



The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education supports advancing the work of the 119k Commission on at-risk and disconnected young people. While the plan involves more than educational issues, we know providing a quality education with mental health supports is vital to retaining students identified as at-risk in middle and high school.

We need to prevent disengagement because reengaging students and families - that is MUCH harder. Connecticut school districts need to sustain programs that engage students and families, like the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program(LEAP). Currently used in just 15 districts, a much broader utilization would, data has shown, reengage more of Connecticut's students and families. Attendance increases when families have had home visits from a member of district staff, up 4% in districts in the month immediately following a visit all the way to the outstanding 30% increase Hartford had at the sixth month mark following their implementation of LEAP.

In schools, the academic supports of tutors and tiered/targeted interventions rely on educators having time and professional development to utilize data and time to be the adult in the building that forms a relationship that keeps a student happy to return the next day.

Increasing the diversity of educators is a vital need, Connecticut's student as a whole are more diverse, the education workforce should reflect the need for students to have a diverse education staff so that they may see themselves, perhaps one day, as educators.

Educators need support to provide their best efforts, as we respect and provide for growth in their professional career, we are increasing an overall positive culture in each school.

State grants to retain and hire more mental health staff in schools are now seen as necessary in these early post COVID years and yet across Connecticut, some districts have had better results to, to use the term, "build them into their

budgets.” When this need is so vital, there shouldn’t be a disparity in providing a known solution across the state.

Schools can’t do the work of educating the whole child alone. They need to have public and private partners in their communities providing support services - mental health, housing stability and food security. Summer food programs, museum and park programs and local recreation opportunities can keep students thriving and ready to begin anew in September. More mental health providers with greater access is also a need. Some communities have joined together to provide emergency mental health services.

Before high school students graduate, districts are doing more to provide career exposure. As skills become something a student is proficient at, their confidence builds and their engagement in the classroom can provide interest in attaining more educational experiences in immediate work study, apprenticeships, and part time jobs. They become lifelong learners.

In order for Connecticut’s students to be provided the best education, the system in our state has to be equitable across the board, while taking into account local beliefs and cultures. Education and the engagement of young people is an investment, not an expenditure and we need to change that mind set, we need the political will. As local and state budgets are proposed, debated and especially as they are presented to the community for adoption, the utilization of public funding to educate students should be considered an asset in a community and a tremendous opportunity to shape its future.



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