

THE COMMISSIONER'S ROUNDTABLE FOR FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
October 22, 2019

I. Call to Order

Ms. Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. The meeting was held at the Graustein Memorial Fund, One Hamden Center, 2319 Whitney Avenue, Hamden.

Members present:

Jeffrey Bianco, Co-Chair, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Connecticut

Jeana Bracey, Director of School and Community Initiatives, Child Health and
Development Institute

Miguel Cardona, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Zulma Costas, Parent, Hartford Parent University

Clifford Dudley, Principal, Orchard Hills School, Milford Public Schools (Representing
Connecticut Federation of School Administrators)

Shenell Ellerbe, Board of Directors, African Caribbean American Parents of Children
with Disabilities (AFCAMP)

Matt Folan, Superintendent of Schools, Department of Children and Families

Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN

David Hopkins, President and CEO, Urban League of Greater Hartford (Represented by
Kyrinda Richardson, Youth Development Manager, Urban League of Greater
Hartford)

Mariam Khan, Student, Hamden High School (Representing the Connecticut State
Student Advisory Council on Education)

Jennifer Lussier, Parent Consultant, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center

Matthew Mauriello, Student, Hamden High School (Representing the Connecticut State
Student Advisory Council on Education)

Michele O'Neill, Educational Issues Specialist, Connecticut Education Association

Ciara Ortiz-Diaz, Student, Sound School, New Haven (Representing the Connecticut
State Student Advisory Council on Education)

Evelyn Robles-Rivas, Supervisor of Language and Community Partnerships, Meriden
Public Schools (Representing Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and
Superintendents)

David Scata, Director of Education, Mohegan Tribe

Mirellise Vazquez, Executive Director, Tauck Family Foundation (Representing
Connecticut Council on Philanthropy)

Lisa Zawilinski, Chair, Department of Education, University of Hartford (Representing
Deans of Schools of Education) (Represented by Maleka Donaldson, Assistant
Professor of Early Elementary Education, University of Hartford)

Members absent:

Mary Lou DiPaola, ESL Teacher, New Haven Board of Education (Representing Connecticut Federation of Educational and Professional Employees (AFT-CT))
Jennifer Falotico, Vice President for Membership, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association
Mario Florez, Managing Director of Social Emotional Learning, UP Education Network (Representing the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors)
Matthew Geary, Superintendent of Schools, Manchester Public Schools (Representing Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)
Paula Gilberto, CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut (Representing United Way of Connecticut)
Chemay Morales-James, Educational Equity Coach, My Reflection Matters and Bridge to Success (Representing Commission on Equity and Opportunity)
Bianka Kortlan-Cox, Vice President for Legislation and Public Policy, Connecticut Association for the Gifted
Nikitoula Menounos, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Connecticut Technical High School System
Rebecca Adams Rieder, Sr. Staff Attorney, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Kris Sodhi, State Council for Educational Opportunities for Military Children
John Taylor, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington Academy (Representing Northeast Charter Schools Network)
Donna Thompson-Bennett, Co-Director, National Parent Leadership Institute
Athena Wagner, Outreach Coordinator, State of Black Connecticut Alliance/Connecticut Parents' Union
Beresford Wilson, Assistant Director, FAVOR

Guests:

Milly Arciniegas, Hartford Parent University
Jennifer Benevento, AFT Connecticut
Kimberly Haugabook, Beacon Health Options
Anne Henderson, National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement
Cheryl Hilton, Southington Women for Progress Equity Initiative
Tressa Spears Jackson, Community Health Network of Connecticut
Jessica Lavorgna, Windsor Locks Public Schools
Anne Mead, Danbury Public Schools
Joanna Meyer, Partnership for Early Education Research, Yale University
Maria Sanchez, American Savings Foundation
Paula Smith, Mohegan Tribe
Michael Stambler, Partnership for Early Education Research, Yale University

State Agency Staff:

Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education
Deborah Watson, Office of Early Childhood

II. Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Judy Carson welcomed the group and asked members and guests to introduce themselves. She then reviewed the group's engagement norms.

III. Launching Year 4 of the Commissioner's Roundtable

Ms. Russell-Tucker provided a brief history of the Commissioner's Roundtable and noted its accomplishments. She reflected on the feedback members provided at the previous meeting and how that feedback is being used to inform the composition and agenda of the group.

IV. Commissioner Cardona's Priorities for Family and Community Engagement

Commissioner Cardona introduced himself to the group and talked about his family background and personal connection to family engagement. He discussed the danger of a deficit-based approach to working with families and stressed the importance of looking at families' assets and talents. He noted how systems, such as schools, create insiders and outsiders. Many of the most vulnerable families feel like outsiders in their own children's education. He challenged the group to work with their networks and constituencies to honor all families and help them see themselves as their children's most important teachers.

V. A National Perspective on High-Impact Family and Community Engagement

Ms. Anne Henderson, Senior Consultant, National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement, presented an [overview of the current research in family engagement](#). She noted studies of high-impact family engagement strategies that showed gains in student performance and highlighted [a new study](#) on the impact of parent leadership on improving equitable practices in schools. After discussing the current family engagement initiatives in Connecticut and how the state is positioned nationally, Ms. Henderson offered recommendations to the Roundtable for catalyzing current efforts and linking family engagement more closely to school improvement. She then facilitated a discussion with members about their experiences as members of the Roundtable and their perspectives on advancing family engagement in Connecticut

VI. Q & A with Commissioner Cardona

Commissioner Cardona shared his intention to create a state framework of high-leverage strategies and resources for district and school improvement. Within that framework, he sees that family engagement plays an important role in achieving more equitable outcomes for students. He discussed with the group the five priorities for his administration that he released earlier at the [Superintendents' Back-to-School Meeting](#). Dr. Cardona also noted his commitment to finding better ways to work with trauma in schools and elevating students' voice in school improvement.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.