



Connecticut Council

for

EDUCATION REFORM

**STATEMENT BY JEFFREY VILLAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CCER,  
IN SUPPORT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP TASK FORCE'S MASTER PLAN**

I am the executive director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER), a nonprofit organization that seeks to narrow the achievement gap in Connecticut while raising academic outcomes for all students. We believe that narrowing Connecticut's widest in the nation achievement gap is both a moral and an economic imperative. For this reason, we are proud to support the Achievement Gap Task Force's Master Plan to Eliminate the Achievement Gap in Connecticut.

CCER's advocacy work is organized around a report, which lists 67+ policy recommendations that comprise a ten-year plan to address Connecticut's achievement gap. Many of our recommendations are included in this Master Plan. Therefore, CCER can be counted on to support several of the measures proposed by this Task Force.

We are in complete agreement with this Task Force that narrowing the achievement gap starts with preschool. It should be a state priority to provide quality preschool experiences and full-day kindergarten to all low-income students. We will be supportive of the legislative and budgetary changes that bring Connecticut closer to this vision.

In addition to improving early childhood opportunities, CCER believes that we must set high expectations for our students if we want to raise achievement. Therefore, we agree with the idea, as presented in the Master Plan, that Connecticut's State Department of Education should compile best practices and models to help districts align their curriculums with the Common Core. We are also highly supportive of any measures that will allow the State to facilitate more professional development opportunities around Common Core.

While we are investing in programs for our students, CCER also believes that Connecticut must leverage its most important resources, its teachers and leaders. We agree with this Task Force that Connecticut must provide competitive compensation and professional autonomy to excellent teachers and leaders. The Task Force has also correctly identified the need to reform teacher preparation programs if we are to develop highly effective professionals. CCER supports all of these policy ideas.

Finally, while we're investing in our students and our educators, we also need to maximize learning time and extend it. Like the Task Force, CCER is extremely supportive of both the TIME Collaborative and the expanded time initiatives within the Alliance Districts and Commissioner's Network.

The achievement gap in Connecticut is a huge problem that gives our low-income and minority students an unfair disadvantage, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty. We are proud to be working with this Task Force and other stakeholders to narrow this deplorable gap. We know that it will take dedication, prioritization, and collaboration, to solve this problem. Our children deserve nothing less.