

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

Draft Minutes of Meeting
(Subject to Revision)
October 24, 2016

I. Call to Order

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held in the Community Room of the State Education Resource Center at 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, Connecticut.

Members present:

Abie Benitez, President, Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
Jeffrey Bianco, Co-Chair, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Connecticut
Jeana Bracey, Director of School and Community Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute
Elizabeth Brown, President, Waterbury Board of Education
Mary Lou DiPaola, ESL Teacher, New Haven Board of Education
Clifford Dudley, Principal, Orchard Hills School, Milford Public Schools
Derby Egyin, Student, Windsor Locks High School
Jennifer Falotico, Vice President for Membership, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association
Mario Florez, Director of School Climate and Culture, Hartford Public Schools
Matthew Geary, Superintendent of Schools, Manchester Public Schools
Natasha Harris, Director of Workforce Quality Assurance, Urban League of Greater Hartford
Giancarlo Isotti, Student, Suffield High School
Aggie Kurzyna, Parent, CT Parent Power
Tamara Lanier, Chief Probation Officer, Connecticut Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division
Jennifer Lussier, Parent Consultant, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
Chemay Morales-James, Educational Equity Coach, My Reflection Matters & Bridge to Success
Beth Regan, Council of Elders, Mohegan Tribe
Robert Smoler, President, Fairfield Education Association
Sara Sneed, Director, Education Investments, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
John Taylor, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington Academy
Tynima Toney, Parent Coach, Hartford Parent University
Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Members absent:

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

Lisa Fair, Parent, Achievement First

Paula Gilberto, CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

Nikitoula Menounos, Principal, Norwich Technical High School

Bryan Randall, Personnel Officer, U.S. Naval Submarine Base

Donna Thompson-Bennett, National Coordinator, National Parent Leadership Institute

Mirellise Vazquez, Executive Director, Tauck Family Foundation

Guests:

Ingrid Canady, State Education Resource Center

Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education

Pamela Charland, Connecticut State Department of Education

Ellen Cohn, Connecticut State Department of Education

John Frassinelli, Connecticut State Department of Education

Karissa Niehoff, Connecticut Association of Schools

Carol O'Donnell, Connecticut Council for Philanthropy

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Connecticut State Department of Education

Abbe Smith, Connecticut State Department of Education

II. Welcome and Introductions

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education

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

III. Setting the Stage – Purpose and Charge for the Group

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut State Department of Education

Ingrid Canady, Executive Director, State Education Resource Center

Ms. Russell-Tucker reviewed the purpose of the group and the objectives for the first meeting. The purpose of the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education is to advise the commissioner and engage in discussion about policy and programmatic priorities to improve outcomes for all students and advance the State Board of Education's comprehensive plan for equity and excellence in Connecticut schools.

The objectives for the first meeting were: to welcome and introduce the group to the purpose and desired outcomes of the group; to establish group engagement norms and desired processes; to outline the scope and sequence of the efforts of the group; to provide a content introduction to the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) Comprehensive Plan; and to engage in dialogue regarding critical questions aligned to the ESSA and the CSBE plan.

Ms. Canady took the group through a process of small group discussions in order to establish group norms. The norms were used to guide the current meeting and will be revisited at future meetings. The norms are intended to ensure that all perspectives in the room are heard and respected. Ms. Canady discussed the importance of modeling culturally-responsive practice at every meeting. The norms generated by the group included listening respectfully to understand others' opinions, respecting all voices as valid, being open to honest and real conversation that is fearless, and being willing to speak one's truth while respectfully acknowledging and embracing other views.

IV. Current Issues – Focus on The Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and The Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) Comprehensive Plan

Ellen Cohn, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

Ms. Cohn presented the background and history of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). She highlighted the purpose and funding levels of the different titles in the law. An important change in the new law is a return of greater control to states. States are required to submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education for use of funding under ESSA and the plan must be informed by stakeholder input. In order to submit a state plan to the U.S. Department of Education by July 1, 2017, CSDE is collecting stakeholder input now through November 2016. The plan will be drafted between December 2016 and February 2017, and will be available for public comment in March 2017.

Ms. Cohn informed the group that focus groups are happening around the state and that an online survey is also available for the public. Information on ESSA, including the stakeholder survey, is available at the [CSDE Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Web page](#).

V. Small Group Discussions – Critical Questions

Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education
Ingrid Canady, Executive Director, State Education Resource Center

Commissioner Wentzell directed the group's attention to the [Connecticut State Board of Education \(CSBE\) Comprehensive Plan](#) for a discussion of the importance of having great teachers and leaders who collectively reflect the rich cultural diversity in Connecticut and who are culturally responsive instructors (p. 5). She noted that while approximately 44 percent of Connecticut students are minorities, only 8.3 percent of the state's certified educators are minorities. Commissioner Wentzell said that in the development of the CSBE Comprehensive Plan, stakeholders consistently said that effective educators who reflect the diversity of the state are a top priority.

Ms. Canady demonstrated the [EdSight data portal](#) on the CSDE Web page and showed members how to view the race/ethnicity of educators in the state as a whole, and in each district and school. Members then talked in small groups about what additional information they need in

order to make informed recommendations about recruiting and maintaining diverse educators. The small groups also discussed what they thought the CSDE should consider when taking action on this priority. Members discussed the importance of personalizing the data about Connecticut's students and teaching force in order to make informed recommendations.

Commissioner Wentzell thanked members for their suggestions and spoke about the timeliness of this topic. She shared information about the new state law ([Public Act 16-41](#)) that the Governor signed the previous week to advance the state's efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of minority teachers in an effort to increase diversity in the classroom and ensure the state can continue to provide high-quality education for all of its students.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 16, 2017, at 9:30 a.m., in the Classroom of the State Education Resource Center at 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, Connecticut.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.