



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Clerk of the Senate
Clerk of the House of Representatives

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell *DW*
Commissioner of Education

DATE: January 7, 2019

SUBJECT: Report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap

In accordance with Section § 10-16nn (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), this memo serves as a report of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap (Interagency Council) and its progress on the implementation of the Achievement Gap Task Force's (AGTF) Master Plan. This report was presented to and reviewed by the Interagency Council on October 11, 2018.

The Interagency Council was formed in 2012 by Governor Dannel Malloy and is chaired by Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman. Agency heads that served on the Interagency Council represented the Departments of: Administrative Services (DAS); Children and Families (DCF); Economic and Community Development (DECD); Education (CSDE); Public Health (DPH); Social Services (DSS); Office of Policy and Management (OPM); and the Board of Regents. Amendments to 10-16nn in 2013 and 2017 added the Commissioner of Housing (DOH) and the Chief Court Administrator of the Judicial Branch to the Interagency Council. Although not an official member of the Interagency Council, the Office of Early Childhood was an active participant and partner in this work.

The Interagency Council first convened in January 2012 with the initial purpose of assisting the Achievement Gap Task Force in the development of a master plan to eliminate the academic achievement gaps in Connecticut. The work of the Interagency Council focused on issues related to education reform, health, housing, wraparound services, and the alignment of state agency efforts.

The AGTF submitted its report entitled, *A Master Plan to Eliminate the Achievement Gap in Connecticut*, (Master Plan) to the Connecticut General Assembly per C.G.S. Section § 10-166mm on February 28, 2014. The Master Plan provided recommendations to inform policy at the state level through January 1, 2020. This plan helped guide the work and focus of the Interagency Council, through the array of topics discussed throughout the past six years, 2012-18.

The Interagency Council addressed issues related to the welfare of students and the supports and resources necessary to reduce barriers to high academic attainment. Topics related to the work of the multiple agencies represented on the Interagency Council and other stakeholders supporting students and families.

In 2012, the primary focus was on the Governor's new education reform agenda, understanding the Community School model and wraparound services, the economic implications of the achievement gap, and housing. Presentations were provided by Smalley Academy in New Britain. Additionally, the superintendents of Manchester and Vernon presented on the districts' Wraparound Services Plans. The Partnership for Strong Communities shared information on housing and the achievement gap.

Chronic absenteeism and the impact on achievement was first introduced to the Interagency Council in 2013. The CSDE shared the definition of chronic absence, data trends, and the impact on achievement. It also highlighted the Grade-level Reading Campaign's work with the New Britain, Hartford, Torrington, Meriden, and Vernon school districts. The superintendent of Meriden Public Schools presented the success of using community partners to provide supports to families and neighborhoods to increase academic success. The presentation also included the role of universal breakfast, family-school liaison teams, and a partnership with the Community Health Center to provide in-school dental, mental health and medical services.

Member agencies shared how they support school districts in the reduction of chronic absence and improve academic achievement. Topics included school-based health centers (DPH); school-based social workers (DCF); mobility/housing (DOH); community revitalization/business (DECD); SNAP and Cash Assistance, Fatherhood (reading programs/sponsored father/child events) and co-parenting (DSS).

Early in 2014, members of the AGTF released the Master Plan and presented its recommendations to the Interagency Council. Each agency had an opportunity to respond to the Master Plan and the work that is currently being done to align resources for children and families. In addition, DCF presented on the Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Plan and the members heard from the Governor's Prevention Partnership on the impact mentoring can have on increasing school attendance.

In 2015, the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County shared its "collective impact" theory behind Cradle to Career, a framework with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for all children across the continuum (birth-25). The principal of DiLoreto Magnet School in New Britain and its partner, Foundation for Arts and Trauma, provided an overview of an innovative program (ALIVE) designed to help schools become responsive to the effects of negative experiences.

Agency updates included DCF's work on Raise the Grade and mapping Smarter Balanced Assessment scores across all six regions. Court Support Services Division (CSSD) reported on partnerships focusing on truancy, school arrests, and suspensions/expulsions. The CSDE focused on chronic absence efforts in Alliance Districts and reported a reduction in chronic absence rates. DOH shared statewide changes and improvements to prevent and end homelessness. DECD reported implementing the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) approach in 47 schools. DSS reported improved access to programs and services that help families including health, nutrition and financial assistance programs.

Later in 2015, the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. (CCAT) provided an overview of the information technology support that CCAT offers to municipalities, boards of education, nonprofits and libraries. The AGTF provided an update on collaborative work with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, New York University, the Schott Foundation and the CSDE to develop a policy and implementation agenda.

Finally, Public Act 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism, was discussed along with its requirements, including the role of the Interagency Council, timeline for implementation, and the development of a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan that was required by January 1, 2016.

Representatives from the DOH and the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness presented on initiatives focused on preventing and ending homelessness in Connecticut. Members of the AGTF updated the Interagency Council on new legislation related to reading, supporting English learners and strengthening mental health prevention and intervention services. The CSDE and its partner, Attendance

Works, engaged members in a facilitated overview and discussion regarding the purpose and overall approach to the development of a chronic absence prevention and intervention guide. The CSDE also provided an overview of the Connecticut Next Generation Accountability System. In addition, the Interagency Council learned about the federal summer meals program and its link to academic learning.

In 2017, the Governor's Prevention Partnership shared the importance of mentoring to reducing chronic absence from the Governor's Prevention Partnership. The CSDE provided an update on chronic absenteeism and the data for school year 2015-16 and shared the final chronic absence guide. The DPH, CSDE and Wallingford Public Schools presented on issues related to the link between health and academic outcomes. The Open Communities Alliance shared its report, *Out of Balance: Subsidized Housing, Segregation and Opportunity in Connecticut*. Representatives from the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee provided an update on its work.

In 2018, the Interagency Council engaged with the Partnership for Strong Communities on issues related to affordable housing and learned more about the supports it provides for student academic achievement. The CSDE provided an update on students displaced by hurricanes. In addition, the CSDE presented on the role of family engagement and the development of a new resource, that will outline Connecticut's blueprint/framework for high-impact family engagement.

The creation of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap has afforded member agencies opportunities to better commit to each other's work and continue to build strong partnerships. This work has created the synergy to align efforts, policy and funding to support the academic achievement of all children. It is with gratitude that we thank Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman for her leadership and commitment, not only to the work of this Interagency Council, but to the health, welfare and success of the students of Connecticut.

If you have any questions, please contact Laura Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, at 860-713-6493.

DRW:ks

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