

THIS MEETING DID NOT CONTAIN A PRESENTATION

JJPOC Education Workgroup Meeting Summary

6/2/2025

1:00-2:30

Web Based Meeting- Zoom

Attendance

Agata-Raszczyk Lawska	John Frassenelli	Nancy DeCrescenzo	TYJI Staff
Ait Gopalakrishnan	John Saccu	Sadie Witherspoon	Andrew Zhebrak
Amy Vatner	John Tarka	Shirley Ellis-West	Brittany Lamarr
Andrew Feinstein	Kari Sullivan Custer	Simone Harris	Erika Nowakowski
Bryan Klimkiewicz	Kathryn Meyer	Tina Mitchell	Paul Klee
Dominique Winston	Kim Traverso	Victor Jones	
Eilsabeth Cannata	Kylie Heneghan	Zoe Masters	
Erica Bromley	Lillian Olanrewaju		
Fran Rabinowitz	Lisa Ariola-Simoe		
Glen Worthy	Lisa Simone		

Meeting Objectives:

The Education Workgroup meeting introduced Representative Kahn as a new co-chair and featured a presentation from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) on its various initiatives to support school districts in addressing absenteeism, truancy, and school discipline. The workgroup then discussed inquiries related to the AEO report and reviewed CSDE's release of the 2023–2024 School Discipline Report. The meeting concluded with updates on Dr. Worthy's work, the amended Education Workplan, and recent legislative developments related to education.

Meeting Summary:

- 1) Representative Kahn is introduced as Co-Chair of the Education Workgroup
- 2) Presentation from CSDE on its initiatives to work with school districts on absenteeism, truancy and school discipline
 - There was a request for a summary of chronic absenteeism and school discipline work, which overlaps with alternative education programs. Specific initiatives were provided and reported on – but not all was included. There are Federal/State

Grant programs that are aligned with at-risk school districts, an increase in technical education content, and data regarding food insecurity.

- Through data-tracking processing, there is a noted improvement in attendance data from start to end of the school year. There are programs like LEAP, Talk Tuesdays, and Attendance Works which assisted with this process by using data to implement best practices.
- These programs are partially assisted through ARPA funding and the Governor's Prevention Partnership. LEAP will be funded into the 2027 school year, 7,000,000\$ for this purpose got passed through the budget.
 - There is a question regarding on what specific programs exist for districts struggling with high rates of chronic absenteeism.
 - Those districts are the ones receiving LEAP funding, in addition to a specific trainings at the start of every school year, targeting opportunity districts which include Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, and Waterbury. Since the pandemic, there are additional mental health supports, tutoring services, and behavioral health services available for students.
 - There is a question on what constitutes a school district with high levels of chronic absenteeism.
 - Prior to the pandemic, this ranged between 10-15%. Afterwards, it ranged up to 20-25%. It peaked in 2024 with some school districts peaking as high as 30%, which has decreased by 25% as of this point.
 - There is a question about the elimination of the mandatory truancy referral system, and its impact on chronic absenteeism rates.
 - There was an elimination of the FWSN program, in order to find a community based support system for youth. There was an excess of referrals to Juvenile Court at the end of the school year, and it failed to improve the rate of chronic absenteeism in the following school year. With that noted – the current system of YSBs may not be sufficient for intake, and there should be conversations regarding potential other solutions.
 - 3) CSDE release of 2023-2024 school discipline report
 - There is a question about what specific attempts are used by high risk districts to assist with lowering rates of suspension and expulsion rates.
 - The data is updated and tracked frequently. An observation was reached that whole child work is essential in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the root causes propelling suspensions.

- Multi-step protocol, looking at individual districts how they address systemic gaps. Desegregation of data analysis, resource mapping, policy reviews, evidence based practices and advocacy, early intervention measures. Another tool – hexagon analysis tool, that is a tool that addresses the individual needs of each student, why it's working and why it's not. Capacity needs area also addressed. There was also a behavioral health system tracking external referrals, which addressing the needs of the whole child, evaluating the support the child needs. Furthermore – there was an evaluation of needs assessment since Covid. Mental health promotion of services, treatment supports and services regarding funding and sustainability. School and mental health quality assessment, it looks at actual system and how well it's running for mental health supports.
 - Question – How can we address the staffing shortage, and shortened school days that are not being addressed by individual school districts?
 - When there's issues with staff funding, and legal violation, this is followed up on and addressed from the state department. There are conversations regarding altering the quantity of administrative staff within individual schools and realtering the funding to mental health supports.
 - Question – The report had overall issues, displaying growth in instances of exclusionary discipline, indicating that the current strategies aren't addressing the issues of Connecticut youth.
 - There were improvements in the actual events occurring in the incidents, and improvements in overall behavioral evaluation. They are less likely to suspend for uniform violations as well. This work is also something that'll take time – and COVID's aftereffects still impact youth entering the educational system. It takes a substantial amount of time to actually implement socio-behavioral systems. It will take time. The school policy violations, and sexually related behavior. There are increases in drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Overall ISS is lower than before, though OSS is higher. About 7% of students are experiencing Suspension or Expulsion, which is similar to pre-pandemic

levels. Highest increases are in the middle school grades, who's population was most at risk. Urban school districts have issues with space in creating ISS rooms rather than sending children to OSS.

- There is a comment about improving strategic planning and restructuring the plan, and hiring a greater quantity of staff through community agencies.
 - Behavioral health pilot addressed this, community providers also assisted families.
- There is a question regarding when to anticipate the improvements from the implementation of the trainings in future reports, and what else could be done for children at risk of entering OSS for more serious charges, as well as the continuation of ethnic and racial disparities
- There is a comment from a community provider regarding difficulties with connection with individual schools, and their failure to provide information for service demand.

4) Update from Dr. Worthy on discussion with C-TEC

- In 2018 there was a mandate from C-TEC to create pathways for children in youth facilities to obtain technical high school education credits. While legislation was introduced, this is still in the process of implementation. Dr. Worthy met with SDE, and they are interested in supporting the students by providing additional programming training and offering children access to adult educational opportunities. There have been difficulties in transferring students from regular high schools to technical high schools, as classes do not always match up. There are ideas to expand existing school programming to earn credentials. Students could earn additional credits and gain work skills.
 - There is a question regarding adult education for students eligible for special education, that traditionally lack support, on whether it's possible to provide supports for that population.
 - Once students move away from K-12 system, students transition away from IDEA, thus losing those supports.
 - There is a follow up question asking if there have been attempts to bridge the gap?
 - a. There is a need to create a network between different facilities and localities for the involved youth.
 - There is a question about creating a career assessment and inventory to understand what fits best for involved?

- The VR Goggles have this capacity, and bringing kids to technical high schools

5) Legislative Updates

- JJPOC Bill is still in the House, there were some amendments to the Education Workgroup's Workplan. This included moving provisions of education in facilities, hiring of substitute teachers, and school attendance tracking from the Conditions of Confinement Subgroup to the Education Workgroup.

Next Meeting: **DATE**

