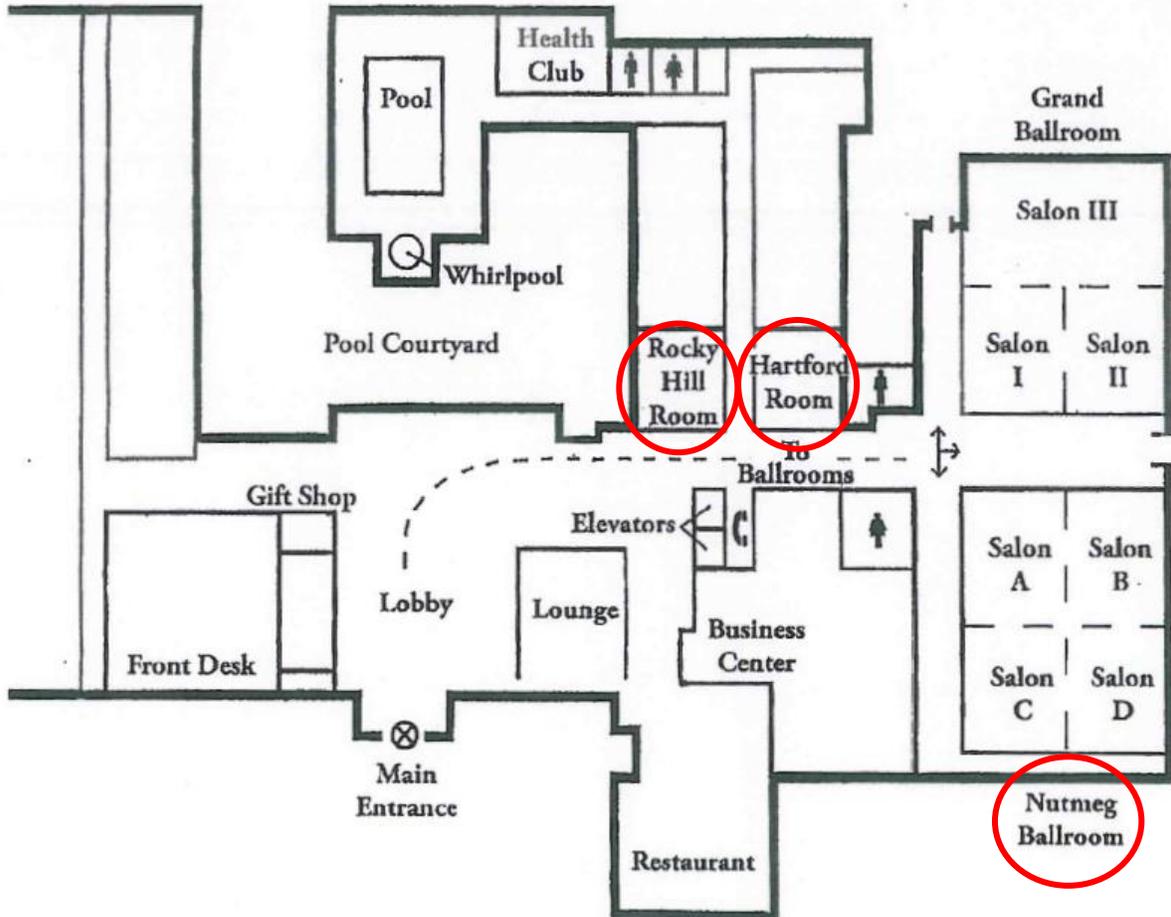


Engaging the Disengaged Learner

AGENDA

8:25 AM	Introductory Remarks (Nutmeg Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jeffrey Villar, Executive Director, CCER • Dr. Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director, CAS
8:30 AM	Keynote - Inspiring Students: Bringing Awe Back to Learning (Nutmeg Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric Shenerger
9:30 AM	Break
9:40 AM	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Schools That Work for Kids (Nutmeg Ballroom) • Measuring Learning with Inquiry (Hartford Room) • Panel – Collaborations that Create Comprehensive Programs to Re-engage Students at Risk (Rocky Hill Room)
10:40 AM	Break
10:50 AM	Keynote – Improving Student Engagement and Achievement (Nutmeg Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Douglas Reeves
11:50 AM	Lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Lunch (Nutmeg Ballroom) • UCCI Working Lunch (Connecticut Suite)—Pre-Registration Only
12:30 PM	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing Chronic Absenteeism (Nutmeg Ballroom) • The Question of Time – Reimagining School Schedules (Hartford Room) • School-Business Partnerships: Keys to Successful Engagement and Creating Opportunities for Underserved Youth (Rocky Hill Room)
1:30 PM	Break
1:40 PM	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Un-Conference” – Your Choice of Small Group Expert Consultation (Nutmeg Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Session A: <i>Wrap Around Services, Taking Away the Barriers to Student Engagement!</i> (Kathleen Cote, Norwich Free Academy) - Session B: <i>Programming and Scheduling for True Student-Centered Learning</i> (Diana Laufenberg, Inquiry Schools) - Session C: <i>School-Based Diversion Initiative</i> (Dr. Jeana Bracey, Child Health and Development Institute) - Session D: <i>Academy of Engineering and Green Technology-School-Business Partnerships</i> (Andrea Comer, CBIA, Michael Maziarz, Hartford's Academy of Engineering & Green Technology) • University of California Curriculum Integration, High School Core Academics with Real-World Expectations (Hartford Room) • Discussion – Changing Legislation Around Families with Service Needs (Rocky Hill Room)

SITE MAP: SHERATON HARTFORD SOUTH HOTEL



Presented by:



* For those who registered for the UCCI Working Lunch with Sarah Fidelibus, the Connecticut Suite is located on the second floor of the hotel.

SESSIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Keynote – Inspiring Students: Bringing Awe Back to Learning

Speaker: Eric Sheninger

Nutmeg Ballroom – 8:30 AM

Awe is a huge component of life—it's hardwired in our brains. When we experience the sensation of awe, we are consumed by wonder, relevancy, emotion, engagement, inspiration, and real-world connections. Awe is a driving force for learning that will not just benefit our students now, but also well into their future. However, traditional views and functions of school deprive many students from experiencing the joy and power of awe as a catalyst for meaningful learning. During this keynote, Eric will share innovative, research-based practices that you can implement to bring back a sense of awe to learning.

Breakout Session: Creating Schools That Work for Kids

Speaker: Eric Sheninger

Nutmeg Ballroom – 9:40 AM

Schools have traditionally been designed to work well for adults, but the conventional school design hasn't always served our learners. Students today need to be empowered to take ownership of their learning in relevant and meaningful ways to prepare them for a constantly evolving world. This session will explore how to cultivate shared ownership, respect, and trust, creating a school learning culture that students value and to which they want to belong in the digital age. Attendees will be exposed to a variety of successful strategies and initiatives implemented at schools with a focus on the purposeful integration of technology, a redefinition of learning spaces, personalized learning, and the whole child.

Breakout Session: Measuring Learning with Inquiry

Speaker: Diana Laufenberg

Hartford Room – 9:40 AM

Using an inquiry-based approach to learning is exciting and engaging for students and teachers alike. Many people understand the initial stages of inquiry which include curiosity, questioning and investigation, but are often left wondering about the later stages of this approach to learning. Join Diana to discuss the ways to both formatively and summatively measure student learning using an inquiry-based approach.

Breakout Panel: Collaborations that Create Comprehensive Programs to Re-engage Students at Risk

**Speakers: Dr. Michael Wasta, Kathleen Cote,
Dr. Jeana Bracey, Sherry McLaughlin**

Rocky Hill Room – 9:40 AM

Through a panel discussion format, participants will learn about three different approaches designed to increase the engagement of at-risk high school students by meeting their academic, emotional, social, and health care needs within school settings. The panelists represent Sachem School—the alternative school of the Norwich Free Academy, the Grade 9 Transition Program at the Meriden Public Schools, and the School-Based Diversion Initiative. They will discuss specifics regarding student selection and enrollment, instructional strategies, tips for family engagement, collaborations with outside agencies, and implementation data on the success of these initiatives. These comprehensive, innovative programs are keeping students on track for college and careers and keeping students out of the “school to prison pipeline.”

Keynote - Improving Student Engagement and Achievement

Speaker: Dr. Douglas Reeves

Nutmeg Ballroom – 10:50 AM

Building on research in 50 states and more than 25 countries, Dr. Douglas Reeves will address how educational leaders at every level can improve student engagement and achievement. His presentation will include the following highlights:

- Technology and human interaction - finding the balance
- Appropriate risk-taking in school and among friends
- Gender differences in response to stress and anxiety
- Avoiding the demotivators - toxic grading practices
- Engaging teachers, parents, and community
- Creativity in a standards-based world

Breakout Session: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

**Speakers: Charlene Russell-Tucker,
Kari Sullivan, Laura Downs**

Nutmeg Ballroom – 12:30 PM

Preview the newly released publication co-authored by Attendance Works and the Connecticut State Department of Education entitled, *Prevention and Intervention Guide on How to Prevent Chronic Absences*. The document will provide you with practical ideas to implement immediately in your schools to reduce chronic absenteeism. Presenters will walk you through the guide, which also highlights Connecticut success stories in reducing chronic absenteeism.

Breakout Session: The Question of Time – Reimagining School Schedules

Speaker: Diana Laufenberg

Hartford Room – 12:30 PM

Time is a major factor for all things education—there is not enough to get to all the standards, there aren't enough minutes in the day for teacher prep/PD, how do we get all the students lunch before 2:00 PM. One of the largest drivers in a school experience is the schedule. It is also one of the least innovative pieces of the school experience. Join Diana to discuss a variety of approaches and models of school schedules to meet the educational mission and vision of your educational setting.

Breakout Session: School-Business Partnerships: Keys to Successful Engagement and Creating Opportunities for Underserved Youth

Speakers: Andrea Comer, Michael Maziarz

Rocky Hill Room – 12:30 PM

Andrea Comer, Executive Director of CBIA's Education Workforce Partnership, and Michael Maziarz, Principal at Hartford's Academy of Engineering and Green Technology, will share how progressive school leadership and meaningful business engagement can unlock student potential and close the workforce skills gap. This session will inform attendees about establishing mentoring and internship opportunities, addressing the unique challenges facing disengaged youth, and using student-centered learning as an empowerment tool.

**“Un-Conference” Breakout Session:
Your Choice of Small Group Expert Consultation
Nutmeg Ballroom – 1:40 PM**

You set your own agenda! Meet the experts in an informal setting and consult with them about your implementation questions or learn more about their specialty area. Participants may rotate from expert to expert to maximize the use of their team planning time.

- Session A: Wrap Around Services, Taking Away the Barriers to Student Engagement!
(Kathleen Cote, Norwich Free Academy)
- Session B: Programming and Scheduling for True Student-Centered Learning
(Diana Laufenberg, Inquiry Schools)
- Session C: School-Based Diversion Initiative
(Dr. Jeana Bracey, Child Health and Development Institute)
- Session D: Academy of Engineering and Green Technology-School-Business Partnerships
(Andrea Comer, CBIA, Michael Maziarz, Hartford’s Academy of Engineering & Green Technology)

**Breakout Session: University of California Curriculum Integration,
High School Core Academics with Real-World Expectations**

Speaker: Sarah Fidelibus

Hartford Room – 1:40 PM

Learn about the innovative and engaging curriculums developed to integrate Career Technical Education content and skills with solid academic content. Discover over 60 high interest standards-based curriculums including; Game Craft: English 10 with Game Development, Chemistry and Agri-Science, and Functional Design through Algebra, available for free and aligned to the Common Core State Standards!!!

Discussion: Changing Legislation Around Families with Service Needs

Speakers: Laura Downs, Erica Bromley

Rocky Hill Room – 1:40 PM

Soon, court will no longer be an option for students who are truant. Across the country and in Connecticut, there is growing recognition that Juvenile Court is not the appropriate venue for behavioral issues such as truancy. Research and best practice indicate that any involvement with the juvenile justice system has more negative than positive impact. PA 16-147 *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee* eliminates a child being a truant, habitual truant, or continuously and overtly defying school rules and regulations from permissible grounds for filing a Families With Service Needs (FWSN), effective August 15, 2017. In this interactive session, participants will have an opportunity to discuss the efficacy of court interventions to reengage disengaged students, and share local innovations that have had an impact. They will also learn about proposed legislation to establish a community-based diversion system focused on identifying and addressing the underlying needs/symptoms of a child’s negative behavior, putting earlier intervention supports in place and diverting children from state agency intervention.

SPEAKERS BIOS

Eric Sheninger, Keynote



Eric Sheninger is a Senior Fellow and Thought Leader on Digital Leadership with the International Center for Leadership in Education and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Through practitioner-driven, professional learning solutions focused on leading and learning in the digital age, Sheninger assists school leaders in embracing and effectively utilizing technology to move schools and districts forward. As principal of New Milford High School, Sheninger oversaw the successful implementation of several sustainable change initiatives that radically transformed the learning culture at his school while increasing achievement. New Milford High became a globally recognized model for innovative practices under his tenure. His efforts to implement technology as a mechanism for transforming teaching, learning and community engagement has led to the formation of the Pillars of Digital Leadership, a framework for all educators to initiate sustainable change to transform school cultures. Sheninger was named to the NSBA "20 to Watch" list for technology leadership in 2010 and TIME Magazine identified his handle as one of the 140 Best Twitter Feeds in 2014. His blog, A Principals' Reflections, was named as Best School Administrator Blog in 2011 and 2013 by Edublogs. He received his Master's of Education in Educational Administration from East Stroudsburg University, Bachelor of Science in Biology from Salisbury University, and Bachelor of Science in Marine and Environmental Science from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Sessions: Inspiring Students: Bringing Awe Back to Learning (8:30 AM - Nutmeg Ballroom)
Breakout – Creating Schools That Work for Kids (9:40 AM - Nutmeg Ballroom)

Dr. Douglas Reeves, Keynote



Dr. Reeves is the author of more than 30 books and 90 articles on educational leadership and student achievement. Twice named to the Harvard University Distinguished Authors Series, Doug received the Contribution to the Field Award from the National Staff Development Council and the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Dr. Reeves was named the Brock International Laureate for his contributions to education. Doug's volunteer service includes assisting doctoral candidates around the world at FinishTheDissertation.org and supporting disabled veterans through the publication *The SNAFU Review*. He blogs at

CreativeLeadership.net, Tweets @DouglasReeves, and texts from 1.781.710.9633.

Session: Improving Student Engagement and Achievement (10:50 AM - Nutmeg Ballroom)

Dr. Jeana Bracey, Director of School and Community Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute



Jeana Bracey is Director of School and Community Initiatives at CHDI. She oversees several school and community-based systems development activities and has experience in school-based mental health, juvenile justice diversion, cultural and linguistic competency development, and program implementation and evaluation. Jeana's work focuses on developing effective systems, policies, and best practices to improve behavioral health outcomes for children, youth, and families through school-family-community partnerships. Currently she coordinates the CT School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI), a program jointly funded and overseen by the

Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division, the CT Department of Children and Families, the State Department of Education, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. SBDI is designed to reduce school-based arrests and to divert youth with behavioral health needs away from the juvenile justice system and into appropriate community-based services and supports. Jeana also directs the Connecticut Network of Care Transformation (CONNECT), a four-year initiative funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), where she oversees planning and implementation of an integrated statewide Network of Care for children's behavioral health. While she officially joined the CHDI staff in July 2011, Jeana has worked with CHDI since 2008 through her predoctoral internship and postdoctoral fellowship at The Consultation Center at Yale University. She earned her PhD in Clinical/Community Psychology in 2010 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Sessions: Collaborations that Create Comprehensive Programs to
Re-engage Students at Risk (9:40 AM – Rocky Hill Room)
"Unconference" Breakout Session (1:40 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)

Erica Bromley, Juvenile Justice Liaison, CT Youth Services Association



Erica Bromley, MSW, is currently the CT Youth Services Association (CYSA) Juvenile Justice Liaison. She is a consultant for CYSA and the owner of KADE Consulting. She has experience in the Juvenile Justice sector and with the Youth Service Bureau system, having been a director in two different towns for a total of over 15 years. Erica has had extensive involvement in the field of Juvenile Justice and Diversion, as well as with advocacy at the local, state and federal levels. She has worked closely with the CT General Assembly on several projects and regularly advocates for CYSA, YSBs, and for Juvenile Justice reform. She is a trained Results Based Accountability (RBA) trainer and has also been trained in Facilitative Leadership. In 2016, she co-authored the Juvenile Review Board Policies and Procedures Guide, which recently received its copyright. She has done extensive work with Chronic Absence and Truancy intervention and reform. Erica is currently a member of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC), a legislatively bound committee working on strengthening the Juvenile Justice system and state level policy across CT. She is also the Co-Chair of its Diversion Workgroup. She is a member of the CT Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) Steering Team and a member of the CT Kids Report Card, run through the Legislature's Children's Committee, and is the liaison to the Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group. In May of 2016, Erica received an executive certificate in Juvenile Diversion from Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy and is now a Georgetown Fellow. Erica graduated with her MSW from Springfield College School of Social

Work and from Hobart and William Smith Colleges with a BA in Psychology and Education. She resides in Hebron with her son and husband, and serves on the Hebron Board of Education as the Board Chair.

Session: Changing Legislation Around Families with Service Needs

(1:40-2:40 PM – Rocky Hill Room)

Andrea Comer, Executive Director, CBIA Education & Workforce Partnership



Andrea Comer serves as Executive Director of the CBIA Education & Workforce Partnership, overseeing the organization's education and workforce development initiatives. Prior to joining CBIA, Andrea served as Chief Development Officer for an education management organization, and has also worked in various roles in government and philanthropy. Andrea currently serves on the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission and on the boards of the CT United Way, the Hartford Public Library, the Urban League of Greater Hartford, and Teach for America Connecticut. Andrea was an award-winning writer for the Hartford Courant and has volunteered with countless campaigns and organizations. Her service to the community has been recognized by the CT Commission on Children, 100 Women of Color, Hartford Enterprise Zone Business Association, the YMCA, the Urban League, and the CT NAACP, which named her one of the 100 Most Influential Blacks in the State.

Sessions: School-Business Partnerships: Keys to Successful Engagement and Creating Opportunities for Underserved Youth (12:30 PM – Rocky Hill Room)

"Unconference" Breakout Session (1:40 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)

Kathleen Cote, Principal, Sachem Campus at Norwich Free Academy



Kathleen Cote is the principal of Sachem Campus, the alternative program at Norwich Free Academy. Sachem Campus was designed for students who exhibit a high likelihood of dropping out of high school, and the program is on the leading edge of providing wraparound services. Before Sachem Campus, Kathleen was the Director of School Counseling in Region 18, and a school counselor at Lyme-Old Lyme High School and Weston High School. She started her career as a Chapter One reading teacher with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in English from the College of the Holy Cross, a Master's Degree in School Counseling from Fairfield University, and a Sixth year in Educational Leadership from Sacred Heart University. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Nationally Certified Counselor. She lives in Norwich with her husband, Joe, and their three children: Patrick, Joseph, and Julia.

Sessions: Collaborations that Create Comprehensive Programs to Re-engage Students at Risk (9:40 AM – Rocky Hill Room)

"Unconference" Breakout Session (1:40 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)

Laura Downs, Senior Fellow, Attendance Works



Laura Downs serves as a Senior Fellow for Attendance Works, a national organization focused on providing technical assistance to school districts and state departments of education on improving attendance and reducing chronic absence. The technical assistance focuses on building the capacity of schools to: establish Student Attendance Teams; unpack data to understand the extent of the chronic absence problem; craft individual and systemic interventions; and facilitate peer exchanges within and across school districts. Ms. Downs is also the president of Morrison Downs Associates, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in community and system change initiatives for children, youth and families; non-profit organizational capacity building; and strategic planning. She recently lead a strategic planning process for the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC) charged with increasing diversion and reducing incarceration and recidivism for justice-involved youth. Ms. Downs was an Assistant Regional Program Director for the Department of Children and Families; a Senior Associate with the Annie E. Casey Foundation; the Director of Programs for the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven; and a Senior Associate for several national consulting firms.

Sessions: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism (12:30 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)
Changing Legislation Around Families with Service Needs (1:40 PM – Rocky Hill Room)

Sarah Fidelibus, Programs Director, University of California Curriculum Integration



Sarah Fidelibus is Programs Director for University of California Curriculum Integration (UCCI). Her professional background includes teaching at all levels of public education: high school, community college, and four-year university at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, Sarah has worked as a communications freelancer, leading social media training for journalists and providing website content management services for various organizations. She has also written for online publications including Poynter, the San Francisco Appeal, and SF Public Press. She lives and works in the Bay Area.

Session: University of California Curriculum Integration, High School Core Academics with Real-World Expectations
(11:50 PM Connecticut Suite – Pre-Registration Only)
(1:40 PM Hartford Room – Breakout Session)

Diana Laufenberg, Executive Director, Inquiry Schools



For 16 years Diana was a secondary social studies teacher in Wisconsin, Kansas, Arizona, and Pennsylvania. She most recently taught at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, an inquiry-driven, project-based high school focused on modern learning. Her practice has deep roots in experiential education, taking students from the classroom to the real world and back again. Prior to her work in Philadelphia, she was an active member of the teaching community in Flagstaff, AZ, where she was named

Technology Teacher of the Year for Arizona and a member of the Governor's Master Teacher Corps. Diana was featured on TED.com for her "How to Learn? From Mistakes" and recognized for earning National Board Certification. Her publications include a featured piece on the New York Times Learning

blog, co-authoring a chapter in an educational leadership book, and an article in the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy. In 2013, Diana Laufenberg partnered with Chris Lehmann to start Inquiry Schools, a non-profit organization working to create and support student centered learning environments that are inquiry-driven, project-based, and utilize modern technology. She currently serves as the Executive Director for Inquiry Schools and lives in West-Central Wisconsin. You can follow her on twitter at @dlaufenberg

Sessions: Measuring Learning with Inquiry (9:40 AM – Hartford Room)

The Question of Time – Reimagining School Schedules (12:30 PM – Hartford Room)

Michael Maziarz, Executive Principal, Academy of Engineering and Green Technology



Michael Maziarz has focused the last 10 plus years of education work on the transformation of low performing urban schools in Hartford, CT. He was a teacher at Hartford Public High School, and later the Dean of Students at two academies. He is currently in his fifth year as Principal of the Academy of Engineering and Green Technology, and has recently taken on the role of Executive Principal, overseeing multiple schools, including the Academy of Nursing and Health Sciences. Michael has accelerated the school's National Academy Foundation Model by developing an Advisory Board of local business partners aligned to the school's theme, infusing a rigorous project-based learning curriculum, and providing students with paid internships and work-based learning experiences at partner companies like United Technologies, Pratt & Whitney, and CBIA. Under his leadership, the school has been nationally recognized for its student-centered, project-based learning work and has received numerous awards and accolades.

Sessions: School-Business Partnerships: Keys to Successful Engagement and Creating Opportunities for Underserved Youth (12:30 PM – Rocky Hill Room)

"Unconference" Breakout Session (1:40 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)

Sherry McLaughlin, Supervisor of Data Integration and Post-Secondary Planning Meriden Public Schools



As a former School Counselor and Director of School Counseling, Sherry currently serves as the Supervisor of Data Integration and Postsecondary Planning for Meriden Public Schools. In this capacity, Sherry leads a team of 20 secondary school counselors supporting all students in pursuing their college, career, and life goals. In addition to supervising the school counselors, Sherry also oversees Success Academy, a relatively new high school program for students who struggle in the traditional high school setting. Sherry's role focuses on helping all students achieve their full potential and experience successful transitions to and through high school. Under Sherry's leadership, Meriden has expanded AP/ECE enrollment, initiated a Grade 8 to 9 Summer Bridge Program, strengthened advisory and college access programming, increased community and higher education partnerships and created a new Grade 9 Transition program for at-risk freshmen. In 2016, Sherry was recognized as Connecticut's School Counseling Supervisor of the Year.

Session: Panel - Collaborations that Create Comprehensive Programs to Re-engage Students at Risk (9:40 AM – Rocky Hill Room)

Dr. Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of Connecticut Association of Schools



Dr. Karissa Niehoff began her career in Connecticut public education in 1989 as a physical education instructor at Greenwich High School. In 1993, she joined the staff of Litchfield High School where, over the course of six years, she taught Personal Wellness and Latin and served as the K-12 Wellness/Exercise Science Department Coordinator and as athletic director. In 2000, Karissa was appointed assistant principal of Har-Bur Middle School in Burlington. Four years later, she assumed the position of principal of Lewis Mills High School, a post she held until being named Deputy Executive Director of CAS-CIAC in 2010. In 2011 she succeeded Michael H. Savage as CAS-CIAC's Executive Director. A sports enthusiast, Karissa served for four years on the Education Committee of the United States Olympic Committee, authoring the "OlympiKids School Celebration Guide," acting as U.S. delegate to International Olympic Academies in Greece and Canada, and representing the USOC at numerous national conventions, conferences, and educational programs. In 1997, she coached a girls' basketball team at the World Scholar Athlete Games, which involved over 2,000 coaches and athletes from 150 countries. Karissa has led forums on topics such as NEASC standards and the accreditation process, Professional Learning Communities, block scheduling, literacy development, using student performance data to drive program development, brain research, curriculum mapping, and legislative issues.

Session: Welcoming Remarks (8:25 AM - Nutmeg Ballroom)

Charlene Russell-Tucker, COO, Connecticut State Department of Education



Charlene Russell-Tucker is the Chief Operating Officer for the Connecticut State Department of Education. She also serves as the Division Chief for the Department's Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness. She has over 20 years' experience including previously serving as the Associate Commissioner of Education. Her work has centered on leveraging the inter-connectedness of the social, emotional, physical and mental health of students and their families as foundations for positive school and life outcomes. In addition, she passionately supports family and community

engagement in education as well as equity and diversity initiatives. Ms. Russell-Tucker participates on various state and national committees; she is co-chair of the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Children Strategic Action Group on Chronic Absenteeism; and has served as expert panel member on committees of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Ms. Russell-Tucker has extensive teaching experience as an adjunct faculty member at Albertus Magnus College School of New Dimensions, an accelerated degree program. She has also served in the role of president of the Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Session: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism (12:30 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)

Kari Sullivan, Attendance Lead, Connecticut State Department of Education



Kari Sullivan currently serves as the Attendance Lead at the Connecticut State Department of Education. Her work involves coordination across agency divisions and with other state agencies and community providers to reduce non-academic barriers to student attendance, e.g., health, housing, juvenile justice. As part of this role, Kari staffs the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap and leads the coordination of chronic absenteeism efforts for the Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group. Prior to accepting this position, Kari served as the Communications Project Manager at Philadelphia Safe and Sound, a leading research and child advocacy organization whose services impacted more than 24,000 children in the City of Philadelphia. She also worked for the Office of the Family Resource Network at the School District of Philadelphia coordinating non-academic support services for students and schools focusing on health, safety, parent involvement, special education and other services. In her personal time, Kari is an advocate for mentoring and has mentored a 16-year-old student for the past six years through Middletown Public School's mentoring program and Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

Session: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism (12:30 PM – Nutmeg Ballroom)

Dr. Jeffrey Villar, Executive Director, Connecticut Council for Education Reform



Jeffrey Villar is the Executive Director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER). He joined the organization in 2013. Prior to coming to CCER, Jeffrey spent 19 years of his career in Connecticut's public education system—first as an educator and later as an administrator. Most recently, he served as Superintendent of Schools in Windsor, CT. Previously, he was Superintendent of Rocky Hill Public Schools and the Associate Superintendent for Meriden Public Schools. He also spent 5 years as a teacher for Hartford Public Schools. Jeffrey holds a Bachelor's in History from the Eastern Connecticut State University, a Master's in Education, and a

Doctorate of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Connecticut. He lives in Mansfield, CT with his wife, Kelly, and his six children.

Session: Welcoming Remarks (8:25 AM - Nutmeg Ballroom)

Dr. Michael Wasta, Education Consultant



Dr. Wasta has 39 years of experience in public education, all in the Bristol CT public schools. He served as a regular classroom teacher, special education teacher, special education administrator, deputy superintendent, superintendent of schools. As deputy superintendent/superintendent, he led the district through a multi-year, comprehensive reform process that resulted in dramatic improvement in student performance. Michael was a consultant for the Leadership and Learning Center in Denver, CO for 8 years, making presentations nationwide and outside of the country on systemic reform, holistic accountability and data teams. As a consultant to the Connecticut State Department of Education for five years, he led in the design and implementation of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative, a statewide systemic reform program designed to improve student performance in the state's lowest performing districts. This program, modeled after

the Bristol process, produced documented results indicating that the performance gap between urban districts and suburban districts began to close.

Session: Panel Moderator – Collaborations that Create Comprehensive Programs to Re-engage Students at Risk (9:40 AM - Rocky Hill Room)