Connecticut: Every Student in School & Engaged!
Charlene Russell-Tucker
Chief Operating Officer
Connecticut State Department of Education

Every Student, Every Day National Conference
Washington, DC
June 10, 2016
Panelists

Desi Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer
Connecticut State Department of Education

Sandra Soucie, Director of Innovation & Impact
The Governor’s Prevention Partnership

Kari Sullivan, Associate Education Consultant
Connecticut State Department of Education

Joseph Vaverchak, Supervisor of Attendance
Consolidated School District of New Britain
Presentation Outline

• Understanding and Spreading Awareness of the Research and Impact of Chronic Absenteeism

• Learning from the Data

• Joining Forces with State-level Champions/Leaders to Build a State-level Infrastructure

• Leveraging Existing District-level Networks

• Promoting “Bright Spots” to Generate Change

• Impact of Connecticut’s Statewide Infrastructure and Systems Approach

• Peer-to-Peer Sharing of Successes and Challenges
Understanding and Spreading Awareness

Sharing research and the impact chronic absenteeism has on educational outcomes
### Early Work: Educate & Inform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Strategic Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Here to Learn: Chronic Absence and the Achievement Gap,” public forum featuring Hedy Chang, Attendance Works (November 12, 2013)</td>
<td>• legislators</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• government entities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• state and local partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Using a School-Linked Services Approach to Solve Chronic Absenteeism,” Connecticut State Department of Education (May 15, 2013)</td>
<td>• local school districts</td>
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<td>• municipalities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• faith-based organizations</td>
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<td>• community providers</td>
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<td>The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (13 Connecticut districts)</td>
<td>• local school districts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• civic leaders</td>
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<td>• policymakers</td>
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<td>• advocates</td>
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<td>• community organizations</td>
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<td>Committee on Children’s Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Report Card Project Leadership Committee</td>
<td>• co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor</td>
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<td>Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap and the Achievement Gap Task Force</td>
<td>• chaired by Lieutenant Governor</td>
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<td>• executive branch leadership</td>
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Example of Creating Visual Awareness

Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism, 2013-14
(Eight Alliance Districts with Network Schools)
Learning from the Data
Data and Accountability

• State longitudinal student data system includes chronic absence data
• Data used to identify high levels of chronic absence
• Visual graphics used to achieve understanding
• Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Report Card included chronic absence as a headline indicator
• EdSight and Next Generation Accountability System includes chronic absence indicator
Why is chronic absence an important issue in Connecticut?

Number of Students Chronically Absent

- 2012-13: 60,851
- 2013-14: 56,171
- 2014-15: 55,956

?
Who is chronically absent in Connecticut?

Snapshot
Percent Chronically Absent, 2014–15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Lunch</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Avg.</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Lunch</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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Chronic Absence Rates by Race/Ethnicity

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Latino of any race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
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What is the link between chronic absence and graduation rate?

Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in 4 Years by Meal Eligibility, 2012–13 Cohort

Connecticut

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eligible for Free Meals</th>
<th>Not Eligible for Free Meals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-Risk</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Absent</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>70.0</td>
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Percent of Students
Strategic Partnerships
Common Goals and Shared Responsibilities

Inside the School House
District Attendance Teams
School Attendance Teams
Enrichment Activities
Mentoring Programs
Awards and Incentives

Shared Accountability & Continuous Improvement
Regular review of data and outcomes
Ongoing strategic planning

Positive Community Outreach
Communitywide messaging and awareness campaign reinforcing a communitywide culture of good attendance

Outside of the School House
Local Government Agencies
Health Care Centers
Social Service Agencies
Museums, Arts & Culture
Faith Communities

Every student in school & engaged!
Joining Forces

State-level champions and leaders role in building state-level infrastructure
Leadership Matters

• CT Kid’s Report Card Leadership Committee, RBA Children’s Report Card, 2011, results statement:

   All Connecticut children grow up in a stable living environment, safe, healthy, and prepared to lead successful lives.

• Chronic Absence Strategic Action Group, January 2014

   Serves as a centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new practices to address chronic absenteeism, promote communication and collaboration among critical state agency and community-based partners.
CT Kids Report Card Leadership Committee

Stable, Safe, Healthy and Successful Children

- Engages key partner agencies and organizations
- Provides input to the Legislature’s Committee on Children
- Promotes strategies that ensure Connecticut's young people grow up in **stable environments, safe, healthy, and ready to lead successful lives**
Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group

Centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new practices to address chronic absenteeism.

Four Goals:

1. Data Issues/Data Development
2. Best Practices – Building Capacity
3. Engage Strategic Partners
4. Report Card – Turning the Curve
Data Issues/ Data Development

To ensure that data are available and accurately inform policy and practice.

- Public reporting of attendance data disaggregated by grade, race, free/reduced lunch, English learners and Special Education

- Developed and disseminated Alliance District Data Analysis Profile Reports

- Partnered with the Connecticut Data Collaborative to initiate attendance data mapping pilot project

- Continued exploration of consistent attendance definitions for data gathering and reporting
Best Practices – Building Capacity

To ensure that policies and practices with proven results are implemented to improve outcomes.

- Focused the Spring 2015 Alliance District Convening on attendance and featured Attendance Works
- Conducted initial structured conversations with targeted communities and local United Ways
- Interviewed Alliance Districts on their own “stories behind the curve” for inventory of best practices
- Presentations at conferences/meetings, e.g., Faith, Families & Schools Conference, Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap; Discovery Communities Peer Exchange & Learning Meeting
Engage Strategic Partners

Strategic Action Group members are identified and represent all strategic partners with a role to play in improving results/“turning the curve.”

- Expansion of membership to include Office of Early Childhood as a key Planning Team member
- Partnered with The Governor’s Prevention Partnership to promote mentoring as an intervention to improve attendance
- Continued membership review to engage all key strategic partners
Report Card Development

Turning the Curve

Report Card is utilized as a communication tool to promote policy decisions.

- Secured State Board of Education resolution requiring chronic absence action plans for Alliance Districts
- Included chronic absenteeism as an indicator in the new Connecticut State Department of Education enhanced Accountability System
- Promoted chronic absence through presentations, reports and media coverage
- Introduced the Chronic Absence e-Bulletin
A “Snapshot” of Progress

Connecticut Kids Report Card

Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group
Snapshot of Accomplishments 2014-15

Purpose: To improve attendance in Connecticut schools by: (1) serving as the centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new approaches to achieve measurable better result; and (2) promoting statewide coordination and communication among critical partners involved in “turning the curve.”

Data Issues
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Linking to Federal Effort to Combat Chronic Absenteeism

Every Student, Every Day: Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

United States Departments of:
• Justice
• Health and Human Services
• Housing and Urban Development
• Education

Action Steps:
1. Generate and act on absenteeism data
2. Create and deploy positive messages and measures
3. Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism
4. Ensure responsibility across sectors
Leveraging Existing District-level Networks
Leveraging Existing Networks

- Policies and practices that are research and evidence-based are embedded into all meetings and professional development opportunities.
- Examples of networks in place that are positioned to include chronic absenteeism into their education reform efforts:
  - Alliance School Districts (30 districts)
  - Commissioner’s Network Schools
  - Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
  - The Campaign for Grade Level Reading (13 districts)
  - The Governor’s Prevention Partnership’s School-Based Mentoring Roundtable
  - Local Interagency Service Teams (LISTs), organized by juvenile court regions
  - Community conversations with local United Ways
  - Community providers invited as partners at Alliance District Convenings
Promoting “Bright Spots” to Generate Change
Demonstrating Success

• “Bright spots” demonstrate that reducing chronic absence *can be done*
  – Middletown Public Schools
  – Consolidated School District of New Britain
  – Vernon Public Schools

• Promotion of successes can start a *ripple effect*

• *Momentum builds* and more districts unpack their data, find the trends and implement a strategic plan
Impact of Connecticut’s Infrastructure and Systems Approach
Looking Back…

Alignment of efforts has had a transformative impact including:

| • Reduction in chronic absence at both the state and local levels |
| • Implementation of Public Act, 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism that included: |
|   • development of a Prevention and Intervention Guide |
|   • district and school-level attendance teams where chronic absenteeism rates are high |
|   • adoption of official definitions for chronic absence |
| • State Board of Education resolution (February 2015) requiring plans to address chronic absence in applications for state funding |
| • Capacity building professional development events and peer-to-peer learning opportunities |
| • Next Generation Accountability System/Guidance and EdSight |
Convergence of Efforts

Positive Discipline

Good Attendance

Diversion from Court System

In School & Engaged

Next Steps

- Release prevention and intervention chronic absence guide
- Launch statewide September Attendance Awareness campaign
- Build internal and external capacity to support districts
- Expand Connecticut’s partnership with Attendance Works
Example of Strategic Messaging

…we can dramatically improve the academic and life outcomes of millions of young people who have been disengaged from a daily, supportive school experience.

The health and well-being of our nation demands that we do no less.

Source: October 7, 2015, Letter on Federal Effort to Combat Chronic Absenteeism at Schools
...we can dramatically improve the academic and life outcomes of 56,171 young people who have been disengaged from a daily, supportive school experience. The health and well-being of Connecticut demands that we do no less.
Peer-to-Peer Sharing
Panel Contacts

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