

MEETING MINUTES
CT Kids Report Card Leadership Committee
October 14th, 2015 Quarterly Meeting
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. LOB Room 2B

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks by Co-Chairs (9:00-9:10)
 - a. Co-Chair Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman convened the meeting at 9:06 a.m. and welcomed everyone. Co-Chair David Nee had attendees introduce themselves.
 - b. Rep. Urban announced the population level for the Report card is complete and provided introductory remarks regarding the following: the updated website being published and live, forecast values, sourcing collected data, and the inclusion of stories, partners and strategies for all indicators. Rep. Urban noted her desire for the attendees to seriously begin considering programs related to these indicators for the purposes of program drill down.
2. CSDE Accountability System Update - Charlene Russell-Tucker & Ajit Gopalakrishnan (9:10-9:20)
 - a. Ajit Gopalakrishnan provided a brief overview of his presentation regarding the CSDE Accountability System. He highlighted the intent of this system to utilize data to improve school systems, identify strengths and weaknesses, and collaborate with communities and school district leaders. Ajit Gopalakrishnan noted the importance of utilizing growth data to track the performance of the child over time beyond test scores. He also noted four broad areas of implementation that factor into the accountability system, including access to the arts and physical fitness as well as Civics and Personal Development, which will be implemented without any additional data collection burdens. Ajit Gopalakrishnan discussed the establishment of a point system for the twelve indicators, and the points expressed as a percentage. Ajit Gopalakrishnan discussed the five categories for school classification. He highlighted that the former names for each have been replaced with basic category numbers to remove the naming-and-shaming stigma that had developed out of those names. Only the bottom two categories retain a specific title due to federal requirements. Ajit Gopalakrishnan commented on the response from schools and the ongoing collaboration with district/school leader level.
 - b. Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor asked if pre-schools were included in this system as a part of public schools. Ajit Gopalakrishnan responded that pre-schools were not included and explained the difficulty identifying where the mandated and non-mandated attendance situations are.
 - c. Ellen Shemitz commented positively on the inclusion of access issues as well as performance in this system. She then asked whether having access to high-quality pre-school could be considered and placed in the academic achievement area and whether school absences could be disaggregated by suspension/expulsion. Ajit Gopalakrishnan answered that the CSDE can view and track attendance and the impact of disciplinary measures, but it was not included explicitly in the accountability system. Regarding pre-school access, he stated his lack of certainty as to how it would fit into the school district accountability system, given that CSDE does partner with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) on pre-school related topics.
 - d. Judith Meyers asked if the data is de-identified and population level data. Ajit Gopalakrishnan responded that the most of the data is student-level and is personally identifiable. Judith Meyers followed up her previous question by asking about whether CSDE can explore student body mass indexes (BMI) when factoring child's physical fitness. Ajit Gopalakrishnan noted that CSDE does not have student level data on BMI. He did reiterate that the fitness data does come in and can be used at the aggregate level, and stated his concerns about the privacy side of data, as well as the line between data related directly to education versus non-education data. Ajit Gopalakrishnan did wish to impress upon the group that they have broadened the indicators to ensure data tracking seeks to consider the outcomes and performance of the whole child.
 - e. Elaine Zimmerman first asked whether CSDE has a way to identify the opportunity gap by race or ethnicity in addition to the achievement gap. Elaine Zimmerman indicated children who have or do not have access to advanced placement courses as an example of an opportunity gap. Ajit Gopalakrishnan indicated the access indicators include the preparation for postsecondary coursework. At this point it has not been broken down into gaps. Elaine Zimmerman then asked whether there is a substantive family component to this new system, noting that family engagement is a core component to child success. Ajit Gopalakrishnan noted that while that factor is not in this system, CSDE does address it to some extent under school climate measures. Even for school climate, Ajit Gopalakrishnan stated there is not a clear or universal piece of data that shows how schools are doing to provide a good school climate. He further discussed recent legislation that requires six standard questions to be included in school climate questionnaires at the school level. Ajit Gopalakrishnan indicated that the results of those standard questions could be explored to understand a common metric for school. Elaine Zimmerman stated his responses led into her third question about school safety standards, noting that it also sounds like there is not a clear indicator for school safety measures. Ajit Gopalakrishnan agreed.
 - f. Martha Stone asked how high-need subgroups that are also high school-mobility or have involvement in juvenile justice or the Department of Children and Families (DCF) are accounted for in this system. Ajit Gopalakrishnan indicated the large number of nuances within the data. He indicated a federal rule requires agencies computing an index score to identify students in that same school or district on October 1st to ensure that the student has been enrolled from that date to the time of testing. Ajit Gopalakrishnan stated this is an example of where the CSDE can track student mobility.
 - g. David Nee indicated his interest in the data collected on school suspensions and how it impacts a student's life and achievement.
3. Quarterly Report: Stable Domain (9:10-10:40)
 - a. Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group Presentation - Co-Chairs Charlene Russell-Tucker & Joe Vaverchak

CT KIDS REPORT CARD

"All Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy, and ready for future success."

- i. Charlene Russell-Tucker noted that our state is the envy of many others right now because we have chronic absenteeism as a component of the accountability system. Before the presentation, she highlighted Public Act 15-225. She stated this law requires CSDE to define disciplinary absence and expands the definition of absence to include in school suspension that is equal to or greater than one half of a school day. Ajit Gopalakrishnan noted schools have shifted from out-of-school suspensions to in-school suspension programs and if good programs are helping the student, the school is penalized for keeping them beyond half a day. Ajit Gopalakrishnan added that these changes may provide better scrutiny over in-school suspension programs.
 - ii. Charlene Russell-Tucker then began her presentation. She noted a joint letter recently sent out by four federal agencies that not only indicated chronic absenteeism as a national problem, described four action steps that should be taken, which are already being done in Connecticut. Her presentation went on to show the data in recent years, showing the percentage as well as the number of students absent, as well as disaggregations. Charlene Russell-Tucker presented a snapshot of progress. She then discussed current data issues as well as data development. Joe Vaverchak introduced himself and discussed the New Britain School District's collaboration with the CT Data Collaborative to establish a geographic information system (GIS) mapping system. He stated his intention to try and find pockets in the school district where we can learn more about the community in terms of where students with free/reduced lunch, low/high test scores, etc. live and where community engagement could be better focused to improve the lives outcomes students. The GIS mapping system could allow for expanded community conversations through layering different pieces of information or indicators that could impact chronic absenteeism. She moved on to discuss best practices and sharing those best practices with multiple districts, with a focus on the Alliance Districts and connecting community partners like United Way. Joe Vaverchak noted the new legislation that requires districts with chronic absenteeism rates of about ten percent to have attendance teams in place. Charlene Russell-Tucker added that CSDE has learned the collaborative relationship with CSSD and school districts like New Britain have been paying dividends for them.
 - iii. Charlene Russell-Tucker continued on with the presentation, noting the newly formed relationship with the Office of Early Childhood and the SAG, as well as continued conversations with the Governor's Prevention Partnership. Joe Vaverchak added the partnership he has developed with the Early Childhood Connection in New Britain is being replicated by other districts that see the need to focus on early childhood education. He also added the importance and shift in having pre-schools more connected to the school district and the school system rather than feeling like silos. Charlene Russell-Tucker noted the State Board of Education moved a resolution requiring chronic absenteeism plans to be developed for Alliance Districts. She moved onto areas of focus and moving forward. What they have now and have heard from members today will be implemented into their 2015-16 action plans, which includes expansion of the GIS mapping program and expanding partnerships with Attendance Works.
- b. Discussion of Strategies and Program Drill Downs
- i. Rep. Urban explained the purpose of the strategy and program drill down discussion. She highlighted the fact we would work on this discussion quarterly, by domain, with Stable domain being the first domain for program drill down. She noted the population level is complete so now we need to pick out programs to look into that effect each indicator. Rep. Urban then had Steven Jones go through each indicator of the Stable domain, showcasing the current trend, forecast trend, disaggregations, stories behind the curve, partners, and strategies. After presenting the indicators, Rep. Urban turned the discussion back over to the co-chairs, noting her interest in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as an example program for drill down. David Nee asked of the group to consider similar programs for further drill down that relate to the nine Stable domain indicators.
 - ii. Jim Horan appreciated the mention of the EITC and noted other programs that relate to employment insecurity would be the most crucial area to providing a child a stable upbringing. He noted the ongoing development of two-generational strategies and the pilot programs that were established in legislation signed into law this year.
 - iii. Sen. Dante Bartolomeo indicated DCF's collaboration with the Department of Housing and the Three Branch Institute's Connecticut Collaborative for Housing and Child Welfare as potential partners. Sen. Bartolomeo gave kudos to Rep. Urban who has worked on this project for many years and commended Committee on Children Clerk Alessandra Burgett, and Special Projects Assistant Steve Jones for all the work they undertook this summer without which this website likely would not have been put together so nicely or so quickly.
 - iv. Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor raised two opportunities the state government has regarding employment insecurity from the federal government. The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (TWIOA), which is a substantial overhaul of a program utilized to help residents with the greatest need of seeking employment through training and career opportunities through the Department of Labor. She also discussed the state plan due in March for the Child Care Development Fund, which tackles the two-generational strategy regarding employment insecurity and preparing children for success.
 - v. Judith Meyers added the notion of paid family medical leave as a program that may connect to one of the indicators in the Stable domain.
 - vi. Rep. Urban noted that programs that should be considered are those programs that we are currently funding. Rep. Urban highlighted the EITC, Free/Reduced Lunch Programs, Workforce Investment programs, and Care 4 Kids as programs that are funded that can relate to this domain.
 - vii. Ellen Shemitz asked if the drill down is for specific programs or for any broad systems issues. Rep. Urban responded that at this point specific programs are the launching pad for this part of the process.
 - viii. Anne McIntyre-Lahner proposed potential programs for consideration. Her first recommendation was for the group to consider whether we need to explore a high-needs super-group, as CSDE did with their accountability system. Another program she proposed on behalf of DCF as an ongoing initiative is the Family Assessment Response (FAR). For

contracted programs, she recommended Community Support for Families program, which supports FAR, and a housing-specific Community Support for Families program.

- ix. Co-Chair David Nee indicated his involvement on a state tax-panel. He indicated that there was a broader discussion at that meeting about general tax credits, but none as specific as the EITC. He recommended that attendees may want to consider visiting the next meeting, which is October 27th. David Nee added it would be good for members to aggregate themselves and ask the co-chairs for air time on this topic.
- x. Co-Chair Lt. Governor Wyman stated a need to play the devil's advocate. She said we need to consider not only what is working and needs more investment or focus, but also programs that are not working and could be eliminated. There is a balance that needs to be made when investing in good programs that cost money by withdrawing from non-performing programs that are still on the books.
- xi. Senator Bartolomeo concurred with Lt. Governor Wyman's notion of a necessary balance. She indicated her vote that Care 4 Kids should be further explored as program that has seen success and sought more funds in the legislative session.
- xii. Charlene Russell-Tucker recommended the Free and Reduced Lunch program be considered. She indicated the need to discuss programs not working, but also those programs where the state can leverage more federal dollars. John Frassinelli explained the Community Eligibility Provision's process, which does data matching through DSS and the unique student ID numbers to award free/reduced lunch. If 40% or more of the student body for a school or district is eligible for free/reduced lunch they are given the option to participate in community eligibility.
- xiii. Elaine Zimmerman added the Employment and Training 50/50 Match opportunity. She differentiated this program from the general employment and training dollars, noting this program allows for federal dollars to be used for childcare. Elaine indicated maximizing this program could ensure more federal dollars be allocated to Connecticut.
- xiv. Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor made two comments. The first comment was to thank Lt. Governor Wyman for noting the importance of understanding we are in a time of limited economic resources and that programs that are not working, but continue to be funded for a variety of reasons need to be scrutinized and reallocated to working programs. She highlighted an ongoing issue many states utilizing RBA have recognized is that funding levels for programs are currently flat regardless of what the outcomes are saying. Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor added her voice to Senator Bartolomeo's support of Care 4 Kids, but noted the significant price tag that has to be considered.
- xv. Martha Stone indicated chronic absenteeism as an indicator to focus on programs, noting four state-level task forces that have some focus around chronic absenteeism. She listed at least five potential programs: Attendance Works, a Probate Court program run by probate judges, child and family support centers (funded by CSSD), a truancy court project run by the Center for Children's Advocacy, the BOOST program in New Haven.
- xvi. Charlene Russell-Tucker agreed with Martha Stone's comments, indicating CSDE becoming more connected to the programs CSSD runs that affect chronic absenteeism and sharing information. She also indicated that a positive strategy that school districts have been undertaking is hiring a liaison to parents, as well as reviewing a New York program that trains success mentors.
- xvii. Jim Horan asked to clarify if the Free/Reduced Lunch program was considered a part of the Employment Insecurity series of programs or a separate program. Rep. Urban agreed that there does seem to be consensus on this issue and others already noted in the discussion. Rep. Urban summarized the process of drilling down on the programs outside of the Leadership Committee with the Appropriations RBA Subcommittee.

4. Priorities for Action (10:40-10:50)

- a. David Nee indicated programs selected for drill down are:
 - i. Chronic absenteeism (Attendance Works or child & family support services)
 - ii. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
 - iii. 50/50 match program.
 - iv. Family medical leave.
 - v. Care 4 Kids workforce program.
 - vi. Free & Reduced price lunch.
- b. In addition, David Nee identified high-needs super-groups and two-generational strategies as conceptual frameworks. He indicated these two ideas may require a separate look or they may be items to keep in mind when looking at the identified programs.

5. Other Business (10:50-11:00)

- a. SBHC SAG Update
 - i. Jill Jensen provided a brief summary of the School Based Health Center (SBHC) Strategic Action Group (SAG). She indicated a subgroup is seeking to put together a data demonstration to understand the effectiveness and impact of the SBHCs. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is currently being developed between the SBHCs in the New Haven and New London districts with CSDE to share data. Bennett Pudlin noted this project is a supplement to the work DPH has been working on with SBHCs to standardize and expand the level of data collection that they are doing and providing to DPH so that they can produce RBA report cards for both a statewide measure as well as individual centers.
- b. Date for next quarterly meeting
 - i. Lt. Governor Wyman announced that the next meeting would be in January at a date and time to be determined.

6. Adjourn (11:00)

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 10:57AM.

CT KIDS REPORT CARD

"All Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy, and ready for future success."