



## **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 25, 2012**

HARTFORD, CT – Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor today announced that Alliance District applications from Derby, Killingly, and New Britain have been finalized and approved by the State Department of Education. Each school district is now eligible to receive additional Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds to support the reform plan proposed by the district to increase student achievement. The size of each district’s Alliance allotment is determined by the ECS formula.

“For too long, the formula for turning around struggling schools followed one guiding principle - increased funding,” said Governor Malloy. “While there are many schools throughout the state that would benefit with increased resources, we can’t simply continue to throw good money after bad. Thanks to the creation of Alliance Districts, increases in funding must now come with a plan for turning around schools and increasing student performance. Our state may have the nation’s largest achievement gap, but thanks to our reform effort, we now have the tools we need to make sure that all of our children can 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 support for public schools, Governor Malloy and the General Assembly have increased Connecticut’s 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: 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 twenty-four 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
Districts	13	15	10	4	6	6	5

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 (NCLB) 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.

Below is a summary of Hartford’s approved plan. For a full description of the district’s proposal, please examine the district’s application (posted on the Department’s website, click on “Alliance Districts”) or contact district staff.

**Derby: \$280,532**

- Derby will extend its commitment to early literacy with improvements to writing instruction for students in kindergarten through second grade. The district will hire literacy tutors, purchase instructional materials, and offer job-embedded professional development on research-based best practices to improve instruction.
- Derby will develop a system of screening prekindergarten and kindergarten students for educational readiness, and begin targeted interventions for early education students in greatest need of social, emotional, and behavioral support.
- The district will form data teams to create better linkages between student outcome data and instructional efforts. These data teams will also partner with the state to gauge and monitor student progress.
- In preparation for the rollout of the statewide educator evaluation and support system, Derby will begin implementation of an evaluation framework that links evaluation results to instructional improvement and professional development.

**Killingly: \$380,134**

- Killingly will provide extended learning time to students in need. The school day will be extended for at-risk 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, who will receive new after school programming. Summer school programs will also be developed to extend the school year for at-risk kindergarten and first grade students, as well as for Killingly Intermediate students in need of math and English language arts support.
- At the high school level, the district will implement a comprehensive plan to address its graduation rate. Killingly will identify students who are not on track to graduate in four years and offer targeted assistance through counseling, remedial time, and credit recovery programs.

- The district will collaborate with Columbia University Teacher's College to offer ongoing, job-embedded coaching to teachers in the Reader's Workshop model.

#### **New Britain: \$2,654,335**

- New Britain will strengthen its core reading program for students in kindergarten through third grade by hiring full-day kindergarten teachers, providing differentiated instruction to individual students based on assessment results, and deploying literacy coaches to help train teachers.
- New Britain will institute a new school calendar that increases learning time by 32 hours per year for students in grades K-8. The district will also increase learning time for English language learners through the addition of schedule blocks focusing exclusively on differentiated language instruction.
- New Britain will align pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs and expectations by hiring a district School Readiness Coordinator, offering professional development in language and literacy instruction practices, hiring additional preschool teachers, and providing 44 new slots for young students to attend school readiness programs.

#### Background on Alliance Districts

##### 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
- Cohort four (approved October 24, 2012): Waterbury
- Cohort five (approved October 25): Hartford, Derby, Killingly, and New Britain

##### Alliance Districts, Year Two

- A short timeframe necessitated expedited reviews and approvals for the 2012-2013 school year; a more rigorous process is planned for year two
- The Department of Education has requested that districts commit to working on several priority areas as process shifts to year two, 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