

Testimony in Response to the Achievement Gap Task Force Call for High-Leverage Strategies to Address the Opportunity Gap in Connecticut

Robert Cotto, Ed.M.
Achievement Gap Task Force
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Co-Chair Senator Toni N. Harp, Co-Chair Dr. Miguel Cardona and distinguished Members of the Achievement Gap Task Force

My name is Robert Cotto, Jr. and I am a Senior Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children. I am also a former teacher here in Connecticut and an elected member of the Hartford Board of Education. I testify today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families. **Connecticut Voices for Children recommends a balanced and broad approach to public schools that support all children's learning and well-being.** We submit three principles that we believe ought to guide the task force and are particularly beneficial to Connecticut's most vulnerable children and families.

Our three principles are:

1. *Approaches to address disparities in achievement should be based on the best research and evidence available, particularly in the indicators that we use to define achievement.*
2. *Our public schools should continue to serve a broad number of educational goals and serve all children's learning and development.*
3. *Enhancing student learning and well-being must take a balanced approach that provides the resources needed for families and students to thrive.*

The indicators that we use to discuss achievement such as standardized test scores, graduation rates, and other student data must be valid and reliable. For example, many studies focus on proficient levels on CMT or NAEP, but this type of data is incomplete. We include evidence in Appendix A and B of vertical scale scores from the CMT's that illustrate how test-score disparities start early and persist. They corroborate what is known about disparities in learning:

We must target resources to reducing disparities in opportunities for cognitive development and learning in early childhood, which is when the achievement gap appears – before most children enter the public school system.¹

These vertical scale scores show a limited, but helpful, picture of how low-income and race matter in where students begin in third grade. But this data also shows that there may be comparable growth between racial and ethnic groups over the course of a year. Importantly, the new information from the CMT shows the need for a variety of reliable assessments and indicators to define achievement that we can use to make valid conclusions about student learning.

¹ Sarah Esty and Cyd Oppenheimer, "Connecticut Early Care and Education Progress Report, 2011," *Connecticut Voices for Children*, (December 2011), available at: http://ctkidslink.org/pub_detail_572.html.

Our schools should continue to provide a broad educational program that serves all children's learning and development. The goals may include, but are not limited to, academic skills, critical thinking, the arts and literature, preparation for skilled work, social skills and work ethic, citizenship, and emotional health.²

Of particular concern is the need to keep all kids in schools. For instance, exclusionary disciplinary policies, unregulated alternative schools, and non-compliance with truancy laws are all examples of ways that schools "push out" students from public schooling. In addition to reporting and collecting accurate data on suspension, truancy, and attrition in high school; particular focus and attention should be paid to the importance of skills developed in pre-adolescence,³ the flexibility of high schools to personalize their programs for struggling students,⁴ and the opportunities for employment and post-secondary education that are open to students.⁵

Trends in the long-term NAEP show that the racial and ethnic minority test-score gap decreased in the 1970's and 1980's. Over the past sixty years, the test-score gap between low-income and high-income students has widened.⁶ The decrease in disparities in achievement for racial groups and increase in disparities between income groups are complex and interrelated. Increase in opportunity for racial and ethnic minorities appear to explain part of the gap closing in past decades.⁷

Achievement indicators are summary measures of school, home, personal, and community factors.⁸ Therefore, we must take a balanced approach to schooling that, with community and parent involvement, combines in-school and out-of-school supports for students and families.⁹ The needs of students and families with low-income must be addressed in combination with any new educational program.

Please see our attached recommendations with background information for further detail and elaboration.

Sincerely,
Robert Cotto, Jr., Ed.M.

Connecticut Voices for Children's Written Recommendations in Response to the Achievement Gap Task Force Call for High-Leverage Strategies to Address the Opportunity

² Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder. *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*. Economic Policy Institute; Washington, D.C. Teachers College Press; New York, NY: 2008. See Chapter 2 on "Weighting the public education."

³ Harris, Angel L. *Kids Don't Want To Fail: Oppositional Culture and the Black-White Gap*. Harvard University Press; Cambridge, MA; 2011." Kindle edition. See Harris location 2288 of 3588 where he stated, "black youth want to learn they simply are not acquiring the skills necessary for academic success. I show that academic preparation prior to high school is more important for blacks achievement relative to whites than their schooling behaviors during high school."

⁴ Laura McCargar, "Invisible Students: The Role of Alternative and Adult Education in the Connecticut School-to-Prison Pipeline," *A Better Way Foundation and The Connecticut Pushout Research and Organizing Project*, (December 2011), available at: <http://ctprop.org/>. See pages 60 – 61.

⁵ Bartlett, Lesley and Garcia, Ofelia. *Additive Schooling in Subtractive Times: Bilingual Education and Dominican Immigrant Youth in the Heights*. Vanderbilt University Press; Nashville, TN: 2011. Print. See Chapter on "Lessons Learned" particularly on the school-to work-transition on page 244.

⁶ Reardon, Sean F. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and The Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." *Whither Opportunity?* Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, editors. Russell Sage Foundation; New York, New York: 2011. Print. See page 98, Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4.

⁷ Magnuson, Katherine A. and Waldfogel, Jane. *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*. Russell Safe Foundation; New York, NY: 2008.

⁸ Harris location 2144 of 3588. Kindle Edition.

⁹ See Rothstein 171 – 172. Also see Brighthouse, Harry and Schouten, Gina. "Understanding the Context for Existing Reform and Research Proposals" in *Whither Opportunity?*

Gap in Connecticut

1. *Approaches to address disparities in achievement should be based on the best research and evidence available, particularly in the indicators that we use to define achievement.*

Recommendations:

- a. A variety of indicators should be used to define achievement, including authentic assessment of student learning. It will be more helpful to see “growth” as indicated by authentic assessments such as in-class student work, portfolios, student performances, and internal assessments.¹⁰ Discontinue using the “proficient” cut score as a benchmark or target, and instead analyze distributional changes or vertical scale scores on standardized tests.¹¹ Test score analysis should be risk-adjusted to compare schools with similar demographics and differential starting points.
- b. The Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test, while useful as a measure of basic academic skills in English, should be detached from punitive consequences and rewards in order to improve the reliability of the data.¹² Alternate assessments for students with disabilities should be carefully reported and regulated.
- c. Target resources to reducing disparities in opportunities for cognitive development and learning in early childhood, which is when the achievement gap appears – before most children enter the public school system.¹³

Background:

Disparities in test scores between socioeconomic groups, known commonly as the achievement gap, are frequently measured by standardized test scores such as the NAEP, CMT, or CAPT. Princeton professor Angel Harris states that, “achievement is essentially a summary measure representing a collection of contributing effects from various factors, some based on personal, home, school, and neighborhood characteristics.”¹⁴ Achievement, as measured by standardized test scores do indeed reflect the impact of teachers and schools, they are also influenced by a number of other factors. Therefore, without controlling for other variables (such as preschool experience and poverty) and considering growth over time, test scores are not a reliable; and therefore are a limited measure of school performance.

¹⁰ Valenzuela et. al. *Leaving Children Behind: How “Texas Style” Accountability Fails Latino Youth*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005. Print.

¹¹ Ho, Andrew Dean. “The Problem With “Proficiency: Limitations of Statistics and Policy Under No Child Left Behind.” *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 37, No. 6 (2008): pp. 351-360. Web. 27 Sept. 2011.

¹² Koretz, Daniel. *Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. Print. See page for 237 for a discussion on Campbell’s Law in social science and the concept of corruption of measures.

¹³ Sarah Esty and Cyd Oppenheimer, “Connecticut Early Care and Education Progress Report, 2011,” *Connecticut Voices for Children*, (December 2011), available at: http://ctkidslink.org/pub_detail_572.html

¹⁴ Harris location 2144 of 3588. *Kindle* Edition.

In the 1970's and 1980's, NAEP scores between white and minority students converged - in.¹⁵ In other words, the achievement gap began to close substantially. Since then, disparities between white and minority students have remained steady while overall test scores on the NAEP have improved for **all groups**. Racial and ethnic minorities' improvement in access to education, employment, and housing, and economic opportunity helps explain a portion of the closing gap, yet multiple studies have been unable to determine a complete explanation for the decrease in disparities.¹⁶ Likewise, scholars are not entirely sure why disparities in the NAEP have remained flat after the period of convergence.¹⁷

For cohorts born after 1943, the gap in results for low-income and high-income students on a variety of indicators such as NAEP has **widened**.¹⁸ Again, there is no definitive answer for this growth in disparities between low-income and high-income students. Yet, the **importance of parent's income in their ability to support early childhood cognitive development** is gaining more attention as a possible factor in this widening achievement gap between economic groups.¹⁹

Vertical scale scores on the CMT also demonstrate the interaction of race and income in the achievement gap. This data set is very crude and limited, but it is the only matched cohort data set available to the public to supplement other information.²⁰

This data set illustrates that minority and low-income students **start out**, on average, lower on the scale than their white and more affluent students in the third grade. However, black, Latino, and low-income students, **on average, experience a comparable amount of growth within the following year as compared to** the statewide average, the average for students paying full price lunch, and the average for white students.²¹

In other words, CMT "growth" improved for all students at roughly the same rate. The test-score gap appears to be largely a function of the fact that low-income and minority students on average start out their early years at lower point. Of note, Black and Latino students who pay full price lunch also **start out at a substantially higher point** than their low-income counterparts.

¹⁵ Reardon, Sean F. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and The Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." *Whither Opportunity?* Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, editors. Russell Sage Foundation; New York, New York: 2011. Print. See page 98, Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4.

¹⁶ See Reardon 110. Also see Barton, Paul E. and Coley, Richard J. "The Black-White Achievement Gap: When Progress Stopped." Educational Testing Service; Princeton, NJ; 2010. On page 8, Burton cites Grissmer's study on the impact of changing family demographics for Black students. He also mentions that historic trends in class size reduction as well as desegregation may have a role in the closing of test disparities. Also see Magnuson, Katherine A. and Waldfogel, Jane. *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*. Russell Sage Foundation; New York, NY: 2008.

¹⁷ See Barton 2, Figure 1 and 2.

¹⁸ See Reardon 96, Figure 5.1 and 5.2.

¹⁹ See Reardon 111. Also see Magnuson, K. and Waldfogel, J. "How is Family Income Related to Investments in Children's Learning." *Whither Opportunity?* Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, editors. Russell Sage Foundation; New York, New York: 2011. Print. 193.

²⁰ eMetric. *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation*. "CT Mastery Test Vertical Scales Interpretive Guide 2009." CT Department of Education, 2011. Web. 15 Aug. 2011.

<<http://solutions1.emetric.net/cmtpublic/UI/Guides/VSInterpretativeGuide.pdf>> The vertical scales are only available for math and reading. Cohorts decreased in size between 2009 and 2010 because of the shift of students from the standard CMT to the modified assessment system. This shift may have affected changes in vertical scales for the standard CMT in math and reading. The State Department of Education warns, "Vertical scale scores (like all other CMT scores) are based on the performance of individual students on the day of testing. When interpreting growth, care should be taken not to base important educational decisions solely on vertical scale results. CMT results can best be used in conjunction with classroom assessments and classroom work to identify potential strengths and needs of students in the content areas assessed."

²¹ eMetric. *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation*. "Vertical Scale Analysis Report-Grade 3, 2009 – Grade 4, 2010-Mathematics and Reading." Disaggregated by Ethnicity and F/R Meals. CT Department of Education, 2011. Web. 6 January 2011. <<http://solutions1.emetric.net/cmtpublic/Default.aspx>> See Appendix A and B.

The test score data has limitations and must be further explored.²² This pattern on the CMT mirrors other studies that show a great part of disparities in test scores happen before students begin in the early years.²³ In fairness, vertical scale scores also demonstrate how multiple source of evidence and indicators must be used to develop a holistic definition of achievement.

The research suggests income may be an important proxy for the types of opportunities that families are able to provide their children for early cognitive development. Disparities in test scores start early and persist over time. **The evidence supports targeting resources to reducing extreme disparities in income and opportunities for early childhood cognitive development and learning, including increased access to quality early care and education programs for children from birth to age five.**

High quality early care and education experiences have been shown to be powerful counters to risk factors - such as poverty, neglect/abuse, and limited parental education – which cause children to enter kindergarten at a disadvantage from which they never recover. Despite the clear evidence to its benefit, less than 14% of infants and toddlers in struggling families receive a subsidy for early care and education. While the numbers are better for preschoolers, one in four in struggling families still lack access to subsidies that would make early care and education more affordable.²⁴ The state must invest more resources to increase access to subsidized early care and education and improve the quality of that care. Furthermore, the state must be sure that any plans to raise the age of kindergarten entrance do not leave children newly ineligible to begin kindergarten – particularly at-risk children whose parents are least able to afford preschool – without a quality educational experience for an extra year, increasing the likelihood they begin kindergarten further behind.

2. *Our public schools should continue to serve a broad number of educational goals and serve all children's learning and development.*

Recommendations:

- a. Schools should support a broad set of goals to develop student learning and well-being. These goals may include, but are not limited to, academic skills, critical thinking, the arts and literature, preparation for skilled work, social skills and work ethic, citizenship, and emotional health.²⁵
- b. Schools should be responsible for providing engaging, positive, and collaborative school cultures that value student differences and promote learning. Schools should continue to develop curricula that meet the needs and interests of a broad range of students, including those for whom traditional classroom learning is less effective, while also ensuring that all students have the opportunity (and are encouraged) to pursue post-secondary education.

²² Changes in distribution on the standard CMT, possible ceiling effects, and the validity of the term “growth” must be analyzed further.

²³ See Harris location 2204 of 3588, Figure 9.1 *Kindle* edition.

²⁴ Sarah Esty and Cyd Oppenheimer, “Connecticut Early Care and Education Progress Report, 2011,” *Connecticut Voices for Children*, (December 2011), available at: http://ctkidslink.org/pub_detail_572.html

²⁵ Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder. *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*. Economic Policy Institute; Washington, D.C. Teachers College Press; New York, NY: 2008. See Chapter 2 on “Weighting the public education.”

- c. Schools have a responsibility to educate all children. Therefore, they should be encouraged to adopt initiatives that promote a positive school climate and discontinue or substantially revise policies that “push out” students, such as exclusionary discipline, unregulated alternative schools into which students are involuntarily transferred, exiting students out of choice schools, and lack of support for students that leave or are pushed out of high school before graduation. The state should take concerted action to reduce the number of students who leave early or who are pushed out of high school, including students who are counseled into adult education programming.
- d. Districts must collect and report the data necessary to ensure compliance with state law and document progress on reducing disparities in the use of school discipline, truancy, and dropout/graduation rates. The state must collect better data and provide greater oversight over alternative schools and programs, which currently operate with little regulation.
- e. Districts and the state should monitor and ensure that management makes improvements in climate and pays attention to broader concerns about student well-being through inspectorate/accreditation teams, analysis of the use of resources provided by state and local government, close review of student work, and careful development and evaluation of curriculum and professional practice.²⁶
- f. Connecticut should consider reducing testing to only grades 4, 6, 8, and 10. The money from administering these tests could be diverted to develop and support a school accreditation team pilot.

Background:

Our public schools should support children’s learning and well-being. Therefore, Connecticut should commit to meeting a broad range of goals in our public schools. In order to prepare children for adulthood, public schools should attend to students’ basic academic skills, critical thinking, the arts and literature, preparation for skilled work, social skills and work ethic, citizenship, and emotional health.²⁷ Student learning should be evaluated using multiple and authentic assessments. Using a single measure that defines learning narrowly undermines student creativity, talent, initiative, and diversity, to the detriment of our public education system.²⁸

The current policy of evaluating schools only using standardized test score proficiency rates has distorted and narrowed the goals of public education in Connecticut. In a forthcoming paper, we will demonstrate one way the data currently used to indicate school quality--percent at proficient--has become distorted. A shift to excluding students with disabilities from CMT testing in math and

²⁶ Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder. *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*. Economic Policy Institute; Washington, D.C. Teachers College Press; New York, NY: 2008. See Chapter 7 on “School Boards, Accreditation, and Her Majesty’s Inspectors.” Also *see* Valenzuela 12 on Quality Review Boards and *see* Darling-Hammond, Linda. “The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools that Work.” Jossey-Bass; San Francisco, CA. 1997. 285 – 290 on “The School Quality Review.”

²⁷ *See* Rothstein 43.

²⁸ *See* Valenzuela 20.

reading to an alternative test has artificially inflated scores in the state. This distortion in test scores had a disparate impact on cities and towns across the state. More importantly, the exclusion of students with disabilities from the standard CMT has disproportionately affected students of color and those eligible for free or reduced price meals.²⁹ In sum, the evaluation of school performance based merely on standardized test scores may have adversely affected the vulnerable students that it was intended to help.

The growth in vertical scales mentioned above has come at the sacrifice of a well-balanced curriculum. From 2002-2009, Connecticut's second graders have had on average fewer hours of instruction in Computer Education, Health, Language Arts, and Social Studies and more hours in mathematics and foreign language.³⁰ Building basic academic skills in the early years is important for student learning, but efforts to improve struggling student skills should not preclude participation in a well-balanced and broad curriculum. The ability to read and perform more advanced cognitive skills in later grades is interrelated with the background knowledge offered by a balanced curriculum and rich life experiences.³¹ The narrowing of school goals to only basic academic skills has diverted attention away from other important aspects of students learning and well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable students in the state, to their detriment.

In addition to exclusions on the standard CMT, there are a number of areas where other types of students are being "pushed out" from public schools. Exclusionary discipline policies and negative school climates can lead students to drop out or be involved in the juvenile justice system. These policies keep students who are already at risk of academic failure out of the classroom, pushing them further behind, and not addressing the often-present underlying learning difficulties.³² Extensive data show minority students experience disproportionate push-out and exclusionary discipline, exacerbating the disparities in indicators of learning and sending the wrong message to students. Furthermore, preventive measures and non-exclusionary punishments have been found to be more effective in creating a positive learning environment.³³

Finally, our state must do more to keep kids in school. The State Department of Education has still not made publicly available schools' truancy rates despite clear evidence of the link between truancy and dropout and a statutory requirement to do so. Furthermore, the state lacks a mechanism to ensure district administrative compliance with laws requiring meetings between school personnel and parents to reduce truant students' absenteeism.

The unregulated use of alternative schools and Adult Education programs are also concerns. A recent study found that thousands of Connecticut's struggling students have, after being counseled or coerced, left traditional schools and are receiving their education in alternative schools and Adult Education.³⁴ Yet these schools and programs often do not include the state-required number of hours of instruction, lack the full spectrum of course offerings, and do not report student test scores

²⁹ See Viana Turcios-Cotto and Robert Cotto, Jr., "Recalculating School Reform in Hartford, CT," Working Paper Presented at Harvard Graduate School of Education Alumni of Color Conference (March 4, 2011). Paper from CT Voices for Children forthcoming in January 2012.

³⁰ Connecticut State Department of Education. *Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) Data Tables*. "Hours of Instruction by Subject Area-Grade 2." CT Department of Education, 2011. Web. 1 Dec. 2011. <http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/DTHome.aspx>

³¹ Curtis, Mary E. and Longo, Ann Marie. *When Adolescents Can't Read: Methods and Materials That Work*. Brookline Books, Newton, MA: 1999. Also see Stanovich 1986 and Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin 1990.

³² Taby Ali and Alexandra Dufresne, "Missing Out: Suspending Students from Connecticut's Schools," *Connecticut Voices for Children* (August 2008), available at: <http://ctkidslink.org/publications/edu08missingout.pdf>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Laura McCargar, "Invisible Students: The Role of Alternative and Adult Education in the Connecticut School-to-Prison Pipeline," *A Better Way Foundation and The Connecticut Pushout Research and Organizing Project*, (December 2011), available at: <<http://ctprop.org/>>

or graduation rates. The State Department of Education does not have a list of the names and locations of all alternative schools and programs in the state, nor the students who attend them. Adult Education is unequipped and not designed to serve the high-needs population of pushed-out students. Adult Education programs offer GED or Credit Diplomas that research finds to be significantly less valuable than a regular diploma (a fact of which many students and parents are unaware).³⁵

Connecticut has relatively high graduation statistics compared to other states. A 2010 study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that Connecticut was one of 17 states with averaged freshman graduation rates above 80%.³⁶ Recent data released by the CT State Department of Education corroborated the 2010 NCES study using a cohort methodology.³⁷ The newer data also suggested that fewer than half of students graduate in four years at some state high schools, and that district dropout rates can be as much as twice those previously reported.³⁸

Similar to the issue of truancy, reliable and available data on graduation and dropout rates may help support struggling schools and districts, and help us better understand racial, ethnic, and economic disparities in dropout and graduation rates. Particular attention and study should be paid to the importance of skills developed in pre-adolescence,³⁹ the flexibility of high schools to personalize their programs for struggling students,⁴⁰ and the opportunities for employment and post-secondary education that are open to students.⁴¹

One of Connecticut's strengths is a well-educated and experienced group of certified teachers that make a difference in children's learning and well-being. In order to build from this strength, Connecticut must continue enhancing the teaching profession through coherent, meaningful, and fair systems for preparation, development and evaluation.⁴² Teacher evaluation must be related to professional standards. Fair and valid indicators related to student learning and well-being may be a part of these professional standards.

A primary issue is how to develop, support, and retain a diverse cadre of skillful teachers, particularly in the schools with high student need. There is a conspicuous difference in the average pay and experience, in terms of years and education level, of teachers in schools with the highest and lowest test scores.⁴³ Schools with the highest need must have well-prepared and skillful teachers that

³⁵ Bob Rath, Kathryn Rock, and Ashley Laferriere, "The Rise of High School Dropouts in Adult Education: Making the Case for Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age and Expanding Alternative Education Options in Connecticut," *Our Piece of the Pie*, (November 2011), available at: <http://www.opp.org/News/news_docs/The%20Rise%20of%20High%20School%20Dropouts%20in%20Adult%20Education.pdf>

³⁶ Chapman, C., Laird, J., and KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2008* (NCES 2011-012). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved 8 Jan. 2012 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>. See page 12 and 13 for the methodology used for this study.

³⁷ Pryor, Stefan. "Nearly 1 in 5 Connecticut students does not complete high school in five years." *News*, Connecticut State Department of Education. 29 Dec. 2011 Web. Retrieved 7 Jan. 2012 Pg. 1. <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/2011_graduation_rates.pdf>

³⁸ Melissa Bailey, "True Dropout Rates Revealed," *The New Haven Independent*, (December 29, 2011), available at: <http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/dropout_rate/>

³⁹ Also see Harris location 2288 of 3588. *Kindle Edition*. He states, "black youth want learn they simply are not acquiring the skills necessary for academic success. I show that academic preparation prior to high school is more important for blacks achievement relative to whites than their schooling behaviors during high school."

⁴⁰ See McCargar 60 – 61.

⁴¹ See Bartlett and Garcia 244.

⁴² See Darling-Hammond 334-335 for recommendations on teacher professionalism.

⁴³ Connecticut State Department of Education. *Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) Data Tables*. "Staff Report-Demographic Information-General Education Teachers-Average Number of Years of Experience" and "Staff

understand the needs of diverse students and can interact respectfully with families such as the state's growing Latino population.⁴⁴ By enhancing the professional status of teachers, and considering ways to make the profession and conditions attractive, all students will have greater access to skillful teachers that create intellectually stimulating and humane learning environments.

3. *Enhancing student learning and well-being must take a balanced approach that provides the resources needed for families and students to thrive.*

Recommendations:

- a. Schools alone cannot provide everything needed for students to be successful learners and citizens. We must therefore employ a comprehensive approach that works in and out of school to create healthy, stable, and engaged families and students, including through expanded access to wraparound services such as health care.
- b. Indicators for the Educational Cost Sharing grant should be updated in order to support local public schools and the ECS purpose: to align state aid with local need.
- c. Student poverty, particularly when combined with race, is associated with low starting points on the CMT and achievement on the NAEP. The state must intervene to decrease poverty and generate income by developing initiatives in concert with people living in low-income communities.
- d. Funds for Supplemental Education Services (SES) from Title I should be diverted from private tutoring services to other direct supports for students and families.

Background:

Schools and communities are interrelated. Therefore, both in-school and out-of-school approaches should be part of any balanced approach. Regardless of the exact approach to improving schools, communities--including various stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers, and local businesses--should be involved in school improvement and development.⁴⁵

Reports-Salary and FTE Counts-Salary” and “Staff Reports-Experience-Percent First-Year Teachers.” Percent CT Department of Education, 2011. Reports from 2009-2010. Web. Retrieved 31 Aug. 2011. Also *see* ConnCan. "2010 School Rankings: Overall Student Performance." Web. Retrieved 15 Aug. 2011.

<<http://www.conncan.org/learn/reportcards>>. The data from the “School Rankings” calculations are unverified.

⁴⁴ See Harris section on “Teacher Perceptions of Black Youth” location 2165 of 3588. *Kindle* edition. Irizarry et. al. *The Latinization of U.S. Schools: Successful Teaching and Learning in Shifting Cultural Contexts*. Paradigm Publishers; Boulder, CO: 2011. See Chapter 3 on “How Can You Teach Us If You Really Don’t Know Us: Rethinking Resistance in the Classroom” by Jasmine Medina.

⁴⁵ Noguera, Pedro. *The Trouble With Black Boys*. Jossey Bass; San Francisco, CA: 2008. See page 250 of 324, location 4155 of 5901. *Kindle* edition. As Pedro Noguera states, “When parents are respected as partners in the education of their children and when they are provided with organizational support that enables them to channel their interested to the benefit of the school, the entire culture of the organization can be transformed.”

There are likely a series of related in-school and out-school factors that affect achievement as measured by test scores. In Connecticut, a combination of housing as a proxy for school allocation,⁴⁶ the relatively high-cost of housing for low-income families with children,⁴⁷ the diminished purchasing power of low-income parents to support their children’s learning and development,⁴⁸ and the intense residential segregation by income in the state,⁴⁹ may have a role in explaining why Connecticut has such an intense disparity in standardized test measures. Therefore, efforts to reduce racial and economic isolation may also be a part of a balanced approach to provide the constitutional right to an equal public education.

School funding policy should bring together the resources of communities in the state. The Educational Cost Sharing Grant should update its indicators, particularly for wealth and town population.⁵⁰ State ECS funds should continue to support the public education of students that have high need, but live in towns with limited capacity to fund schools through property tax revenue.

Any approach to improving student learning and well-being must take into account the evidence and research on achievement and the importance of race, income, and early childhood cognitive development. Given that income and early childhood cognitive development are related to initial disparities as measured by test scores, resources should target poverty and the resulting disadvantages in the development of low-income children. Communities should be engaged in developing ideas for state initiatives to intervene to reduce poverty. In addition to increasing economic opportunity, the state should invest in pre-birth through early childhood development. In sum, a combination of in-school and out-of-school interventions must guide Connecticut’s broad and balanced approach to addressing the disparities in opportunity in our state.

Appendix A

CMT Reading

⁴⁶ See Part 3 of Jack Dougherty and colleagues. *On The Line: How schooling, housing, and civil rights shaped Hartford and its suburbs*. Web-book preview edition. Hartford, CT: Trinity College, Fall 2011 (<http://OnTheLine.trincoll.edu>). Retrieved 7 Jan. 2012.

⁴⁷ datacenter.kidscount.org. *Kids Count Data Center*. “Children in low-income households where housing costs exceed 30 percent of income (Percent) – 2010.” Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011. Retrieved 30 Dec. 2011. In Connecticut, 78% in low-income households with children have housing costs that exceed 30 percent of income. Original Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2010 American Community Survey.

⁴⁸ Kaushal, Magnuson, and Waldfogel. “How is Family Income Related to Investments in Children’s Learning?” *Whither Opportunity?* Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, editors. Russell Sage Foundation; New York, New York: 2011. Print.

⁴⁹ Bischoff, Kendra and Reardon, Sean F.. “Growth in the Residential Segregation of Families by Income, 1970 – 2009.” Stanford University; Palo Alto, CA. Center for Education Policy Analysis. US 2010 Project: Discover America in a New Century. November 2011. Retrieved 1 Jan. 2012. <<http://cepa.stanford.edu/news/growth-residential-segregation-families-income-1970-2009>>

⁵⁰ Rodriguez, Orlando and Siegel, Jacob. “Problems with Connecticut’s Education Cost Sharing Grant.” *CT Voices for Children*; New Haven, CT. (February 2011). <<http://www.ctkidslink.org/publications/Bud11CTEduCostSharingGrantProblems.pdf>>

Matched-Cohort Vertical Scale Scores by Race and Free/Reduced-Price Meal Status

Universe: CT students enrolled in Grade 3 in 2009 and Grade 4 in 2010

	Grade 3 Average Scale Score	Grade 4 Average Scale Score	Matched Average “Growth”
All Students:			
State	430	457	28
Asian American	445	474	29
Black	402	429	27
Hispanic	400	426	26
Am. Indian	415	446	31
White	441	470	28
F/R Meals:			
State	401	428	27
Asian American	417	444	27
Black	396	422	26
Hispanic	393	418	25
Am. Indian	388	417	29
White	417	445	28
Full Price:			
State	444	472	28
Asian American	454	483	30
Black	420	449	29
Hispanic	425	453	28
Am. Indian	433	465	32
White	446	474	28

Source: eMetric. *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation.*

Appendix B

Matched-Cohort Vertical Scale Scores by Race and Free/Reduced-Price Meal Status

Universe: CT students enrolled in Grade 3 in 2009 and Grade 4 in 2010

	Grade 3 Average Scale Score	Grade 4 Average Scale Score	Matched Average “Growth”
All Students:			
State	457	500	44
Asian American	472	521	49
Black	431	471	40
Hispanic	435	476	40
Am. Indian	445	490	44
White	466	511	45
F/R Meals:			
State	435	475	40
Asian American	457	503	46
Black	425	464	39
Hispanic	430	470	40
Am. Indian	421	463	42
White	448	489	40
Full Price:			
State	468	513	45
Asian American	476	526	50
Black	447	490	43
Hispanic	455	497	42
Am. Indian	463	509	46
White	469	515	45

Source: eMetric. *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation*