

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

September 22, 2021
Meeting Minutes



OPENING REMARKS & ROLL CALL

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor
State of Connecticut

Opening Remarks

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz opens the meeting with remarks, noting:

- Governor Lamont has nominated Charlene Russell-Tucker to serve a full-term as our Commissioner of the State Department of Education after a unanimous vote from the State Board of Education and pending approval of the full legislature and extending well-deserved congratulations to Commissioner-designate Russell-Tucker.
- Her appreciation to partners at CSDE, particularly Kari Sullivan-Custer, for their support in the administrative functions of this Council and for their partnership in leading this team to advance this important work.

Roll Call

Lt. Governor asks Kari Sullivan Custer, State Department of Education (SDE)) to conduct the roll call.

- **Office of the Lieutenant Governor:**
The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, Chair; and Cherie Phoenix-Sharpe, General Counsel
- **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 School 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):** *(Not present)*
- **Department of Social Services (DSS):** *(Not present)*
- **Judicial Branch:** Patricia Nunez, Program Manager
- **Office of Early Childhood (OEC):** *(Not present)*
- **Office of Policy and Management (OPM):** Holly Williams, Director, Fiscal and Program Policy Section
- **State Department of Education (SDE):** Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner-Designate; John Frassinelli, Division Director; Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer; Kari Sullivan-Custer, Education Consultant; and Matthew Falconer, Education Consultant

Agenda

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz reviews the agenda noting that topic leads will introduce Results Statements and Policy Recommendations and that other agencies with comments should participate as applicable. Lt. Governor asks if there are any questions about the agenda.

I. Opening Remarks & Roll Call

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz
Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut

II. Acceptance of Minutes and Follow-up from Last Meeting Discussion

III. Guest Speaker: Summer Programming and the Role of Time

Erica Forti, Superintendent, East Haven Public Schools

IV. Agencies' Response to Achievement Gap Task Force (AGTF) Master Plan

- Inside the Schoolhouse (led by Commissioner Russell-Tucker)
 - Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap
 - Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap – Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students
- Inside State Government (led by Commissioner Dorantes)
 - Students in State Care

V. Next Steps

VI. Closing/Meeting Adjourned

Acceptance of Minutes and Follow Up from Last Meeting

Topic	Notes
December 2021 Guest Speaker Recommendation	Lt Governor recommends that at our last meeting of the year, December 15, we take a look at what Middletown Public Schools has been doing since 2019 with its literacy program. She shares that she recently read that they were able to increase the literacy skills of their students, despite the pandemic. She proposes that the Council hear from a subject matter expert on Middletown's ability to improve student literacy.
July 19 th 2021 Meeting Minutes	- Lt. Governor notes the following topics covered: - Inside Higher Education: - Leaders that Close the Gap: Administrator Preparation and Development; - Highly Effective Teacher Preparation Programs; and - Inside the Schoolhouse: - Principal and Teacher Hiring and Retention for Schools that Demonstrate Persistent Gaps - Lt. Governor notes status of July Meeting Minutes: - Draft previously circulated for review; - A draft is posted on the Interagency Council website; - Lt. Governor asks for comments or changes or objections to accepting minutes as final - No objections, minutes accepted as final.
Follow-up items from July 19 th Council Meeting	- Lt. Governor notes that following actions were taken in respect to the Council's annual report to the Legislature: - Draft reviewed at Council's July meeting; - Draft circulated to the Council shortly thereafter for further review and comment; and - Annual Report finalized and submitted to the Legislature on Monday, July 26, 2021. - The 2021 Annual Report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap is now available on the Council's website.

Guest Speaker: Summer Programming and the Role of Time

Commissioner-Designate Russell-Tucker introduces today's guest speaker, Erica Forti, Superintendent of East Haven Public Schools, noting that the presentation will set the stage for the results statement on the role of time in closing the achievement gap.



"In summer 2020, my district, like all others, found itself in the midst of the COVID-19 catastrophe.

We used the crisis to adopt an approach we had been discussing for years: block scheduling.

What appealed to us about the practice is that it frees up time for hands-on learning and collaboration, while affording deeper levels of teaching and learning with fewer interruptions."

Erica Forti, Education Week, July 2021

[The Pandemic Forced My District to Make One Big Change Worth Keeping \(Opinion\) \(edweek.org\)](https://www.edweek.org/news/education/2021/07/eric-forti-the-pandemic-forced-my-district-to-make-one-big-change-worth-keeping-opinion/2021/07/eric-forti-the-pandemic-forced-my-district-to-make-one-big-change-worth-keeping-opinion/)

East Haven Public Schools



Exploring

Empowering

Achieving

TIME

It is only as good as how you strategically manage the key variables that impact how well it is used.

- Data
- Developing Staff Capacity
- Leadership Supervision and Evaluation
- Engaging Students and Families
- Materials and Resources



FINDING THE TIME

- **Standard School Day**
 - How do we maximize the time we already have?
- **Extend School Day by 30 Minutes**
 - How do we individualize to challenge, accelerate, or intervene?
- **Before and After School**
 - How do we partner to enrich as a meaningful extension of the school day?
- **Summer School**
 - How do we engage beyond the school year to close academic gaps and address learning loss?



Summer School

How do we engage beyond the school year to close academic gaps and address learning loss?

- Priority Standards
 - focused teaching and learning
 - mapping to lesson scope and sequence
 - preparing for next grade level
- Pre and Post Assessment
 - monitor growth and progress
- Attendance AND Engagement



Extending the School Day by 30 Minutes

How do we individualize to enrich, accelerate, and intervene?

- WIN - What Individuals Need
 - specific to each student's need
 - focused on high leverage skills
- Matching Staff to Student Need
- Data
 - monitor growth, adjust focus
 - change strategies
 - re-group



Standard School Day

How do we maximize the time we already have?

- Transitions
- Integrated Learning
 - PE, Art, Music, Recess, Snack, Lunch
- Planning & Preparation
 - Clear learning objectives
 - instructional delivery
- Scheduling
 - block schedule



Before and After School

How do we partner to enrich as a meaningful extension of the school day?

- Partnering
 - town, YMCA, EHPS
- Extension of the School Day
 - enrichment
 - developing relationships
 - building self efficacy



QUESTIONS?



Exploring

Empowering

Achieving

Questions for Guest Speaker

Commissioner Russell-Tucker invites the Lt. Governor to ask questions.

Questions	Answers
Lt. Governor asks Superintendent Forti to repeat a statistic she mentioned as to improvements.	Superintendent Forti responds that in Grades 6 through 8 they conducted an integration through a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) block. The STEM block was designed so that it engaged students in a hands-on way but was very closely tied to priority standards in mathematical thinking and some of the math standards. Over a five week session, in week three, students grew 54 percentage points from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment that focused on problem solving and algebraic thinking.
Dr. Hegedus addresses Superintendent Forti with a suggestion and a comment on block scheduling. He states that “in my working in developing curriculum in mathematics classrooms, the block scheduling needs to be really tightly tied to the curriculum and the objectives of the activity. Not all curriculum is written with time in mind and certainly some of the pushback that I had is that a block is too long, which I don't agree with. The block schedule can be the right amount of time when you've got the right curriculum and the right activity structures and activities designed for that purpose.” He offers to share some of the research and acknowledges that this is fascinating work.	Superintendent Forti shares that the block schedule was, in part, a result of the pandemic and the need to limit transitions. They found that it does allow for more small group instruction, especially in math. They can provide interventions for prerequisite skills that are needed to move along in the learning. She continues that in the current year, the district is developing and revising curriculum to better match with block scheduling. They are also working with teachers on instructional models within block scheduling that can produce high student results.

Questions for Guest Speaker

Commissioner Russell-Tucker invites the Lt. Governor to ask questions.

Questions	Answers
Doug Casey remarks on research that indicates students may perform better in certain disciplines if scheduled at particular times of the day, morning vs. afternoon. He continues with asking if student achievement data informed when classes are scheduled?	Superintendent Forti responds that they do keep that in mind at the different developmental levels. For elementary school students, ELA and math blocks are usually earlier in the day. However, high schools are a little tired in the morning and they wake up later in the day. The district does keep this in mind when scheduling classes, however, she remarks that it is a little difficult to do it across the board with all students present. This is something that they may pay closer attention to in the future.

AGENCIES' RESPONSE TO THE AGTF MASTER PLAN

Review of Agency Responses

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Results Statement –Time will be maximized as a resource, for all students, to optimize their mastery of skills and content. (Lt. Governor introduces two subjects and Commissioner Russell-Tucker, who leads discussion.)

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Response to Overall Results Statement	JUD	The Branch contracts for a summer enrichment program in the state juvenile detention centers. The goal of this six week program is to prevent 'slippage' in educational learning that occurs during the summer months, while expanding and enhancing educational enrichment and remediation. Each residential treatment program (REGIONS) contracted for by the Branch also provides a summer enrichment program for youth in their care.	Patricia Nunez shares that JUD contracts annually for summer enrichment programs for six weeks.
Response to Overall Results Statement	DAS	Ensuring students have digital learning skills works in tandem with other Commission initiatives, especially its research and recommendations in Personalized Learning. See the report, "Charting New Frontiers in Student-Centered Learning," in partnership with CAPSS, November 2017.	Doug Casey responds and refers to work from two years ago with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) that supports mastery-based learning. Demonstrating mastery vs. making way through seat time. Focus on the outcomes vs. time spent. He comments that there is a lot to unpack with this topic. Mr. Casey encourages Council members to look at the report referenced in the notes.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
The Achievement Gap Task Force will lead in sharing best practices, research, and outcome data to help build statewide understanding, dialogue and direction for expanded learning time, both within the classroom and school year and outside. Participants, at a minimum, should include state legislators, SDE officials, union, community, and business leaders, Boards of Education, Superintendents, and Connecticut's TIME Collaborative.	SDE	Summer Enrichment Grants - AccelerateCT Task Force assisted with the design and development of the Summer Enrichment Grant application - CSDE surveyed camps halfway through the summer in mid-July*, and at that time over 57,000 students had already enrolled in or participated in summer enrichment programming: - Expansion Grants: 39,990 - Innovation Grants: 27,253 * at this time, the majority of camps were still enrolling, and Innovation grantees such as the CT Science Center and the Beardsley Zoo (which had free admission through September 6th) reported hundreds of visitors every day - SDE is in the process of evaluating camps, including camp visits, working with the Connecticut COVID-19 Education Research Collaborative (CCERC). The data collected will aid in generating the final number of students served, provide a comparison to numbers of kids attending camps years prior, and inform future grant/programming decisions. Assessment data shows the importance of the quality of time in learning: CSDE: 2020-2021 Assessment Data Shows the Positive Effects of In-Person Learning Over Hybrid and Remote Models After School Programs 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Grants (federal) Expanded School Building Hours Program Investments going forward Districts – innovative use of time New London – full-year calendar for K and Grade 1 – on a different schedule (starting this year) Mastery-based learning and role of time	- Commissioner Russell-Tucker introduces Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer at SDE. - Mr. Gopalakrishnan states that SDE administered state assessments in spring of 2021. We did not administer them in the Spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. - After analysis, SDE concluded that students that learned in person lost the least ground academically. - Those who learned in remote and hybrid models showed substantial weaker achievement and growth. - Looking back at 2019 assessment scores for comparisons – matched student data. Comparing growth from 2017-19 and 2019-21. Growth was weaker even for in-person learners. All information is available in the link in the notes.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
The Achievement Gap Task Force will lead in sharing best practices, research, and outcome data to help build statewide understanding, dialogue and direction for expanded learning time, both within the classroom and school year and outside. Participants, at a minimum, should include state legislators, SDE officials, union, community, and business leaders, Boards of Education, Superintendents, and Connecticut's TIME Collaborative.	SDE	Continued from previous slide. After School Programs 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Grants (federal) Expanded School Building Hours Program Investments going forward Districts – innovative use of time New London – full-year calendar for K and Grade 1 – on a different schedule (starting this year) Mastery-based learning and role of time	- Russell-Tucker notes that SDE created a one-pager for families so they can understand the importance of in-person learning. - Russell-Tucker introduces Mr. Frassinelli who shares: - Afterschool state funded program (2 year grant) 21st CCLC (5 year) – community partners, wellness physical activity, family engagement college readiness STEAM, tutoring and academic supports – linked to real time what is happening in the classroom. - Expanded school room grant = target specific students with needs and specific areas where students are having challenges.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
The SDE shall offer policy guidance in developing a statewide framework to support time and learning innovations at the district and school levels.	SDE	- Federal application process – identifying innovations that can be shared across the system. - Attendance tracking of remote learning days is a daily construct vs. measured by amount of work completed and/or mastery?	- Russell-Tucker calls attention to policy guidance connected to time and attendance noting that CT may be one of the only able to take assessment data and look at it by learning model. She further notes that we are a state that has set a high bar on attendance and that the districts stood up the data. - Commissioner Russell-Tucker introduces Mr. Gopalakrishnan to review tracking of remote learning days connected to time - Mr. Gopalakrishnan notes: - Attendance for at least half the school day to be deemed present was extended to the remote day construct. Allowed for flexibility of asynchronous work / off normal school hours. - By having this data at the student level, allowed SDE to understand how students learned last year. - Able to use that attendance data to provide Pandemic EBT benefits to those students with higher need due to remote learning (driven by monthly attendance data). Food safety net for students and families. - Russell-Tucker acknowledges the partnership with DSS to make this happen.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Support for School Improvement Grant (SIG) efforts to increase learning time: NCTL works directly with state education agency (SEA) leaders to develop guidelines for districts and schools to effectively increase learning time.	SDE	- The Connecticut State Department of Education Evidence-Based Practice Guides were created (and continue to be created and updated) to help inform school and district decision-making regarding instructional and student support programming and to optimize the use of local, state, and federal school improvement funds. - Interventions applied under Title I, Section 1003 (School Improvement) are required to have strong, moderate, or promising evidence (Tiers 1-3) to support them. - Each of the 9 evidence based practice guides (listed below in blue) also includes a dedicated section to Extended Learning. Climate and Culture Early Learning English Language Proficiency Equity-Driven Leadership Mathematics On-Track Graduation Reading Science Student/Family/Community Engagement Response continues on next slide	- Mr. Frassinelli shares that there are 9 evidence-based practices listed in the notes. - This is part of our Turnaround Office work with Alliance Districts and Commissioner's Network Schools. - The guides help support districts to expand learning time before school, after school and Saturday programs.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Support for School Improvement Grant (SIG) efforts to increase learning time: NCTL works directly with state education agency (SEA) leaders to develop guidelines for districts and schools to effectively increase learning time. <i>Continued from previously slide</i>	SDE	Examples of school-based School Improvement Grant efforts: Dunbar School, Bridgeport Public Schools An afternoon intervention program services scholars in grades K-8 through small group instruction. 3x/week for 1.5 hours a day. Brennan Rogers, New Haven Public Schools Provides tutors to support Tier 3 literacy instruction and a before/after school program to support literacy/math. North Branford Intermediate School, North Branford Extended learning opportunities to increase opportunities for personalized learning for all students. Identifying/recruiting students that will benefit from extended learning through benchmarking and Smarter Balance data and teacher input. Based on enrollment and needs, provides after-school extended learning opportunities, staffing, (e.g.,- additional Reading Specialist services, scheduling and resources, (e.g., Fountas and Pinnell and Illustrative Mathematics), goals, continual progress monitoring and fluidity of enrollment. West Side Middle School, Waterbury After-school and summer programs provide additional instruction for students in mathematics and English language arts. The afterschool program will run three eight-week session for 90 minutes a day, three days a week.	Mr. Frassinelli reviews the exemplars listed in the notes and explains that Tier 3 denotes students who need the most assistance with literacy.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
OPM and SDE shall offer guidance and support to SEA leaders on using federal resources to increase learning time, including Race to the Top, supplemental education services (SES), and 21st Century Community Learning Center/strong.	SDE	- In 2015, SDE awarded over \$800,000 in federal grants for expanded learning time in low-performing, high-poverty schools. Seven schools — three in Meriden, two in New London, and one each in Windham and East Hartford — received grants to add 300 or more hours of instruction through a longer school day, longer week, or longer school year. These grants were given for two years. - The purpose of the 21st Century Community Learning Center Expanded Learning Time (21st CCLC ELT) Grant Program funding is to expand learning time by 300 or more hours through a longer school day, week and/or year for addressing school wide priorities for all students. Priorities include rigorous academics, differentiated supports, frequent data analysis, targeted teacher development, engaging enrichment and an enhanced school culture. This delivery model includes schools partnering with community agencies to provide student supports - Each of the seven school/community partnerships that received an award used the funds to carry out a broad array of activities that align to the schools instructional priority and advance student achievement. Examples include: time for additional core academic instruction including English, mathematics, science, and social studies; individualized academic intervention or acceleration based on an ongoing analysis of student achievement data (e.g., remedial education activities and academic enrichment learning programs); programming that provides limited English proficient student supports to emphasize language skills; engaging enrichment programming such as art and music education activities, technology education, health and wellness programming and programming that supports the development of a strong school culture of high expectations and academic achievement; programs that promote community and parental involvement; and programming that allows teachers and partnering staff to meet regularly for professional learning focused on improving instruction and data analysis to improve academic achievement and student engagement."	- Commissioner Russell-Tucker remarks that some of these programs no longer exist but that SDE is using new federal dollars for enrichment grants and afterschool programs. - Mr. Frassinelli reviews some of the notes and further acknowledges that the focus is on adding quality time and the effective use of time. - Mr. Frassinelli also notes that critically important to all this work is the implementation of SEL initiatives in schools supporting teachers and students; students in trauma or crisis cannot learn.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Briefings on research in time and learning shall be presented to education and policy leaders, including state legislators, Department of Education officials, and union, community, and business leaders.	SDE	- The 2020-21 State Summative Assessment results reveal that students who learned in-person lost the least ground academically while those who learned in hybrid or remote models showed substantially weaker achievement and growth. CSDE's research in partnership with Attendance Works during 2020-21 reveals that early chronic absenteeism predicts later absenteeism across different learning models. - CSDE's 2018 report, Voices from the Field: Factors Influencing Academic Growth, identifies six factors other than time (e.g., culture/climate, targeted curriculum, small data, responsive professional learning, etc.) that contribute to strong academic growth among all learners including those with high needs. - CSDE's 2020 graduation reports offer insights from several districts on factors that contribute to increased four-year and extended year graduation rates among all learners including those with high needs.	- Mr. Gopalakrishnan shares that assessment results highlighted time differently: in person v. hybrid v. remote formats. - SDE partnered with Attendance Works to research the predictive nature of early chronic absence is a predictor of later chronic absence in the school year. 2018 report is a review of factors that attribute to greater student growth, especially with the most vulnerable population. Almost all the factors are about the quality of how the time is used. 2020 report notes using time wisely and effectively – relationship building or credit recovery or strategies for helping students achieve mastery.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Role of Time in Closing the Achievement Gap

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Written proposals on time and learning innovations, based on national and state research, shall be integrated into state's application for federal funds or waivers.	SDE	See earlier response on use of federal 21st CCLC ELT grants.	Commissioner Russell-Tucker shares that SDE now has the CCERC under Mr. Gopalakrishnan's leadership so we can determine what does and doesn't work
			Follow-up – Dr. Hegedus notes the development of programs in higher education that are complimentary to this work. He can follow up with a summary

Inside the Schoolhouse

Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap — Find the Missing Advanced Placement (AP) Students

Results statement: Low income and Black and Hispanic students will enroll in and pass advanced placement courses.

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Overall response to policy recommendation provided by SDE	SDE	- This goal has been broadened to focus on ensuring that students participate and succeed in rigorous coursework that prepares them for success in college and careers post high school. These may be Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual enrollment courses offered in partnership with Connecticut's colleges and universities. - This inclusive, holistic approach is memorialized in Indicators 5 and 6 of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System. - For the past eight years, the CSDE has sent letters directly to students with potential to succeed in rigorous courses. The identified students can be accessed by authorized district/school personnel through EdSight Secure. - The CSDE has subsidized the full cost of AP exams for students from low-income families. Connecticut's efforts are recognized nationally by the Education Strategy Group. Connecticut students lead the national in AP performance and show noticeable increases among students from low-income families, and black and Hispanic students.	- Mr. Gopalakrishnan remarks that the results statement focuses on AP courses, but we've learned that students can experience rigorous coursework through many avenues. - This past year switched to middle school assessments to determine which students are ready for rigorous course work. - Connecticut's efforts are highlighted in national publications.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap — Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Automatically enroll students who score proficient on state exams and allow for an opt out. Build supports and train teachers for advanced placement classes.	SDE	Public Act 21-199 requires boards of education to adopt a new challenging curriculum policy that aligns with CSDE guidance and includes (1) criteria for identifying grade eight and nine students who may enroll in an advanced course or program and (2) the requirement that these students have an academic plan that allows them to enroll in one or more advanced courses and earn college credit or gain career readiness skills.	Mr. Gopalakrishnan discusses PA 21-199 – SDE partnered with the Office of the Governor to craft legislation expecting schools to establish new automatic enrollments in challenging curriculum pathways in high school, with parents’ agreement. CSDE will be issuing guidance on implementation of this new legislation.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap — Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Provide higher level learning opportunities for all students. Prepare all students for AP course work.	SDE	See Public Act 21-199 (challenging curriculum policy)	- Commissioner Russell-Tucker refers to previous remarks - Lt. Governor points out that automatically enrolling students in AP or advanced classes is part of both the Governor's and legislature focus on equity. Important point to highlight this priority as we have struggled pre-pandemic and during the pandemic.
Require schools to examine data on advanced placement enrollment patterns and strategize what needs to be done to close the opportunity gap.	SDE	Districts utilize data through College Board, IB, and EdSight Secure to examine and close opportunity gaps.	

Inside the Schoolhouse

Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap — Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Assure that students know about accessing advanced placement courses, what the benefits are, and how to sign up.	SDE	For eight years, the CSDE has sent letters directly to students who had the potential to succeed in rigorous courses like dual enrollment classes offered by colleges and universities, the College Board's Advanced Placement courses, or the International Baccalaureate program. It encourages them to take those courses and outlines the benefits of taking such courses. In 2021, CSDE expanded its methodology for identifying students and sent communications to students and their parents.	Commissioner Russell-Tuckers notes Mr. Gopalakrishnan remarks about the letters sent to students and shares that thousands of letters go out each year and get a lot of response.
Include the preparation gap in long term strategy and build rigorous course as the norm.	SDE	- Participation and success in rigorous coursework are indicators in the accountability system. - College and Career Readiness is the outcome measure in Connecticut's Early Indication Tool modeling for Grades 10-12 students. These data are also available educators through EdSight Secure.	Mr. Gopalakrishnan adds that the expectation that students participate in rigorous courses is part of SDE's early indication tool for districts.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap — Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Build a culture of high expectation, find missing students in advanced placement classes and determine professional development and staff supports to make this possible.	SDE	The list of students receiving letters from the CSDE is provided to authorized users in school districts through EdSight Secure.	Commissioner Russell-Tucker refers to previous remarks.
Require all high schools to offer a minimum number of advanced placement classes and provide the necessary supports.	SDE	Districts have increased their offerings of either AP, IB, or dual enrollment courses in partnerships with Connecticut's colleges and universities.	- Mr. Gopalakrishnan notes that this work is ongoing – expanding dual enrollment and credit is a focus area this year as is increasing FASFA completion - Mr. Gopalakrishnan further notes new automatic admission's program. - Lt Governor adds that automatic admission is a game changer and another important piece of our equity agenda.

Inside the Schoolhouse

Narrow the High-End Opportunity Gap — Find the Missing Advanced Placement Students

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Identify model schools that are closing the high end opportunity gap for others to learn from.	SDE	- Four school districts were profiled in the CSDE's Learn Together Grow Together platform, which highlights innovative district practices in several areas. See Bristol Expands College Readiness Options Enfield Expands College and Career Readiness Opportunities Meriden Increasing Expectations and Supports for All Middletown Expands AP Participation	Commissioner Russell-Tucker highlights four districts for the work that they have been doing as “bright spots” on the CSDE Learn Together Grow Together CT website.

Inside State Government

Students in State Care

Results Statement – Students in state care will meet goal in school performance. (Lt. Governor introduces subject and Commissioner Dorantes, who leads discussion.)

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Response to overall Results Statement	DCF	More than 4,000 children are in the custody or supervised care of the State of Connecticut. These are the most vulnerable children as they are no longer with their families, have been uprooted and often feel a missing context and community.	- Commissioner Dorantes provides updated #s of children in DCF custody at this point. As of today, 3,580 children in DCF care. 1,458 of them are ages 7-17 and some are over age 18 but completing K-12 education - Commissioner Dorantes becomes disconnected from meeting. Lt. Governor reviews “Next Steps” section of agenda until Commissioner Dorantes’ return. - Commissioner Dorantes introduces Matt Folan, Superintendent and Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams who will be assisting in the presentation and reviews recommendation notes.

Inside State Government

Students in State Care

Results Statement – Students in state care will meet goal in school performance.

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Response to overall Results Statement	DCF	CT DCF's Education Division has been the vanguard amongst child welfare agencies in improving education services and addressing the achievement gap for children in foster care with the establishment of the Education Consultant and Educational Specialist positions in their Regional Education Services (RES). RES staff serve students on the caseloads of social workers in DCF regional offices. This twelve-member team (two per region) regularly interface with local education agencies, regional educational service centers, Approved Private Special Education Programs, Surrogate Parents, public and private educational agencies including CT State Department of Education (CSDE) relative to the DCF Commissioner's statutory responsibility "to provide or arrange for the provision of suitable education for every child under his/her supervision, either in public school, special education programs, private schools, work/training programs, institutions or facilities."	- Commissioner Dorantes shares that there is a special emphasis on older youth who may be under credited and DCF has a virtual academy with licensed instructors to do credit retrieval, SAT prep, and high school diploma attainment. This was stood up prior to the pandemic. - Superintendent Folan remarks that he was happy to see that East Haven uses the same Edgenuity virtual program. - Lt. Governor asks if the number of children in the custody of DCF increased, decreased or stayed the same during the pandemic? - Commissioner Dorantes responds there were 4,252 kids in DCF care when she first started as Commissioner. They made a concerted effort to keep children safely at home and return children safely and timely. There has been some slow down of reunification due to pandemic, but the court system has worked closely with DCF at safely moving along adoptions and transfer of guardianships. The number reflects a downward trend of children remaining at home or unifying and remains below the national average.

Inside State Government

Students in State Care

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Response to overall Results Statement	DCF	• The Department of Children and Families conducted an extensive revision of the federally mandated Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE). Each child coming into care has their needs assessed within thirty days of coming into care. The revised developmental/educational section contains standardized screening measures across educational domains that provide valid and reliable scores which are beneficial in understanding a child's needs and strengths. • This information is often shared with local educational agencies (LEAs) who are responsible for the educational programming for a child in DCF care. As a primary referral source under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) DCF makes formal referrals for evaluation for special education based upon the documented evidence of a possible disability as may be screened in the MDE.	• Commissioner Dorantes review the department's response. • Superintendent Folan remarks that MDE is a great tool for helping districts understand where kids are when students are being enrolled.

Inside State Government

Students in State Care

Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Response to overall Results Statement	DCF	- Since federal and state legislation was passed in 2008 and 2010 respectively, children placed by DCF into out-of-home care have the right to be maintained in their school of origin, or the school they were attending prior to DCF care. It has been known that school mobility negatively impacts not only achievement but also a child's social emotional functioning in school. DCF has met this need proactively by contracting with a statewide provider to ensure that children whose best interest educational school placement decision is to remain in their school of origin be timely and efficient. Ensuring the educational stability for children in DCF protects the achievement and overall school functioning for this often-transient population of student. - Changing schools can be disruptive to students' progress in many ways, particularly when those changes occur during the school year or when there are multiple school moves throughout students' educational careers. School moves not only disrupt the continuity of educational instruction, but they also may cause significant social and emotional stress as children may lose relationships with peers and supportive adults.	- Commissioner Dorantes shares that there has been a significant emphasis on the school of origin or school that the child was in prior to coming to DCF with special attention to educational stability as well as any disruptions to a child's academics as a result of a move into foster care. - She reports that special attention is paid to kinship placements. - An element that helps to maintain the school of origin is through the DCF fiscal department and transportation and the length of time it takes to get a student from their placement to their school of origin. If the placement is more than 50 minutes, a consultation is conducted to determine if it is still in the child's interest to be maintained in the school of origin or introduced into new school district. - Superintendent Folan remarks on the special circumstances that the pandemic has created for district transportation systems. Commissioner Dorantes shares the level of screening and training that is provided for all drivers.

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Response to overall Results Statement	JUD	- Connecticut legislative changes transferred post adjudicatory supervision and oversight responsibilities to the Branch in July 2018. Secure REGIONS treatment programs in Bridgeport and Hartford as well as a network of contracted staff secure REGIONS treatment programs service youth placed by the Court on Probation with Placement. Students receive an on-site education program provided by the local education authority (LEA) or the approved private special education program. - The Branch has supported children and families to address achievement gap issues during COVID-19 in the following ways: - The Judicial Branch, Court Supported Services Division (JBCSSD), has collaborated with the education programs in the state detention centers during the COVID-19 school closure to implement distance learning through hard copy work packets and/or technology and to ensure students received credit for work completed. Students benefited from being able to interact with teachers through daily phone calls to ask questions, stay motivated, and obtain help with their schoolwork.	- Patricia Nunez of the CT Judicial Branch reviews the agency notes and shares that JUD has been partners with DCF on the educational oversight of youth in the state detention system and youth placed in contracted residential placements. Statutory changes in 2018 transferred the post-adjudicatory responsibility of youth in need of secure care and treatment to the judicial branch. - Ms. Nunez provides that at no point in time did they have to pivot to virtual learning during the pandemic, maintained in person learning.

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Response to overall Results Statement	JUD	- Discussions are taking place for the 20/21 school year to explore what devices, technology enhancements, and learning platform (Google classroom) require implementation for distance learning. JBCSSD and the education providers in the detention facilities are collaborating with the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS) to determine best practices in bringing technology to students. - Students and their families stay connected through daily phone calls and implementation of remote visitation procedures (e.g., virtual visits). - Through the hard work and coordination efforts of the education provider (Domus) and facility staff in piecing together all school credits earned, one student in the Hartford REGIONS treatment program was able to graduate from high school. This was a proud moment for this student, his family, staff and the Branch.	- Ms. Nunez reviews notes and highlights that students and their families stay connected through daily phone calls and implementation of remote visitation procedures (e.g., virtual visits). - She points out that one student in the Hartford region graduated and received a high school diploma. Domus is the education provider in that region.

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Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
Response to overall Results Statement	JUD, DCF	- The Judicial Branch is a sitting member on the Juvenile Justice Planning and Oversight Committee (JJPOC). We are presently working through the JJPOC Education Subcommittee to develop draft recommendations regarding the Department of Children and Families role in providing administrative oversight of education for students in congregate care facilities. - The Branch has released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the use of Tablets in the detention centers and contracted REGIONS programs. The Branch's goal is to provide a Tablet to each youth so that they may utilize content to supplement and reinforce education content taught in the classroom, participate in post-secondary education (as applicable) and vocational opportunities, and enjoy leisure reading and entertainment.	- Commissioner Dorantes asks Deputy Commissioner Williams to speak to the JJPOC and educational oversight for children in juvenile justice facilities. - Deputy Commissioner Williams remarks that at the last JJPOC meeting, they finalized the planning process for the oversight unit that was introduced and passed in legislation. It allows oversight of the educational services for children who are in locked juvenile justice facilities. - Highlights are data integration and data transmission. This was identified as one of the critical pieces that has caused challenges for educating youth in these facilities – lack of timely data transmission and data retrieval. - The other focus is credit retrieval and accurate accounting for credit activity. He shares that when children transition back and forth from facilities, a lot of the investment they put in learning is lost because it is not accurately accounted for. There is a high focus on the transition with transition specialists to make sure that every child that enrolls is a child in this system and we manage their transition in and transition out with SDE's re-entry specialists to assure that there is a warm hand-off from one system to the next. - The final part is an accountability system which looks at performance and achievement outcomes for kids on an ongoing basis and to index them and have data dashboards show improvements of academic achievement. - Currently recruiting for a director at DCF to lead this work.

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Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
The Interagency Council should monitor the implementation with fidelity of the Raise the Grade Pilot Program in the pilot cities, with a plan toward using data and lessons learned from the pilot to bring the Raise the Grade Program to scale.	SDE, DCF	- Raise the Grade Pilot Program ended in 2015, however, state agencies continue to collaborate and improve learning conditions for targeted students. - SDE has created a list of district-based juvenile justice liaisons/re-entry coordinators in districts with at least 6,000 students to ensure the timely exchange of student educational records to and from juvenile justice facilities; ensured credit for work performed in juvenile justice facilities is applied to district progress when the student returns to the home district; liaison contact information shared with JUD and DCF.	- Commissioner Dorantes reviews note and invites SDE to speak further. - Mr. Frassinelli provides background on the Raise the Grade Pilot Program that took place in three largest school districts: Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven. The program looked at students who were performing at below grade level and with the collaboration of work between DCF and SDE, they identified common concerns among those students, including: impact of trauma, students in crisis, high levels of absenteeism and disproportionate use of discipline in some of the situations. - He remarks that the most important part of what they learned is the need for DCF as the oversight agency for the education of kids in custody and, as shared by the Commissioner Dorantes and Deputy Commissioner Williams, this work is underway. Mr. Frassinelli also added that this work involves all the state agencies and a number of advocates. It is a great opportunity to understand and provide wrap-around services for the students in all the care situations whether court support services, school detention facilities or residential facilities, etc. - Mr. Frassinelli reviewed the agency notes of the district-based juvenile justice liaisons.

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Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
DCF, in consultation with SDE should focus on embedding best practices in the pilot cities, which should serve as demonstration sites.	SDE	See previous response.	Commissioner Dorantes notes previous responses and further states that they will <i>Follow-up</i> with a copy of the implementation plan to the IAC.
State agencies must continue to effectively coordinate to track, share and report achievement data to ensure that children in state care in the pilot cities and throughout the state do not fall through the cracks of our educational system.	JUD	JBCSSD and SDE renewed a data exchange Memorandum of Agreement in January 2020. The purpose of the MOA is twofold: to allow for receipt of individual student school information that will assist JBCSSD staff in developing a customized educational plan for students involved in the court system, and allow aggregate data exchange between agencies.	
The state must require quality, transparency and accountability from alternative school programs” administered by public schools as well as private educational programs that are run by the state or state contractors.	SDE	SDE developed the Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings and Standards for Educational Opportunities for Students Who Have Been Expelled. The department also convenes a recurring community of practice for alternative education programs (AEP) and conducts school visits. SDE will continue with the development and implementation of the Attendance Project with six AEP sites.	Mr. Frassinelli notes that this is a critical initiative and is a deliberate focus of Commissioner Russell-Tucker to ensure the students get robust education opportunities

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Policy Recommendation	Responding Agencies	Notes	Meeting Remarks
DCF should create a smaller ratio between foster students and teachers devoted to their school success in the DCF Education Division.	DCF	A new administrative unit within DCF will oversee the education of children who have entered into the justice system and are detained in facilities run by CSSD and DOC. DCF will ensure proper communication and the timely transfer of credits and records between the education systems in the facilities and the child's LEA. DCF will collect evidence-based data to track the academic achievement of the students and hold the systems accountable for providing the appropriate education to the students.	- Commissioner Dorantes asks Superintendent Folan to address this policy recommendation. He shares: - Fortunate to have small student: teacher ratio for in-person learning. One of the first districts to be full in-person learning. - By February/March 75% of students in foster care were receiving full, in-person learning. - Learned that students needed extra adult support when returning to in-person learning. Tutoring programs and teachers are needed to fill in the gaps. - Commissioner Dorantes asks Superintendent Folan to address the percentage of students promoted to the next grade level. He responds that there was full promotion. He further notes that achieving graduation is a huge milestone for their population and that close to 200 students graduated. - Commissioner Dorantes stresses the importance of in-person learning for students in foster care particularly given that foster care parents may not know how well the child is doing academically. She also shares that for older youth in care there was a federal moratorium that extends to the end of September 2021 to keep children from aging out of care during the pandemic and to ensure that they had transition plans.

Next Steps

(Lt. Governor notes that these next steps were previously reviewed)

- 2021 Meeting Schedule (all meetings will be held from 1 to 3 p.m.)
 - *December 15, 2021 – Lt. Governor announces that the topics will include reading and English language learners and invites others to make suggestions about guest speakers.*
- 2022 Meeting Schedule – Lt. Governor announces the 2022 meeting agenda. All meetings will be held from 1 to 3 p.m.
 - *Friday, March 11, 2022*
 - *Tuesday, June 7, 2022*
 - *Friday, September 16, 2022*
 - *Tuesday, December 13, 2022*

Closure/Meeting Adjourned

Lt. Governor asks for any comments or questions and, seeing none, adjourns meeting at approximately 3:00 p.m.