

## 2012 Achievement Gap Task Force DRAFT Recommendations

Recommendations	Addressed in PA 12-116 or other authority	SDE Work towards Recommendation
<b>Schools</b>		
Require all schools with an achievement gap to offer the School Breakfast Program and recess. (TH)	Yes under CGS § 10-215 (existing law) free breakfast and lunch as per federal requirements and under PA 12-116 all are required to offer a total of 20 minutes of physical activity for grades K-5.	Recess component addressed in PA 12-116; list of school breakfast participants attached.
Laptops for every student in the middle schools that they can take home. Many of them do not have access to computers in the home and they can use them for research, homework, etc. Some states have programs where the laptops are donated. Companies receive tax incentives for joining these programs. Also, more computers in the 2-5 grades in the classroom. (AS)	No, but state offers a corporate tax credit for computer donations.	Some Alliance Districts are using technology as part of their plans.
<u>What About the Middle Schools?</u> With the requirement that there be Student Success Plans for all students starting with 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, the importance of a focus on the Middle Schools in closing the Academic Achievement Gaps (AAG) is reiterated. Yet, most discussion that is grade level/age cohort focused seems to me to be on early education, 3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> grade literacy, or high school graduation. Many say that the Middle School years are the “last chance” for many students’ educational success trajectory to be changed. It is an intervention point and a key transition set of years for most	Partial, PA 11-35 requires Student Success Plans for each student starting in grade 6.	Student Success Plans are being implemented in all districts based on the Secondary School Reforms. These plans begin in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade. Lower performing middle schools are to be addressed by Alliance Districts as part of tiering their schools and intervening as appropriate.

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young people. I would like to see the Master Plan (MP) recommend that there be a workgroup charged with developing a plan to strengthen our Middle Schools – not just curriculum-wise but also looking at affective domains. (DK)		
<b>Early Education</b>		
<p><u>The First 1000 Days – Getting It Right from the Start.</u> There is a momentum growing nationally and now in CT to focus not just on Pre-K but on the first 1,000 days of a child’s life – especially for those children who are experiencing one or more Toxic Stressors - as the absolute best time/place to intervene and provide support to children if we really want to give them the tools to be successful in school and life. I would like to see the MP make a strong statement that CT’s Early Education Plan and the system that will support and implement it needs to include in more than a cursory passing plans to improve the first 1,000 days of a child’s life in CT(DK)</p>	No. But PA 11-181 requires the state to develop a coordinated system of early child care and education by July 1, 2013.	Goal of the Early Childhood Planning Office is to create a statewide coordinated early childhood system. Much work is under way.
Quality Pre-K for every child in the state and then followed by all day kindergarten. (AS)	Partial. 1,000 additional school readiness seats with half going to education reform districts.	Additionally, Alliance funds and Priority School District funds can be used for early education including all day kindergarten. Several districts are going in this direction using Alliance funding.
Require all family day care home providers to attain 9 CEU’s per year that focus on early childhood development. The credits can be gained through CT Charters a Course, community colleges, etc. (TH)	No	CEUs no longer exist – districts are required to provide in-service PD and teachers collaborate and track based upon evaluation goal-setting process. DPH handles licensing - \$700,000 going to DPH for quality enhancement (part of \$3 million in school readiness quality enhancement which also includes standards and professional development).
Create a home health visitation system to narrow health inequities and achievement gap;. Should include appropriate referrals for	No.	20 new school-based health clinics and 10 new family resource centers (plus additional funding for current FRCs) will help to

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health and poverty reduction programs, Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), and Medicaid (COC)		address health and outreach services and home visits.
Integrate early education and home visitation systems; connect these systems in training, professional development and standards (COC)	No.	Early Childhood Planning Office is working to coordinate systems among agencies.
<b>Extending School Time</b>		
<p><u>It's About Time</u>: The Master Plan (MP) should have a recommendation related to expanded learning time; it would be ideal to actually have that as a "number of hours" but I am not sure what that metric would be for the various education levels. In a recent <i>CABE Journal</i> article, Executive Director Robert Rader noted, "The Federal Government has adopted the Massachusetts 2020 guidelines that call for an extra 300 hours of additional time each year." I would like to see the MP recommend a workgroup be charged with addressing this and bring back to us recommendations on how many more hours are needed and how that could be implemented. (DK)</p>	No, but the law does not prevent a school or district from extending school time and some do.	All Commissioner's Network Plans include extending the school day and/or school year. Alliance Districts are frequently using Alliance funding to extend learning time. The State is collaborating with the National Center on Time & Learning in a pilot with three Alliance Districts.
Require all schools with an achievement gap to extend the school day to 5:00 p.m. through utilizing existing staff, volunteers, and supervisory staff. (TH)	No	See Above.
Longer school day and reconfigure the school year for more marking periods - 4 or 5 and make them equally apart. (AS)	No	See Above.
<b>Curriculum</b>		
Require evidence-based curriculum in school districts with an achievement gap. The State Department of Education should monitor and evaluate the sufficiency of curriculums in low performing school districts and schools. Each curriculum shall be tested against the various state and federal tests for effectiveness. If the curriculum is inadequate, the SDE should identify tested and scored evidenced based curriculums from which the district can	No, but all districts in the process of revamping curricula to align with SBE-adopted Common Core Standards.	The Common Core Standards, and correlated curriculum, are an important route to curricular rigor and instructional success. CSDE adopted the Common Core Standards in 2010. Implementation began in districts in the 2011-12 school year and continues. Full implementation and Smarter Balanced Assessments are expected in the 2014-15 school year.

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select and be required by SDE to implement. The SDE should also assure that the supporting materials (books, workbooks, etc.) are available to all students. (TH)		
SDE, in collaboration with the RESCs, will establish model curricula in reading and mathematics in grades K-3, complete with benchmarks, assessments, and progress monitoring tools aligned to the CCSS. Model curricula will be made available to all districts. Technical assistance with implementation will be provided by SDE or local RESCs to Alliance and regional districts. (MC)	PA 11-85 required SDE to approve and distribute model curricula and frameworks in reading and mathematics for grades prekindergarten to four. PA 12-116 requires intensive reading interventions, assessments for certain schools and a statewide reading plan for K-3.	CSDE website provides crosswalk documents, units of study, sample lesson plans, pacing guides, unit correlations and resources for district on the Common Core website. <a href="http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&amp;q=322592">http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&amp;q=322592</a> More work is under way.
Fund expansion of intensive reading instruction program that is included in PA 12-116. (COC)	No.	Early literacy was a focus of PA 12-116. One of the programs included is an intensive intervention pilot in 5 schools. Other components include new K-3 Reading Assessments, a statewide reading plan, and reading professional development.
<b>Re-entry Issues/Behavioral Issues/Drop-Out Prevention</b>		
Each school district shall develop a re-entry plan for students who are away from their school due to a juvenile justice intervention, a	No, but PA 11-115 expands students	Coordination and collaboration with other state agencies under way.

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DCF or Special Education out-of-district placement, extended suspension and/or expulsion. For districts with large numbers of children re-entering the school system, a transitional school experience should be available prior to the child/youth re-entering his/her school. (TH)	right to re-enter school after spending time in a juvenile detention facility and requires districts to give credit for courses completed in unified school districts 1 and 2 (DCF and DOC).	
Develop a regional system of schools for children who have behavioral problems who interrupt the classroom experience. These schools would work with children who are chronically disruptive, violent, and have had multiple suspensions/expulsions due to these anti-social behaviors expressed in the classroom. The students would also be at least one year behind grade. The schools in this system would have specially trained teachers, case managers, etc. knowledgeable of evidence based methods or best practices for teaching these children and addressing their behavior problems. (TH)	No	
Full study of school based arrests (where and how many), school resource officers (where, how many), change in school climate where sro's have been implemented, alternatives to sba's (JR)	No	
Boarding schools for troubled children	No	
<u>How Do We Prevent High School Drop Outs?</u> A lot of things happen between Freshman Year and Senior Year. One of the major events for many, unfortunately, is dropping out of school. Just as we have a systematic way of helping students to meet graduation requirements and now that we have a common measure of	No	SBE adopted statewide policy of excused and unexcused absenteeism to address truancy. Districts have been notified by C-Letter, and Department is preparing a letter with further guidance on how to address and track this issue. One Network school is a high school, enabling the pilot of work

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graduation rates, I think the MP should require that high schools below a certain threshold of dropout rates should have a “Drop Out Prevention Plan” developed by the district, approved by the Commissioner, and monitored by the State Department of Education. (DK)		related to graduation rates and improvement thereof.
Establish system of tracking chronic absenteeism. Use data to identify patterns to help determine the correct interventions. (COC)	No, but SBE has adopted a statewide definition of excused and unexcused absences as SBE was required to under PA 11-36.	SBE adopted statewide policy of excused and unexcused absenteeism to address truancy. Districts have been notified by C-Letter, and Department is preparing a letter with further guidance on how to address and track this issue.
<b>Teacher Preparation</b>		
Increase urban field experiences, acceptance standards, and coursework in ELL & achievement gap strategies in teacher and leader preparation programs in State. (MC)	Partial, PA 12-116 requires four semesters but does not specifically require urban experiences.	Educator Preparatory Advisory Council (EPAC) is looking intensively at teacher preparation from many perspectives and is due to report to CGA on April 1 with recommendations. See Special Act 12-3 for full list of requirements in reporting.
<u>Like Painting, the Hard Work is in the Preparation.</u> An alignment between and among all the teacher and principal/administrator programs and curricula in CT that reflects rigorous courses and programs, practicum time in urban centers and districts under the guidance of true masters, and learning that measures proven cultural sensitivity and understanding are key components. The presentations by Dean DeFranco - and the 5 year program that UCONN requires – give a feel for that. Would love to see the MP recommend that Schools of Education in CT report back to us on	No	EPAC is looking intensively at teacher preparation from many perspectives and is due to report to CGA on April 1 with recommendations. See Special Act 12-3 for full list of requirements in reporting.

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how they will refine their programs – in light of PA 12-116 and given the AAG in CT- to better prepare teachers, principals, and administrators. (DK)		
<b>Data Analysis</b>		
Through the Interagency Council (IC), identify health, housing, and student mobility disparities using agreed upon criteria. Use said data to create action plans for addressing disparities. Report on progress semi-annually to the IC, Human Services, and Education Committee of General Assembly. (MC)	No	Commissioner sits on both councils – will need to work with and involve other agencies who are on that council.
Create a yearly rank of districts' (a) achievement gap status and (b) success at closing the achievements gaps based on pre-determined measures. Annually, the LEAs with the greatest gaps (25) will submit plans for approval by SDE. The districts with the greatest gains in closing the gaps (10) will present their strategies to the SDE annually. (MC)	No	ESEA waiver creates new accountability system – see attached Power Point for details of this system. Specifically, Focus Schools under the new accountability system are schools with gaps in subgroups; Schools are responsible for implementing plans this school year to address these gaps.
Gather CT- specific data on performance of black and Hispanic males and include Schott’s Opportunity to Learn Index (measures whether schools are providing every student with a true opportunity to learn). (COC)	Yes, performance data for black and Hispanic males is available; no regarding Schott’s Opportunity to Learn Index.	Data for Focus Schools looks at Black and Hispanic subgroups, but not by gender. PA 12-116 includes new guidelines for newly approved Charter Schools including single gender and ELL students.
<b>Parent Involvement</b>		
Promote family-school partnerships at each school at every level. (COC)	Partial PA 12-116 establishes 10 new family resource centers; in PA 12-1, JSS, pilot program for Parent University	Parent University to be piloted in 2 districts this school year. Working to develop Parent Technology Pilot. 10 new Family Resource Centers, and increased funding for existing FRCs. School Governance Councils have been expanded to be required in all Turnaround, Focus and Review schools.

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	in two educational reform districts	
Teach parents about the achievement gap and its implication for children and society. (COC)	No	Work with PIRC (Parent Information Resource Center) to train parents in new accountability system.
Offer specific activities and roles for parents in schools and at home as partners (COC)	Partial, Even Start Family Literacy Program in PA 12-120	Parent University to be piloted in 2 districts this school year. Working to develop Parent Technology Pilot. 10 new Family Resource Centers, and increased funding for existing FRCs. School Governance Councils have been expanded to be required in all Turnaround, Focus and Review schools.
Ensure cultural awareness at every entry point including bi-lingual opportunity for parent participation. (COC)	No	CALI Training on cultural awareness is conducted through SDE.
<b>Wrap-Around Services</b>		
<p><u>What Can Non-Educators Do?</u> Community organizations are assets to be tapped and wisely used. I would like to see the Master Plan (MP) include language that talks about the important role of “wrap around services” and which is supportive of Commissioner Pryor’s initiatives related to the community schools concept being rolled out statewide. From my perspective, I believe community based organizations like United Way can play a key role. All this is most important, perhaps, for the Alliance Districts. The MP should include a recommendation that any transformation plans include how the district will utilize, maximize, and rally community assets. (DK)</p>	Partially: 20 new or expanded School Based Health Centers and 10 new Family Resource Center; also PA 12-1, JSS requires SDE to provide wrap-around services to education reform districts within available appropriations.	20 new or expanded School Based Health Centers and 10 new Family Resource Center; also PA 12-1, JSS requires SDE to provide wrap-around services to education reform districts within available appropriations. Commissioner’s Network schools include focus on wraparound services. Multiple Alliance Districts do as well. Work with Interagency Council will lead to greater coordination of wraparound services.
<b>GED/Alternate Schools/Adult Education</b>		

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Encourage the CT Attorney General to oppose the privatization and increased cost of the GED. It is going from \$13.00 to \$120.00 without taking into consideration preparation costs. (TH)	No (pursuant to CGS § 10-5(b) fee is set at \$13).	
Lets get a handle on the number of alternative schools that exist in CT, the demographics of those schools, including those with disabilities and what the quality of instruction is. Also a timeline for what the growth has been over time. (JR)	Data is available on number of schools and demographics; no study on quality of instruction or timeline.	SDE has data on schools and demographics
Determine the number of adult education programs in the state, the demographics of their students, including those with disabilities, the quality of instruction and a resource needs assessment. Also a timeline for what the growth has been over time. (JR)	No	SDE has data on schools and demographics
<b>Housing/Zoning</b>		
Through the I.C., establish a 2 year partnership with the Partnership for Healthy Communities aimed at creating legislation that will (a) incentivize mixed income housing in communities with high-resource schools and (b) de-incentivize zoning practices in cities and towns which result in de facto segregation in CT. (MC)	No	
<b>Graduation Requirements</b>		
High School Graduation Requirements: <u>Are We Willing to Really Think Outside the Box?</u> Our students are being educated to be part of a global society. Other parts of the world, approach high school graduation requirements differently. The CT Department of Education a few years ago was examining, on a pilot basis, utilizing the Board Examination process which would permit some students to graduate high school after passing a Board Exam, say after two years and enter our CT Higher Education system and would permit	Partial, see PA 10-111 which required SDE to create a board exam pilot program that would allow students to	CGS 10-5c enables SBE to permit students in grades 9-12 to substitute achievement of a passing score on a series of examinations for any student who successfully completes the board examination certificate program.

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<p>other students to remain in high school and pass a second level Board Examination. The pilot was never really funded and momentum was lost. One of its value-adds was that it could, in theory, free up high school teachers to focus in the last two years of high school on both those who had not yet passed level one and those who were preparing for level two exams. I would like to see the MP call for a further consideration of the Board Examination Pilot. (For quick reference, a related NYT article on this movement: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/18/education/18educ.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/18/education/18educ.html</a>) (DK)</p>	<p>graduate if they passed an appropriate series of exams.</p>	
<b>Oversight</b>		
<p><u>PA 12-116</u>. So who is monitoring not just the implementation but also the RESULTS on the Academic Achievement Gap of PA 12-116? I'm presuming using RBA that information will be going back to the Education Committee. But given the charge to the AAG Task Force, I think we have a role in monitoring progress. I think the MP should address that and refine our role in that process. (DK)</p>	<p>PA 12-116 places various reporting requirements on SDE and the Education Commissioner to report to the Education Committee</p>	<p>SDE is creating a Performance team that will conduct related work. Among other duties, this team will track school and district progress in gap closure and overall achievement, and annually update SPI and DPI, including subgroups, based on new assessment data. Reports due to CGA on Commissioner's Network, Early Literacy Pilot, teacher evaluations and other initiatives. RBA report cards will also be updated.</p>
<p><u>Do We Ever Talk About the Role of Boards of Education in Closing the AAG?</u> In the turnaround process, the low hanging fruit, recently, seems to be to supplement or supplant local Boards of Education, rather than provide more support to them to do a very difficult job. I would like to see the MP include a statement that local Boards of Education in CT are key partners and leaders in the movement to close the AAG and recommend that CABE and local Boards give us a report that outlines what they need from the State to help them do their job more effectively. (DK)</p>	<p>Not in PA 12-116, but in state law the local board is the key actor in implementing local education policy.</p>	<p>Boards of education were required to approve Alliance District plans so they are partnering in those efforts. Lighthouse training through the Bureau of Accountability for Boards of Education. Special Master law enables intervention and support when boards are struggling.</p>

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The AGTF should become the oversight body for implementation of AG and reform efforts with periodic reports provided. No one outside the executive really monitors implementation which is why we talk about issues for years and years. (JR)	SBE and Education Committee and General Assembly provide oversight.	
<b>Other</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>PA 12-116. There's A Lot There – Point I.</u> And there was a lot in the Education Reform acts in 2011 and 2010. I would suggest that it would be valuable for the AAG Task Force – and the General Assembly – to have a report prepared (by OLR?) that lets us see the components of the original proposals that never made it to the finish line. This information could help us determine other components/items that should be in the MP – which were not possible in legislation because of political and other considerations. (DK)</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Hot Topics:</u> At our 6/11 meeting Dr. Cardona bravely ventured into the water that contained topics liked shared resources across current district lines, aka regionalization and “student success is often impacted by the issues children face from 3 PM – 9 AM and on weekends.” I hope the MP doesn’t run from hot topics but includes them in a way that it will help creative solutions emerge and will show the leadership with which the Task Force has been charged by the General Assembly. (DK)</li> </ul>		Regionalization: Small district study being conducted for considerations of regional cooperation, and there is \$100,000 allocated for technical assistance to help districts with regional cooperation.