

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting (Subject to Revision)
October 16, 2015

Call to Order

The Honorable Nancy Wyman, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut, called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. The meeting was held in Hearing Room 2B of the Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut.

Member agencies
represented by:

Michael Carone, Legislative and Regulations Analyst, Department of Social Services
Evonne Klein, Commissioner, Department of Housing

Christopher Leone, Superintendent of Schools, Department of Children and Families
Alison Lubin, ZOOM Public Policy Fellow, Department of Economic and
Community Development

Krista Ostaszewski, Legislative and Regulations Analyst, Department of Social Services
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer, Connecticut State Department
of Education

Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Guests:

Miguel Cardona, Achievement Gap Task Force, Meriden Public Schools

Elliot Ginsberg, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc.

Steven Hernández, Achievement Gap Task Force, Commission on Children

Karen Jarmon, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc.

Dawn Martorelli, Meriden Public Schools

Jaquita Monroe, Court Support Services Division, Connecticut Judicial Branch

Sergio Rodriguez, Connecticut State Department of Education

Dan Salazar, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc.

Kari Sullivan, Connecticut State Department of Education

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes from June 11, 2015

Minutes were unanimously approved.

III. What Can Happen When “Outside the Schoolhouse” and “Inside the Schoolhouse” Partner

Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. (CCAT)

Elliot Ginsberg, President and Chief Executive Officer

Karen Jarmon, Communications Director

Dan Salazar, Director of Information Technology

Mr. Ginsberg provided an overview of the information technology support that CCAT offers to municipalities, boards of education, nonprofits and libraries. The work

consolidates capacities and capitalizes on the Nutmeg Network as an important tool for Connecticut.

Dan Salazar further detailed CCAT's work with Connecticut schools, libraries and non-profits including:

- leveraging the Nutmeg Network and providing cloud resources for schools and towns;
- providing resources that enable students to learn and connect at home and continue their learning;
- helping districts to operate more efficiently by teaching schools how to use technology efficiently, therefore, needing less district-supported staff and resources;
- allowing districts to develop, share and sustain quality professional learning opportunities for teachers. Lessons can be stored and brought back out again for future opportunities;
- adapting curriculum to be more interactive for differentiated learning styles and better engage students at risk of dropping out;
- providing Internet access for homework help;
- bringing high speed Internet to not served and underserved populations;
- creating accessible and open communication with parents through mobile devices; and
- redefining libraries to become more of a focal point in the community.

CCAT is helping to promote and integrate technology into schools and communities, building on the capacity and high speed of the state's Nutmeg Network. Technology, if used in the right way integrated strategically with curriculum and professional teacher development as well as community involvement, can play a role in closing the achievement gap.

IV. Achievement Gap Task Force Update

Miguel Cardona, Co-Chair, Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF)

Dr. Cardona provided an update on a recent meeting of the AGTF with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, New York University (NYU) and representation from the Connecticut State Department of Education. The AGTF will be working with the Schott Foundation to develop a policy and implementation agenda. NYU will be preparing a series of reports and updates on the status of Connecticut's gap closing efforts as well as illuminating data on how we may address opportunity gaps on issues "outside the schoolhouse." "Addressing the gaps and disparities in achievement is everybody's job – it still takes a village."

In addition, a national webinar series is planned for November with the federal Health and Human Services Department and the Federal Interagency Health Equity Team. Connecticut was invited to present its approach to a national audience to spotlight our

efforts to close the achievement gap. A sense of urgency and the need to move more quickly was expressed by members.

V. Upcoming Legislative Report Requirements

a. Agency Updates on Master Plan Commitments “Roundtable” Discussion

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer

Charlene Russell-Tucker reviewed the purpose of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap (Council) as outlined in Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-16nn. It requires the Council to:

1. Assist the Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF) in the development of the Master Plan to eliminate the academic achievement gaps in Connecticut.
2. Implement the provisions of the AGTF Master Plan, and, if necessary, make recommendations for legislation relating to the plan.
3. *Submit annual progress reports on the implementation of the AGTF Master Plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and the Achievement Gap Task Force.*

State agency representatives on the Council were asked to review their activities and strategies to date to implement the provision of AGTF Master Plan. The following was reported.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Commissioner Wentzell shared with the Council recent correspondence from the federal government announcing its new efforts to address chronic absence, [Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absence](#). The components of the national plan are closely aligned with the work that is already being done in Connecticut. Our work with the Alliance Districts has allowed CSDE to bring the issue of chronic absence to the forefront of our Alliance District convenings, technical assistance and data monitoring. Districts have a stronger understanding of the importance of reducing chronic absenteeism.

Charlene Russell-Tucker thanked the Commissioner for her support and leadership to ensure students are in school and ready to learn. She remarked that Connecticut’s success in moving the needle on chronic absenteeism has taken leadership at all levels. State and local support have made the difference. CSDE is on target with addressing the chronic absence section of the AGTF Master Plan.

Department of Children and Families, Unified School District #2 (DCF)

Superintendent Leone provided an overview of the Raise the Grade program’s strengths, weaknesses and the opportunities it has provided in order to move the work forward. To address the achievement gap, DCF is mapping the recently released Smarter Balanced

Assessment scores across all of the department's six regions. This information will be used to strengthen relationships and communications with the superintendents in those regions for both students identified with special education and students that are not identified to have special education needs.

Department of Housing

Commissioner Klein informed the council of the changes and improvements that have been made across the state to prevent and end homelessness. There are eight Coordinated Access Networks across the state to help individuals and families resolve issues and find resources before they become homeless as well as provide the appropriate resources to individuals and families who are homeless. Individual and families are rapidly rehoused into permanent housing, if appropriate. However, because Connecticut has a well-developed system, these families and individuals are being housed in many instances in a shorter time frame than in previous years. In addition, the Department is working to change exclusionary zoning in communities. The Department is working on a special project with DCF to support family reunification. Connecticut is the first state in the nation to end chronic homelessness for veterans and is on track to end homelessness among veterans by the end of 2015. Since 2011, the Department along with the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) has completed approximately 7000 units of affordable housing, with another 2500 under construction and has committed funding to another 5255 units. To date, together with CHFA, our investment in affordable housing totals almost \$1 billion.

Department of Economic and Community Development

Alison Lubin shared that the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) approach is in 47 schools and provides arts in the classroom, leadership workshops and summer institutes. It embeds the arts into the school climate and curriculum. This is a model program to infuse the arts into the curriculum to help close the achievement gap.

Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

Leah Grenier offered that OPM is available to assist agencies to help align and coordinate proposals and to have a cross-agency coordinated response to closing the achievement gap.

Department of Social Services (DSS)

Mike Carone noted that the agency supports the important work needed to be done to close the achievement gap. The agency provides a variety of programs and services that can help families including health, nutrition and financial assistance programs. They include Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) and the Medicaid School-Based Children's Health (SBCH) Program among others. A priority for DSS is ensuring that eligible Connecticut children and their parents have access to these services as well.

b. Implementation of Public Act 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absence
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer

Charlene Russell-Tucker provided an overview of the new legislation and its requirements including the timeline for implementation.

CSDE, along with the Council, is directed to develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by January 1, 2016, for local and regional school boards to use. An overview of the specific components of the plan was presented. Council agencies will be invited to participate in the development and review of the plan before it is submitted. Additional information will be forthcoming.

In addition, the new legislation expands the definition of an absence to include any in-school suspension that is greater or equal to one-half of a school day. A discussion was held about the implementation and impact of this new definition.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on January 21, 2016, at 3 p.m. Location is being determined.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.