



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.

November 8, 2012

HARTFORD, CT – Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor today announced that Alliance District applications from East Hartford and New Haven 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-six 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	15	16	11	5	7	7	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 are summaries of the East Hartford and New Haven approved plans. 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.

East Hartford: \$1,714,744

- As part of a larger effort to align the district’s curriculum and instruction with the Common Core State Standards, East Hartford will improve its instruction for bilingual and English language learner students through the development of specific content for these subgroups and the provision of targeted professional development and job-embedded coaching for educators.
- East Hartford will expand its summer school program for students in kindergarten through the third grade. The district will be able to serve an expanded cohort of students, and will concentrate its efforts on moving students to the proficient level by grade three.
- East Hartford will partner with the National Center on Time and Learning, a leading non-profit organization that coaches districts on best practices in extended time strategies for students.

New Haven: \$3,841,903

- New Haven will strengthen components of its teacher and principal evaluation systems, specifically the elements which deliver meaningful coaching based on the results of educator evaluations. The district will offer coaching for instructional managers, provide information on best educational practices, and provide teachers with the opportunity to observe and discuss effective teaching.
- New Haven has developed a Portfolio of Schools initiative designed to increase student choice and improve instructional options for families. The district will invest more heavily in data and performance management protocols in all schools to promote differentiation.

- New Haven will intensify its work to provide wraparound services, and to serve students with behavioral and social challenges. Alliance funding will be used for professional development for behavioral interventionists and teachers serving these student populations.
- The district will implement a college and career readiness online platform, enabling students to set individual behavioral and secondary and post-secondary academic goals via student success plans.

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, Derby, Killingly, and New Britain
- Cohort six (approved November 8, 2012): East Hartford and New Haven

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