

Hartford  
**OPPORTUNITY YOUTH**  
Collaborative

**Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative Meeting Notes**

November 13, 2020

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**1. Welcome from the Chair – Mayor Bronin**

- Goal: to spend time looking back on the summer activities but also focus on the work that is going on right now and where we think there are gaps or opportunities
- We most likely all feel we need to come together and connect with youth who are disengaged
- We are facing a crisis—when it comes to disconnect and disengagement due to the pandemic which is magnified by these uncertain circumstances
- Immediate challenges and needs are key for today’s discussion, where we need to focus on where the crisis is most acute and what can we do in these moments to change what is going on

**2. Business Agenda**

a. Old business – written reports were referred to for additional information.

b. New business

**i. Active efforts to increase engagement and connection during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**1. HPS 9<sup>th</sup> Graders with Early Warning Indicators and Other Higher-Need Students, Superintendent Torres-Rodriguez**

- Update on Learning Models and Overview of engagement data
- Shared a quick look at indicators when designing return to learn plan, worked to establish any in-person schooling opportunity that they can so long as it is safe.
- Key data points: 95% have device access (HPS), avg attendance 82%, avg days absent 7, 40 days been in school meaning students have missed at least 4 days.
- Did begin the school year with a staggered schedule – this was a confusing schedule however, in addition to a ransom-ware attack, there are some gaps regarding attendance for residents and nonresidents, not shown on the slide but throughout all HPS chronic absenteeism rates have doubled
- They are in the process of calibrating; a remote learner does not need to be present the entire time so long as the student is there half the period time vs. counting them for the entire time they are there
- Count students who get credit for half-day for all work they submit for online students, in person students do not need to submit work—measurements are different for each
- Risks of fully remote students is clear with attendance numbers
- By week 8 the no-show rate was almost twice as high for out of school youth v. those who go in person
- EWI students: focused on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade absenteeism, large amount of fully remote are at risk
- Grade k-9 going to a hybrid model, and pivoting to this model they will have live instruction, this additional 13 contact hours for these students
- We continue to hear from students and families that there is needs that need to be fulfilled, over 100 teachers willing to provide tutorial services for youth in need

- Increased access to meals has 10,000 students learning remotely, and now increased meal sites
- Internet reliability is not as prevalent as before
- Team has been over 1,000 homes to do home visits
- Will share presentation to engage and answer any questions, Hybrid-model was an intricate design to ensure that classroom with 14 students or less can continue to stay with their cohort, over 15 students needed to rearrange

2. **All In! Class of 2021 Graduating Seniors, Paul Holzer**

- Sharing on what is being designed, there is an All In! Steering committee next Friday
- After the summer, very clear from all program providers that the students staying virtually engaged was very difficult because there was a lot of stress and uncertainty
- Program challenges for recruiting and addressing those needs
- Lessons: need to start early than spring to create relationships, with adult to student relationships are key, paid incentives for kids had an easier time
- Subgroup came up with the All-In Senior, fully coordinated to get seniors of 2021 in programs with students focused on non-traditional post-secondary options
- Numbers: 1041, and 200 in other sources, there are major estimates from 2020 and previous years, every year there is about 55% students in HPS end up in 2/4 year college
- 550 kids will intend to go to college, 40% are not intending to go to college (400), there is roughly 200 that are not on track to graduate—then those who are not are called OY, the program is to look at students graduating on time oth college and not college intentional, achieve 100% post-secondary plans, 10% increase of college enrollment, place 200 students in another career pathway program, all of these goals are very aggressive due to COVID
- Advantage of Counsel Wednesdays – provide great focus
- Workshops on these Wednesdays
- Communication component
- Key Factors: data tracking, accountability, strong synergy with Mayor’s office with disengage youth

ii. **Current realities, challenges, and concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic**

1. **Workforce Recovery for Opportunity Youth, Jim Boucher**

- Highlights: Occurring with young people 18-24 years of age and how COVID has impacted this group
- COVID has impacted young people of color more adversely than the rest of the population, youth unemployment has increased two-fold for Black and Hispanic young adults, this impact also effects post-secondary experiences
- OY population almost doubled in the past several months after the COVID pandemic hit, 4,000 roughly OY before, now this is almost doubled
- Survey data: Adult ed program—potential young people who did not get diploma 50-70%
- Many youths have gap years now or are not going to college who normally would
- Sectors hit the hardest: retail, culinary and almost 2/3 of people impacted by COVID are those who are lower-income and individuals in LAX and POC, a key point or two—healthcare and IT are making a comeback
- Heavy reliance on tools and tech is a challenge to support young adults getting back into the labor market
- Starting to see some opportunities come back to the community in employment and training and job placement opportunities
- All together these training and ed supports as they become more available still have challenges recruiting OY for these programs

2. **Young Legend Testimonials, Juan Colon and Aleena Durant**

- Collise Oates: Problems were job steadiness, appreciate the opportunities however challenges include housing stability, where prior work experience is required, and that has been difficult during the pandemic. Complicating the issue is the need for reliable transportation. Also, one needs to factor in working from home to not get anyone sick. Gaining additional education is very difficult which is needed to pursue job opportunities. Also, the Foster care System needs further attention, as well as more quality summer and year-round youth employment opportunities.
- Juan Colon : shared that he has been working hard to take care of a family of four, and experienced joblessness and recently has been helping a friend with business. He has continued to look hard, yet uncertain about working in a COVID environment. It is taking harder because he does not want his young children to get sick. The essential takeaway from all of this: need help getting back into work. It is easy to say go online and do an app, but a lot of young people do not want to enter the world due to COVID because it could affect family. Overall there is a need for better transparency to get the latest information. Resources that Juan has used includes OPP and does get sent job applications, Needs support with getting back to work or back into schooling. Also, expressed the need for more mental resources; especially given the trauma that is impacting many people.
- Aleena Durant: Stressed the importance for the Youth Voice to not be taken for granted, and to make a commitment to help young adults thrive. COVID took a drastic toll and networks of community support. As a young leader—she encourages adults to share-resource and create self-sufficiency and ask for what need for value and what they deserve. During the COVID the supports had to adjust however, main three job search—laid off from part-time position, unable to file for unemployment, offered a position as a peer-mentor – and expected better follow through. Shared that one of her biggest challenges was clarity with 211 making sure the resources are update, where at times having trouble connecting with them. Shared the issue of homelessness. Started a program she really loved, and 3 days into the program COVID began and it was not an option to work remotely. Her son is now virtual learning, yet difficult at time to use the network which frequently breaks down. Stressed the importance of clear communication, follow up and having the youth voice at the table.

Kim Oliver concluded the update section noting the importance of the youth voice, and that they be heard, and acknowledge that the next steps and plans include breaking into three working groups that can do a deeper dive into the three areas of discussion, and including the youth voices, and to consider clear action steps! Paul Holzer provided a further report about the All In! Coalition and the importance of their role, how do to align this work with HOYC.

There was an agreement to approve the creation of three (3) work groups and identify members for each of the three work groups, who will put in place age/grade –specific interventions to immediately address the current and projected of needs of disengaged, disconnected, and opportunity youth for the December 2020 meeting.

Mayor Bronin thanked the presenters and noted that while we did not have time for further discussion that the working groups were key and will be a focus going forward. Need to keep in mind, as much as we have been focused on 9<sup>th</sup> graders—but need to shift focus and recognize the importance of helping Opportunity Youth as well, noting the major challenges that he heard at the meeting.