

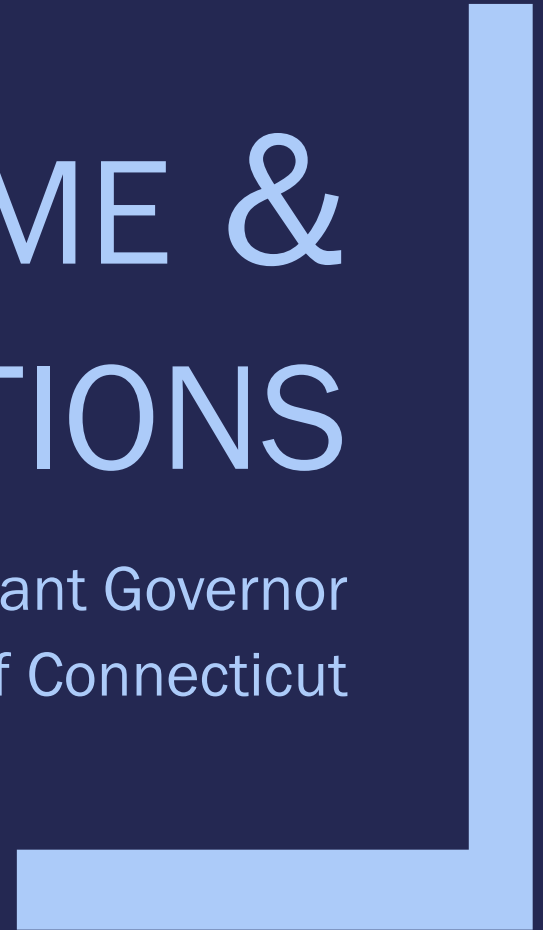
INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

February 21, 2020
450 Columbus Boulevard
Meeting Rooms North C & D
Hartford



WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor
State of Connecticut



INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education





Connecticut State Department of Education
Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner

Interagency Council: It Still Takes a Village



@CTDepartmentOfEducation



@EducateCT



Interagency Council for Closing the Achievement Gaps

Turn and Talk

List areas where a gap might exist in outcomes based on race or poverty.

(e.g., reading scores, access to quality dental care)

Connecticut Schools are ranked 3rd in the country recently by a national publication.

Connecticut Schools recently named 2nd best in the nation for Opportunity to Succeed.

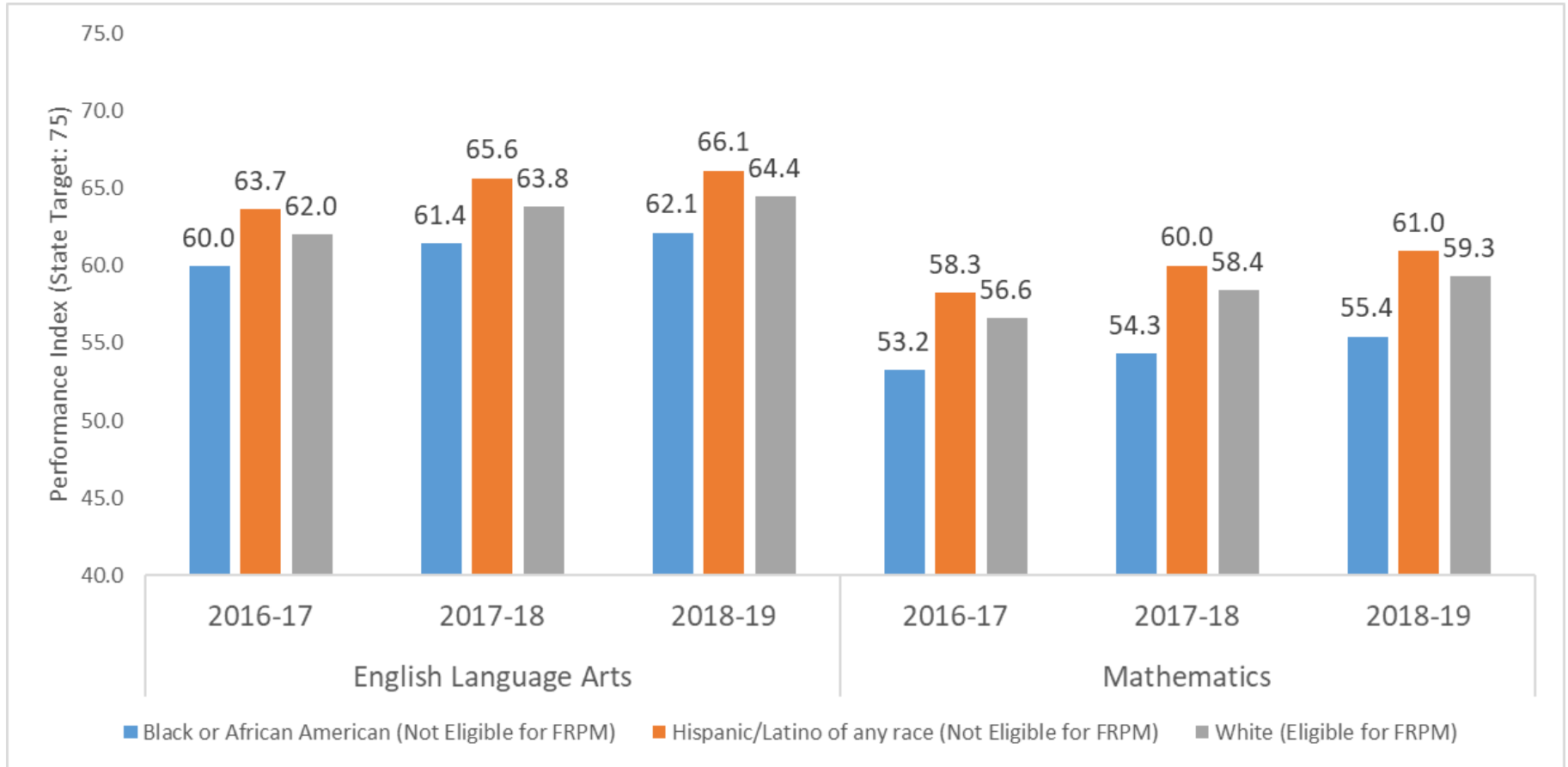


In Connecticut today, more affluent black students perform worse than poorer white students.

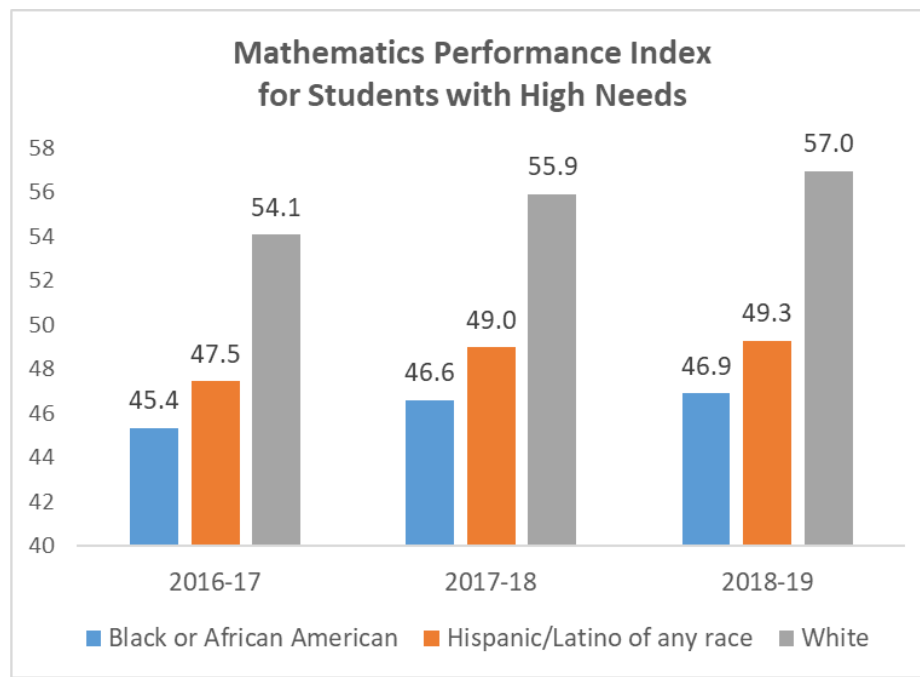
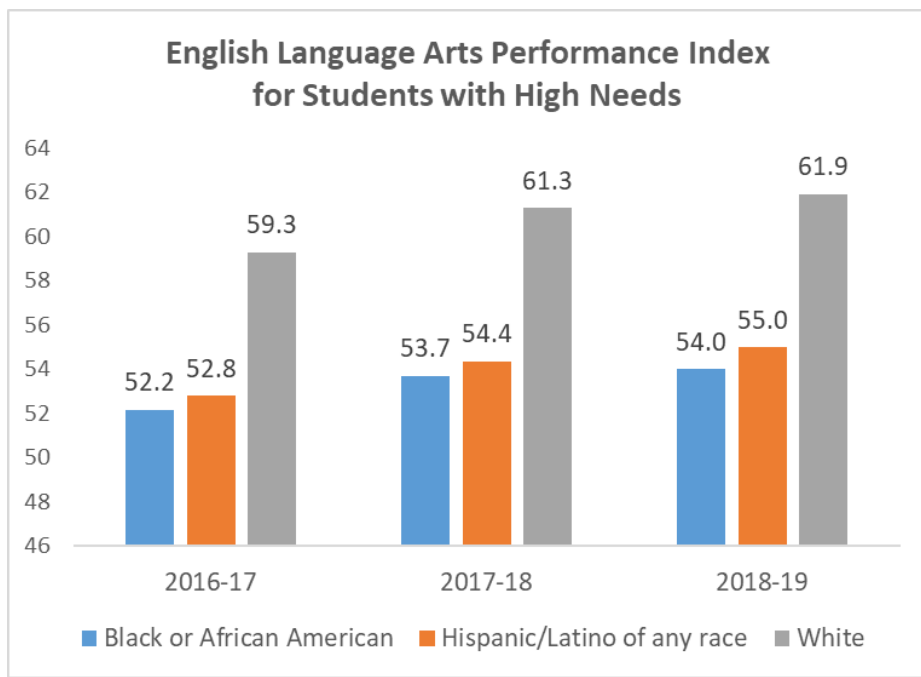
In Grade 9, nearly 1 out of every 4 black or Hispanic students is suspended or expelled as compared to 1 out of every 13 white students.



More affluent black students perform worse than poorer white students.



High-needs students have gaps by race

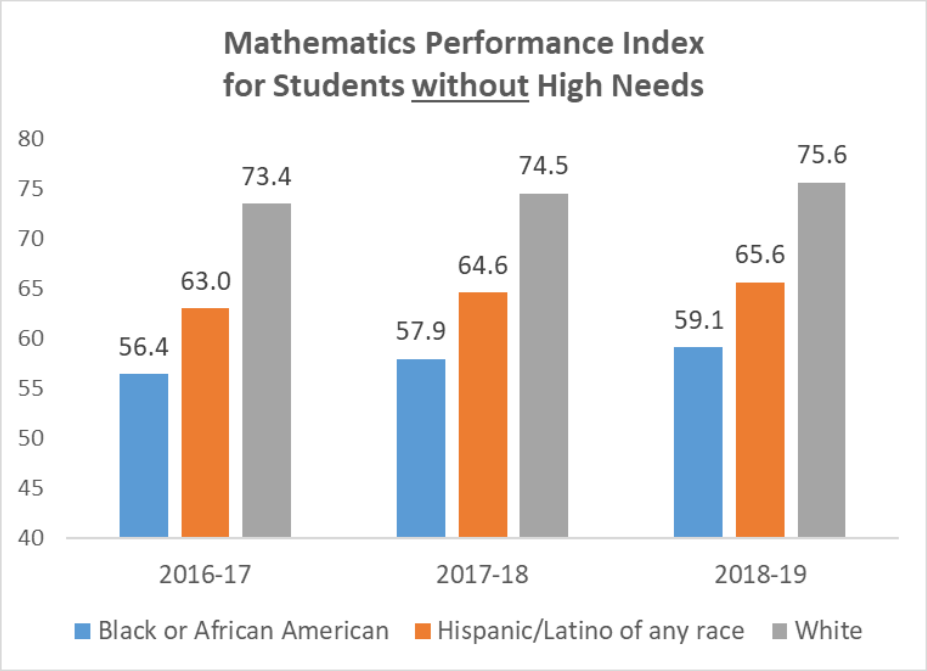
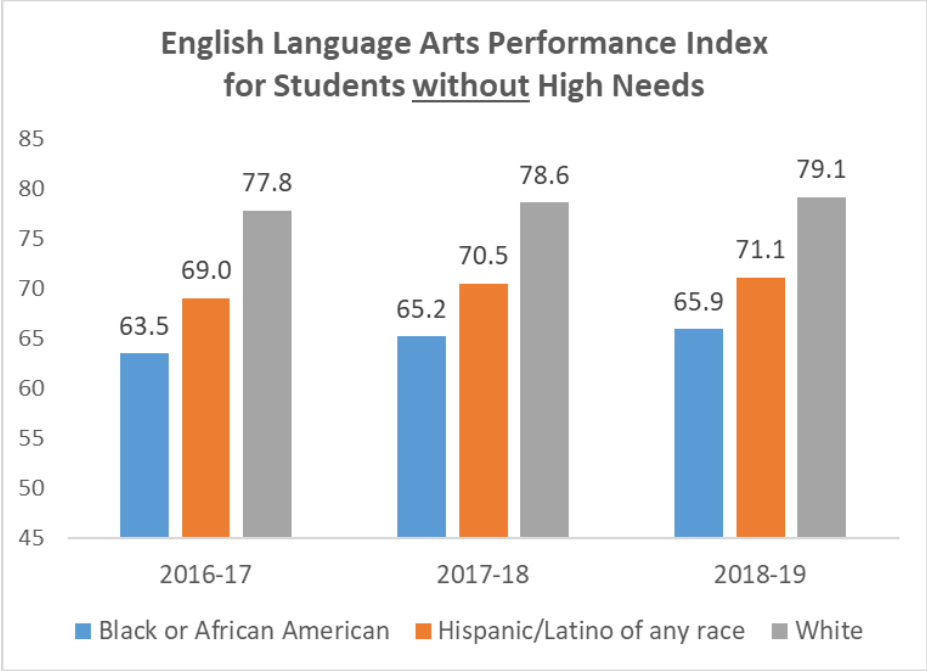


In 2018-19, about 80 percent of black and Hispanic/Latino students were identified as high needs*, compared to only 33 percent of white students.

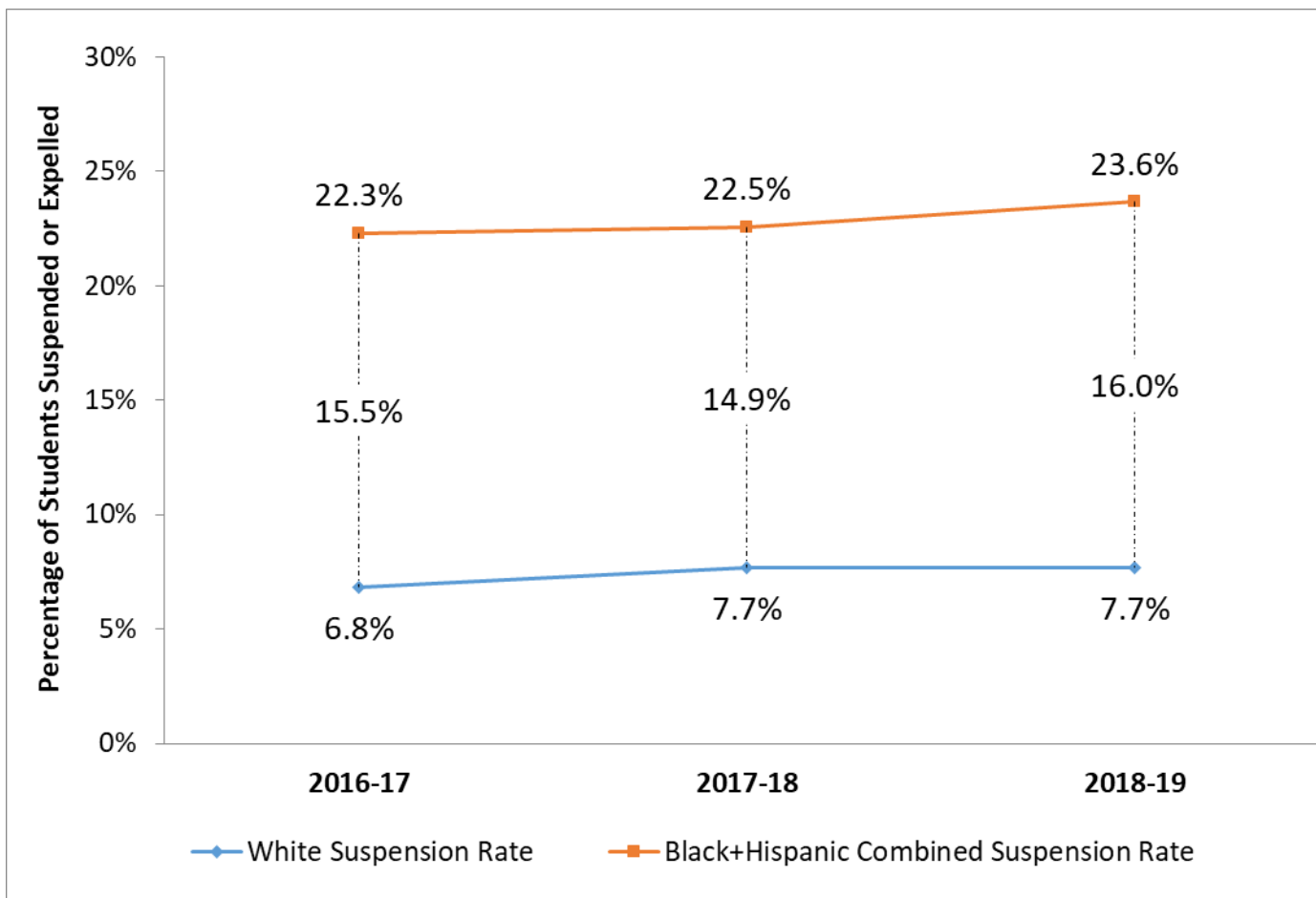
**Students with high needs are English learners, students with disabilities, and/or from a low income family.*



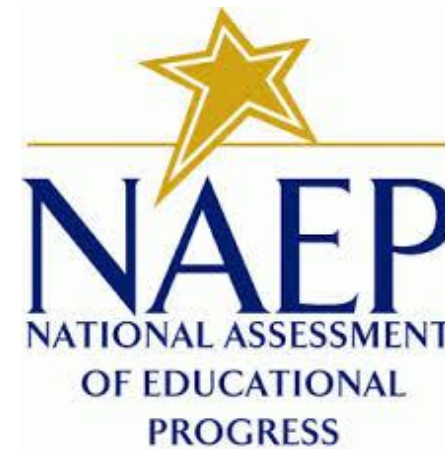
Gaps are greater by race for non-high needs



Black/brown students in grade 9 are suspended 3 times more than white students



40+ Years of NAEP (Nation's Report Card) Testing

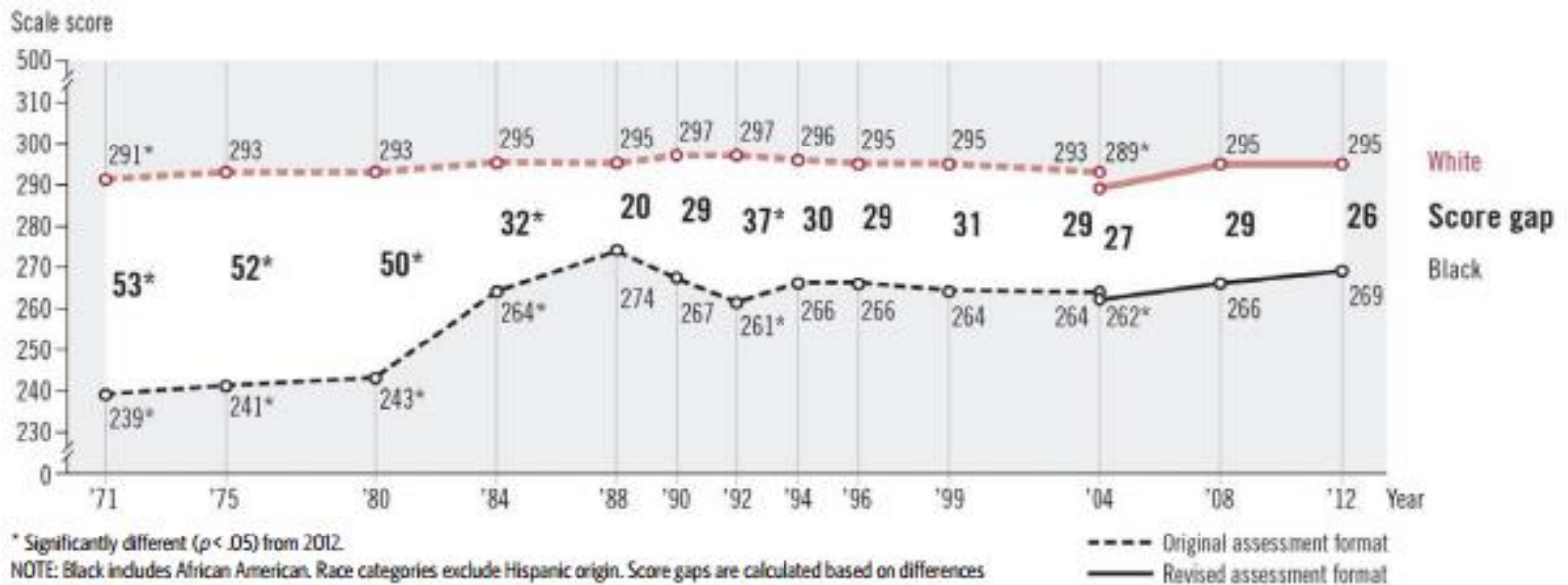


- Significant gaps still exist
- Skin color and zip code are great determinants of success
- CT has among the greatest gaps in student achievement



Black-White Gap

Figure 11. Trend in NAEP reading average scores and score gaps for White and Black 17-year-old students



The White - Black score gap narrowed **27** points since 1971.



Latino-White Gap

Figure 12. Trend in NAEP reading average scores and score gaps for White and Hispanic 17-year-old students



The White - Hispanic score gap narrowed about **20** points since 1975.

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2012.

NOTE: White excludes students of Hispanic origin. Hispanic includes Latino. Results are not available for Hispanic students in 1971 because Hispanic was not reported as a separate category at that time. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.



Good News!!!

Gap is closing



At this rate, they'll be gone in...

2060



Achievement Gap Task Force was created 2011



2014 Master Plan was submitted

Inside School House

Reading

English Learners

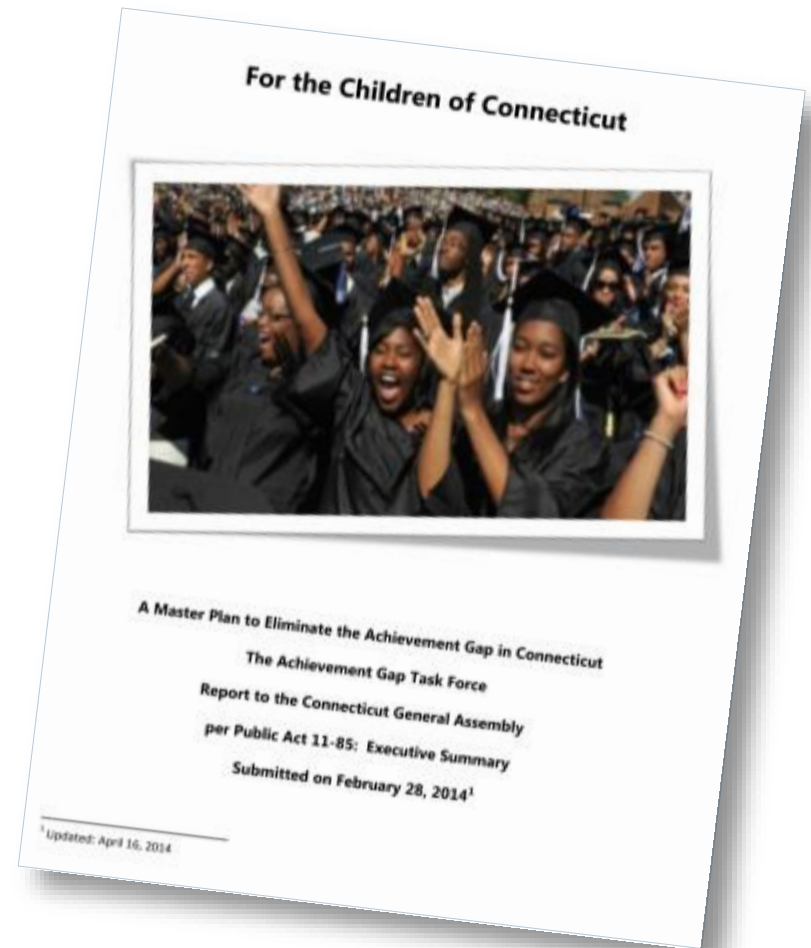
Chronic Absences

Outside School House

Housing Insecurity

Access to Mental Health

Food Insecurity



Interagency council was established to address root causes of inequities that lead to gaps

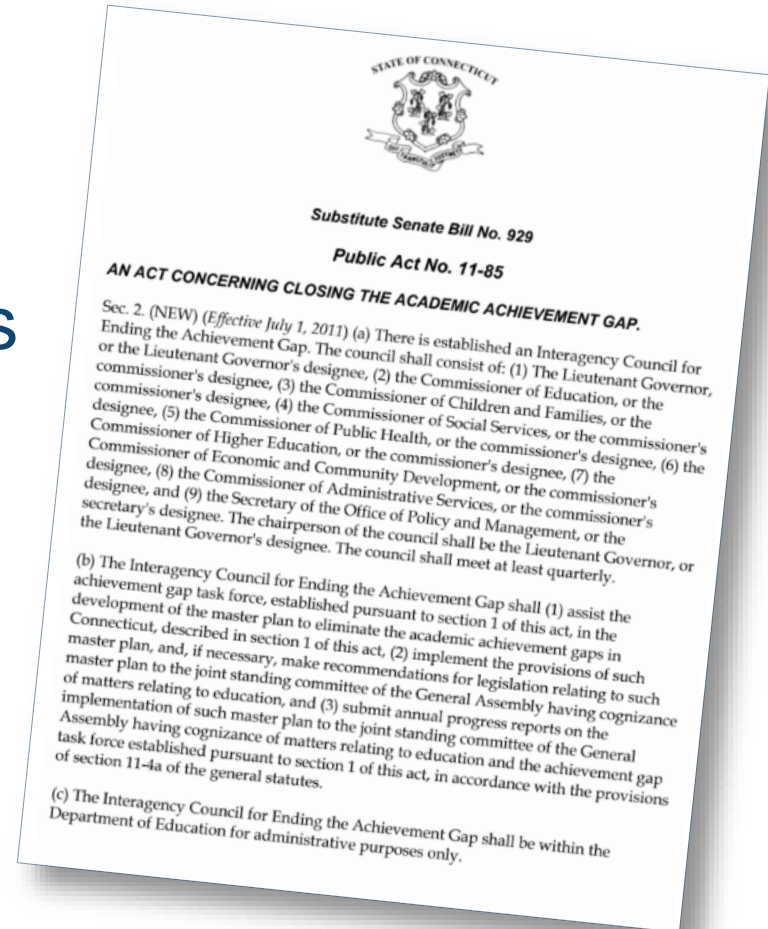




It still takes a village...

Who is in the room?

- Lt. Governor Bysiewicz
- Executive Branch leaders
- Blur the lines
- New culture in agency interdependence





Questions?



[@CTDepartmentOfEducation](#)



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CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Featured Achievement Gap Task Force Recommendation

Chronic Absence

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Deputy Commissioner

Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
February 21, 2020

Presentation Outline

- Master Plan Recommendation for Chronic Absence
- Chronic Absence Defined
- Why Attendance Matters
- The Connecticut Landscape
- State Infrastructure to Reduce Chronic Absence



MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION FOR CHRONIC ABSENCE



Results Statement, Rationale & Policy Recommendations

Chronic Absence

Results Statement – All Students will attend school at least 90% of the school year.

Good attendance is essential to student achievement and graduation. Children must be in school to thrive academically. But too often, students, parents and school leaders and teachers do not realize how quickly absences – excused or unexcused – can leave children and youth falling behind. Chronic absence – missing 10 percent of the school year, or just 2-3 days each month – predicts lower third-grade reading proficiency, course failure and eventual dropout.

Although attendance is typically considered the province of local education agencies, state policymakers can play key roles in ensuring that schools track the most reliable attendance data and intervene in meaningful ways. Essential to this is looking beyond the traditional measures of attendance: the number of students who show up every day (average daily attendance) and the number of students skipping school (truancy).

Schools and districts must also look at how many students are missing 10 percent of the school year in unexcused and excused absences. Research shows that 10 percent is the threshold where absenteeism correlates to poor academic outcomes. This measure is known as chronic absence.

Families need to be informed so that they can partner with schools on attendance. Often parents don't realize how quickly absences add up: Just two to three days a month amount to 10% of the school year. Helping families understand what they can and should do to ensure their children are in school so they have an equal opportunity to learn is a critical ingredient of a two-generation approach to ending poverty. Couple this with outreach to ensure parents know how to improve attendance or where to turn for help.

Chronic absence can develop for myriad reasons ranging from hunger, a parents depression, transportation problems, lack of winter clothing to a child raising the younger children while a parent works. Chronic absence is a social and economic barometer of the families in Connecticut. With careful attention and personal outreach, each child's situation can often be turned around promptly. Treating an absent child as a problem or a family fault, misses the cause and the intervention.

The impact hits low-income students and children of color particularly hard, especially if they don't have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom and are more likely to face systemic barriers to getting to school – such as unreliable transportation or conflicting parent work schedules.

Chronic absence is often a symptom of a student's general unhappiness with school. Improvement plans should include efforts to determine underlying reasons for excessive absenteeism, including concerns about 1) safety, 2) belonging and friendship, 3) academic engagement and progress, 4) freedom to make choices, 5) opportunities to have fun and 6) learning differences.

Policy Recommendations

- **Public awareness:** Build public awareness of chronic absence and why it matters across schools and communities.
- **Attendance Tracking:** Track individual student attendance and absences in state longitudinal student databases, ensuring that data are entered accurately and consistently.
- **Standard Definition:** Adopt a standard definition of chronic absence (missing 10% of the school year) to be used statewide and by each school district. The definition should clarify how chronic absence is different from unexcused absences (truancy) and ensure the inclusion of absences due to suspensions, as well as absences that come when children switch schools and do not immediately start at a new school.
- **Chronic Absence Reports:** Regularly calculate and share chronic absence data statewide, providing information by district, school, grade and subgroup. Make the information publicly available through school and district report cards.
- **Reports to Families:** Encourage districts to provide families with real-time data on their child's attendance, as well as an alert if their child may be accruing too many absences.
- **School Improvement:** Require school improvement plans to include chronic absence data, strategies that will be used to identify causes for such absence, build a culture of attendance, and fashion effective interventions for chronically absent students.
- **Capacity Building:** Promote dissemination and learning to educators and parents about evidence-based and promising practices for reducing chronic absence including strategies that engage community organizations as partners in the work.



Results Statement: *All students will attend school at least 90% of the school year*

AGTF policy recommendations for reducing chronic absence:

1. Public Awareness
2. Attendance Tracking
3. Standard Definition
4. Chronic Absence Reports
5. Reports to Families
6. School Improvement Plans
7. Capacity Building
8. Interagency Resource Allocation and Coordination

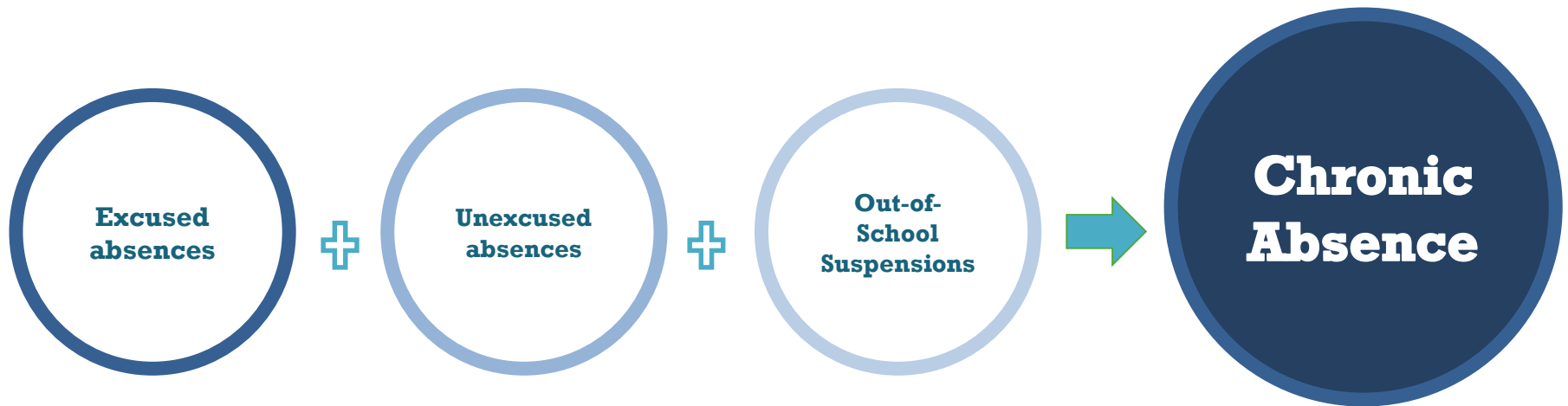


CHRONIC ABSENCE DEFINED



What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. **C.G.S. Section 10-198c(1)** defines it as **missing 10% or more of school for any reason.**



Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).



Source: Attendance Works

Factors that Contribute to Chronic Absence

Barriers

- Illness, both chronic and acute
- Lack of health, vision, or dental care
- Trauma
- Unsafe path to/from school
- Poor Transportation
- Frequent moves or school changes
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems

Negative School Experiences

- Struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability
- Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability

Lack of Engagement

- Lack of culturally relevant, engaging instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Failure to earn credits/ no future plans
- Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes

Faulty Beliefs

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades



WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS



Attendance Matters!

National Research

At every age and every stage, chronic absence erodes the academic and social skills needed to succeed in school

- Children in poverty are more likely to be chronically absent at a young age

Ability to Read at Grade Level

Being chronically absent significantly affects a student's ability to read at grade level, perform academically and graduate on time

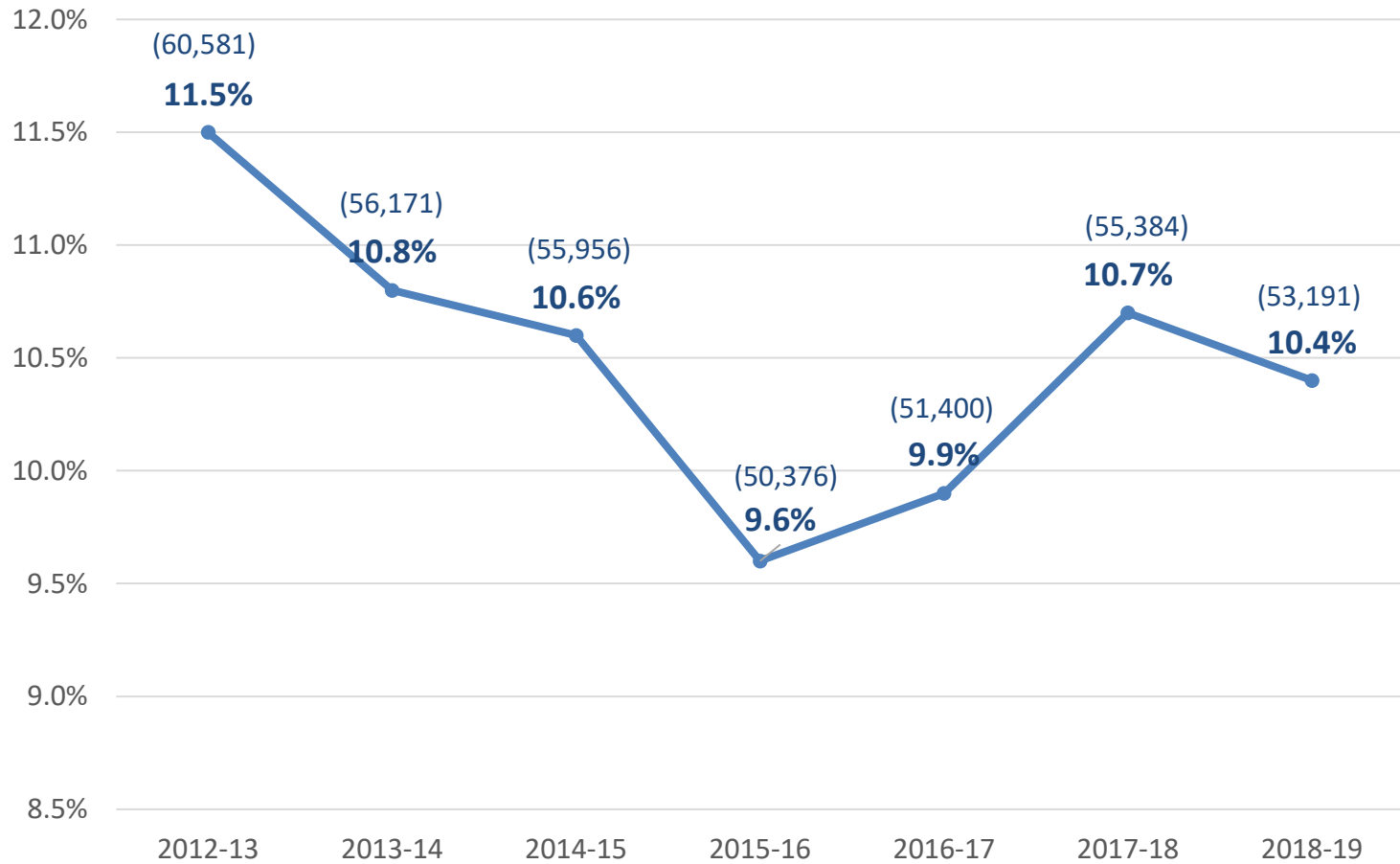
- Students who are chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade
- By sixth grade, chronic absence is a key early indicator of dropout from high school
- By ninth grade, attendance may be a better indicator of dropout than eight-grade test scores.



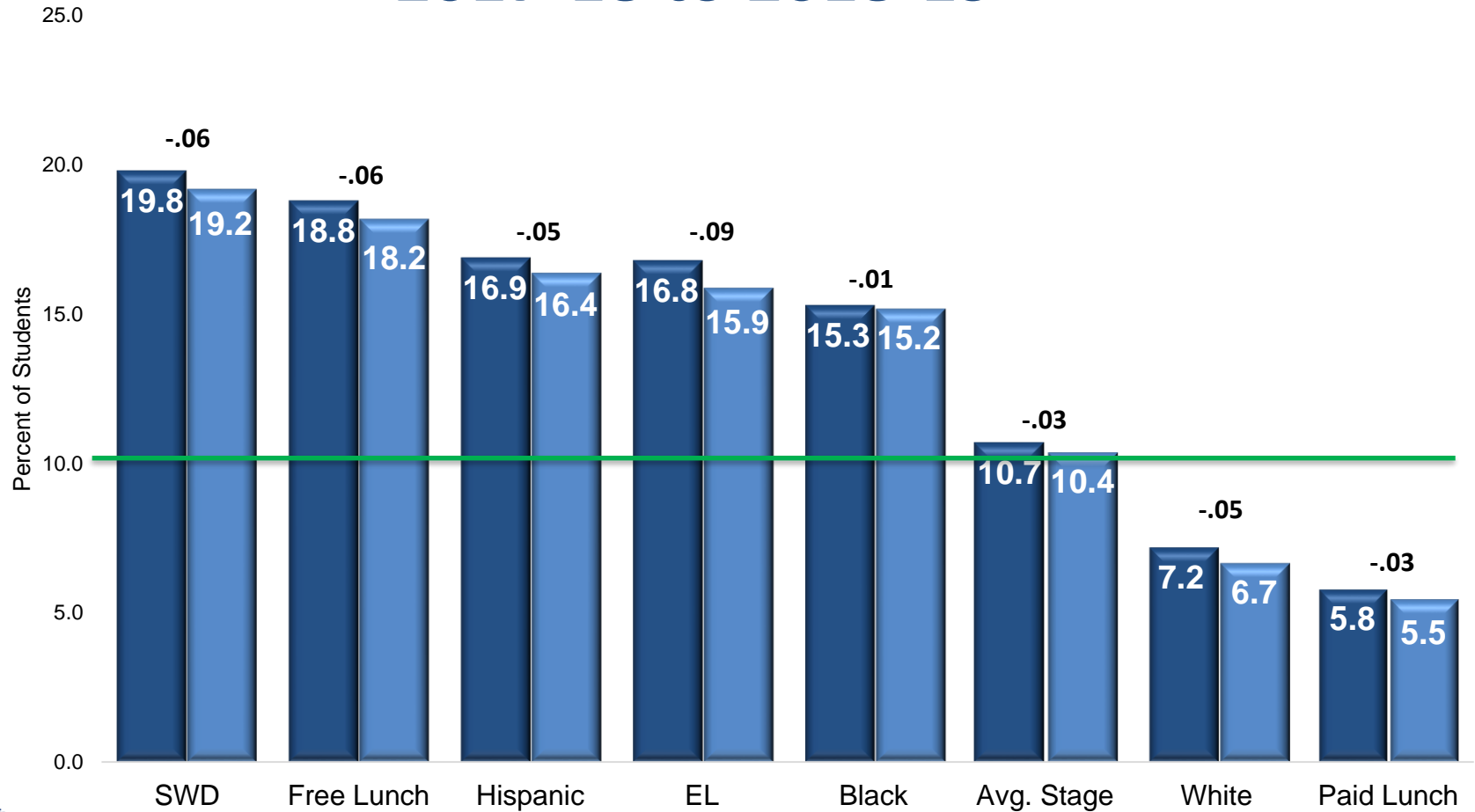
THE CONNECTICUT LANDSCAPE



Chronic Absence Trend



Chronic Absence by Selected Student Groups 2017-18 to 2018-19



Chronic Absence Landscape in Connecticut

10.4 percent of K-12 students (53,191 students) were chronically absent in the most recent 2018-19 school year. This is down from 55,384 or 10.7 percent in the previous school year and from 11.5 percent or 60,581 students in 2012-13.

Significant disparities remain as evidenced by chronic absence rates across student groups both at the state and district levels.

- Black/African American and Hispanic or Latino students have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than their White counterparts.
- English Learners and Students with Disabilities still show high rates compared to their general education peers.
- Students eligible for free meals are highly more likely to be chronically absent than students not eligible for free or reduced price meals.



Chronic Absence by Grade Level

25

20

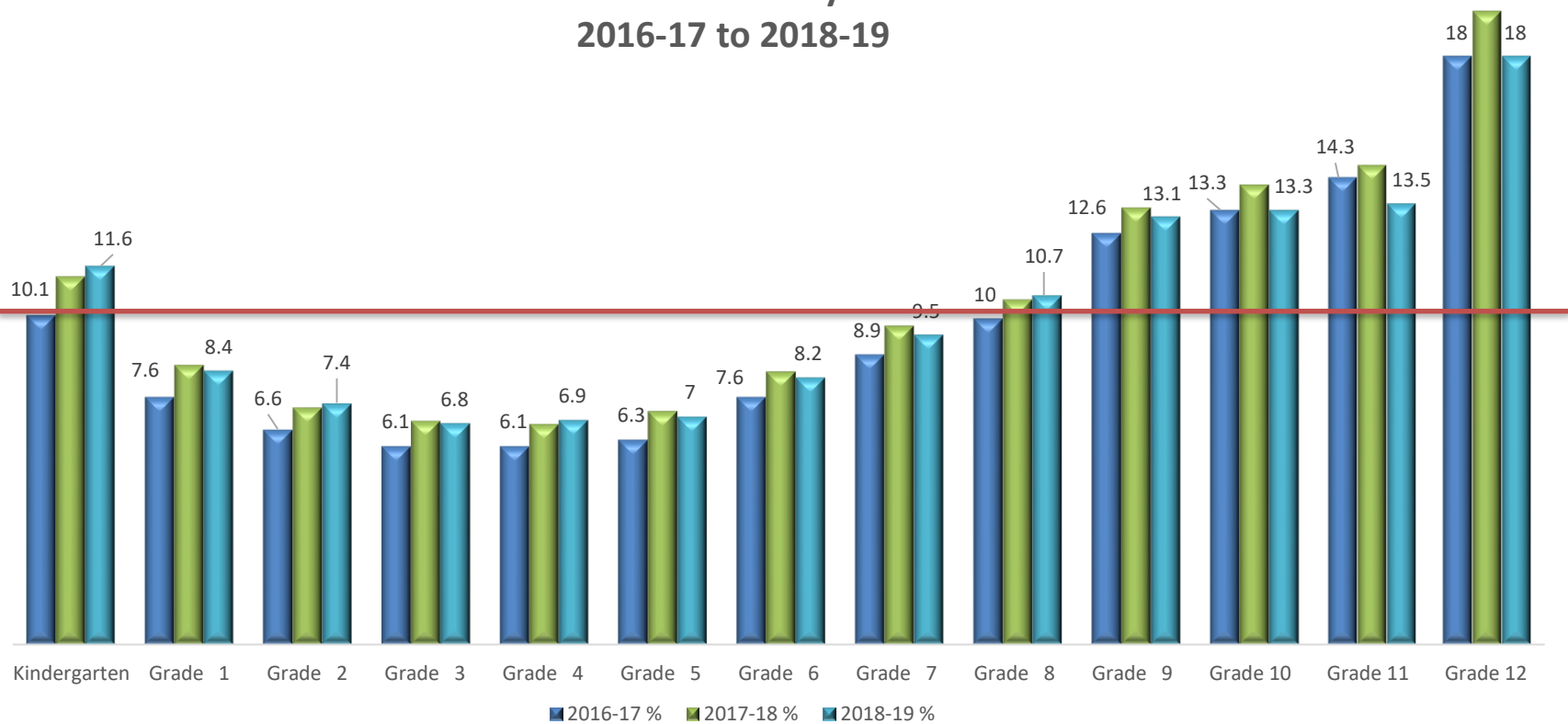
15

10

5

0

Chronic Absence Rates by Grade Level
2016-17 to 2018-19



STATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENCE



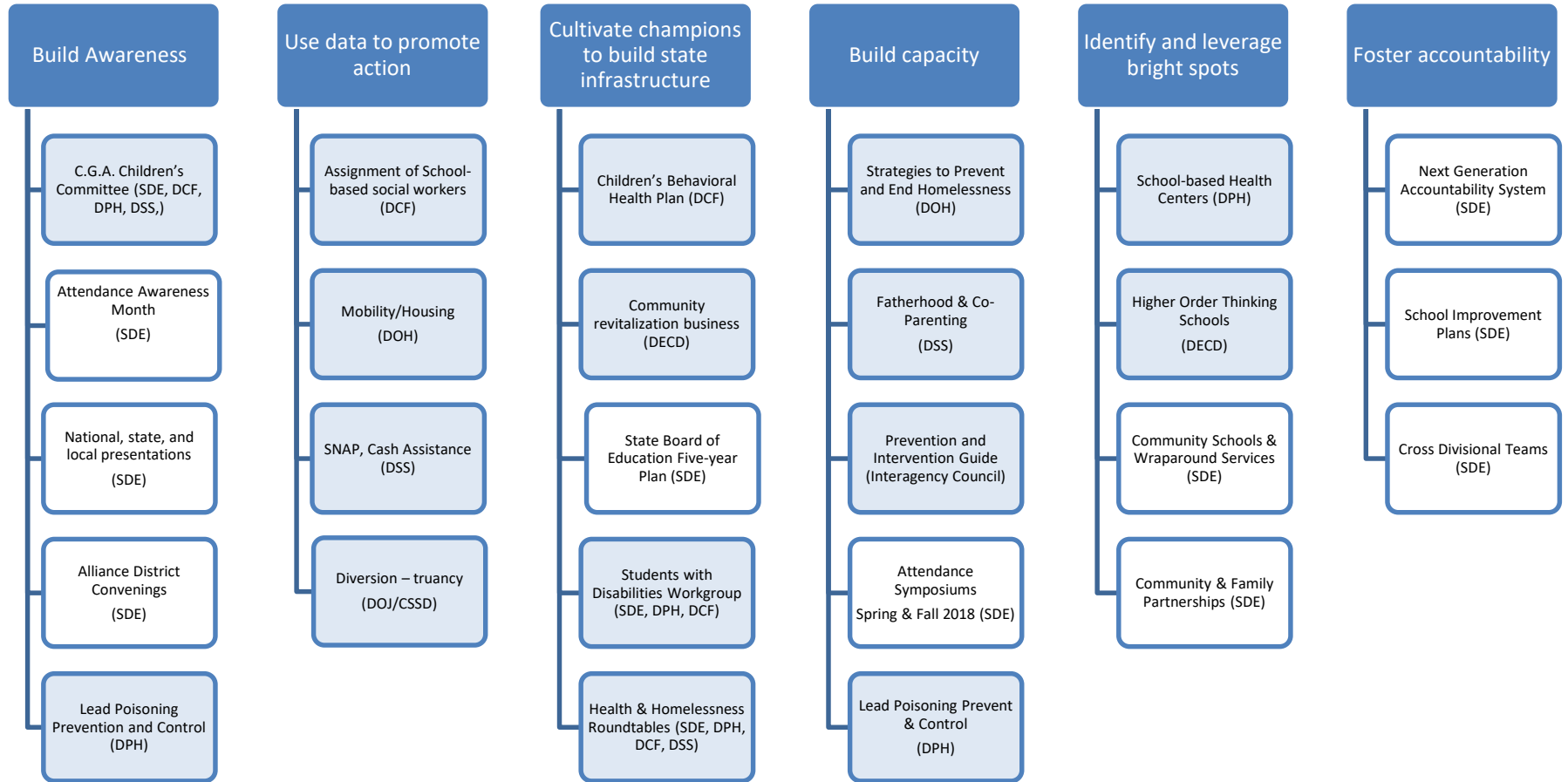
ALIGNMENT OF AGTF RECOMMENDATIONS WITH SIX STRATEGIES THAT WORK



Source: Chang, H., Russell-Tucker, C., & Sullivan, K. (2016). Chronic early absence: What states can do. Kappan, 22-27.



CONNECTICUT - SIX STRATEGIES THAT WORK ALIGNED WITH STATE AGENCY EFFORTS



Strategic Collaboration & Transformative Impact

Executive Branch

- *Leader of the Interagency Council on Ending the Achievement Gap with attendance focus*
- *Strong supporter of the state attendance efforts*

State Board of Education

- *Five-year Comprehensive Plan includes reduction of chronic absence*
- *Board requires plans to address chronic absence in applications for state funding (selected districts)*

Legislative Branch

- *State statute to address chronic absence includes: Prevention and Intervention Guide; district and school-level attendance teams; and adoption of official definition for chronic absence*

CSDE

- *Next Generation Accountability System/Guidance and EdSight Data Portal*
- *Early Indication Tool*
- *Focus on subgroups with high levels of chronic absence (students with disabilities)*

Judicial Branch

- *Member of Strategic Action Group on Chronic Absence*
- *Leader on issues on diversion and truancy*

Other Partners: LEAs, State, National

- *Leverage partnerships to support strategic direction*
- *Utilize as external experts*
- *Collaborate for Attendance Awareness Month*



A Collective Approach

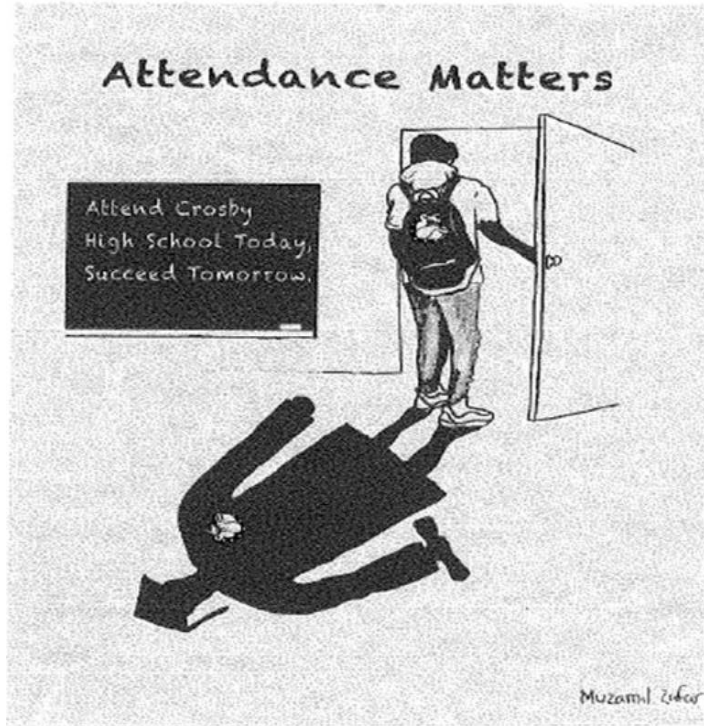


Illustration courtesy of Muzamil Zafar, Crosby High School Student

*“The good news is chronic absence can be significantly reduced when **schools, families and community partners work together** to monitor data, promote good attendance and address hurdles that keep children from getting to school every day...”*

**Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success
by Reducing Chronic Absence**



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Vision for Council Going Forward

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz



Identification of AGTF Policy Recommendations

Deliverables for Next Meeting

Closing

- Next Meeting
- Adjournment

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Vision for Council Going Forward

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