



## Secondary School Reform in Connecticut Comprehensive Student Support Systems

### Introduction

Designing secondary schools where all students can learn and achieve at high levels requires attention to the needs of the whole child. Student success drives Connecticut's Plan for Secondary School Reform – the expectation that all students can and will succeed. For this to happen, schools must be redesigned so that *every* student is engaged, learns rigorous and significant content and develops skills essential for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will require an integrated approach that embraces varied and flexible educational opportunities, personal connections, academic challenges, and customized courses of study tied to each student's education, career aspirations and attending to individual academic, health and safety needs.

### Four Key Task Areas

Connecticut's secondary schools must provide for the graduation of all students, by promoting student excellence that fosters critical thinking, individual voice, and safe and healthy learning communities that are inclusive of all members. Four key task areas support Secondary School Reform in Connecticut: ***Model Curriculums, Student Success Plans, Capstone Experiences and Comprehensive Student Support Systems.*** Thriving, healthy schools provide the foundation of a positive school climate, nurturing positive relationships and high quality learning that ensures students will excel academically and lead healthy and balanced lives.

### Comprehensive Student Support Systems

Comprehensive Student Support Systems align health, safety and education efforts that lead to improved physical, mental and developmental outcomes and academic achievement for students. A comprehensive, coordinated and integrated approach to health, wellness and school environment provides the framework for school communities to improve student achievement, streamline resources and reduce fragmentation and duplication of services. Student health and safety status and student achievement are directly connected and, in fact are one of the most significant influences on learning and achievement. Students learn best when physical settings are clean, well maintained, bright and secure; individuals respect themselves and others; and the emotional climate supports positive, respectful and meaningful relationships. When students feel welcome, accepted, valued and safe, they will challenge themselves academically and their readiness for learning is significantly enhanced. Creating and maintaining safe and healthy learning environments can also reduce absenteeism and classroom behavior problems, improve classroom performance, better prepare students to be productive members of their communities, establish life-long healthy practices, make schools more engaging as well as address staff wellness needs.



**Connecticut State Department of Education  
Comprehensive Student Support Systems  
Essential Practices Framework**

**Charge:** to develop a framework that defines essential components of a universal system addressing school environment and the physical, social, emotional, behavioral and mental health needs that provides a foundation for successful student learning and achievement.

<b>Core Components</b>	<b>Essential Elements</b>	<b>Recommended Elements</b>	<b>Examples</b>
1. Coordinated and Integrated Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies, practices data sources supporting health</li> <li>• District level school health council and coordinator</li> <li>• School level health council and coordinator</li> <li>• School improvement plans include health priorities</li> <li>• Data-driven decision making</li> <li>• Use of assessments</li> <li>• Federal and State compliance regarding health and safety</li> <li>• Professional development aligns with policies, programs, practices</li> <li>• Common language understanding of health and wellness among school personnel/community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand partnerships</li> <li>• Staff wellness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies, practices and services in place and consistently implemented</li> <li>• District policies regularly reviewed and revised</li> <li>• Family and community partnerships in place</li> <li>• District-level teams in place and functioning</li> <li>• School-level teams in place and functioning</li> <li>• School improvement plans include specific action steps addressing health</li> <li>• Messages and actions integrated throughout the school</li> <li>• Data sources used to guide policies and practice</li> <li>• Staff wellness programs in place</li> <li>• Schools comply with <i>all</i> federal and state legislation regarding health and safety</li> <li>• Assessments regularly conducted</li> <li>• Program delivery to all school community members</li> <li>• School community members have access to wellness supports</li> <li>• Governance in place to ensure sustainability</li> </ul>

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2. School Health Education and Physical Education Programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive school health education program</li> <li>• Physical education program</li> <li>• Student competence in content, skill development and health literacy</li> <li>• Integrated cultural responsiveness</li> <li>• Differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Foster resiliency through positive youth development approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer social skills curriculum</li> <li>• Capstone and student success plans include health and safety</li> <li>• Encourage academic risk taking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Physical Education Programs taught by certified teachers</li> <li>• Planned, ongoing, systematic programs</li> <li>• National and state standards guide policies and practice</li> <li>• Research-based and culturally appropriate curricula implemented</li> <li>• Programs and curricula regularly reviewed, evaluated and updated</li> <li>• Adults responsive to students' academic needs</li> <li>• Social skills integrated into planned program</li> <li>• Conflict resolution skills incorporated into programs and practices</li> <li>• Utilize RtI/SRBI model to ensure services to all</li> </ul>
3. School Environment/ climate/culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess school climate</li> <li>• Policies and procedures foster positive climate and culture</li> <li>• Students have positive relationships with adults</li> <li>• Respect is demonstrated</li> <li>• Positive role-modeling</li> <li>• School facilities in compliance with state and federal regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring program</li> <li>• Extra-curricular programs</li> <li>• Family support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate surveys regularly conducted</li> <li>• Policies and practices ensure a safe and healthy learning environment</li> <li>• Welcoming school atmosphere is evident (physically, emotionally)</li> <li>• Mentoring programs in place</li> <li>• Every student identifies a caring adult</li> <li>• Students willingly discuss all issues with school professionals, families</li> <li>• Allegations of bullying decrease</li> <li>• Ethical behavior evident</li> <li>• Facilities are safe and healthy</li> <li>• Environments that demonstrate respect for all students and welcome diverse communities</li> </ul>
4. Student leadership and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students engagement in health and safety matters</li> <li>• Offer culturally relevant activities</li> <li>• Positive youth development initiatives</li> <li>• Opportunities for safe and healthy student socialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Peer mentoring and mediation programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students participate in school governance</li> <li>• Student developed code of ethics implemented</li> <li>• Students participate in extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Students participate in service projects</li> <li>• Student mentoring and mediation programs in place</li> <li>• Gay-Straight Alliances and other student supports groups in place</li> </ul>

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5. Support services, personnel and remediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to physical and mental health services</li> <li>• Adequate ratio of health providers</li> <li>• Evidence-based interventions such as: Response to Intervention (RTI), positive behavioral supports</li> <li>• Special education services as needed</li> <li>• Tutoring and remedial help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-based health centers</li> <li>• Reform efforts integrate support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School community members access programs and services</li> <li>• Student/staff ratios reflect national guidelines</li> <li>• School-based health centers are present</li> <li>• Screenings, referrals and evaluations conducted</li> <li>• All national meal / feeding programs are available</li> <li>• Implementation of Healthy Food Certification</li> <li>• SRBI implemented across all areas</li> </ul>
6. School, family and community partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent education</li> <li>• Communicating and creating a welcoming climate</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Supporting learning at home</li> <li>• Decision-making and advocacy</li> <li>• Collaborating with community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action team for partnering</li> <li>• Engage in systemic planning and evaluation process of partnerships</li> <li>• Provide professional development for school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer family support and education programs</li> <li>• Culturally relevant materials and networking opportunities offered</li> <li>• District and school health teams include family and community members</li> <li>• Use school and district data on school and family health needs to inform community partners of resource gaps</li> <li>• Two-way conversations</li> <li>• Multiple venues to increase communication</li> </ul>
7. Highly qualified administrators/ teachers/staff and other personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District administration supports health, wellness and safety</li> <li>• Ethical educational practices</li> <li>• Teachers prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century</li> <li>• Meets the requirements for “highly qualified”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster collaborative leadership among school personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health, wellness and safety integrated into student achievement efforts</li> <li>• Safe, healthy, respectful and positive learning communities are in place</li> <li>• Code of ethics inform professional growth plans</li> <li>• Code of ethics inform teacher evaluation</li> <li>• Professional development includes health and wellness issues</li> <li>• Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for School Administrators and Educators</li> <li>• School Leader Evaluation and Professional Development Guidelines</li> <li>• Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development</li> <li>• Ten Indicators of a Quality Evaluation Plan</li> <li>• Connecticut Common Core of Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• TEAM</li> </ul>