



EDUCATION REFORM UPDATE

Alliance District Application Approvals

Public Act 12-116, An Act Concerning Educational Reform, created the Alliance District program with the goal of providing new resources to the districts in greatest need – provided they embrace key reforms to position their students for success. To achieve this, the law establishes a process for identifying 30 Alliance Districts – the districts with the lowest district performance index scores statewide – and allocates to these districts \$39.5 million in increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding in the upcoming fiscal year. Each district's receipt of its designated allocation is conditioned upon district submission, and Connecticut State Department of Education approval, of an Alliance District Plan for the expenditure of the new increment of conditional funds in the context of the district's overall strategy to improve academic achievement.

October 22, 2012

HARTFORD, CT – Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Connecticut Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor today announced that the third cohort of Alliance District applications have been finalized, as school district plans from Bloomfield, Danbury, East Haven, East Windsor, Hamden, Manchester, Meriden, New London, Norwalk, Stamford, Winchester, Windham, and West Haven were approved by the Department of Education. Each of these thirteen (13) districts is now eligible to receive additional Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds to support the reform plans proposed by the district to increase student achievement. The total number of approved districts is now nineteen (19).

Governor Malloy said, "As one of the central elements of this year's education reform effort, Alliance District funding will position additional, needed resources in schools that have struggled to build momentum around student achievement. These plans, which require individual school districts to create a strategy for turning around struggling schools, have the potential to drastically improve student outcomes, so that geography will no longer be a hurdle for a student to overcome. It's not simply a matter of new funding – this is about embracing the reforms that we know improve student achievement, so that all of our children have the chance to succeed."

Commissioner Pryor said, "I want to congratulate the leadership teams of these districts – including the superintendents and central office staff, as well as the teachers and other stakeholders who contributed to the formation of the ideas. At a time when other states are cutting state support for public schools, Governor Malloy and the General Assembly have increased our commitment to the school districts in greatest need of support – provided they embrace and implement reforms that will improve student achievement. There are a variety of approaches represented in the proposals put forward by these

districts, including talent strategies that support teachers and school leaders, enhancements in early-grade reading instruction, expanded time initiatives, interventions in low-performing schools, and more.”

Summary information on approved Alliance District applications

The Alliance Districts developed a variety of multi-faceted initiatives for their applications, drawn in many instances from the list of reform strategies set forth (on a permissive basis) in statute. The chart below categorizes the key initiatives that will be undertaken by the nineteen Alliance Districts approved to date.

Initiative Type	Talent Development	K-3 Literacy	Extended Time	Common Core	Accountability / Data Systems	Parent and Community	Pre-K / Full-Day Kindergarten
Number of Districts	10	12	7	3	6	4	3

Each district has also allocated funds toward interventions that will begin this year in Focus Schools, as identified through Connecticut’s No Child Left Behind waiver. Districts have begun planning processes for future interventions in Turnaround Schools and Review Schools – also designations emanating from the state’s waiver – for future school years.

Please see below for summaries of many of the initiatives proposed by the thirteen districts approved today. For full descriptions of district proposals, please examine the districts’ applications or contact district staff. The amount of each grant is determined by the ECS formula, as revised by this year’s legislation.

Bloomfield: \$204,550

- Bloomfield will expand an existing extended learning time program, adding 60 minutes of instructional time to the school day for third through eighth graders. This program will coordinate with the Early Start Program, which adds five weeks of instruction to the summer months, by aligning curriculum between the initiatives.
- Bloomfield will institute a Leadership Academy, which will serve principals, teachers, and parents. The Principal Academy will focus on developing effective instructional leaders through one-on-one time with experienced coaches. The Teacher Academy will cultivate future district leaders by identifying and supporting existing teacher leaders and talented instructional staff. The Parent Academy will provide workshops on parent leadership, parent compacts, and support for parent participation in school reform efforts.
- Bloomfield will strengthen its curriculum, instruction, and assessments through, among other mechanisms, creating a feedback loop between teacher evaluation results, professional development, and student performance data. The districts’ curricula will also be aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

Danbury: \$1,696,559

- Danbury will enhance its work to address the achievement gap for English language learners by augmenting the district’s team of instructional interventionists. Danbury will also assign one additional bilingual education teacher at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and supplement literacy instruction by adding instructional time before, during, and after school.

- Danbury will improve high school instruction through new job-embedded coaching for ninth grade instructors in core academic areas in year one. In years two through five, this coaching model will be expanded to all high school grades.
- Danbury will phase in full-day kindergarten district-wide, starting with five schools in year one, and continuing with additional schools in years two and three.

East Haven: \$500,400

- The district will partner with Literacy How to provide job-embedded professional development in literacy via reading specialists, who will assist in coaching district teachers in various instructional strategies. This shift will increase the capacity of district educators and ensure that high quality lessons are provided to the greater number of students.
- East Haven will develop a comprehensive data system that will link assessments to the Common Core State Standards, guide teachers in the formation of individualized instruction plans for students, and inform the areas in which teachers will receive targeted professional development.
- East Haven will also establish a Newcomer Center, which will increase instructional time and deliver specialized lessons to English language learners in need of support.

East Windsor: \$168,335

- East Windsor will use its allotment of Alliance District funds to create a literacy initiative for students in kindergarten through third grade at Broad Brook Elementary, the district's single Focus School. This intensive reading intervention strategy for students reading below proficiency will include a literacy coach, four reading interventionists to provide differentiated support, and year-long embedded professional development for the principal and teachers.

Hamden: \$882,986

- Hamden will intensify support for its lowest performing schools by conducting instructional audits, evaluating building principals, and using the results of these tools to provide executive coaches to principals in need of support.
- Hamden will expand its use of student data to drive instructional decisions in the classroom by bringing aboard two new data facilitators. Data personnel will train teachers and administrators in the effective use of data to drive instructional and administrative decisions.
- Hamden will identify middle school students from typically under-represented groups and provide support, through summer and year-round programming, for their increased participation and success in high-level high school courses.
- Hamden will continue to align its curriculum with the Common Core and will work to develop a teacher evaluation and support system in accordance with state guidelines.
- Hamden will partner with Hamden Partnership for Young Children (HPYC) to establish a 4 week transition to kindergarten program in each of the lowest performing elementary schools for children with little or no pre-K experience.

Manchester: \$1,343,579

- Because nearly 30% of Manchester kindergarten students have not had the experience of a public or private preschool program, the district will initiate a six and a half week summer start program to ease the transition for young learners entering school, and to ensure that these new students are socially, emotionally, and academically prepared to start kindergarten.

- Manchester will add significant support for its K-5 students in need of reading support via the provision of additional tutors and coaches, access to online assessments and data-evaluation tools to ensure effective practice, and, beginning in year 2, the implementation of a six week summer literacy intervention for students below grade level.
- Manchester is also using Alliance funds to develop a teacher and administrator evaluation and support system that uses evaluation results to provide high-quality, job-embedded professional development.

Meriden: \$1,777,411

- Meriden will implement a full-day kindergarten program in all elementary schools, resulting in a total of 34 full-day Kindergarten classrooms.
- Also in the area of early education, Meriden will rewrite and implement its kindergarten curriculum for alignment with the Common Core State Standards.
- With assistance from the National Center on Time and Learning, Meriden will expand learning time at Casimir Pulaski Elementary school. This work will be supported by Alliance funding and an innovation grant awarded to the district by the American Federation of Teachers.
- Meriden will extend student learning time by expanding a Saturday STEM Academy, adding sessions for third, fourth, and fifth graders. In addition, Meriden will increase enrichment program sessions for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders.

New London: \$809,001

- New London will implement a new curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Coordination of instructional practice and curricular standards will be achieved through active professional development. In addition, the district is increasing efforts to support English language learners by increasing professional coaching for ELL teachers.
- New London will align its teacher evaluation plan to include criteria for successful performance connected to student data and use the results of those evaluations to drive job embedded professional development.
- New London will partner with National Center for Time and Learning to create extended learning time teams in all elementary schools and Bennie Dover Middle School. This initiative will also increase learning time by 80 hours at Jennings and Winthrop Elementary in this academic year.
- With the restructuring of its Central Office, New London will augment its focus on developing a high quality teacher corps by bringing on a Human Resources/Talent Director to spearhead the implementation of a systematic talent development plan.

Norwalk: \$577,476

- Norwalk will use its Alliance funding on specific initiatives aimed at addressing areas of improvement in individual schools, as indicated by student achievement data. Richard C. Briggs High School, Norwalk's alternate high school program, will begin a long-contemplated redesign from a traditional high school into smaller learning communities.
- Norwalk will expand a research-based early-grade literacy initiative that began in the district at Marvin and Fox Run schools to two new schools: Rowayton and Jefferson elementary schools. This initiative will provide teachers with enhanced tools for improving reading skills of struggling students.
- At Brien McMahon and Norwalk High Schools, Norwalk will provide training, technology, and additional collaborative time for teachers to make full use of recently created student data

systems – allowing educators to make instructional decisions based on student needs. A new coach will also be added to the Math Department.

- At three elementary schools in need of support, Norwalk will employ a literacy coach to provide job-embedded literacy training. The training will focus on implementing CCSS aligned assessments and using their results to provide personalized interventions for students.

Stamford: \$920,233

- Stamford will expand a set of interventions designed to address the district's achievement gap and to create and support a culture of high expectations for student learning in the district.
- These strategies will include extending the school day for struggling students – so that educators can provide interventions for these students without pulling them out of regular instructional courses. In year one, Stamford will extend learning time in all twelve of its elementary schools by implementing before and after school literacy programs. In year two, Stamford will extend time for young learners by expanding a summer pre-K program to all twelve elementary schools. In addition, Stamford will add a six week summer school program for incoming Kindergarteners in its two Focus Schools.
- Stamford will re-initiate its Project Opening Doors initiative, which has increased participation and success in AP classes for under-represented students.
- Stamford will rewrite its literacy and math curriculum and train instructors to align instructional practice with the Common Core State Standards.

Winchester: \$207,371

- Winchester will partner with the University of Connecticut to develop a comprehensive teacher and administrator evaluation and support model that will provide job-embedded coaching for the transition to the Common Core, and establish a district data team to ensure professional development decisions are informed by student performance outcomes.
- To support its K-3 reading initiative, Winchester will hire a literacy coach to lead the district's literacy staff, interface with the district data team, and provide coaching to classroom teachers.

Windham: \$763,857

- Windham will implement a comprehensive talent management strategy through which highly qualified teachers will partner with beginning teachers for a full year of co-teaching experience. These highly qualified teachers will be identified as master teachers based on student assessment data and administrator evaluations. Students with the greatest academic need will be placed in these co-taught classrooms.
- Windham will increase instructional time in two of its highest need schools by launching a planning process for increasing the school day and school year. A redesign team will coordinate with parents to implement a phase-in system which will increase learning time at both Sweeney Elementary School and Windham Middle School by 300 hours by year five of the Alliance District Designation. These two schools will add one hour of instructional time to each school day beginning in January 2013.

West Haven: \$1,381,848

- West Haven will expand and evolve its existing teacher leader initiative by launching a transition from group-based professional development to a new model of job-embedded training. Training in the new model will be tailored to the needs of teachers, as identified by the results of the state evaluation and support system.

- The district will provide 6 coaches to work with new teachers in math (which student achievement data has shown to be an area in need of improvement) and 10 literacy coaches to provide coaching to teachers and interventions with students.
- West Haven will intensify its support of early learners by expanding its summer program for at-risk prekindergarten, special education, kindergarten, and first grade learners from four weeks to five.
- To align feedback to educators with student outcomes, West Haven will develop an evaluation plan consistent with state guidelines. It will include a differentiated professional development plan for teachers based upon evaluation results.

Notes on the Alliance District Process to date

Application Process

- All 30 designated Alliance Districts submitted applications in August
- The iterative process involves rounds of dialogue between the Department and districts to ensure proposals fulfill program guidelines and goals
- Districts have been asked to revise, expand, focus, and/or clarify components of their proposed plans
- Districts were asked to consult local stakeholders, including the local bargaining unit, and submit plans to their boards of education

Approved Alliance District Plans

- Cohort one (approved September 6, 2012): Ansonia, Naugatuck, and Windsor Locks
- Cohort two (approved September 24, 2012): Bristol, Vernon, and Windsor
- Cohort three (approved October 22, 2012): Bloomfield, Danbury, East Haven, East Windsor, Hamden, Manchester, Meriden, New London, Norwalk, Stamford, Winchester, Windham, and West Haven

Alliance Districts, Year 2

- A short timeframe necessitated expedited reviews and approvals for the 2012-2013 school year; a more rigorous process is planned for Year 2
- The Department of Education has requested that districts commit to working on several priority areas as process shifts to Year 2, including:
 - School intervention and redesign
 - Evaluation-informed professional development
 - Transition to new accountability system described in Connecticut's approved NCLB waiver
 - Preparation for the Common Core
 - Strategic planning
 - Monitoring of Alliance plan implementation