



**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

**DATE:** July 26, 2021

**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 July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Focus and Activities**

Since its last [report to the legislature](#) on July 1, 2020, the Interagency Council met four times, once on each of October 30, 2020; December 10, 2020; March 17, 2021; and July 19, 2021. Each meeting was structured with Council members leading discussion about the subject matters selected for that meeting together with their corresponding Results Statements and Policy Recommendations, all as set forth in the AGTF Master Plan. This format has facilitated open, collaborative discussions across member agencies.

During the October 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, member agencies reviewed the status of their work with respect to the Policy Recommendations for the following topics and the respective Results Statements:

1. Poverty: Children will live with their families in economic stability.
2. Hunger and Food Insecurity: Children will be food secure and fueled to learn.
3. Social Emotional Health Prevention and Intervention: All children will be emotionally stable, resilient and capable of self-regulation.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz led the discussion on Poverty and the then Commissioner of Education, Miguel Cardona, led the discussions for both Hunger and Food Insecurity and Social Emotional Health Prevention and Intervention. The presentations on each subject area were followed by robust discussions between Council members regarding potential avenues for interagency collaboration or legislative routes through which the recommendations could be alternatively addressed. Additional information is available in the [October 2020 meeting minutes](#).

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The December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting commenced with a special presentation from Skip Kodak, Executive Vice President, AMS Marketing Group, Americas for LEGO Systems, Inc. Mr. Kodak shared some of LEGO Systems Inc.'s initiatives to strengthen equitable early childhood development programs and its contributions to culturally responsive curriculum that foster skills development.

The presentation was followed by discussion on how the public and private sectors might work together in furtherance of these principles. Member agencies then reviewed the status and progress of their implemented responses to the Policy Recommendations for the following topics and their respective Results Statements:

1. Early Care and Education: Every child is school-ready upon entry to kindergarten.
2. Inside the Schoolhouse: Use of Curriculum in Closing Achievement Gaps in Low Performing Schools: Model curriculum is available for schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps.
3. Inside the Schoolhouse: Creativity and Innovation and the Achievement Gap Synopsis: All students have opportunities to learn in classroom environments that promote a culture of creativity and innovation.

Commissioner Beth Bye from the Office of Early Childhood led the discussion on Early Care and Education, and the then Commissioner of Education, Miguel Cardona, led both discussions pertaining to Inside the Schoolhouse: Use of Curriculum in Closing Achievement Gaps in Low Performing Schools and Creativity and Innovation and the Achievement Gap Synopsis. Additional information can be found in the [December 2020 meeting minutes](#).

During the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, the member agencies reviewed their responses to the Policy Recommendations for the following three subject areas and their respective Results Statements:

1. Housing: All children will live in safe and stable housing.
2. Family Engagement: Families will actively engage in their children's learning and partner with their children's schools for educational excellence.
3. Inside the Schoolhouse: School Climate and the Achievement Gap: All students learn in a positive school climate.

Deputy Commissioner Shanté Hanks from the Department of Housing led the discussion on Housing, Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes from the Department of Children and Families led the discussion on Family Engagement, and Acting Commissioner of Education Charlene Russell-Tucker led the discussion on School Climate. A notable part of the discussion revolved around the Fatherhood Initiative (FHI). Many of the member agencies are involved in an array of services for fathers including positive parenting skills, empowerment and leadership development, as well as educational and career guidance. In addition to responses to the Policy Recommendations, the Council members discussed other ways that they currently work towards

the overall Results Statements and Policy Recommendations and considered new ways to collaborate as well. Further details are provided within the [March 2021 meeting minutes](#).

During the July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, member agencies reviewed the status and progress of their implemented responses to the Policy Recommendations for the following subjects and their respective Results Statements:

1. Inside Higher Education: Leaders that Close the Gap: Administrator Preparation and Development: All principals and administrative leaders will be prepared to work in schools with achievement gaps.
2. Inside Higher Education: Highly Effective Teacher Preparation Programs: All pre-service teachers accepted to teach in CT schools will be trained in closing persistent gaps in academic achievement.
3. Inside the Schoolhouse: Principal and Teacher Hiring and Retention for Schools that Demonstrate Persistent Gaps: School districts with persistent gaps will be able to grow and retain the effective leaders and teachers they need.

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 on the rest of the AGTF Master Plan Policy Recommendations with leadership from member agencies whose work corresponds most with the overall subject.

The remaining 2021 Interagency Council meetings are scheduled to take place on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and December 15<sup>th</sup>. For the September meeting, the Council intends to cover Students in State Care, as well as two subjects that fall within the category of Inside the Schoolhouse: 1) Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap and 2) Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap – Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students. In December, the Council anticipates covering the final two Results Statements, both also Inside the Schoolhouse: 1) Reading; and 2) English Language Learners.

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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