

**CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR READING RESEARCH**  
**Summary of the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) Meeting**  
**January 13, 2021**

Attending: Bonnie Bauer, Erin Benham, Miguel Cardona (Commissioner), Eric Clemons (by phone), Karen Dubois-Walton, Elwood Exley, Estela Lopez (Vice-Chair), Donald Harris, Martha Prou, Awilda Reasco, Malia Sieve, Robert Trefry (Ex-Officio).  
Absent: Janet Gates (Ex-Officio)

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ingrid Canady, Director of SERC, congratulated George Coleman, former Commissioner of Education, on his recognition by the Board. She also congratulated Commissioner Cardona on his appointment as new United States Secretary of Education. She thanked the Board for their support and approval of the new African-American, Latinx, and Puerto Rican Studies curriculum requirement.

Sarah Egan, JD, from the Office of Child Advocacy, congratulated George Coleman and the Commissioner. She requested that the Board increase its oversight on the negative impact of school closures on those with little opportunity for remote learning, especially those with significant disability. She advocated for a permanent agenda item be added to insure oversight of ongoing inequities in districts.

Martha Stone, echoed all the congratulations to the Commissioner and Dr. Coleman. She reported on her agency's documentation of districts flaunting CSDE attendance guidance and requested that the issue be approached through the legal construct of the right to an education as opposed to guidelines. In addition, she noted the notable differences in special education staffing and in enforcing engagement. For example, Bridgeport sends police officers to find students and New Haven utilizes community engagement. She requested that the CSDE conducts audits of student engagement modeled on that conducted by Massachusetts. (Charlene Russel Tucker, Deputy Commissioner, responded that meetings with districts regarding student attendance and engagement are being conducted. CT has a robust system that is being used as a model for other states.)

Katherine O'Callaghan, AACTE representative and Western Connecticut State University Professor, offered congratulations to Commissioner Cardona on behalf of the organization. She noted the hard work of university professionals in transforming programs in response to Covid-19 and reiterated the organization's commitment to working with the CSDE and other state agencies.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- A. Personnel Matter: Discussion of Interim Commissioner. The Board retired to Executive Session for approximately one hour following a unanimous motion.

## ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION

- A. Recognition in Honor of George Coleman, State Education Resource Center Board. A resolution was approved accepting the retirement of George Coleman from the SERC Board and honored him for his many roles in public education and his service to the CSDE, including serving as Commissioner.

## REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Cardona thanked the Board for all its support during his tenure and congratulated George Coleman. He thanked all members of the Department for their commitment and hard work in the current crisis. Estala Lopez then presented a resolution thanking the Commissioner for his service to the state.

## REPORT OF THE CHAIR

No report

## CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Report on Agricultural Science and Technology Education (ASTE) Graduates Five Years After Graduation. The item was removed from the agenda to allow discussion after a motion by Estella Lopez was approved. Members noted the role of the ASTE systems in promoting equity. The report's survey of the Class of 2014 ascertained that:
- Eighty five percent of respondents who started a four-year college degree program earned a degree.
  - Seven percent of respondents own their own business.
  - Ninety-five percent are employed, 26 percent in an agriculture related field.

The Board approved the report.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- A. Agency Update. Charlene Russell-Tucker reported on the partnership with the Department of Public Health and the institution of *Health and Safety Tuesdays* whereby district Superintendents and district medical professionals receive advice directly from Department of Public Health professionals. Russell-Tucker introduced Dr. Lynn Sosa, DPH Epidemiologist, who reported that, thus far, 2 people have developed the new COVID-19 variant, a more infectious, though not more severe, strain. She also reported that the mitigation measures enforced by schools have been shown to be effective.

Desi Nesmith reported on the current data regarding the Governor's FASFA challenge for districts to increase the number of students accessing FASFA by 5%. With respect to the Board's concerns regarding student engagement and attendance, the CSDE is conducting weekly conversations with New Haven regarding progress toward increased student attendance. That district is now planning to begin a hybrid model for elementary students beginning on January 19<sup>th</sup>. Danbury has similar plans. Finally, there are ongoing meetings regarding all students who have not been able to attend and noted the outstanding work of the Performance Office for providing weekly data regarding district attendance models.

Russell-Tucker also reported on the Department follow up addressing concerns of Greenwich parents of special education students. She then called on Kathy Demsey, CFO, to report on the Federal award of SR2 grants to the State totaling \$492 million. Based on Federal guidelines, 10% of the award is reserved for the State and the rest is allocated to the districts. The Financial Office is working on establishing priorities and defining educational recovery priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Mulready