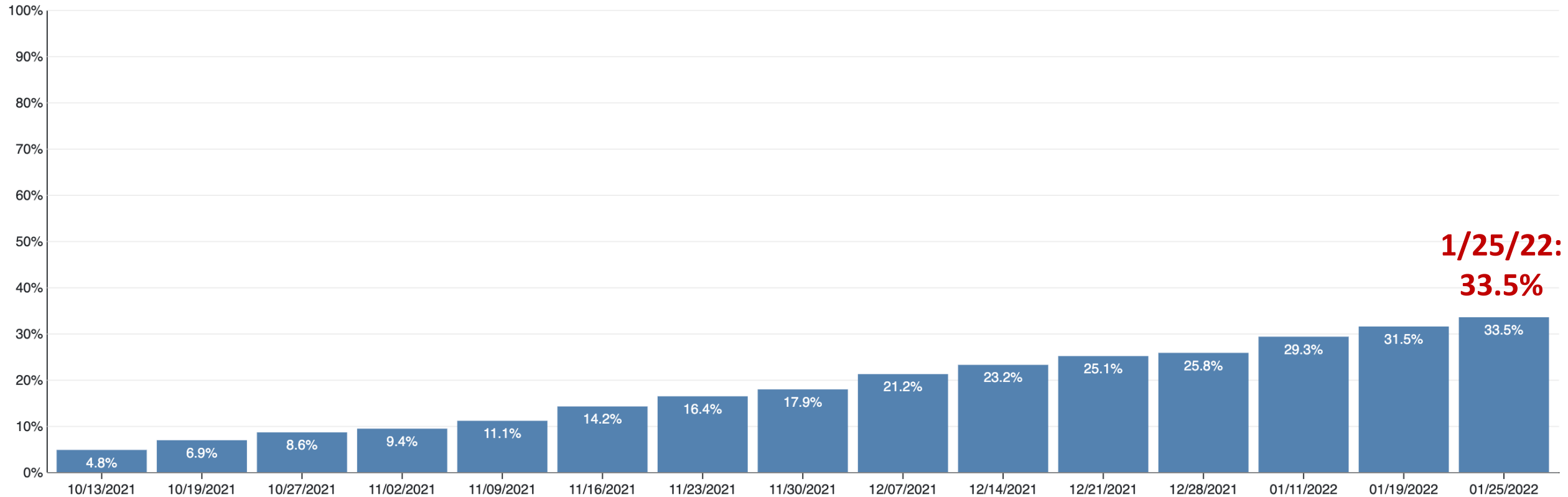


**90% of Challenge schools (up to 36 schools) will increase their FAFSA completion rates by 5 percentage points or more**



**A statewide completion goal of 60%, or an increase of roughly 5 points from June 2021**

# Connecticut's FAFSA Completion Rate Goal: 60% by June



[EdSight FAFSA Dashboard](#)



# FAFSA Completion Supports Provided by CSDE

## Professional Development Opportunities

- **Monthly Community of Practice meetings** with FAFSA Challenge schools to learn best practices and discuss successes and challenges
- Monthly **FAFSA completion coaching sessions**, provided by RISE Network, to FAFSA Challenge schools
- Statewide **FAFSA completion trainings** open to all counselors and educators

## Resources and Tools

- **Launch of FAFSACT.org**, a website where students can receive virtual assistance on FAFSA completion, no matter where they live in the state
- **Family FAFSA Completion Toolkit** developed by RISE Network (forthcoming)

## Recognition

- Monthly **newsletters** recognizing schools displaying innovative FAFSA completion strategies
- Monthly **awards to schools** that demonstrate the highest month-to-month growth in FAFSA completion
- **WTNH coverage of Windham High School's** progress in FAFSA Challenge

# Participating Schools and Districts

<b>A. I. Prince Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>Howell Cheney Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>Ansonia High School, Ansonia</b>	<b>J. M. Wright Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>Bassick High School, Bridgeport</b>	<b>James Hillhouse High School, New Haven</b>
<b>Bridgeport Military Academy, Bridgeport</b>	<b>John F. Kennedy High School, Waterbury</b>
<b>Brien McMahon High School, Norwalk</b>	<b>Montville High School, Montville</b>
<b>Bristol Eastern High School, Bristol</b>	<b>New London High School, New London</b>
<b>Bullard-Havens Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>Norwalk High School, Norwalk</b>
<b>Central High School, Bridgeport</b>	<b>Norwich Free Academy, Norwich Free Academy</b>
<b>Civic Leadership High School, CREC</b>	<b>Norwich Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>Crosby High School, Waterbury</b>	<b>Oliver Wolcott Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>Danbury High School, Danbury</b>	<b>Platt Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>E. C. Goodwin Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>Torrington High School, Torrington</b>
<b>East Windsor High School, East Windsor</b>	<b>Vinal Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>Eli Whitney Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>W. F. Kaynor Technical High School, CTECS</b>
<b>Emmett O'Brien Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>Warren Harding High School, Bridgeport</b>
<b>Enfield High School, Enfield</b>	<b>Westhill High School, Stamford</b>
<b>Griswold High School, Griswold</b>	<b>Wilbur Cross High School, New Haven</b>
<b>H. C. Wilcox Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>Wilby High School, Waterbury</b>
<b>Hartford Public High School, Hartford</b>	<b>Windham High School, Windham</b>
<b>Henry Abbott Technical High School, CTECS</b>	<b>Windham Technical High School, CTECS</b>



# African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Course of Studies Update

## Milestones

- ❖ Published and updated full curriculum on SERC website and units on GoOpenCT
- ❖ Training series, coaching support, and office hours for educators serving as Initial Implementers
- ❖ Created Feedback Form on website for public comment
- ❖ Responding to questions from field to ensure consistency of messaging

## Successes

- ❖ High level of participation and inquiry during virtual training
- ❖ Districts implementing in a variety of ways
- ❖ Some high schools with five sections
- ❖ High level of student engagement being reported
- ❖ Heightened focus on access for SWDs and MLs
- ❖ Conversations in community and at BOE meetings evidencing school and teacher commitment to implementation



# Rigorous Coursework Letters Overview

- ❖ Students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade receive letters from the Commissioner encouraging them to consider enrolling in rigorous courses (AP, IB, and/or dual-enrollment) based on Smarter Balance test performance
- ❖ First round of letters to nearly 33,000 eligible students were mailed earlier this month
- ❖ Second round of letters, either to parents of eligible students or eligible students, went out earlier this week
- ❖ This has been communicated with districts, and a webinar on the logistics surrounding these letters was held in December

# Supporting Mental and Behavioral Health Update

- ❖ **Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) update:**
  - In use by 62 districts covering more than 60,000 students
  - DESSA Cohort 3 information sessions - April and May
  
- ❖ **CSDE has invited districts to pilot an initiative aimed at:**
  - Assessing school mental health system needs;
  - Designing and implementing a system of supports and services to embed in the school community; and
  - Tracking improvements over time
  
- ❖ **Opioid Use Prevention**
  - School survey on Naloxone (Narcan)
  - Training for School Nurse Supervisors
  - Train-the-Trainer Guide: DCP - Drug Control Division; CT Pharmacists Association; DMHAS; CT State Medical Society; University of Saint Joseph and UConn – Schools of Pharmacy

# Listening to Roundtable Members

Based on your personal, organizational, and advocacy perspective, inclusive of today's updates, please share with us:

**What themes or areas you are hearing from your constituencies do you want to bring to the attention of the Commissioner of Education and her team?**

Frame your response as encouraging practices, challenges, and solutions that you propose CSDE can employ to support Connecticut's families, students, and districts.



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**Thank you!**

**Be safe and be well!**

**Next meeting: April 20, 2022, 1-2:30 p.m.**

*Note: This date is tentative, as the legislature will be in session.*