

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

Draft Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
October 17, 2018

I. Call to Order

Ms. Ingrid Canady, Executive Director of the State Education Resource Center (SERC), called the meeting to order at 9:10 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:

Jeana Bracey, Director of School and Community Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute
Clifford Dudley, Principal, Orchard Hills School, Milford Public Schools (Representing Connecticut Federation of School Administrators)
Matt Folan, Superintendent of Schools, Department of Children and Families
Bianka Kortlan-Cox, Vice President for Legislation and Public Policy, Connecticut Association for the Gifted
Jennifer Lussier, Parent Consultant, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
Athena Wagner, Outreach Coordinator, State of Black Connecticut Alliance/Connecticut Parents' Union
Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education
Beresford Wilson, Assistant Director, FAVOR

Members absent:

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
Mary Lou DiPaola, ESL Teacher, New Haven Board of Education (Representing Connecticut Federation of Educational and Professional Employees (AFT-CT))
Jennifer Falotico, Vice President for Membership, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association
Matthew Geary, Superintendent of Schools, Manchester Public Schools (Representing Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)
Paula Gilberto, CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut (Representing United Way of Connecticut)
Chemay Morales-James, Educational Equity Coach, My Reflection Matters and Bridge to Success (Representing Commission on Equity and Opportunity)
Robert Smoler, President, Fairfield Education Association (Representing Connecticut Education Association)

Nikitoula Menounos, Principal, Norwich Technical High School (Representing Connecticut Technical High School System)
David Scata, Director of Education, Mohegan Tribe
John Taylor, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington Academy (Representing Northeast Charter Schools Network)
Donna Thompson-Bennett, National Coordinator, National Parent Leadership Institute
Mirellise Vazquez, Executive Director, Tauck Family Foundation (Representing Connecticut Council on Philanthropy)

Guests:

LaTeena Bartee, Waterbury Hospital
Jennifer Benevento, AFT Connecticut
Paige Bray, University of Hartford
Ingrid Canady, State Education Resource Center
Angela Holmes, Waterbury Hospital
Barbara Johnson, Waterbury Hospital
Jessica Lavorgna, Windsor Locks Public Schools
Betsy Leborious, Capitol Region Education Council
Jennifer Michno, University of Connecticut
Kris Noam, Bridge to Success, Waterbury
Michele O'Neill, CEA
Shenell Ellerbe, AFCAMP
Elena Trueworthy, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

State Agency Staff:

Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education
John Frassinelli, Connecticut State Department of Education
Jennifer Johnson, Office of Early Childhood
Karen Pitt, Office of Early Childhood
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education
Deborah Watson, Office of Early Childhood

II. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Ingrid Canady, Executive Director, State Education Resource Center (SERC) welcomed the group and asked members and guests to introduce themselves. Ms. Canady then reviewed the group's engagement norms.

III. Emergent Critical Issues in Education

Ms. Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) provided information on the following issues:

- CSDE recently won a federal five-year grant called Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education). The state will receive \$1.8 million over five years to increase awareness of mental health issues among school-age youth and to provide training for school personnel and other adults.

- CSDE's "[Evidence-Based Practice Guides](#)" are available on the agency's Web site. The guides are intended to 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. A guide is available for [school-family-community partnerships](#) as well as six other areas that address academics and school culture.
- CSDE recently released a new publication entitled "[Alternative Educational Opportunities for Students Who Have Been Expelled: Best Practice Guidelines for Program Implementation](#)." These Best Practice Guidelines provide a framework to support the implementation of high-quality programming for students placed in an existing alternative program or school or a different alternative educational opportunity.
- CSDE is launching the CT School Discipline Collaborative on October 31, 2018. The purpose of the group is to advise the Commissioner and the State Board of Education on strategies for transforming school discipline in order to reduce the overall disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline.
- CSDE conducted a brief survey of superintendents to gain an understanding of the use of evidence-based family engagement strategies in school districts. The CSDE will provide information to superintendents throughout the school year to support implementation of high-impact family engagement aligned with the [Evidence-Based Practice Guide](#).
- The [Commissioner's 2018-19 Back-to-School Meeting](#) took place on August 15, 2018 and included [information about Connecticut's new definition of family engagement](#).
- [Recent results](#) for the Advanced Placement (AP) exams show that Connecticut public school students are continuing to increase their performance and participation. The number of students who took at least one AP exam in 2017-18 increased 5 percent over 2016-17. Of the exams taken, the number of students achieving a score of three, four, or five increased 3.8 percent over 2016-17. These improvements were evidenced among students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds and extend to the state's Alliance Districts.
- Mr. John Frassinelli, Chief, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, discussed the Safe Havens Act for Newborns, which creates a safe alternative to leaving or abandoning unwanted infants in unsafe places. The Act allows a parent to voluntarily give up custody of an infant 30 days or younger and avoid prosecution for abandonment by bringing the infant to one of the state's 37 hospital emergency rooms. The law went into effect in Connecticut in 2000 and has since saved the lives of 37 infants. In an effort to save the lives of additional infants, the CSDE encourages districts to provide instruction to students regarding Connecticut's Safe

Havens Act as part of the high school curriculum. See attached letter for more information.

IV. Connecticut's New Definition and Framework for Family Engagement: Presentation and Call to Action

Dr. Judy Carson, Program Manager for School-Family-Community Partnerships, CSDE, provided an overview of "[Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families: Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement](#)," highlighting the definition, guiding principles, stakeholders roles and actions, and examples of high-impact practice.

The project was a joint effort with CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative and represents a birth to college and career approach. Guest speakers described how the definition and framework are informing work in their agency/organization.

- Ms. Jennifer Johnson, Division Director, OEC, discussed how the OEC's family engagement activities align with the new definition and framework (particularly the Quality Recognition and Improvement System).
- Ms. Elena Trueworthy, Associate Director, Early Childhood Collaborative, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, described how the definition and framework provide a common language that will help funders avoid working in silos.
- Ms. Jennifer Michno, Clinical Instructor, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, discussed a partnership between the University and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to effectively implement family, school and community engagement work into leadership training for aspiring administrators. Five training modules were developed and piloted with students this fall.

Ms. Canady facilitated a discussion with participants about actions they can take to implement the framework in their own work. Participants talked about actions they can take individually and ways they can promote systems change.

Dr. Dianna Wentzell thanked the group for their participation and recommendations. She underscored the importance of the group as a permanent part of the CSDE's structure for advising the Commissioner's office on policy matters.

V. Meeting Dates for 2017-18

The next meeting will be held on January 23, 2019, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, 10 Columbus Boulevard, 7th Floor, Hartford, Connecticut.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: School Health Educators
School Nurses and Nursing Supervisors
School Counselors
School Social Workers

FROM: John D. Frassinelli, Bureau Chief 
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: October 18, 2018

SUBJECT: Connecticut Safe Havens Act for Newborns

In Connecticut, the Safe Havens Act for Newborns, codified in Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sections 17a-57 to 17a-61, creates a safe alternative to leaving or abandoning unwanted infants in unsafe places. The Act allows a parent to voluntarily give up custody of an infant 30 days or younger and avoid prosecution for abandonment by bringing the infant to one of the state's 37 hospital emergency rooms. The law went into effect in Connecticut in 2000 and has since saved the lives of 37 infants, according to data from the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF). The Connecticut Safe Havens Act statutes can be found at https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_319.htm#sec_17a-57.

Section 2 of Public Act 18-182 requires the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBE) to provide local and regional boards of education with information on Connecticut's Safe Havens Act and how instructional materials can be obtained from DCF. For the full public act language, please visit <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/act/pa/pdf/2018PA-00182-R00HB-05446-PA.pdf>.

In an effort to save the lives of additional infants, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) encourages districts to provide instruction to students regarding Connecticut's Safe Havens Act as part of the high school curriculum. The slogan from proponents of the legislation supporting this instruction is: "10 Minutes in 10th Grade." Additional details and resources regarding Connecticut's Safe Havens Act for Newborns, including printable materials in English and Spanish and contact information, can be found on the DCF website at <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/1-DCF/SAFE-HAVENS-ACT-for-Newborns>.

Please share this information with school staff and community partners to facilitate the conversation on this important issue. Questions for the CSDE can be directed to Shelby R. Pons, Education Consultant, at 860-807-2103 or shelby.pons@ct.gov.

JDF:er

cc: Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer, CSDE
Shelby R. Pons, Education Consultant, CSDE