

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting (Subject to Revision)
February 29, 2012

Call to Order

Lieutenant Governor Wyman called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. The meeting was held in room 1A of the Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut.

Members present were: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner, Department of Education
Donna Cambria, Department of Children and Families
Roderick Bremby, Commissioner, Department of Social Services
Catherine Smith, Commissioner, Department of Economic and Community Development
Jeffrey Beckham, Department of Administrative Services
Leah Grenier, Office of Policy and Management
Leonard Lee, Department of Public Health

Absent: Michael Meotti, Executive Vice President, Board of Regents for Higher Education

Others Present: Charlene Russell Tucker, Chief Operating Officer, CSDE
Miguel Cardona, Co-Chair, Achievement Gap Task Force
David Fink, Policy Director, Partnership for Strong Communities

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes from January 26, 2012
Minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Update on the Education Reform Agenda
The Commissioner of Education, Stefan Pryor, gave a brief update of the 2012 Education Reform. There are six principles. **Principle 1:** Enhance Families' Access to Early Childhood Education. There will be 500 additional slots to be funded immediately by high-need children with the opportunity to attend existing early childhood programs from around the state. There will be a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). This system's goal is to improve the quality of the entire child care system. **Principle 2:** State Support and Intervention in Low-Performing Schools. There will be a Commissioner's Network of Schools. This will be made up of the lowest performing schools in the state. This network will conduct their own turnaround with additional resources and additional dollars. There will be an establishment of a community schools approach by establishing or strengthening wraparound services for students, with referrals to health and social service providers. **Principle 3:** Expand Availability of High-Quality School Models. This will expand Magnet, Charter, CommPACT and Agricultural Science schools. This will, also, include our Vocational Technical Schools.

Principle 4: Removing Red Tape and Other Barriers to Success. The Department of Education will consolidate forms. It was found that the same data collection came from multiple forms with duplication. It was found to be redundant and data collection will be reduced by one-third. **Principle 5:** Develop the Very Best Teachers and Principals. There will be an increase in professional development for teachers and leaders in evaluating strengths and weaknesses. Additional dollars will be needed in recruitment of teachers. To ensure that we have the best teachers, we will raise the bar for entry into the teacher preparation program; create tuition loan forgiveness programs; and reform the accreditation process. **Principle 6:** Funding. There is a need for more resources. There will be a Performance Alliance between districts and the state, which will include: higher performance schools, specific strategies, early grade teaching (K-3), greater hours and talent strategies, including entrepreneurial. There will be a Common Chart of Accounts for fiscal transparency. The Commissioner mentioned additional reforms. Such as: Common Core and International Standards, Parent Information and Involvement Pilot, Personalized Learning Grants, Enhancing College Access, College Readiness Assessment, Third Grade Reading and Programs to Improve Student Health and Reduce Obesity.

Catherine Smith applauded the Commissioner and will give her full support. She had questions on the math-STEM and housing.

Commissioner Pryor replied that nothing is more important and math-STEM. This would be bolstered through the vocational technical schools. There would be a governance change for the private sectors to join the Board of Vocational Technical Schools. There would be an increase in funding to the vocational technical schools and a curriculum improvement throughout the system, specifically aligned with the Common Core Standards. The Department of Education has applied for the ESEA Waiver and will implement rigorous standards through the Common Core with math and science. As far as housing, the Department hopes that there will be a collaboration with the community schools, removal of abandoned buildings near schools, family referrals and future conversations with the Housing Authority.

IV. Roundtable on Community Schools

The Chief Operating Officer, CSDE, Charlene Russell-Tucker gave a brief presentation on Community Schools. Community Schools have links between health, social services and parents. This is not a program, it is an approach. There is a potential for several partners. Connecticut is on the cutting edge for this approach. There are several results with the Community Schools approach. Some of them are: children are ready for school with their health, students attend school consistently, students are actively involved in learning and their community, schools are engaged with families and the community, families are actively involved in their children's education and students succeed academically. There will be a roundtable discussion on April 17, 2012, to link services but before this can happen a leadership team is to get together. This leadership team should have at least one member from each agency. If you are interested, please either call or e-mail Michelle Rosado.

- V. Update from the Achievement Gap Task Force
Miguel Cardona, Co-Chair, Achievement Gap Task Force, gave a brief update. Mr. Cardona is also a principal at Hanover School located in Meriden. This task force is a collaborated effort and is worthy of attention. This task force was formed last year and its purpose is to address the achievement gap. An initial report was done last year. It is on their Web site, if you want to view. The master plan with recommendations is due July 1, 2012. The task force is pleased to work with this council in the coming months. The task force is open to any suggestions that this council has. There are several issues that correlate with the achievement gap. We need to create urgency with our stakeholders. Parents need to take bold action.

Lieutenant Governor Wyman suggested that we need to make parents comfortable and that we should try to teach parents to be involved with their children's education.

Commissioner Pryor commented that the task force is doing an extraordinary job and thanked Mr. Cardona.

- VI. Housing and the Achievement Gap
David Fink, Policy Director, Partnership for Strong Communities, gave a brief update on housing in Connecticut. There is not enough supply in Connecticut. There are not enough affordable rentals and starter homes. Twenty-seven percent make less than half the median income and spend more than half that on housing. Families in Connecticut are living in old building (causing asthma), expensive housing or not enough rooms in the house, requiring children to sleep on the couch. Families do not want to move from the city to the urban towns. We should be considering creating more choices in both the cities and urban cities to have more affordable housing. We should be going back to the old fashion way – rent, buy small then buy larger.

Lieutenant Governor Wyman asked about zoning in the urban areas. Mr. Fink responded that the town's need to show interest to create housing and bring to the town's Zoning Commission.

- VII. Next Meeting
The next meeting will be held on May 15 after the legislative session is done.

- VIII. Adjournment
Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.