

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Hartford

Minutes of Meeting

December 16, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

[Meeting Recording](#)

I. 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 December 16, 2025, meeting of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap and conducted roll call.

Roll Call:

The following agency personnel were present:

Office of the Lieutenant Governor: The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor; and Tracy Opoku, General Counsel

Office of the Governor: Thea Montanez, Senior Advisor; and Sudiksha Mallick, Strategic Policy Advisor

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU): Paula Talty, Interim Dean, School of Education, Central Connecticut State University (CCSU)

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

Department of Children and Families (DCF): Matt Folan, Superintendent of Schools, Unified School District #2

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD):

Department of Housing (DOH): Shante Hanks, Senior Advisor

Department of Public Health (DPH): Julie Vigil, Branch Chief

Department of Social Services (DSS): Astread O. Ferron-Poole, Director of Administration

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

Office of Early Childhood (OEC): Elena Trueworthy, Interim Commissioner of Early Childhood

Office of Policy and Management (OPM): Peter Hopko, Budget Specialist

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE): Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Deputy Commissioner; John Frassinelli, Division Director; Renee Savoie, Education Consultant; and Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant for Attendance and Engagement

Lieutenant Governor reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives set forth. She shared today's meeting will focus on student attendance and engagement.

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

Lt. Governor shared that the Council last met on September 16, 2025. The minutes of that meeting were circulated to the Council in draft form for review.

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 September 26, 2025, minutes were accepted as final.

III. Review of Annual Reports of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap to the General Assembly

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz informed members that the Council intends to submit the annual reports for 2024 and 2025 to the Legislature on Monday, December 22. Members were invited to review the draft and submit any questions, comments, or suggested edits.

Council members were asked to send feedback to Kari Sullivan or Tracy Apuku no later than the close of business on Friday, December 19, so that revisions could be incorporated before the report is finalized and submitted.

Seeing no additional questions or updates, the Lieutenant Governor transitioned the meeting to the scheduled presentations.

IV. Update from the Governor's Kids Cabinet, Thea Montanez, Chair, Governor's Kids Cabinet (Cabinet)

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz introduced Thea Montanez, Chair of the Governor's Kids Cabinet, who provided an update on the Cabinet's work. Ms. Montanez was joined by Sudiksha Malik, Governor's Fellow.

Ms. Montanez explained that the Governor's Kids Cabinet is composed of twelve state agency leaders, primarily from health and human services agencies, who work collaboratively to improve outcomes for Connecticut children, youth, and families.

She highlighted the Cabinet's recent focus on students experiencing homelessness. During the 2023–24 school year, more than 5,600 Connecticut students were identified as experiencing homelessness, representing a 63 percent increase since 2020. Students experiencing homelessness face significant educational challenges, including lower graduation rates, lower academic performance, and higher rates of absenteeism.

Ms. Montanez described a recent initiative supported by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, which engaged ReInstitute to facilitate a 100-Day Challenge aimed at improving cross-agency collaboration to support families experiencing housing instability. The effort

involved the Hartford, New Britain, and Windsor school districts along with multiple state agencies and community partners.

Through this initiative, partners developed a school-based prevention, identification, and referral process to better support families who are temporarily staying with friends or relatives, often referred to as “couch surfing.” While Connecticut has a coordinated response system for individuals who are unsheltered, this work identified a gap in services for families experiencing this type of housing instability.

The initiative supported 29 households representing 55 students and connected families to resources such as rental assistance, utility support, and employment services. Participants also identified challenges, including limited capacity for intake and follow-up and the need for more flexible funding to address family needs.

Ms. Montanez noted that the initiative is now expanding to the Bristol and Plainville school districts with support from the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, with the goal of testing the model in additional communities and exploring opportunities for broader statewide collaboration.

V. Release of the 2024-25 Next Generation Accountability Results, Renee Savoie, Education Consultant, CSDE

Renee Savoie from the CSDE provided an update on the 2024–25 Next Generation Accountability Results. She explained that Connecticut’s Next Generation Accountability System includes a broad set of indicators designed to measure how well schools are preparing students for success in college, careers, and life, providing a more comprehensive view of performance beyond standardized test scores.

Ms. Savoie noted that achievement results released earlier in the year showed continued improvement in student performance and academic growth, along with declines in chronic absenteeism. She shared that the most recent accountability results reflect positive statewide progress across several indicators, suggesting encouraging momentum for schools and districts.

She highlighted improvements in the postsecondary readiness indicator, particularly in the number of students earning college credit while still in high school through dual credit opportunities. These experiences help students reduce the cost of postsecondary education while also increasing their confidence and readiness for college and career pathways.

Ms. Savoie noted that the state has made targeted investments to expand dual credit partnerships between school districts and higher education institutions, helping align

course offerings with student interests and workforce needs. As a result, participation in dual credit programs has increased significantly in recent years.

Looking ahead, she shared that the state plans to continue building on this progress through additional investments aimed at expanding access to dual credit opportunities for Connecticut students.

VI. Cross-Agency Discussion

Julie Vigil from the Department of Public Health suggested potential collaboration to support families experiencing housing instability, noting that programs such as WIC and school-based health centers may help identify families in need and connect them with resources. Thea Montanez welcomed the suggestion and noted that the idea could be discussed further through the Governor's Kids Cabinet.

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz also highlighted the importance of dual credit opportunities, particularly in relation to the state's debt-free community college program.

Doug Casey from the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology shared findings from the Online Courseware Study, noting that widespread access to one-to-one technology programs in high schools is helping students earn college credit and reduce barriers related to scheduling and transportation.

Paula Talty from Central Connecticut State University added that many students are entering college with dual credit coursework, sometimes with enough credits to begin as second-year students. She also noted ongoing discussions about improving credit transferability across the state system and highlighted the need for university faculty support to ensure alignment between high school courses and college-level expectations.

VII. Next Steps

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz invited suggestions for topics and speakers for the next quarterly meeting, scheduled for March 17, 2026.

VIII. Closing/Meeting adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.