



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 Hartford’s Alliance District application has been finalized and approved by the State Department of Education. Hartford Public Schools 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. Hartford’s \$4,808,111 grant is the largest in the state.

Hartford’s proposed uses of Alliance funds are designed to strengthen its portfolio district model. The application includes initiatives to expand literacy interventions for students in kindergarten through grade three; to recruit, retain, and develop the best possible educators for its classrooms; to redesign district middle schools; to enhance college readiness; and to implement interventions in its Focus Schools (which have been designated as part of Connecticut’s new school accountability system, ensuring greater focus on student subgroups demonstrating high need for such attention).

“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, “Hartford’s application was exemplary in a number of ways, including the fact that individual high-impact initiatives are deployed in service of a unified strategy. I commend Dr. Kishimoto and her team for crafting a high-quality plan, and for faithfully working with the Department throughout the Alliance District process. Thanks to the Superintendent’s plan, these state investments will make a significant difference for Hartford students.”

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-one 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	12	13	8	4	6	5	4

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.

Hartford: \$4,808,111

- Strengthens Third Grade Promise initiative for student literacy by expanding opportunities for prekindergarten programs and, by deploying K-3 Literacy Assessment Teams to improve instructional strategies
- Begins preparation for the district’s educator evaluation and support system
- Institutes a new initiative to implement the Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) framework for student intervention, through deploying intervention specialists at each school level (elementary, middle, and high school)
- Trains and provides differentiated support to principals to prepare them to implement interventions in Focus Schools through the assignment of school quality officers

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, 2012): Hartford

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