

**CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HARTFORD**

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TO: Chairpersons of Local and Regional School Boards
Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Theodore S. Sergi
Commissioner of Education

SUBJECT: "Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools – *A Leadership Brief*," The Learning **First** Alliance, March 2003

DATE: April 24, 2003

Once or twice a year I see a very good publication – which, I admit, by definition is a document that includes beliefs and suggestions that align with my own. Attached is such a document. The Learning First Alliance is made up of many national organizations and has done excellent work in the past in the areas of reading and mathematics.

Whether we are focusing on school district improvement or school building improvement, this publication supports the proposition that success depends heavily on Expectations – Expectations – Expectations and Leadership – Leadership – Leadership.

Of course, resources do make a difference. But change is also needed. We need continually better systems that (1) align systemwide curriculum, instruction, staff development, assessment and data reporting; (2) provide more time for some students, more use of technology and more one-to-one interventions; and (3) expand preschool, early reading success and parent/family engagement in student learning.

We all agree we can do a lot better, but only if we have "the courage to acknowledge our poor performance and the will to seek solutions" (page 3). We cannot and will not do better without courage and leadership. Thank you for your efforts.

TSS:fsm