

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

March 17, 2021
Meeting Minutes



OPENING REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor
State of Connecticut



Opening Remarks and Introductions

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz opened the meeting with the following remarks:

- All of Connecticut teachers are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations and the administration is looking forward to continuing to keep our schools open.
- As of today, 97% of Connecticut schools are open for some in person learning; 59% of those are completely in person; and the remainder are open with a hybrid model.
- The State Department of Education has done an amazing job of prioritizing student and teacher safety and putting the importance of student engagement first.
- Former Commissioner for the State Department of Education, Dr. Miguel Cardona, is now part of the Biden-Harris administration as the United States Secretary of Education. The administration will miss his presence and his perspective but is thrilled for him and look forward to future visits from Cabinet Secretary Cardona.
- The administration is very excited to continue working with Charlene Russell-Tucker, who is now our Acting Commissioner of the State Department of Education. Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker has more than 20 years of experience as a leader in education, most recently, serving as Deputy Commissioner. Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker has worked closely with our office to coordinate efforts in addressing the performance gap issues before us and it is our pleasure to continue to have the benefit of her service. Congratulations, Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker.

Member Agencies

Roll Call – Kari Sullivan, State Department of Education (SDE)

- **Office of the Lieutenant Governor:**
The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, Chair; Cherie Phoenix-Sharpe, General Counsel; and Megan E. Baker, Intern
- **Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU):** Dr. Stephen Hegedus, Dean of Education, Southern Connecticut State University
- **Department of Administrative Services (DAS):**
Doug Casey, Executive Director, Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- **Department of Children and Families (DCF):**
Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner; Michael Williams, Deputy Commissioner; and Matt Folan, Superintendent, Unified District #2
- **Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD):** Glendowlyn Thames, Deputy Commissioner
- **Department of Housing (DOH):** Shanté Hanks, Deputy Commissioner
- **Department of Public Health (DPH):** Dr. Mario Garcia, Public Health Improvement Manager
- **Department of Social Services (DSS):** Kathleen Brennan, Deputy Commissioner; John Dillon, Office of Child Support Services
- **Judicial Branch:** Patricia Nunez, Program Manager
- **Office of Early Childhood (OEC):** Beth Bye, Commissioner
- **Office of Policy and Management (OPM):** Holly Williams, Fiscal and Program Policy Section Director
- **State Department of Education (SDE):** Charlene Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner; John Frassinelli, Division Director; Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant; and Matthew Falconer, Education Consultant

Agenda

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz reviewed the agenda as follows:

- I. **Opening Remarks and Introductions**
The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz
Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut
- II. **Follow-up from Last Meeting Discussion**
- III. **Agencies' Response to Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF) Master Plan**
 - a. *Housing*
 - b. *Family Engagement*
 - c. *Inside the Schoolhouse: School Climate and Achievement Gap*
- IV. **Next Steps**
- V. **Closing/Meeting Adjourned**

Follow-up Notes: Last Meeting

- December 10, 2020, meeting minutes circulated for review on December 23rd and final minutes are posted on the [Interagency Council website](#).
- Updates to Curriculum for PK – Grade 3.
- CSCU – Planning to present at the June Meeting. Noted that since the development of the Master Plan they are subject to new statutory and regulatory requirements and want to make sure future efforts to close the achievement gap are aligned with external regulators, accreditors and professional standards,
- Lt. Governor - CT University Center on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities received a 5- year grant from United States Department of Education (USDOE) to expand content of Early Childhood Associates Degree program and to expand.
- CSCU - National Early Childhood Professional Association Standards are being updated and CSCU will need to update its math standards. Also, there is legislation to address inequities in early childhood education, PK to age 8.

AGENCIES' RESPONSE TO THE AGTF MASTER PLAN

Review of Agency Responses

**Agency responses are in plain text, supplemental information discussed during the Council meeting is bolded*

Housing

All Children will live in safe and stable housing.

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
<p>The state should 1) increase incentives provided to municipalities that zone for and create affordable and mixed-income housing under HOMEConnecticut and other housing programs, 2) give significantly higher priority for discretionary grants and other benefits to municipalities that similarly zone and create affordable mixed-income housing, and 3) support Sect. 8-30g and other statutes that strongly encourage such zoning and housing creation.</p>	<p>DOH</p>	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <p>Deputy Commissioner Hanks lead the review of this recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As a result of this original recommendation, incentives were created and made available to communities under the Housing for Economic Growth (HEG) program as part of HOMEConnecticut and the Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) program. As indicated in the 2020 IHZ Report, \$220,000 in Zone Adoption Grants have been provided in 11 communities, and two Building Permit Grants have been made.• On July 15, 2020, the Department announced that there will be an additional \$558,000 in Affordable Housing Technical Assistance grants to 44 municipalities, in order to assist them in the development of local Affordable Housing Plans and is currently funding the creation of an Affordable Housing Tool Kit, aimed at providing guidance and tools to municipalities as they attempt to address their local affordable housing needs.• The Department is committed to this collaborative approach with our municipal partners and believes that this recommendation should be fully supported.• Deputy Commissioner Hanks: noted that a comprehensive guidebook is available on DOH website. DOH assessed what the needs were to help municipalities get to the finish line with affordable housing projects.

Housing

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Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
<p>The state should take advantage of the higher demand for multifamily housing- ownership and rental- that comes from economic and demographic imperatives and provide incentives- cash grants, infrastructure capital, technical assistance where towns are inclined.</p>	<p>DOH</p>	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department has and continues to prioritize housing development activity in High and Very High Opportunity communities and neighborhoods.• We fully support the provision of capital funds for planning (predevelopment), development and infrastructure. Although we do not support cash grants, we do support funding for technical assistance and have begun conversations with our small communities about accessing federal funding to address this planning activity.• In addition, the Department is preparing to launch a municipal grant program to facilitate the identification and evaluation of municipally controlled property for feasibility and potential use in the development of affordable housing opportunities. It is anticipated that this opportunity will be launched in the Fall of 2020.• DOH Deputy Commissioner Hanks – noted that DOH continues to offer technical assistance during early stages and supports predevelopment loans. Also, DOH connects municipalities with sister agencies such as Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and Department of Transportation (DOT) when necessary.

Housing

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Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
<p>Use investments in new commuter rail and Bus Rapid Transit lines to ensure affordable and mixed-income housing is built near those stations. In addition to lower housing costs, families can enjoy lower transportation costs, avoid substandard housing hazards and benefit from generally high-resource schools in communities with stations.</p>	<p>DOH (DOT)</p>	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department of Housing continues to support the coordination and collaboration of investment with the investments of other state agencies, particularly as it relates to transit-oriented development.• There has previously been an OPM led initiative to coordinate the investments along these lines; however, this initiative has been, understandably, less active in last twelve months.• We fully support the reinvigoration of this initiative and are prepared to support this initiative with the prioritization of investment across the board.• DOH Deputy Commissioner Hanks – remarked that there are currently multi-family developments in the hopper, and DOH partners with DOT and DECD on these projects.

Housing

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
<p>Schools should collect data to become aware of housing and home situations of students: to learn whether students live in overcrowded or substandard homes, whether housing is perceived as unsafe by the children and family, whether parents pay so much for housing that there is little income left for necessities, and whether parents are unable to be around to supervise homework, meals and recreation due to employment demands of high rent.</p>	DOH	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Housing has concerns related to this recommendation. The concern is specifically related to the source of the data the schools are being asked to collect, the ability of schools to collect this data, and, in particular, as they have been impacted by COVID-19 and the adaptation to tele-education. • DOH Deputy Commissioner Hanks – thanked OPM Secretary McCaw for issuing DOH 150 new rental assistance vouchers. DOH works with the Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) to assure that families in hotels and shelters find permanent housing. DOH also collaborated with OEC. CT also launched UniteCT, which is the emergency rental assistance program.
	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness/housing status of students is collected annually through the Pupil Services Information System (PSIS). • CSDE provides ongoing guidance and training with district liaisons to ensure accuracy of all data and support for students experiencing homelessness. • SDE continues to develop and release agency guidance and provide technical assistance for schools and communities to appropriately identify, engage and support students experiencing homeless, including: Best Practices for Improving Attendance by Addressing Homelessness and Housing Instability; Questions and Answers for Supporting the Educational Needs of Students Who Change Schools During a Disaster or Emergency Situation; and Connecting and Listening to Vulnerable Families During COVID-19.

Housing

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
Fully utilize the McKinney-Vento Act, working with Congress to expand available federal resources, to ensure that homeless children have access to school, transport to their schoolhouse and to minimize the deleterious effects of changes in school with accompanying loss of trusted teachers, friendships and routines, lowered school expectations and inconstancy during transiency.	DOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expansion of federal resources, particularly associated with the McKinney-Vento Act, is a critical component of any homeless associated initiative. Connecticut, through the Department of Housing and other state agencies, is a national leader in addressing the needs of our homeless population and addressing the needs of our most vulnerable homeless component, homeless children, continues to be a priority for the Department. Housing opportunities, in reasonable proximity to educational opportunities, continues to be a priority when assessing where to makes its investments and we believe is a better investment than transportation options. However, no avenue of assistance in bringing educational opportunities to the children of our State should go unexplored and underutilized, if available. DOH Deputy Commissioner Hanks – shared that it continues to work with SDE and DCF.
	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDE continues to leverage and administer all available federal funds to direct and provide school districts with financial resources targeted to support students experiencing homelessness and housing instability, including; annual McKinney-Vento appropriation; currently \$896,000 (75% increase from FY14); Emergency Impact Aid to Displaced Students (\$10.6 million in FY18); and Assistance for Homeless Children and Youth (\$327,880 in FY19). SDE has convened state and community providers and advocates with school districts to identify practices to support students and families experiencing unstable housing including (e.g., roundtable discussion with stakeholders in school year 2020; focused attention on this population and attendance in school year 2021).

Housing

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>The Commissioner of Housing may develop initiatives that will improve access to higher performing schools for families using the RAP certificate and federal Section 8 vouchers by including information about public school choice as part of a Mobility Counseling Program; undertaking a pilot program to link vouchers and certificated to housing opportunities in neighborhoods with high performing schools; and convening an inter-agency working group with the Commissioner of Education to propose new initiatives to better connect fair housing and the promotion of educational diversity and achievement.</p>	<p>DOH</p> <p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As previously discussed, no avenue of assistance in bringing educational opportunities to the children of our state should go unexplored and underutilized, if available. The Department continues to promote the inclusion of information about public school choice as part of its current Mobility Counseling contracts. In addition, the Department has recently made a change to its Federal Section 8 HCV program Administrative Guide, to allow the conversion of up to 100 vouchers into project-based rental assistance, for placement in housing developments in High and Very High Opportunity communities. This project-based initiative is expected to be implemented in Fall 2020. If successful, the Department will look for the opportunity to expand this initiative in the future. The Department of Housing has initiated conversations with Department of Education regarding the use housing as an opportunity to promote recruitment of the next generation of educators and expand the diversity of that group. • SDE Acting Commissioner serves as member to the Reaching Home (RH) Campaign Coordinating Committee, an interagency leadership group whose goal is to make homelessness in Connecticut rare, brief and one-time by 2023. • SDE Education Consultants, including McKinney-Vento State Coordinator, serve in supporting roles to the RH Campaign's Resources and Prevention workgroups. • SDE data is routinely shared with DOH and the SDE McKinney-Vento State Coordinator serves on DOH lead advisory work groups. • SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker - shared a pilot program designed to incentivize teachers of color through the recruitment of educators from historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) and partnering with SDE and Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHAFA).

Follow-Up Discussion

- OEC Commissioner Bye - Noted a legislative bill is coming out in housing, around landlords, not excluding residents from holding family childcare homes - part of effort to expand amount of licensed high quality early childhood in CT. Also educational implications for having family childcare available and if they're in the network, they get support from OEC towards accreditation and child development associates (CDAs).
- Lt. Governor – Governor’s Council on Women and Girls (COWAG) supports a bill expanding daycare options and assistance with childcare.
- OEC Commissioner Bye - Noted pilot idea in New Haven to take abandoned properties and work with banks and family care providers to offer family childcare and provide a path to homeownership.
- Lt. Governor - Noted federal childcare funding that's coming through American rescue plan.
- SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker - Noted collaboration regarding students who are experiencing homelessness.
 - *SDE John Frassinelli - Every district must have a liaison to identify and support students experiencing homelessness and we collect this data annually. SDE offers resources to district liaisons with guidance and best practices on how to identify students experiencing homelessness; provide mandatory transportation and enrollment in school; and how to access to connectivity and provide electronic devices for students experiencing unstable housing.*
- DOH Deputy Commissioner Hanks – Based on discussion from previous meetings, DOH followed up with SDE and DAS about availability of connectivity devices. There are currently ample devices. Additional communication to communities is needed on how to use the devices and access free Wi-Fi and hotspots. Evening meetings to share this information with the community were held in Bridgeport.
- Lt. Governor – Noted the Daleo Foundation donated \$44 million for laptops to ensure that students in every needy district had an electronic device and internet or Wi-Fi access. Also, Governor just announced free Wi-Fi opportunities in Middletown and several other areas.
- DCF Commissioner Dorantes – Preliminary discussions regarding fed dollars with DOH for stability of older youth and car; cases management including connections to education so older kids transitioning have resources to usher and connect them into the next phase of their lives

Family Engagement

Families will actively engage in their children’s learning and partner with their children’s schools for educational excellence.

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
<p>Provide parent universities in low-income and public housing sites that support parents as partners in the school house. Such parent universities teach parents the how to partner with schools, what to expect, how to determine quality and how to prepare children for daily and year-long schoolwork.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner Dorantes lead the review of this recommendation. • SDE - State funds were allocated for parent universities for three years (FYs 2012-2015). Grants were made to Hartford, New Britain, New Haven and Waterbury. • The Parent University grants created two-generation strategies that supported families as partners in learning in order to increase student success and close achievement gaps. They worked with community partners to empower parents to be partners, leaders, life-long learners and advocates for student learning and school improvement. The Parent Universities offered a year-round range of services for parents at sites throughout the community and online. In addition, school staff participated, thus building their capacity to partner with families. Some programs have sustained work in this area. • SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker – shared that some districts have sustained the parent universities. Parent universities are a priority area for ESSER II funds.
<p>Ensure that every parent utilizing a home visitation program knows the component of a quality early childhood setting and how to place their child in an early care setting, if desired. Create a formal placement trajectory from home visitation to quality early care, for vulnerable families with very young children.</p>	<p>OEC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has changed. HV focused on prevention and job placement. • OEC Commissioner Bye – noted shift to covering families in early years. OEC has an RFP process to move to a more regional approach with a focus on pregnant women and perinatal period as well as ongoing behavioral health challenges. This shift is grounded in equity. • DCF Commissioner Dorantes - noted that in thinking about academic success this takes into consideration the entire continuum, including pre-child birth.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
Review each School Readiness Council's parent engagement plan and ensure that parents are partners in early care and education within both formal and informal learning settings.	OEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note from OEC: Not Applicable OEC Commissioner Bye - stated that there is a bill before Education Committee requiring communities to have 25% of their membership include parents of young children. DCF Commissioner Dorantes – noted the importance of peer supports resources.
Ensure that providers are trained in authentic family engagement to maximize partnerships with families in learning.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDE is collaborating with OEC to expand parent leadership offerings through the Parent Trust Fund. OEC's contribution of federal Preschool Development Grant funds will support additional Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) training programs in communities. PLTI supports parents' engagement in their children's education and enables them to become advocates for children, ultimately enhancing the civic climate of community life. SDE requires that state and federal after-school funding recipients include a family engagement component. After school providers are provided with technical assistance and are invited to attend monthly professional networking meetings on improving family engagement. SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker - noted that SDE hosts family webinars on Tuesday evenings and that parents often find support from each other in the chats.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Within Alliance and Network schools, create incentives for community/school family strengthening and engagement plans, pre-natal to grade three. Consider matching Title 1 dollars and/or expanding the Parent Trust Act to finance such plans. Plans would offer parents information on school excellence, how children learn, education policies, linkages, resources and supports for parents to meet and converse with one another.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDE is collaborating with OEC to expand parent leadership offerings through the Parent Trust Fund. OEC's contribution of federal Preschool Development Grant funds will support additional Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) training programs in communities. PLTI supports parents' engagement in their children's education and enables them to become advocates for children, ultimately enhancing the civic climate of community life. • Family and Community Engagement is identified as a state priority for ESSER II funding. • SDE John Frassinelli - noted that SDE funds afterschool programs, and that eligibility includes only schools and districts where 40% or more students are eligible for free or reduced priced meals.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Build fatherhood audits into birthing hospitals, home visiting programs and early care settings to reflect on how fathers are welcomed and brought in as partners for a child's optimal development. (Fatherhood audits have been launched in our state through DPH and reveal significant gains in systems change with increased participation among dads).</p>	<p>DPH DCF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CT Fatherhood Initiative is part of a nationwide, federal initiative that promotes the importance of a father's involvement and influence in the lives of their children. Through the initiative, dads are imparted with parenting skills, educational and career guidance, and exposed to the legal rights that are granted to fathers. • DCF has developed robust fatherhood programs to ensure active engagement by fathers in their children's lives. The programs extend well beyond youth committed to the Department to prevent the separation of families and strengthen the father's role in a child's life. The Department's Fatherhood Engagement Services program provides statewide coverage that work with fathers in DCF case planning and services and strengthens positive parenting skills. They provide Intensive outreach, case management services and 24/7 Dad© group programming. • Each DCF Region has a Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT) that consists of dedicated individuals including DCF staff and community leaders, committed to increasing the overall engagement of fathers and their families and communities. The Regional FELT teams have instituted creative practices to empower fathers. The successful practices are then implemented statewide by other FELT teams. FELT teams also host local "Dads Matter Too" events to bring the importance of father in the community and promote resources available for families. A large segment of our services stem from the CT Fatherhood Initiative (CFI). • DCF was a founding partner in CFI and have been a motivator behind several programs that connect fathers to their children. The Department hosts annual Fatherhood Conferences, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, CFI and community providers, that focus on specific topics and areas of interest regarding the Department's fatherhood work. • DCF Commissioner Dorantes – shared that DCF is one of 8 jurisdictions across the county with a comprehensive enough program to be highlighted and shared with other agencies in a year-long learning collaborative to enhance other fatherhood engagement strategies.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Ensure that the parents on School Governance Councils are trained and inform other parents, k-3, on educational excellence, how children are faring in reading and math, and what policy and program challenges and strengths avail themselves in the schoolhouse. Ensure that all members of School Governance Councils are trained to reach out to parents.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDE collaborated with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) to deliver in-district training modules on School Governance Council roles and responsibilities, school improvement planning, student achievement data, school budgets, hiring school administrators, culturally responsive practices, school-parent compacts and parent involvement policies, and family engagement. • SDE, CABE and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) recently collaborated to provide online training for school principals responsible for implementing councils. • The SDE provides a number of documents on its website to assist schools, including descriptions of council responsibilities, guidance on election procedures and sample forms and materials for elections (i.e., recruitment flyers, nomination forms, election ballots). • Have over 350 School Governance Councils (includes parents, teachers, community members and, for high schools, HS students) in underperforming schools to provide ongoing support for the districts • CSCU Dr. Stephen Hegedus – suggested to involve higher education system as they discussed, through the American Association for Colleges and Teacher Ed. (AACTE), a future conference involving PTA to engage leadership in schools, higher ed and families/parental engagement • Follow-up – SDE and CSCU to continue discussion.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Expand the availability of resources and public-private partnerships in Connecticut's model Parent Trust so all low-income districts can compete and provide family engagement and leadership training.</p>	<p>OPM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPM - Parent Trust Fund: Provides Leadership and Civic Engagement Training for Parents in low-income school districts. SDE is collaborating with OEC to expand parent leadership offerings through the Parent Trust Fund. OEC's contribution of federal Preschool Development Grant funds will provide additional Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) training programs in communities. PLTI supports parents' engagement in their children's education and enables them to become advocates for children, ultimately enhancing the civic climate of community life. • OPM - COVID related impact to school, employment and other socioeconomic factors may impact expansion of current efforts and limit expansion efforts. New resources would need to be identified to support expanded efforts. • OPM Holly Williams – shared that OPM is continuing to look for ways to partner with private sector businesses and non-profits effectively.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Utilize existing structures and policies to enhance family engagement such as family resource centers, community family centers, family programs in housing projects, Parents Supporting Educational Excellence and other model programs and initiatives that see parents as assets and partners in education.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training provided to Family Resource Centers on the CT Parent Engagement Framework and incorporated into FRC RFP. Parent leadership programs, such as Parents Supporting Educational Excellence, are funded through the Parent Trust Fund. • SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker – noted that SDE uses every opportunity, including all grant programs, to elevate district efforts in family engagement
	<p>DCF</p>	<p><u>Quality Visitation Centers:</u> The Department is interested in creating six Quality Parenting Centers located throughout the state to actively engage and support parents in their contact and positive interactions with their children, ages 0-12 years of age. The Department's goals of this service are as follows: To strengthen and preserve relationships and critical connections between children placed in out-of-home care with their parents, siblings, parents and other family members;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide trauma informed care and services to reduce child's sense of abandonment and loss as a result of their removal from home and continued separation; • To enhance parenting capacity and improve child and family functioning; and • To assist in achieving permanency for children through timely reunification and/or development of an alternative permanency plan.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
Assure that the current LEAD program, working with school leaders on leadership, includes leadership with families as partners.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDE worked with the LEAD CT UCAPP Residency Program for aspiring educators to develop five instructional modules on family engagement. These modules constitute 10 hours of instruction in the research base for family engagement, evidence-based practices and leadership strategies. District family engagement leaders from the Hartford region participated in the development and piloting of the modules and presented the modules to university faculty who lead administrator preparation in CT. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving supported the project.
Review family engagement plans in schools, written in school profiles to assess trends and quality in family engagement. Ensure that existing public school requirements for school-family compacts and policies are enforced and evaluated (SDE)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDE provides training and resources for school-family compacts. • Annually districts must provide narrative explaining its Parental Outreach Activities for the SDE District Profile and Performance Reports. • School-Parent Compact (Title I, Part A. Sec. 1116(d) requires that, <i>“each school served under Title I shall jointly develop with parents for all Title I children a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State’s high standards.”</i> • SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker - shared that CT developed one of the first School-Parent Compacts in the nation and it has been held up as a national model.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
<p>All teacher and administrator preparation programs should provide opportunities for students to gain competency in family engagement. (DHE)</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SDE worked with the LEADCT UCAPP Residency Program for aspiring educators to develop five instructional modules on family engagement. These modules constitute 10 hours of instruction in the research base for family engagement, evidence-based practices and leadership strategies. District family engagement leaders from the Hartford region participated in the development and piloting of the modules and presented the modules to university faculty who lead administrator preparation in CT. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving supported the project.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
Encourage and incentivize school districts to develop district-wide programs that support family involvement, in partnership with community agencies and family resource centers.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District strategic plans that are developed in response to state and federal funding are guided by the CSDE Turnaround Framework which includes family and community engagement as a key component of a comprehensive plan. Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement provides common language, guiding principles and specific examples of high-impact practice to inform school and district family engagement plans.*
Allow up to 2% of Title One funds to be used to support parent involvement programs, as is federally recommended. Title 1 funds can be used to hire family-school coordinators and can help the school to develop a family-friendly school climate.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDE convenes monthly statewide meetings for any professional and family-school liaisons involved in engaging families in children's education. Friday CAFÉ is a peer-to-peer learning network that promotes best practices in equitable family engagement. Thursday After Hours is a companion program for teachers to learn more about engaging families. SDE John Frassinelli – noted that CAFÉ stands for "Community and Family Engagement" and during COVID they added "Thursday After Hours" which includes teachers
Ensure that schools and school districts include parent engagement as a key component of any strategic plan to improve student achievement, with a shared vision for interaction between parents, teachers, schools, administrators and school boards from Pre-K through high school.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Same as above. District strategic plans that are developed in response to state and federal funding are guided by the CSDE Turnaround Framework which includes family and community engagement as a key component of a comprehensive plan. Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement provides common language, guiding principles and specific examples of high-impact practice to inform school and district family engagement plans. SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker - reported that SDE convenes a quarterly meeting of the Commissioners' Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education with parents.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Require local Boards of Education, with School Governance Councils, to review, assess, and improve upon parent involvement and engagement policies every two years.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDE collaborated with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) to deliver in-district training modules on School Governance Council roles and responsibilities, school improvement planning, student achievement data, school budgets, hiring school administrators, culturally responsive practices, school-parent compacts and parent involvement policies, and family engagement. • SDE, CABE and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) recently collaborated to provide online training for school principals responsible for implementing councils. • The SDE provides a number of documents on its website to assist schools, including descriptions of council responsibilities, guidance on election procedures and sample forms and materials for elections (i.e., recruitment flyers, nomination forms, election ballots). • School Governance Councils (Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-223j), <i>School Governance Councils were created by the state's education reform law to enable parents, school staff, students (where appropriate) and community leaders to work together to improve student achievement. School Governance Councils serve in an advisory capacity and are charged with assisting the school administration in making programmatic and operational changes to improve the school's achievement.</i> • SDE John Frassinelli - Important to remind local and regional boards of education that School Readiness Councils are in place for a reason and the duly elected members (family and community members and teachers) are part of the conversation.

Family Engagement

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Ensure that all activities and policies to engage parents (school governance councils, parent universities, family civics, etc.) are aligned and coordinated across districts and within schools.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDE convenes the Commissioner’s Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education quarterly to advise the Commissioner of Education regarding policy and programmatic priorities to improve outcomes for all students and advance the State Board of Education’s comprehensive plan for equity and excellence in Connecticut schools. Membership reflects a balanced representation of the three major constituencies – school/district staff, parents (or guardians) and community members – as well as students. The Roundtable advises and serves a coordinating function on emergent policy issues such as school reopening, student performance and minority teacher recruitment. • SDE John Frassinelli – shared that there is ongoing work with roundtables to identify more partners in all sectors to assist in this work and make sure that districts have access to community-based supports within their communities. • SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker – explained that Connecticut’s Definition and Framework for Family Engagement was co-created with families, OEC and the Commissioner’s Roundtable and has been showcased as a national model.

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Create a map and access points for parents of parent information and ways to be involved in schools.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecticut's Framework for Family Engagement provides a definition of family engagement that was co-created with families from across the state. Families' input on effective engagement and suggestions for improving practice were incorporated as guiding principles for planning and implementing family engagement programs. Specific examples for family-school partnerships are included as high-impact strategies in the areas of early childhood, elementary school, middle and high school, after school programs and reducing chronic absence.
Include parent involvement in teachers', administrators', and front office staff's annual performance evaluation process.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging families is part of the teacher and administrator evaluation system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SDE is offering flexibility in the educator evaluation system for 2020-21 and encouraging districts to prioritize social emotional learning (SEL) and family engagement and invest in developing educators' capacity to partner with families. Follow-Up – SDE to send around information regarding 7 Ways SDE is leading in SEL.

Family Engagement

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Train school staff on strategies to engage fathers in their child's education.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday After Hours is a best practice sharing community for teachers and other school staff to learn authentic engagement strategies for all parents and guardians. The Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens partnership with OEC engages young fathers in their child's development and education. • OEC Commissioner Bye – stated that this is the last year of federal funding for the Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens (SPPT) program. • SDE John Frassinelli – SPPT program has been operating for 9 years. An important part of this program has been a focus on the connection with young dads. With it ending it important to note that there is also the CT Fatherhood Initiative and other work to address the connection with fathers that has been woven into best practices, as previously noted.
Conduct periodic surveys inviting parents to assess the degree to which they have been able to “engage” with their school in a meaningful way on matters of importance to them.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts conduct annual school climate surveys with families that include questions about their engagement with the school and priorities for their children's education.

Follow-up Discussion

Significant Progress on Home Connectivity Gap

DAS – Doug Casey led this discussion (and agreed to provide follow-up information, which is included below):

- Connectivity remains key in fostering healthy and ongoing relationships between educators and families. We have provided nearly 12,000 connections, approximately 15,000 - 20,000 students through Everybody Learns.
- Work with the Office of Early Childhood will add another 700 connections to families of young children and home-based childcare centers. Lessons learned point to need for local, community supports.
- Working with SDE and OTG around a holistic approach to getting families online and addressing overall student and family wellbeing. Also serving on State Library's Digital Inclusion Task Force to index community programs and scale best practices.
- Launch underway of 150 wireless connections through the Connecticut Education Network ([Details](#))
- Report on barriers to engagement and connectivity ([Full Report](#))
- Note the \$7.1B Emergency Connectivity Fund to connect students and library patrons in an expansion of the E-rate program ([Details](#))
- Also note Emergency Broadband Benefit (www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit), expansion of the Lifeline program, a \$50 credit per month for broadband and \$100 for devices
- DCF Commissioner Dorantes - These are important factors towards sustainability beyond the pandemic.
- SDE Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker – A priority of the federal ESSER II funding is remote learning, staff development and the digital divide – they knew that there was a need beyond placing the devices so they have also made educators and families get comfortable with remote learning.

School Climate

All students learn in a positive school climate.

To address external and internal stressors that impact an individual students' readiness to learn, and improve school climate overall, the following implementation recommendations should be considered:

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes
School Climate Committee should use school climate assessments and school-specific data on bullying to create a concrete School-based Climate Improvement Plan to help improve school climate.	SDE	<p>Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.</p> <p>Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker lead the review of this recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">CSDE is developing a resource document on free school climate surveys, assessments, and checklists as a resource for schools.SDE Acting Commissioner serves as tri-chair to the legislatively created SEL and School Climate Collaborative to address wide variety of issues related to school climate including the use of school climate assessments and school climate plans.SDE John Frassinelli - noted that this is currently happening from sample surveys provided in 2015 and districts are intent on utilizing assessments with students, parents, and community members

School Climate

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
Support the development of a pilot program to test school-based models focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSDE completed a SEL Scan statewide. Working with DCF, CSDE applied for and received the federal Project AWARE grant. As part of the grant an SEL and student mental health framework was developed and is being piloted in the Project AWARE districts.
Districts should revise their climate improvement plans to SDE every three years, to incorporate updated data and showcase best practices at their individual schools. SDE should develop and implement a high-quality statewide school climate assessment instrument, and work with districts to collect information related to policies and practices that are successful in contributing to school climate improvement.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the legislative mandates of the SEL and School Climate Collaborative is to recommend and implement a statewide school climate assessment by July 2021. Districts post School Climate Improvement Plans on their district websites. SDE John Frassinelli – noted that this Spring SDE will launch an SEL Assessment for students in 30 districts and will make it available to all districts in the next school year.
Clarify the definition of bullying in Section 10-222d of the C.G.S. to align with language governing protected classes and harassment under civil rights laws.	SDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed - PA 19-166 redefined bullying as recommended.

School Climate

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>Provide guidance and support to implement the state’s school climate and anti-bullying statute, with fidelity, in pre-K through 12, with a resource emphasis in districts and schools that experience persistent gaps in academic achievement. Support may include professional development, including teacher training.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated training on creating trauma informed and trauma sensitive classrooms to understand the sociocultural factors impacting student development and learning and how current events and experiences, race, and cultural identity intersect with school climate and social-emotional development. Provided targeted supports and resources for identified districts on school climate data collection and assessments; aligning and integrating school climate initiatives such as restorative practices and trauma-informed practices into action; and, evaluating the impact of implementation. Provided professional development to districts on building community and promoting relationships virtually and in-person to help school leaders understand the importance of relationships especially during this challenging time, and to identify strategies to promote collaboration and relationships with and among staff, students, and families. Social-Emotional Learning: Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits Framework Grades K-3 and developing a Habits document for Grades 4-12. The SDE conducted a Statewide Landscape Scan on best practices on SEL to support schools ongoing efforts. This Spring the SDE is rolling out a Statewide Social Emotional Universal and Supplemental Screening Assessment. CSCU Dr. Stephen Hegedus – stated regarding teacher training, undergraduate programs have 120 credits maximum in normalization policy (same for many universities). SEL modules have been incorporated throughout the curriculum, but we can't add something new without taking away so there's a continuous cycle of what is most important to prepare all teachers. We need to consider ongoing professional development through leadership educator training as well. DCF Commissioner Dorantes– noted the importance of also building capacity with other practices that compliment what happens within the schoolhouse, like social work programs.

School Climate

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes Bullets provided prior to the meeting are listed first. Comments added during meeting follow in bold.
<p>In underperforming districts and schools, climate assessments could be used to help identify and create connections between student, classroom, school, district and the community and external resources, in an inside/outside the school gap closing strategy. This strategy may include access to after-school programs, evening family and community supports, and to neighborhood vocational and recreation programming.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts conduct school climate assessments with their students, faculty and families and use the results to inform improvements to school environments, support social-emotional well-being, and academic success. • CSDE is developing a resource document on free school climate surveys, assessments, and checklists as a resource for schools, and tools to support data-driven decision making. • SDE John Frassinelli – mentioned that this happens in all schools.
<p>Survey students, if possible annually, in order to obtain their views on the extent to which the climate for learning in their schools is conducive to their success.</p>	<p>SDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSDE engaged the “Thought Exchange” platform, a crowd sourcing platform, to provide an opportunity for students to share and rate their thoughts. Two “exchanges” have been conducted with a total of 24,000 student responses. • This is in legislation (PA 19-166), and the SEL and School Climate Collaborative will be creating a uniform survey tool. • CSDE supports the CAS Student Equity Advisory Board and State Student Advisory Council on Education.

Lt. Governor thanked discussion leads and reviewed next steps:

- 2021 Meeting Schedule (all meetings will be held from 1 to 3 p.m.)
 - *June 23, 2021*
 - *September 22, 2021*
 - *December 15, 2021*
- Anticipated topics for June Meeting:
 - *Inside Higher Education*
 - Leaders that Close the Gap: Administrator Preparation and Development
 - Highly Effective Teacher Preparation Programs
 - *Inside the Schoolhouse*
 - Principal and Teacher Hiring and Retention for Schools that Demonstrate Persistent Gaps
- Annual Report to the Legislature
 - Draft will be circulated before the next meeting

Closure/Meeting Adjourned

- Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.
- Watch the full meeting on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/8tgYWaHrCLQ>