

THE COMMISSIONER'S ROUNDTABLE FOR FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION
Hartford

Draft Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
June 8, 2017

I. Call to Order

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), called the meeting to order at 9:43 a.m. The meeting was held in Plaza North Meeting Room C of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) offices at 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut.

Members present:

- Abie Benitez, President, Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (Representing Connecticut Association of Schools)
- Jeffrey Bianco, Co-Chair, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Connecticut
- Paige Bray, Associate Dean for Research and Community Education. Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Hartford (Representing Deans of Schools of Education)
- Clifford Dudley, Principal, Orchard Hills School, Milford Public Schools (Representing Connecticut Federation of School Administrators)
- Jennifer Falotico, Vice President for Membership, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association
- Mario Florez, Director of School Climate and Culture, Hartford Public Schools (Representing Commission on Women, Children and Seniors)
- Paula Gilberto, CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut (Representing United Way of Connecticut)
- Natasha Harris, Director of Workforce Quality Assurance, Urban League of Greater Hartford
- Jennifer Lussier, Parent Consultant, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
- Nikitoula Menounos, Principal, Norwich Technical High School (Representing Connecticut Technical High School System)
- Chemay Morales-James, Educational Equity Coach, My Reflection Matters and Bridge to Success (Representing Commission on Equity and Opportunity)
- David Scata, Director of Education, Mohegan Tribe
- Sara Sneed, Director, Education Investments, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- Donna Thompson-Bennett, National Coordinator, National Parent Leadership Institute
- Mirellise Vazquez, Executive Director, Tauck Family Foundation (Representing Connecticut Council on Philanthropy)
- Jeff Vanderploeg, Vice President for Mental Health Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute (representing Jeana Bracey, Director of School and Community Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute)

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Athena Wagner, Outreach Coordinator, State of Black Connecticut Alliance/Connecticut Parents' Union

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

Members absent:

Audrey Brown, Parent (Representing African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP))

Elizabeth Brown, President, Waterbury Board of Education (Representing Connecticut Association of Boards Education)

Mary Lou DiPaola, ESL Teacher, New Haven Board of Education (Representing Connecticut Federation of Educational and Professional Employees (AFT-CT))

Derby Egyin, Student, Windsor Locks High School (Representing State Student Advisory Council on Education)

Lisa Fair, Parent, Achievement First

Matthew Geary, Superintendent of Schools, Manchester Public Schools (Representing Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)

Giancarlo Isotti, Student, Suffield High School (Representing State Student Advisory Council on Education)

Aggie Kurzyna, Parent, CT Parent Power (Representing Connecticut Parent Power)

Tamara Lanier, Chief Probation Officer, Connecticut Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division (Representing Connecticut State Conference of NAACP)

Bryan Randall, Personnel Officer, U.S. Naval Submarine Base (Representing State Council for Educational Opportunities for Military Children)

Robert Smoler, President, Fairfield Education Association (Representing Connecticut Education Association)

John Taylor, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington Academy (Representing Northeast Charter Schools Network)

Tynima Toney, Parent Coach, Hartford Parent University

Beresford Wilson, Assistant Director, FAVOR

Guests:

Jennifer Benevento, AFT Connecticut

Ingrid Canady, State Education Resource Center

Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education

George Coleman, CES

Mary Farnsworth, Office of Early Childhood

Anne Henderson, National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement

Jessica Lavorgna, EDC

Betsy LeBorinous, CREC

Jennifer Michno, UConn, Neag School of Education

Carol O'Donnell, Connecticut Council for Philanthropy

Paula Smith, Mohegan Tribe

Allan Taylor, Connecticut State Board of Education

Deborah Watson, Office of Early Childhood

Agency Staff:

Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education

II. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education, called the group to order and reiterated [the charge](#) to the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education. She thanked the group for their commitment to representing the voices of families and community members in the Roundtable's discussions of important education issues.

Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education, welcomed the group and thanked them for their commitment and contributions to the Roundtable. Commissioner Wentzell told the group that she intends for the Roundtable to be a durable part of the State Department of Education's work to ensure that parent and community input is not an afterthought.

Ms. Ingrid Canady directed the group's attention to the group norms and reminded them that the norms were co-created with the group using a culturally-responsive process that represented members' interests and values.

III. Important Emergent Issues in Education

A. Connecticut's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan

Ms. Russell-Tucker discussed [Connecticut's Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Consolidated State Plan](#), which was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on April 3, 2017. Connecticut was among the first group of states to submit a plan. The U.S. Department of Education is expected to finalize the review of Connecticut's plan later this month.

B. New Guide for Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools

Ms. Russell-Tucker announced the publication of CSDE's new guide to help schools and districts in their efforts to reduce absenteeism and increase attendance: [Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts](#). She noted that Connecticut is being recognized as a national leader in this area. The state's chronic absence rate has declined substantially in the last four years, dropping from 11.5 percent in 2012-13 to 9.6 percent in 2015-16

IV. The Connecticut Blueprint for Defining, Understanding and Promoting Family and Community Engagement in Children's Learning and Development

Ms. Russell-Tucker described a new project that CSDE is undertaking in collaboration with the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, a project of the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy that comprises 14 funders from around the state. The funders are interested in partnering with the CSDE, the Office of Early Childhood and other state agencies to create a clear and useful definition, values and operating principles related to family engagement. Ms. Russell-Tucker noted that the project is responsive to the [Connecticut State Board of Education's \(CSBE\) Five-](#)

[Year Comprehensive Plan \(2016-21\)](#) goal to “support and develop authentic opportunities and experiences for meaningful parental engagement by building capacity for families and school staff to partner effectively in support of student success” (p. 12).

Ms. Russell-Tucker reviewed the project plan and timeline and informed the group that in addition to providing their input in the current meeting, they will be invited to participate in a statewide symposium in the fall (date to be announced). She then introduced guest speaker Anne Henderson, Senior Consultant, National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement.

Ms. Henderson [presented a brief overview of high-impact family engagement strategies](#). With this backdrop, participants reflected on what makes a good definition of family engagement. Ms. Henderson and Ms. Canady took the group through a facilitated activity to:

- review elements of existing definitions of family engagement;
- discuss and prioritize the elements that they view as most essential and identify important elements that are missing;
- brainstorm ways the definition can be used at the state and local levels; and
- identify tools/materials that will be helpful for implementation.

Ms. Henderson told the group that the notes from their discussion will be compiled to develop a draft definition and as well as sample tools to support implementation. The draft materials will be reviewed at the next meeting Roundtable.

V. Follow-Up from Previous Meeting Regarding the CSBE's Comprehensive Plan Goal for Great Teachers and Leaders

Previous meetings of the Roundtable focused on minority teacher recruitment and the [CSBE Five-Year Comprehensive Plan \(2016-21\)](#) commitment that “great teachers and leaders collectively reflect the rich cultural diversity in Connecticut and are culturally responsive educators” (page 5). At the April 20, 2017 meeting members were asked to provide input on behalf of their organization related to increasing the cultural diversity and responsiveness of Connecticut's educators. Ms. Russell-Tucker thanked members for providing input. She noted that CSDE received input from 10 members and other members who would like to respond should do so before the end of the month. Members' feedback will be compiled for the Commissioner's consideration.

VI. Meeting Dates for 2017-18

The Roundtable will continue to meet regularly. Meeting dates for the 2017-18 school year are September 27, 2017; January 24, 2018; and May 9, 2018. All meetings will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (locations to be determined). The topic of the September 27, 2017 meeting will be Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.