

Connecticut State Department of Education – December 8, 2025



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Purpose

The purpose of the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education **is to advise the Commissioner of Education** regarding policy and programmatic priorities to improve outcomes for all students and advance the State Board of Education's comprehensive plan for equity and excellence in Connecticut schools.



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Agenda

Welcome

John Frassinelli, Director, Office of Student Support Services

Emergent Critical Issues in Education

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner

CT Statewide Assessment Results

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer

Featured Presentations and Discussion

Emergency Department Visits for Mental and Behavioral Health, Connecticut Children's

Dr. Cristin McDermott, Division Head, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

Constance Grant MSN, RN, Senior Director of Mental Health Services and Emergency Department

Update and Discussion on School Governance Councils Legislation

Dr. Judy Carson, Program Manager, School-Family-Community Partnerships

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



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Meeting Ground Rules

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

- Be willing to speak our truth while respectfully acknowledging and embracing other viewpoints
- Be open to honest and real conversation that is fearless (“Say what you want, not what you think others want to hear”)
- W.A.I.T. (Why Am I Talking?)
- Listen respectfully to understand others’ opinions. Ensure that all voices are valued and respected.
- E.L.M.O (Enough Let’s Move On)



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Emergent Critical Issues in Education



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Connecticut's Students, Educators and Schools

- **School Districts: 202**
- **Schools/Programs: 1,554**
- **Certified Staff FTE: 53,616**
- **Non-Certified Staff: ~69,000**

Students: 508,402

- 54.9% Students of Color (~279,000)
- 45.1% White Students (~229,000)
- 44.8% Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (~228,000)
- 18.5% Students with Disabilities (~94,000)
- 11.3% English Learners/Multilingual Learners (~57,000)
- More than 180 Languages spoken
- 5,463 students experienced homelessness and housing instability in 23-24

Source: <https://public-edsight.ct.gov/>



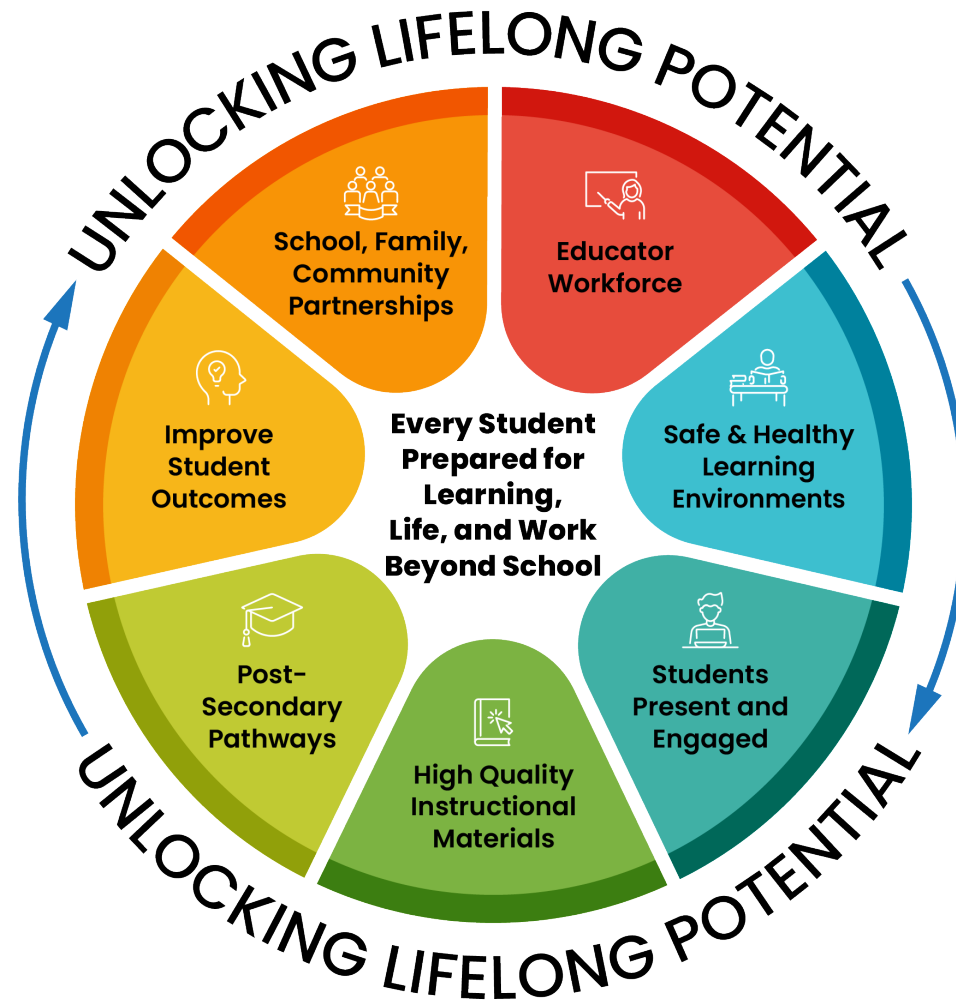
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Fiscal Updates



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Continued Strategic Focus Areas





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2024-2025 Accountability Results



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Connecticut Students Continue Upward Trend in Achievement, Attendance, and College Readiness

- Results show that Connecticut students improved on most indicators, including academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, ninth-grade students being on pace to graduate on time, postsecondary readiness, four- and six-year graduation rates, physical fitness, and arts participation.
- The overall Accountability Index increased again—from 70.8 in 2023–24 to 71.8 in 2024–25—marking steady statewide progress.



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State Investments in Dual Credit Yield Dramatic Growth (*part of Postsecondary Readiness Indicator 6*)

- The percentage of 11th and 12th grade students earning three or more college credits with a grade of “C” or better prior to graduation increased from 22.3 percent (17,552) in 2021-22 to 30.7 percent (24,718) in 2024–25.
 - Black/African American students: 14.5 → 23.4 percent
 - Hispanic/Latino students: 14.0 → 22.2 percent
 - Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals: 14.9 → 22.3 percent



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Student Performance and Postsecondary Readiness

More CT high school students are taking college-level classes

District leaders are reconsidering traditional pathways to college, offering more practical training for today's job market

by Emilia Otte
October 30, 2025 @ 4:31 pm



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Students walk through the campus at Central Connecticut State University. CREDIT: SHAHRZAD RASEKH / CT MIRROR



NEWS // EDUCATION

More Connecticut HS students earning college credits, showing postsecondary readiness, new data shows

By [Natasha Sokoloff](#), Staff Writer
Oct 30, 2025





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Student and Educator Comments about Dual Enrollment

*“That has **really made me feel more confident** going into my plans for a 4-year bachelor’s degree in college,” Kayla Markowitz, Senior, Jonathan Law High School, Milford.*

Superintendents say they’ve shifted their focus when developing courses with an eye to the current job market. And some have begun to question the widely-accepted philosophy that every high school graduate should pursue a 4-year degree. [CT MIRROR]

*“**I believe that we need to create systems and structures in our high schools that are responsive, that they can be agile enough to be responsive to the workforce,**”* said Joseph Macary, Superintendent of Vernon

Anna Cutaia, superintendent of Milford Public Schools, said the school **meets with industry representatives** to hear what skills are needed for the current labor market. She said they have **recently added industry certifications**, which allow students to go directly into the workforce — or into an apprenticeship, technical school or a 2- or 4-year college degree program. [CT MIRROR]

*“**I want to go into healthcare. Allied Health 1 was the highlight of all my dual enrollment courses. ... it really helped me figure out what field I want to go into... I want to become a radiologist or radiology technician, and we were able to go on many job shadows and get real world experience...**”* Grace Johnson, Senior, Rockville High School, Vernon



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Schools Receiving Recognition

140 Schools of Distinction
34 in Alliance Districts



72 schools identified for state support

*46 Turnaround Schools receiving comprehensive assistance and
26 Focus Schools receiving targeted supports*

***10 schools previously identified have improved
enough to exit identification***



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Featured Presentation and Discussion

Emergency Department Visits for Mental and Behavioral Health

CT Children's: Behavioral Health

Cristin McDermott, MD

Division Head: Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics & Psychiatry | University of Connecticut School of Medicine

Connie Grant, MSN, MHA, RN, NE-BC

Associate Chief Nursing Officer and Senior Director of Clinical Services

Emergency Department- Zone C



Dedicated Team Members in Zone C

- Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)
- Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
- Behavioral Health Technicians
- Nurse Manager & Nurse Team Leads
- Behavioral Health Technicians
- Pediatric/Medical APRN
- Child Life Specialist
- Care Coordinators & Licensed Clinical Social Work

Data

Patients Length of Stay (Year to date total)

- Average Daily Census: 20.43
- All Patients Average LOS (Hours): 52.908

FY 2025 Month (captured by discharged data)

- Total Amount of Patients: 3104

Arrival Method (Captured by arrival data)

- Ambulance: 70%
- Car: 29%

Top 10 Towns: Incidence (FY25)

Town	Number	Percent
Hartford	679	27%
Manchester	175	7%
East Hartford	230	9%
Bristol	202	8%
New Britain	158	6%
West Hartford	158	6%
Enfield	146	6%
Windsor	65	3%
Granby	23	1%
Plainville	29	1%



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Update and Discussion on School Governance Councils Legislation



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Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 10-233j (2011)

Initially Identified 350+ Low-Performing Schools (2009 and 2011 data)

Required Membership and Responsibilities

Membership: Elected by peers in exact number

- **Elementary & Middle School Councils:** 7 Parents or Guardians, 5 Teachers, 2 Community Leaders, 1 Principal (nonvoting). Total 15 Members
- **High School Councils:** 7 Parents or Guardians, 5 Teachers, 2 Community Leaders, 1 Principal (nonvoting), 2 Students (nonvoting). Total 17 Members

Responsibilities: Advise on programmatic and operational changes to improve the school's achievement

- Review School Data, Plans, and Budget
- Participate in Hiring School Leaders
- Parent Involvement and Climate Policies

District Role: Provide Training and Instruction to Members

State Role: Biennial Report



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2024–25 School Governance Council Survey (Self Report) Statewide Snapshot

Survey Response

300 schools required to establish Councils

147 schools responded (49%)

70 schools (23%) reported an active or partially active Council

Among Active Councils (N=70)

61% met regularly

90% aligned with school improvement plans

14% had full statutory membership requirements

Effectiveness Self- Ratings

0% “Excellent”

36% “Good”

44% “Fair”

20% “Weak/Restarting”



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What's Working When Councils Function Well Survey Self-Report

71% — Improved family engagement

60% — Improved school climate

44% — Stronger teacher–parent relationships

37% — Improved student achievement and attendance

Councils influenced:

- Budget priorities
- School safety planning
- School renovation projects

Takeaway: Active Councils report improved relationships, school climate, and influence on real decisions



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Persistent Barriers Limiting Impact Survey Self-Report

61% — Difficulty recruiting members

49% — Inconsistent attendance

37% — Membership turnover

27% — Scheduling conflicts

From qualitative responses:

- Parent participation often fluctuates
- Even with advance planning, attendance is inconsistent
- Leadership changes disrupt continuity
- Competing responsibilities impact long-term sustainability

Takeaway: Schools report systemic barriers that limit full implementation



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Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall Takeaway:

The survey indicates that when Councils are active, they serve as effective vehicles for family engagement and school improvement. However, the low participation rates, modest performance ratings, and membership gaps suggest that the current model remains difficult for many schools to fully implement.

Moving Forward:

To gain a better understanding of both the strengths and challenges of Connecticut's model for School Governance Councils, the CSDE plans to engage a broad group of stakeholders, including state policymakers, district leaders, families, community members, and students. In addition, the CSDE will research other states' initiatives and frameworks and review current best practices for school-based decision-making and shared leadership.



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Thank you!