




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Clerk of the Senate
Clerk of the House of Representatives

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona 
Commissioner of Education

DATE: July 1, 2020

SUBJECT: Report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap

Background

In accordance with Section [§10-16nn\(b\)3](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), this report serves as the annual progress report on the implementation of the Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF) Master Plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and the AGTF. This report was presented and reviewed by the Interagency Council on June 23, 2020.

Focus and Activities

The new administration's inaugural meeting of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap (Interagency Council) convened on February 21, 2020, and was presided over by chair, Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz. The first meeting was delayed given the change in administration and the time required to appoint new leadership at the state agencies who are represented on the council. All members were represented at the inaugural meeting as indicated below:

- Lieutenant Governor, Chair
- Chief Court Administrator
- Commissioner of Administrative Services
- Commissioner of Community and Economic Development
- Commissioner of Education
- Commissioner of Housing
- Commissioner of Public Health
- President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
- Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management
- Commissioner of Office of Early Childhood*

*The Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood is not named as a member in legislation but is included as a member.

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz focused this first meeting on the:

- history of the achievement gap and intent of the Achievement Gap Task Force;
- review and discussion of the Master Plan; and
- role of the Interagency Council and current efforts.

The topics and discussion of the February 21, 2020, meeting included:

Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap - Purpose and History

Commissioner of Education Miguel A. Cardona served as the co-chair of the Achievement Gap Task Force and was a contributing author and visionary of the AGTF Master Plan when it was released in 2014. Commissioner Cardona used data to demonstrate the achievement gap between white students, students of color and high needs populations that included achievement on academic assessments and discipline rates. He indicated that although the achievement gap is closing, it will take until 2060 to close at the current rate.

Commissioner Cardona provided background on the Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF), created in 2011, and its Master Plan for Ending the Achievement Gap, issued in spring 2014. The AGTF structured the Master Plan to identify strategy recommendations that should be considered both “Inside the School House” and Outside the School House.” The Interagency Council was established to address root causes of inequities, identified in the Master Plan, that lead to gaps.

Featured Achievement Gap Task Force Recommendation - Chronic Absence

Deputy Commissioner of Education Charlene Russell-Tucker introduced the Interagency Council members to the AGTF Master Plan recommendation on chronic absence. The Master Plan provided a results statement, rationale and policy recommendations for each strategy. The results statement for chronic absence is that “All students will attend school at least 90 percent of the school year.”

An overview of the definition of chronic absence, factors that contribute to chronic absence, and why attendance matters were provided. The presentation also reviewed chronic absence trends and disparities for selected student groups and by grade level.

Deputy Commissioner Russell-Tucker discussed how the strategies implemented collaboratively across state agencies and community partners were aligned with the nine AGTF Master Plan policy recommendations for chronic absence. She visually displayed how specific activities/priorities/initiatives of the member agencies of the Interagency Council aligned with and supported the policy recommendations of the AGTF. These efforts resulted in a decline in overall chronic absence rates over the 2012-13 to 2018-19 time period.

Roundtable Discussion

Presentations were followed by a roundtable discussion of member agency participants who identified agency priorities and initiatives that align with the AGTF recommendations. Additional information is in the [February 21, 2020, meeting minutes](#).

Looking forward

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz’s plan is to continue the focus and efforts of the Interagency Council on the recommendations of the Master Plan in subsequent meetings throughout the calendar year ending December 30, 2020.

Report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
July 1, 2020
Page 3

The summer meeting of the Interagency Council was held on June 23, 2020. The Lt. Governor conducted a strategic dialog with the member agencies on the recommendations in AGTF Master Plan and how they align with current data and the administration's focus within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, equity for all, reopening the state and schools and ending the achievement gap.

Additional meetings will be scheduled in 2020 to achieve the quarterly statutory meeting requirements. If you have any questions, please contact Laura Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, at 860-713-6493.

MAC:ks

cc: Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz
Education Committee
Legislative Library
Office of Legislative Research
State Library