

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
Hartford

Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
March 7, 2023. 1:00 p.m.

[Presentation Slides](#) and [Meeting Recording](#)

Opening Remarks and Roll Call

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut, called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and welcomed all attendees to the March 7th meeting of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap. She introduced Kari Sullivan Custer to conduct Roll Call.

Roll Call:

Kari Sullivan Custer recorded the following agency personnel present:

Office of the Lieutenant Governor: The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, and Christine Jean-Louis, General Counsel

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU): Dr. Stephen Hegedus, Dean of the College of Education at Southern Connecticut State University

Department of Administrative Services (DAS): Doug Casey, Executive Director, Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology (CCET)

Department of Children and Families (DCF): Matt Foley, Superintendent of Schools

Department of Housing, Shante Hanks, Deputy Commissioner

Department of Public Health: Lynn Sosa, MD, Acting State Epidemiologist and Acting Director of Infectious Diseases

Department of Social Services: Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner, and Talitha Coggins, Manager, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives

Connecticut Judicial Branch (JUD): Patricia Nunez, Program Manager, Court Support Services Division

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE,) Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner; John Frassinelli, Division Director; Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer; Chlo-Anne Bobrowski, Education Manager; and Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant

Agencies not in attendance: Department of Economic and Community Development, Judicial, Office of Policy and Management and Office of Early Childhood

Lt. Governor introduced and welcomed new Council members:

- Alexandra Daum, Commissioner of Economic and community Development and her designee Tekowa Omara-Otunnu, Arts Education Manager.
- Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner of Department of Social Services, and her designer, Talitha Coggins, Manager of Equity and Inclusion Initiatives.

Lieutenant Governor reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives set forth. She shared that the focus of today's meeting will be the state's response to health and respiratory illness in children and the success of the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) with representatives from the Department of Public Health and State Department of Education.

She shared that we welcome the active engagement of our Council members, and we will continue to follow the format of our previous meetings where we will address policy recommendations from the 2014 Master Plan and seek input from Council members. She invited participants to ask questions or share anything that you would like to add.

After the discussions described above there will be a brief legislative roundtable where member agencies can identify legislative initiatives that the Council should be watching as the process.

I. Acceptance of Minutes and Follow-up from Last Meeting Discussion

Lt. Governor shared that the Council last met on December 13, 2022.

The Council reviewed the oversight and administration of education and our juvenile justice facilities and took an in-depth look at the fatherhood initiative work in DCF.

The minutes of the December 13, 2022, meeting were circulated to the Council in draft form for your review. We did not receive any edits or comments to the minutes.

Participants were invited to make suggested changes at this time. Seeing and hearing none, Lt. Governor asked for any objections to the minutes as final? Seeing and hearing no objections, the December 13, 2022, minutes were accepted as final,

Lt. Governor introduced Dr. Worthy from the Department of Children and Families to kick off the next presentation.

II. Health & Respiratory Preventative Measures

Dr. Lynn Sosa, acting State Epidemiologist and Acting Director of infectious Diseases, shared a status update on where we stand with viral respiratory diseases in Connecticut and how the approach differs this year. Using presentation slides, Dr. Sosa, reviewed health data for particular respiratory diseases, including COVID-19, influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), are impacting children and youth this year compared to past years.

In addition, Dr. Sosa provided an overview of the Centers for Disease Control's Community Level System for understanding transmission by county. Two sets of data help inform the public with a snapshot of what is going on in COVID-19, where they lived. This included a combination of case rates as well as hospital measures - hospital bed utilization as well as admission rates. This data determined the community levels and then the CDC tied prevention measures to those community levels.

Dr. Sosa also shared health-related data reported from childcare centers and schools. At the time of the report, there were relatively small number of childcare centers and schools, reporting staff and students with COVID-19.

Lastly, Dr. Sosa reviewed current messaging and awareness efforts to ensure people are aware of the latest guidance.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker shared, on behalf of the agency, appreciation for the work CSDE has done over the past few years with the Department of Public Health, and specifically Doctor Sosa. Every week CSDE partnered with DPH for *Health and Safety Tuesdays* for an hour every Tuesday morning – approximately 80 or 90 Tuesdays.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker credits those sessions as one of the reasons we were able to keep our schools in Connecticut open. Every Tuesday morning over that time period our superintendents or school nurses or school medical advisors had a trusted source and a place to come to get all their questions answered. She talks about it often as the “Connecticut difference” and the best-in-class collaboration, which we sometimes take for granted. But I just really want to thank Dr. Sosa and the team at DPH that was with us the entire way.

Details of the presentation and discussion are available in the [presentation slides](#) and [meeting recording](#).

III. Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)

Commissioner Russell-Tucker began the presentation on LEAP by stating how appropriate it is to come right after the DPH presentation on health as it leads right into the issue of attendance.

The Commissioner set the stage and context for LEAP by sharing that the “Governor took a leap of faith.” He invested in this program, because we were so concerned about making sure students were in school and engaged and to focus on attendance because we recognize how pivotal that is for student success.

The good news is we're investing in this program and this program is working. It's become a national best practice in terms of the work that we're doing here.

The Commissioner shared that the Connecticut Center for Education Research Collaborative (CCERC) is the reason we know that this is working. CT has some really great researchers who are literally evaluating the investments that CSDE is making.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker introduced John Frassinelli and Kari Sullivan- Custer to provide the presentation.

John Frassinelli began the presentation with a recently released video of LEAP. The video can be seen here. https://youtu.be/Kil83e_nZLA

His presentation consisted of:

- Impact of pandemic on student attendance
- Current causes and challenges to student attendance

Kari Sullivan-Custer presented on the history and context for the development and implementation of LEAP and the essential elements of the LEAP home visit model, including training and home visitor support.

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer, introduced CCERC and the [evaluation of LEAP](#). He introduced the team of evaluators, which were lead by Wesleyan University. He provided an overview of the impact LEAP had on student attendance.

The objective quantitative results show that Connecticut's home visit program is clearly effective, leading to an average increase in attendance rates of nearly 15 percentage points for families visited during the 2021-22 school year in the 6 months that followed. The positive impact was noted across student populations (race, ethnicity, gender, geography, etc.).

LEAP has an impact on more than just attendance. Through the qualitative feedback from the home visitors and families, we learned that there were 8 additional benefits from LEAP including:

- improved family-school **relationships**
- increased student attendance
- increased student **engagement**
- increased student achievement
- increased feelings of **belonging**
- increased access to **resources**
- increased **expectations of accountability**
- greater **gratitude and appreciation**

Details of the presentation and discussion are available in the [presentation slides](#) and [meeting recording](#).

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz provided an overview of the next steps going forward. The calendar for 2023 will have quarterly meetings on Tuesday afternoons including March 7th, June 20th, September 19th, and December 12th, 2023.

IV. **Legislative Roundtable**

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz called on agencies to share information on legislation they are submitting or watching. She asked that the focus be on items related to the Council's work. The discussion is available on the Interagency Council website at https://youtu.be/5ZnJPzx_p0I.

V. **Next Steps**

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz provided an overview of the next steps going forward. The calendar for 2023 will have quarterly meetings on Tuesday afternoons including June 20th, September 19th, and December 12th, 2023.

She reported that we tentatively have the rollout of the EdSight data portal by the CSDE and we are also planning to invite OEC to share their thoughts on the importance of continuity of learning between grades and where play-focused education becomes lost.

She invited members to offer any suggestions for guest speakers who can provide a particular insight on topics related to the Council's work.

VI. Closing/Meeting adjourned

On behalf of Governor Lamont and herself, the Lt. Governor thanked everyone for their participation and good work. She wished each a wonderful, safe, happy holiday season.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

DRAFT