



Susan Bysiewicz
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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

FROM: Office of Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz
Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education

DATE: December 20, 2023

SUBJECT: Report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap (“Interagency Council”)

Background

In accordance with Section [10-16nn\(b\)\(3\)](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes, 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. This report was presented to and reviewed by the Interagency Council on December 12, 2023.

Focus and Activities

Since its [last report to the legislature](#) on September 23, 2022, the Interagency Council met five times, December 13, 2022; March 7, 2023; July 18, 2023; September 19, 2023; and December 12, 2023. Each meeting was structured with Interagency Council members leading discussions focused on the Results Statements and Policy Recommendations set forth in the AGTF Master Plan and the related subject matter selected for that meeting. This format continues to facilitate open, collaborative discussions across member agencies and has kept the AGTF Master Plan as a focal point at every meeting.

During the December 13, 2022, meeting, member agencies focused on and addressed agency efforts to provide oversight and administration of the education of students in juvenile justice facilities and the Fatherhood Initiative. They also reviewed 2023 meeting dates, topics, potential guests, and any necessary follow-up.

The meeting began with a joint presentation by Dr. Glen Worthy, Educational Administrator, Juvenile Justice at the Department of Children and Families, and Patricia Nunez, Program Manager, Court Support Services Division at the Judicial Branch. Following the presentation, Michael Williams, Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Children and Families led a presentation and discussion on the Fatherhood Initiative.

Additional information is available in the recording of the [December 2022](#) meeting.

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The March 7, 2023, meeting commenced with a Health & Respiratory Preventative Measures presentation from Dr. Lynn Sosa, Acting State Epidemiologist and Acting Director of Infectious Diseases at the Department of Public Health. Dr. Sosa outlined national trends relating to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Influenza, including highlights on impact within Connecticut and its response. Dr. Sosa also provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic and any impact on student/staff attendance at childcare centers, schools and engagement.

The presentation was followed by a facilitated discussion by Education Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker and agency staff, John D. Frassinelli, Division Director, Bureau of Health, Nutrition and Family Services on the [Learner Engagement and Attendance Program \(LEAP\)](#). Council members were introduced to the theme “The Sky is not the Limit”, and that CT’s LEAP has been featured as a national best practice for others to look to. Statewide attendance trends were discussed from 2019 to present day, including current causes/challenges that LEAP coordinators face. Overall, six months after a LEAP visit, students in PK-5 showed a 10% increase in attendance, and students in grades 6-12 showed a 20% increase in attendance. LEAP’s success is more impactful in later grades. Council members learned of the following benefits of LEAP from families and home visitors of the 8,700 students that received at least one LEAP home visit:

- 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

The discussion was then followed by a legislative roundtable led by Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz on items Council members should keep an eye out on during the 2023 legislative session.

Additional information can be found in the recording from the [March 2023](#) meeting.

The July 18th meeting allowed member agencies an opportunity to participate in an informal roundtable discussion on legislative updates and future council goals.

Further details are provided within the [July 2023](#) recording.

During the September 19th meeting, member agencies received a live demonstration of additional data metrics captured by the [EdSight Data Portal](#), which is an interactive data portal accessible to the public. The presentation was facilitated by Commissioner Russell-Tucker and agency staff, Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer. The following dashboards were highlighted:

- CT Report Cards on schools and districts, which includes details on student enrollment, performance, graduation, meals, per pupil expense, etc.
- Course related data, such as computer science based on gender, race/ethnicity, district level participation, etc.
- Educator diversity/staffing levels based on districts, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.
- Student Homelessness, which is one of the newer dashboards created. Data showed where students are sleeping nightly, student profile characteristics (such as gender, race/ethnicity, etc.), and impact on performance at school/district levels.

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- College Enrollment, which highlighted data of high school graduates 4 to 6 years after high school graduation and impacts on college enrollment over several years, including the impact of COVID-19

The demonstration was then followed by a presentation by several agency staff members of the Office of Policy Management's Data and Policy Analytics Division concerning a review of

American Rescue Plan Funds, which included highlighting the [open portal dashboard](#) on how the funds have been distributed and [annual reports](#) issued. Council members learned the importance of data culture building to provide transparency on the use of the funds and an evaluation/impact of the use to date. LEAP is one of the ARPA touchpoints that has seen significant positive impact.

Further details are provided within the [September 2023](#) recording.

During the December 20, 2023, meeting, member agencies reviewed this report. In addition, special presentations were facilitated by:

- Office of Early Childhood on the importance of the continuity of learning between grades, where play focused education becomes lost.
- Department of Social Services presented updates on the Fatherhood Initiative and EBT.
- The Department of Administrative Services provided a presentation on the issue of maintenance of technology that schools received during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the timing of this annual report, meeting minutes will be available on the website once finalized and approved.

Looking Forward

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz plans to continue robust discussion with member agencies concerning:

1. Program updates and measured progress with respect to existing programs;
2. Any new initiatives consistent with goals of the Interagency Council; and
3. Any proposed legislation relevant to the work of the Interagency Council.

The 2024 Interagency Council meetings have been scheduled for March 19, June 18, September 17, and December 17.

If you have any questions about this report or otherwise about the Interagency Council, please contact Laura Stefon, Connecticut State Department of Education, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, at (860) 713-6493.

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