

**B. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION: Please complete each section below.**

- 1. For each Tier I and Tier II school that the district commits to serve, provide the following:**
- a) **an analysis of the needs of each school down to the subgroup level using at least three years of disaggregated achievement data. Include a copy of the needs analysis for each school with a summary of the needs to be addressed at each school;**

Stamford Academy is a charter school, operating under the umbrella of the nonprofit Domus, serving students in grades nine through twelve in Stamford, CT. These students have not succeeded in traditional public school settings. They have dropped out, been kicked out, or have flunked out of the other local schools. Instead of giving these young people two hours of tutoring a day, the minimum a district must provide as mandated by the State of Connecticut, Domus was asked by the mayor of Stamford in 2004 to start a charter school to provide a rigorous academic opportunity for these kids. We seek out the high school kids who have been marginalized and who others do not want. We strive to get them back on grade level and to help them successfully transition from high school to college, vocational training, or the skilled workforce. However, this job is not easy because the student body shows the following characteristics:

- 19% are special education (compared to 10% for Stamford district, 11% for State)
- 99% are youth of color (Stamford district 59%, State 25%)
- 83% qualify for free or reduced lunch (Stamford district 41%, State 29%)
- academic performance **upon entry to the school:**
  - in **reading**, the majority enter the school FOUR grade levels behind; based on CMT data: 22% proficient (compared to Stamford 79%)—*more than three times* the number of nonproficient students as the district
  - in **math**, most students enter FIVE grade levels behind; based on CMT data: 9% proficient (compared to Stamford 72%)—*eight times* the number of nonproficient students as the district

The three-year disaggregated achievement data on the CAPT showed that Stamford Academy tenth grade students performed far below their peer groups in Stamford and the State by coming to us at least four grade levels behind in both math and reading in each of the three years. The root cause of this sub-par performance is repeated years of lower student achievement, while continuing to move on grade-to-grade. We can see similar levels of underperformance by looking at the CMT data of the students who join Stamford Academy. Data at the subgroup levels also shows considerable underperformance for Stamford Academy students versus their peer groups at the State and Stamford District levels.

Group	Year	Math % at/above proficiency	Reading % at/above proficiency
State	2007	77.3	79.7
	2008	79.7	82.7
	2009	78.4	81.8
Stamford	2007	63.3	75.6
	2008	71.5	78.8
	2009	69.3	77.8
Stamford Academy	2007	9.7	5.6
	2008	9.1	21.2
	2009	20.7	17.9

Stamford Academy strives to give these struggling students the tools they need to be able to perform at or above grade level. We know that many factors enter into a student’s ability to perform well in school. This disaggregated achievement data was analyzed in the work done to prepare the Stamford Academy Charter Renewal Application and in Cambridge Education’s recent external evaluation. Both the internal and external analyses pointed to a need

to adjust our curriculum to be more in line with the deficiencies showing in our student body, based on their proficiency when they join us as measured on the CMT and then again on the CAPT. We have set the following goals for our students in order to raise their academic performance and successful transitions to post-secondary education:

Goal 1: Stamford Academy will reduce the amount of students who are not proficient in reading by 10% per year over the next three years.

Goal 2: Stamford Academy will reduce the amount of students who are not proficient in math by 10% per year over the next three years.

Goal 3: Stamford Academy will reduce the amount of students who are not proficient in writing by 10% per year over the next three years.

Goal 4: Stamford Academy will reduce the amount of students who are not proficient in science by 10% per year over the next three years.

Goal 5: Stamford Academy will have a 90% graduation rate in each of the next three years.

Goal 6: 80% of graduating seniors will successfully transition to post-secondary education.

Goal 7 : 80% of our students will have 95% attendance or better.

### **Needs Assessment**

It is clear to Stamford Academy personnel that it is necessary to improve the ways in which we move students from the below basic and basic categories in CAPT to the proficient and above categories. Stamford Academy has a specialized mission that guides the school to attract the most struggling high school students in the greater Stamford area. Due to this mission, there are many unique challenges that face our school. The vast majority of students come to Stamford Academy having scored below basic and basic on their 8th grade CMTs. Additionally, according to our internal assessments, students arrive at Stamford Academy, on average, 4.5 grade levels behind in both reading and math. The challenge is for our school to fill in the gaps in basic understanding, while simultaneously getting students to grade level before the administration of the CAPT at the end of the 10th grade.

#### **Stamford Academy has identified the following areas of need:**

- **creating a well-developed curriculum specific to the needs of our student body that will lead to an improvement in student academic achievement and preparation for post-secondary education**
- **implementing a process to motivate staff toward meeting or exceeding academic achievement goals, and replace underperforming staff**
- **creating a robust model of collecting and analyzing data for the purpose of having data inform instruction**
- **training staff in ways that will equip them to be best suited for the challenges our student population presents and in ways that they can use the curriculum and data to improve outcomes**
- **providing flexible learning opportunities that allow students to direct their own learning**
- **improving the way we engage and motivate the students and families we serve**

**All of the needs of Stamford Academy have been established as steps necessary to help us achieve the academic gains listed above as Goals.**

In order to work to close the gaps in achievement for our students and reduce non-proficient students year-to-year

by ten percent, several initiatives have to be taken. Stamford Academy will carefully design a curriculum that is rooted in State standards and aligned with what the CAPT assesses while taking into consideration the low academic entry point and considerable diversity of our student body. The curriculum model that is developed will utilize State standards as an end-point of achievement. The standards should be rigorously laid out for each grade level and content area with an emphasis on the power standards. All teachers will have a clear understanding of these standards by grade and content area. There will be attention given not only to the knowledge aspect but also the skills context. We will identify the skills that are most needed to help these students reach the schools' vision and goal of all students transitioning into postsecondary education or training. We will continue to look for innovative learning projects that have meaning, relevance, interest, and motivation to incorporate into the curriculum, providing students with the opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be successful. The internal and external evaluations show us that currently there is insufficient rigor in the curriculum, and it does not always build on prior learning and experience. It is not systematic enough and does not provide enough guidance and support for teachers. It is evident that there will have to be some further adaptations made to the curriculum for students starting at the school given the significant deficiencies they present when they arrive at the school. Our students face considerable challenges in their reading abilities, and we need to make the best use of our reading specialists to help them gain lost ground. In addition, the programs utilized for reading recovery may not be best suited in the present format to the ages of the students. There is no single, commercially-produced curriculum package that can be pulled off-the-shelf that will align directly with the needs and abilities of students at this school. We need a well-crafted, rigorous, innovative, skills- and knowledge-driven model of learning that will accelerate the rate of learning and success for all of our students.

A critical piece in assuring the success of our students is having qualified and motivated staff who can help us to move our students to achievement levels in line with our goals. We need to provide monetary incentives that attract top-quality staff and teachers and reward them for the extraordinary efforts we will expect of them in bringing about this degree of change. We know that they will be working with a struggling student body, in conditions that do not allow for down-time, and for longer than average hours every day. Staff who do not meet a "Satisfactory" or above rating in their performance reviews will be subject to corrective action plans or termination. Our status as a charter school provides us flexibility with our hiring and retention practices, and this flexibility will be integral to having a continuously motivated and high-achieving staff.

Our school and our staff need to improve at collecting relevant data, analyzing that data effectively, and tailoring our instruction based on that data. It is necessary for our school to plan out our curriculum in skill-based units and assess what has been taught in 6 to 8 week increments. This will allow our staff to better plan instruction for the next unit. This interim assessment process should happen 4 to 5 times per year. Our school needs expert help in both the creation of interim assessments and training in how best to analyze data.

Due to the fact that our school serves the most struggling in our community, it is essential that we offer our staff world-class training and professional development. This training needs to come in the areas of, in addition to those areas already stated, effective teaching, teaching struggling adolescent readers, school culture, behavior management techniques, and removing social and emotional barriers to education. This training and development must consist of outside experts coming to Stamford Academy and through visits to learn best practices from high performing schools that are serving similar populations of struggling students.

Our students need to have more flexibility in the learning opportunities that we provide. We will devise new curriculum and with that, chances for students to learn in and out of the classroom. We feel that these new opportunities will better prepare them for a successful transition to college, vocational training, or the skilled workforce. The development of the Pre-Graduation Academy (PGA) with basic skills taught in 76-minute classes in the core subjects of English, math, social studies, and science in the ninth and tenth grades frees students up to take electives in their eleventh and twelfth grade years.

Finally, it is essential to put the staffing and infrastructure in place to support the unique needs of our students and

their families both academically and socially/emotionally. In these next three years, we will add a few new positions at the school to help get these initiatives and programs off the ground. We need to continue to work to remove the barriers that have prevented academic success for our students for the first fourteen years of their lives. We need to do this by developing a strong school culture and employing a variety of non-traditional methods to re-engage our students and families.

**b) three-year student achievement goals in reading/language arts and mathematics on the CMT or CAPT for all students and subgroups;**

Targets	Evidence	Evidence Collection
The amount of students who are not proficient in reading will decrease each year by 10% according to the CAPT	CAPT scores	Director of Curriculum
The amount of students who are not proficient in math will decrease each year by 10% according to the CAPT	CAPT scores	Director of Curriculum
80% of students will increase at least 1.5 grade levels in math over the course of the school year	NWEA*	Director of Curriculum
80% of students will increase at least 1.5 grade levels in reading over the course of the school year	NWEA*	Director of Curriculum

\*We obtain NWEA standardized test scores for students in each grade, whereas CAPT scores include only our tenth grade students.

**c) a detailed description of the intervention model selected for each school and how implementing the model will assist in meeting the identified needs of the school (NOTE: SIG funds may be awarded to a district for a Tier I or Tier II school that has implemented, in whole or in part, a turnaround model, restart model or transformation model within the last two years so that the district and school can continue or complete their implementation of the model.);**

Under the SIG Transformation model, the LEA replaces the principal with a highly capable principal with either a track record of transformation or clear potential to successfully lead a transformation (although the LEA may retain a recently hired principal where a turnaround, restart, or transformation was instituted in the past two years, and there is tangible evidence that the principal has the skills necessary to initiate dramatic change); implements a rigorous staff evaluation and development system; rewards staff who increase student achievement and/or graduation rates and removes staff who have not improved after ample opportunity; institutes comprehensive instructional reform; increases learning time and applies community-oriented school strategies; and provides greater operational flexibility and support for the school.

Stamford Academy hired a new principal who began in September 2009. The recent external evaluation done of Stamford Academy by educational consultants Cambridge Education during their visit on April 8 and 9, 2010 indicates that “evidence from students, parents, and staff indicates that there have been significant improvements in behavior and the learning culture of the school since the start of the academic year.”

There will be rigorous means to evaluate and develop staff. The staff evaluations take place twice yearly – both of which take place after data relating to student achievement have been compiled and analyzed. The director of curriculum and instruction or the director of Stamford Academy will conduct a pre-arranged formal evaluation in the classroom, after completing a pre-observation. The teacher will be evaluated on many different aspects of their teaching in major topics such as: engaging students in learning; assessing learning; classroom culture and climate; and learning environment. A rating score will be calculated. Areas of strength and areas in need of improvement will be written in to the evaluation. Teachers have a space to write their comments. In addition to these formal

evaluations, the teachers are each evaluated once a year by the Assistant Superintendent of the Stamford Public Schools. This is a pre-arranged detailed evaluation. The teachers are also evaluated at least eight times a year in short unannounced visits by the director of curriculum and instruction. The director of Stamford Academy or the director of curriculum and instruction borrowed the idea that short observations of teachers in their classrooms, without note taking, and with in-person feedback could provide good learning opportunities for teachers and leadership. This idea was popularized by Kim Marshall who was a Boston teacher and school administrator for 32 years. He now coaches new principals and writes the [Marshall Memo](#), a weekly newsletter summarizing educational research and ideas. All of these evaluations will be taken into account when determining a staff member's overall rating. Many opportunities exist for development of staff including actions such as: videotaping of one or multiple classroom sessions; analyzing lessons; professional development; the director of curriculum and instruction team teaching; working with a veteran teacher; observing classrooms of high functioning peer teachers; or interaction with the instructional coach. Staff members have opportunities for internal advancement to positions such as: grade level leads; instructional coach; or the academic and post-secondary advisor position.

There will be a new method instituted by which all teachers and staff will be eligible for merit pay. The primary component to be considered will be student achievement, but it will also take into consideration the staff member's adherence to Domus Core Principles and Family Goals. These evaluation opportunities will take place twice yearly and the merit payments, if earned, will occur following these evaluations. A thorough description of this new merit pay system is described in Section E.A.2. These regular evaluations will allow total transparency to the staff member and will provide all staff members information about their performance and ways corrective actions need to be taken, if necessary. Any staff who do not achieve a "Satisfactory" rating or better will be put on a corrective action plan or be terminated.

Evaluations of teachers or staff who do not meet a Satisfactory or better rating will require the establishment of a corrective action plan or if appropriate, termination. Our status as a charter school allows us the flexibility to take quick action regarding staffing matters. A staff member who does not receive a rating of at least a "Satisfactory" will be put on a corrective action plan. This written plan outlines overall goals, action steps, and supports that will be provided. It covers a 30 day period, and there is a meeting two weeks into the plan to touch base on how things are progressing. At the 30 day meeting, the person can have their rating changed to evidence improvements, can be put on an extension of the corrective action plan, or can be terminated if insufficient progress is seen.

Our plan involves comprehensive instructional reform by initiating a thorough review and rewrite of our curriculum, tailored specifically to enabling staff at Stamford Academy to address the academic deficiencies many of our students present when they enroll at Stamford Academy. As stated above in the Needs Assessment section, our curriculum redesign will align with state standards to assure that our population of students who arrive at Stamford Academy with low proficiency rates can make the gains they need to make to rise to the level of proficiency they need on standardized tests and to successfully transition to post-secondary education, vocational training, or the skilled workforce. This curriculum redesign may be undertaken with the aid of external consultants, either on a paid or un-paid basis.

Our school has increased learning time by increasing class times from 63 minutes per class period to 76 minutes per class period in our school day which lasts from 8:15am to 3:15pm. This is slightly longer than a "regular" public high school day. We also plan to offer summer school for those students who need extra help or who need to make up credits in order to remain on grade level. For those students, the summer school class day will last up to four hours, from 8:00am to 12:00pm, Monday through Friday with 55 minute classes offered in math, English, science, and social studies. Students will be given short times to transition between classes. There will be one teacher handling all of the math classes, or all of the English classes, for instance, with the four grade levels rotating through during the four morning class periods. A staff member from the school will oversee the program to facilitate students taking online courses in order to make up credits to remain on grade level. Our school believes very strongly that involvement of stakeholders helps us to improve our outcomes for our students. Since we know that student performance increases with regular engagement of caregivers in their school life, we will

increase involvement with our parents and families by enhancing our current programming. We actively reach out to the parents and guardians of the students who attend Stamford Academy, in large part through our very dedicated team of family advocates, who attend to the social and emotional barriers that may exist which impede a student's ability to succeed academically. The family advocates develop strong relationships with the families of each student and help solve problems which may be making it hard for a student to stay out of trouble, attend class, remain focused, and transition to post-secondary education. Programming targeted to parents will be a focus of the work family advocates do with families. We also have established ties to numerous nonprofit and corporate partners in the community to provide the students additional recreational, support, and internship/job shadowing opportunities. We will be looking to expand this area through the establishment of the Pre-Graduation Academy (PGA) which will provide the students opportunities to increase their out-of-classroom learning in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

Our structure as a charter school allows us considerable flexibility regarding staffing, curriculum design, scheduling, and line-item realignment within an established budget. This allows us to shift and add responsibilities to existing staff and to take corrective action or implement terminations without delay. Staff development occurs throughout the year and any changes to the schedule are at the decision of school leadership.

The adoption of the transformation model along with a new funding stream will enable Stamford Academy leadership to implement the wholesale capacity-building initiatives that will result in sustained academic achievement gains for the students who come to our school.

**d) a description of how the district has monitored the implementation of each school's improvement plan;**

Stamford Academy is the only school within the Stamford Academy District. The superintendent of Stamford Academy is overseeing the implementation of the District Improvement Plan. He meets face-to-face with the Stamford Academy leadership team on a weekly basis, at a minimum. They consistently visit Common Formative Assessments data, attendance and truancy data as well as discipline records as these can provide an indication as to how well the students will perform on the CAPT. Each of the five Tier 1 indicators outlined in the plan have underlying actions/strategies/interventions that have a timeline assigned to them. The five indicators are: Improve CAPT performance in Literacy and Mathematics by 15%; Ensure that all teachers are highly qualified; Evaluate and create new school curricula and develop Power Standards to streamline curricular goals; Increase student achievement in reading by one and a half grade levels; and Improve teaching and learning by employing best practices. There are assigned responsible parties for each action/strategy/intervention. In most cases, these are the director of curriculum along with teachers, reading specialists, language arts teachers, or other teachers. A means of evaluation has been assigned to each action/strategy/intervention.

**e) the results of any external evaluations conducted at each school within the past five years;**

There have been two evaluations of Stamford Academy over the past few years, with each presented as an attachment. The first is an independent school review executed by Dr. Christine Casey, former assistant superintendent of Stamford Public Schools. She had suggestions of things to work on, but in general, thinks that Stamford Academy, over time, will show the results shown at Trailblazers Academy, a charter middle school operated by Domus since 1999. A Cambridge Education report dated April 8, 2010 outlined main findings around: school culture, instruction and learning, the curriculum, and data analysis and utilization. While the report states that significant improvements have been made in the last year regarding the school culture, it indicates that the students themselves need to take more responsibility for their own contributions to their learning. Teacher expectations and behavior management strategies vary across the school. Professional development needs to happen in relevant areas, and that information gathered in training sessions be shared across the organization. The myriad of backgrounds present within the student body at Stamford Academy requires a curriculum that reflects that diversity. We will offer different electives in the eleventh and twelfth grades but also opportunities to learn outside of the classroom in internship, employment, and community service activities.

**f) the status of school-level data teams at each school;**

Structure:

There are two data teams at Stamford Academy. The Humanities Data Team includes the following members: two English teachers, two social studies teachers, one Spanish teacher, and two reading specialists. This team is facilitated by the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade-level lead.

The Math and Science Data Team includes the following members: two math teachers, two science teachers, one art teacher, and one physical education teacher. This team is led by the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade level lead.

Teams meet every Friday morning from 7:30-8:30am and are usually attended by the director of curriculum and instruction. Although the grade-level lead provides much of the guidance, each data team member plays a role in the process. Members are responsible for keeping minutes, sending out weekly agendas in advance of the meetings, keeping track of data, and having necessary materials available for the entire team. All teachers commit to attending the meetings with data already prepared for analysis. Jennifer Chomiak, a literacy specialist at Cooperative Educational Services (CES), has been quite helpful with helping the teams set norms and weekly goals. She has noted that teacher buy-in in the process is quite high.

Development and Support:

Jennifer Chomiak of CES began her work with us in February 2010 and has completed three out of five support sessions with us around our Instructional Data Teams. Ms. Chomiak debriefs with the director of curriculum and instruction after every session. Below is where we currently stand in the Data-Driven Decision Making Process. (Standards cited from *Standards for School Data Teams*)

Areas of Strength at Stamford Academy:

- A clear process for data collection and analysis is utilized.
- Data used in analysis extends beyond high stakes assessment data.
- There is ample opportunity for participation by every member.
- The discussion follows the agenda.
- The group stays on task.
- The group serves as a problem-solving group as obstacles arise.
- The decisions made by the group are supported by all members.
- At the end of each meeting, next steps are clearly identified and a timeline is developed for follow up.

Areas in Need of Development at Stamford Academy:

- A clear process is set for decision-making, follow-up, and feedback.
- Discussion is largely supported by evidence and data.
- The team uses relevant data (both adult action data and student outcome) to determine the effectiveness of their actions designed to achieve the identified student outcomes.
- The team modifies the plan in response to the data and tracks each change.
- The team conducts a comprehensive review of the plan at least once a year.

**g) a description of how the district has monitored the implementation of corrective action plans or restructuring plans for each school, if applicable, and provide the status of the implementation of each plan; and**

Stamford Academy was founded in 2004 and has not had a corrective action or restructuring plan in place. The school did make a change in leadership last summer by recruiting for the fall of 2009 both a new director and director of curriculum and instruction from the Summer Principals Academy at Teachers College, Columbia University.

**h) a description of the level of the district's participation in the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI)\* and the implementation of applicable CALI initiatives.**

Participation in CALI Training Modules:

Four teachers have completed basic training in Improving School Climate, Common Formative Assessment (CFA), Data Driven Decision Making (DDDM), Effective Teaching Strategies (ETS), and Making Standards Work. Four teachers have completed Improving School Climate and CFA. Six teachers new to Stamford Academy this academic school year have not attended CALI trainings. Two teachers hold CALI certifications in CFAs. The director of curriculum and instruction has obtained the 2010-2010 CALI training calendar and will have untrained teachers attend training during the fall of the 2010-2011 school year.

Implementation of CALI Initiatives:

Stamford Academy's focus this year has been on implementing Data-Driven Decision Making and Common Formative Assessments. The school data teams create CFAs collaboratively and share effective instructional strategies. Teams are currently working towards analyzing student work critically to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching. A recent debrief with Ms. Chomiak suggests that Effective Teaching Strategies should be the next area of focus. Improving School Climate would be implemented school-wide if CALI feedback identifies it as an area in need of improvement.

Conversations around DDDM revealed the need to obtain a new student information system. Two options have been thoroughly investigated, and two more will be evaluated. Stamford Academy plans on implementing a new system by July 1, 2010. The new student information system will help gather data around attendance, credit accumulation, interim and summative assessments, and other important student demographic information. This student information system will collect information that is different from that which we collect in our other data collection efforts with our Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) software. The data collected through ETO looks to assess our progress against goals relating to: the amount of students who are not proficient in reading, science, and math decreasing yearly as measured by CAPT; internal assessments measuring grade level increases in math, reading, and writing; keeping students in classrooms; student attrition; staff turnover; staff attendance; staff reporting that they receive meaningful, ongoing staff development; staff reporting that colleagues treat them with dignity and respect; staff reporting that they receive timely, supportive feedback from the school leadership team; teachers accompanying a family advocate on a home visit; staff achieving their individual professional development goals; internal stakeholders returning surveys; staff members having students report that their teachers/advocate/director/adults truly care about them; students reporting that bullying is not an issue at school, and the program having an operating surplus.

\*Please refer to Appendix B for *Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative* descriptive document.

**2. For each Tier I and Tier II school that the district commits to serve, demonstrate the capacity to use SIG funds to provide adequate resources and related support in order to implement fully and effectively the selected intervention in each of those schools, by stating how:**

**a) funds will be used to support the staffing and organizational structure to implement the selected intervention model in each school. Include an organizational chart outlining district- and school-level support structures;**

In order for Stamford Academy to accomplish the initiatives required to make the gains expected through this Transformational model, additional staff will need to be hired for the period of the grant. We expect that there will be a small increase in staffing levels during the grant period, and those may be cut back following the period of the grant as we assimilate the techniques that we learn during the grant period. Funding to accommodate remaining staff positions would be supported through activities of the development office. Staffing positions will change in the following ways: An existing teacher will expand his responsibilities to include acting as the Pre-Graduation Academy director; an academic/post-secondary advisor will oversee the accumulation of credits for

each student and their transition to post-secondary education; an instructional coach will be promoted from within and will continue to teach in the classroom; we will hire a reading specialist; our existing technology manager will act as the school's data specialist; and we will hire a teaching fellow. There will be a person promoted from within to replace the existing director of family advocates; that position will be renamed as the director of social services and post-secondary programming. (That represents a position reclassification, not an addition to staff.) The proposed organization chart is attached.

**b) district- and school-level staff will be trained to fully and effectively implement the selected intervention model in each school;**

In order for our staff to make the significant changes they need to make to bring about the aggressive academic achievement goals we have set for ourselves, staff need to receive outside professional development training (which will be shared internally where appropriate). Staff development will include training opportunities for targeted staff at Stamford Academy, involving teachers, leaders, and the family advocates. An overarching goal of the training programs will be to provide staff the necessary tools to be able to increase the student achievement of all students so that students reach proficiency, graduate, and move on to post-secondary education. Data will be collected and staff will be trained to know how to utilize that data to help instruct whether or not the methods employed lead to the achievement of goals set for students. Areas to develop to help move the school forward will include improving the quality of teaching and learning, improving the contribution made by students to their own learning, developing a structured but innovative curriculum that matches the needs of the students, and developing systems that enable the school to collate and utilize academic, social, and personal data. Training opportunities will be made easy to access as it is imperative that all staff receive the appropriate training we need them to have to help move our students toward our goals.

**c) the district will monitor each component of the selected intervention model for each school; and**

A School Improvement Grant Monitoring Committee will be established to monitor progress of initiatives towards the overall goals as well as monitoring the allocation of resources and funds. This committee will meet monthly to determine the ongoing effectiveness of programming and to ensure appropriate allocation of resources. The committee will be comprised of the Stamford Academy school director, Domus chief education officer, Domus assistant executive director, Stamford Academy director of social services, Stamford Academy director of curriculum, Domus director of clinical services, and Domus chief financial officer.

**d) the district will monitor the allocation of resources and funds to effectively implement the selected intervention model in each school.**

As noted above, the above-listed School Improvement Grant Monitoring Committee will meet monthly and will assess monthly the allocation of financial resources. The assessment will focus on the way that the resources are being utilized and how the use of those resources are tracking versus the achievement of our goals.

**3. Describe actions the district has taken, or will take, to:**

**a) design and implement interventions consistent with the federal requirements of the SIG (see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/guidance20100120.doc> for guidance on federal requirements);**

- (1) Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model. Stamford Academy replaced the principal in September 2009 and feels confident that Mr. Callahan has the skills and competencies necessary to transform Stamford Academy into a high-functioning school.
- (2) Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that —
  - (a) Take into account data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates. Data will be rigorously collected and regularly

analyzed to make sure that the data points to the attainment of the goals set for the students. There will be analyses compiled during the year and these might indicate mid-course corrections which will be implemented immediately if there is consensus that a change is required in order to allow attainment of goals. Stamford Academy has developed a new system by which teachers and staff will participate in a new Merit Pay system which is designed to take student achievement into consideration (a 50% weighting), as well as adherence to Domus Core Principles and Family Goals. Student achievement includes a measurement of the percentage of students in a classroom who have received at least one acceptance letter to a post-secondary educational opportunity and have a definitive plan on how to successfully transition.

(b) Are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement. Teachers and principals will be intimately involved in the setting of benchmarks for evaluations. There will be open dialogue about the setting of the benchmarks and staff feedback will be requested periodically. The existence of the goals will be reviewed with each staff member prior to the beginning of the school year and prior to the evaluation period.

(3) Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so. The evaluations that occur twice yearly will provide means for staff performance reviews, which will carry new opportunities for merit pay. Those staff members who perform well will receive twice-yearly merit pay over and above their salaries. Those who do not perform at a “Satisfactory” or above level will either be put on a corrective action plan or will face termination if the situation is that dire.

(4) Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies. Stamford Academy will purchase a robust student information system which will allow for accurate tracking of student achievement data, attendance, and progress on interim assessments. The data will be used to evaluate progress of students toward the established academic advancement goals, and will also be used as a means to assess each staff member’s effectiveness in helping students achieve gains necessary to reach goals. The system will provide concrete data at multiple points during the school year and can be used to revise a teaching approach, attention to certain problematic lessons, overall achievement, attendance, and can provide information about each student that may reveal social or emotional issues that impede academic success. Staff will obtain the necessary training to know how to input and export relevant data. The redesign of the curriculum will allow for the development of a standards-based curriculum, and the establishment of interim assessments that will match up with that curriculum. The curriculum will be designed to improve student achievement and propel our students toward post-secondary education. An outside vendor will come in to support department staff and do curriculum mapping with close attention paid to aligning with state and district standards. The program is built around those standards, with innovative ways to help students prepare for the future. Teachers and other staff will receive training to best implement this new curriculum.

Family Advocates will receive training to help them improve student achievement and make schools safe, healthier, and more conducive to learning. Family Advocates are charged with helping the school community understand the critical role that social and emotional development play in the overall success of young people. Additionally, Family Advocates require on-going training around teaching students the necessary skills to manage emotions that interfere with concentration and learning, to develop motivation even in the face of challenges and academic setbacks, to work cooperatively with peers, and to set and work toward academic and life goals. The selected training opportunities below will support Family Advocates in on-going efforts to involve parents and families to maximize student learning. The Family Advocate model promotes working collaboratively with families to develop student plans, initiating Family Night events that welcome and engage caregivers, and working with families to influence school decisions, plans and evaluating school programs.

<b>Year 1-2010/2011</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>
Boys Council/Girls Circle	\$400.00	Dec 2010	Dec 2010
Group Work (with students)	\$800.00	July 2010	July 2010
School Counseling 101	\$500.00	Sept 2010	On-going
Classroom Observations/Behavior Plans	\$500.00	July 2010	July 2010
SEL Overview, training and implementation	\$1,000.00	July 2010	On-Going
SEL Assessment, Evaluation and Outcomes	\$1,000.00	July 2010	On-Going
SEL books, manuals, training guides, curricula	\$800.00	July 2010	On-Going

*Examples of SEL training:*

- *Creating the Foundation for Comprehensive School Climate*
- *Rutgers On-Line SECD*
- *School Connect: Optimizing the High School Experience (40 lesson curriculum)*

**Year 2-2011/2012**

Advanced Group Work (conducting parenting skills groups)	\$800.00	July 2011	July 2011
Family Engagement	\$1,000.00	July 2011	On-Going
Cultural Competency	\$800.00	July 2011	July 2011
Service Learning	\$700.00	July 2011	Sept 2011
Positive Behavior Supports	\$700.00	July 2011	On-Going
School Climate/Phase II SEL	\$1,000.00	July 2011	On-Going

An instructional coach will be identified from within the ranks of current Stamford Academy teaching staff for his or her effectiveness as a teacher at Stamford Academy. The contract made with a consultant to develop this function will involve lesson development and training the instructional coach to provide in-class feedback to teachers. This effort to improve teacher effectiveness will boost student achievement.

(5) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model. The merit pay mentioned above will bring new incentives to the teachers and staff and will tie strongly to student achievement. There will be opportunities for advancement within the school, with the semi-annual evaluations acting as a key identification tool for the leadership team to use in identifying candidates for internal promotion or new positions. The school improvement grant will bring a few new hiring positions to the school, and there will be chances for existing staff to apply for internal opportunities to add new responsibilities, such as the new role of instructional coach.

- b) recruit, screen and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality. You must submit the *Evaluation of External Partners* form found in Appendix G for each external partner you are proposing to use;**

Stamford Academy will not engage an external provider.

- c) align other federal, state and local resources with the interventions (e.g., Title I, Part A Regular and ARRA, Title II, Part A Teacher Quality, Title III, Part A English Language Acquisition, state Priority School District funds, State Accountability funds and Education Cost Sharing set-aside funds);**

The leadership team of Stamford Academy is devoting all of their resources to the improvement of our school through reaching the seven stated goals in this grant. Our school will use the funds outlined in this grant coupled with the other federal Title monies to work towards increasing student achievement and achieving the targeted graduation rates. The resources supplied by the School Improvement Grant will be supplemented by Title monies in the categories that they are designed to fund. For example, improving the literacy of our students is of paramount importance; we have addressed this need in several ways through the SIG, but would look to enhance those services through our Title I grant. The other federal funds we receive are aligned with the school improvement plan and are being used to further our development of the improvement plan. We will align the Title funding and the state funds to the requirements of the transformation model, and will plan carefully to avoid duplicating any services that we already provide.

- d) modify its teacher or administrator contracts, practices or policies to enable its schools to implement the interventions fully and effectively; and**

Stamford Academy is a charter school, and as such, staff operate free of union regulations. The leadership of Stamford Academy/Domus are in control of the hiring and firing of all staff, with regular performance review meetings occurring with staff. This allows all staff to know their current performance level, communicated at least twice a year. The ratification of employment letters occurs with Board approval. The leadership team has flexibility to motivate their staff or dismiss underperforming staff as a result of the charter school status.

- e) sustain the reforms after the funding period ends.**

Most of the actions that the school plans to make as a result of this grant will be capacity-building and funded during the three years of the grant period. The benefits of the changes will remain long after. The changes to the curriculum will occur during the three-year period, with the majority of the work occurring in the first three months. This may need revisions as time passes and the needs of the student body change as we improve their academic achievement levels. As the student body makes academic progress, our students will be able to avail themselves of more advanced programming and outside-of-the classroom opportunities. We expect that the leadership team will be able to accomplish these changes. Staff incentives will continue following the grant period, and the development officer at Domus will fundraise to cover these. The development officer will fundraise with current funders, lapsed funders, and funders who we feel will find the story of our transformation compelling. This person will be responsible for submitting and winning grants with new funders, who we expect will become recurrent funders. The executive director of Domus, the chief education officer, the director of Stamford Academy, and the director of curriculum and instruction will play a leading role in telling the compelling story to current and potential funders, supplementing the efforts of the development officer. The data collection system will be in place, and as the system develops, we intend to involve the staff of Stamford Academy into the collection and interpretation of that data. The existing information technology staff member will assume responsibilities of the system. The benefits of the training for all staff will remain long after the funding ends. Our leadership team, development staff, and board of directors will be committed to sustaining the initiatives started during the grant period for a long time after the grant period ends.

- 4. Include a timeline delineating the steps the district will take to implement the selected intervention in each Tier I and Tier II school the district commits to serve.**

Initiatives listed below will be funded through the School Improvement Grant. The actions and dates outlined below are those funded through this grant, but we expect many of these initiatives to continue past the funding period by pursuing separate funding streams.

<b>INITIATIVE</b>	<b>Date to Begin</b>	<b>Date to End</b>	<b>Position Responsible</b>
Student Information System – Purchase Software/Training	July 2010	June 2013	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Family advocate training	July 2010	June 2012	Director of Clinical Services
Academic/ Post Secondary Advisor – hire new staff member	July 2010	June 2013	Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Director of Family Advocates
Teaching Fellow – hire new staff member	July 2010	June 2013	Director
Hire consultant to train instructional coach	August 2010	June 2013	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Purchase leveled books and textbooks	August 2010	June 2011	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Merit Pay for staff	January 2011	June 2013	Director

**5. Provide a description of how the district has consulted with relevant stakeholders, including parents, regarding the district’s application and implementation of the intervention model in its Tier I and Tier II schools.**

Stamford Academy has undertaken a rigorous process by which it has involved its teachers, staff, and family advocates in the planning of the future needs and direction of the school by asking for each staff member to complete a *Transformational Survey*. The questions focused on the process of self-analysis involving: personal development of each staff member (greatest accomplishments, greatest challenges, support in areas of challenge, and needs for personal development); school development (greatest accomplishments, greatest challenges, effective or ineffective training techniques employed at the school, computer training needs, and professional development needs); supporting students and families (collaboration with colleagues, communication amongst staff, communication with families, living and modeling the Domus core principles, and skills building needs); and school policies and structures (regarding uniforms, discipline approach, a merit pay system, and credit recovery opportunities for SA students). All staff completing the survey were asked to submit any thoughts, questions, suggestions, ideas, or concerns that the staff member might have regarding any of the areas addressed or areas they felt needed attention.

Parents are asked to complete a survey twice a year. The parents are asked to complete this Family Survey which they are advised is used “to gather information that will be used for school improvement planning.” Their input is very important to the ability of Stamford Academy to effectively engage them in the lives of their students. Questions focus on, but are not limited to, expectations, parental access to school administrators, their child’s feelings about the way they are treated and respected at the school, attendance at school events, behavior guidelines, class work, learning opportunities, communications with the school, access to and quality of school resources, and the celebration of diversity. Parents are also asked to provide written answers to two questions

regarding what the school does well for the child and what improvements the parent would like to see at SA.

- 6. For each Tier III school the district commits to serve, identify the services the school will receive or the activities the school will implement. A district has flexibility to choose the strategies it will implement in the Tier III schools it commits to serve. A district does not have to implement a particular school improvement strategy in its Tier III schools. The strategies the district selects should be research based and designed to address the particular needs of the Tier III schools.**

N/A

- 7. If the district is not applying to serve each Tier I school, explain why it lacks capacity to serve each Tier I school.**

Stamford Academy is the only school within this district.

**E. Provide the following information regarding EACH Tier I and Tier II school using the Transformational Model.**

School Name: Stamford Academy

**A. Describe how you will develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness by:**

**1. Replacing the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.**

The principal and director of curriculum and instruction currently in place joined Stamford Academy at the beginning of the 09/10 school year. They both have impressive backgrounds.

Clark Callahan, the director of Stamford Academy, started his professional career as a hall director at Fairfield University for 300 freshmen while earning his MBA. During his time at Fairfield University, his passion for service learning led him to lead two international service trips to Duran, Ecuador. The summer after completing his MBA, he volunteered as the aquatics director at a camp for inner-city kids. Teaching youth who had never been swimming before served as a catalyst for Clark to go into education. Five years ago, he started his career in education by substitute teaching in the Stamford Public Schools before starting his career at Stamford Academy where he taught Math, Business, and Entrepreneurship. His leadership skills and passion for student achievement led him to establish the Work and Learn program at Stamford Academy which allowed over 50 students to gain practical job training and experience through various work experiences. He led students on three service learning initiatives to New Orleans, Boston, and New York. While holding his students to high academic standards he also held the following leadership positions at Stamford Academy: director of finance, director of Work and Learn, director of summer school, and co-director of Service Learning. In 2009 Clark became the director of Stamford Academy where he directs his passion to serve the most underserved population in Stamford by helping them successfully transition into post-secondary education.

Ed.M. in Educational Leadership, Teachers College at Columbia University  
M.B.A. with emphasis in Human Resources, Fairfield University  
B.A. in Communication Minor in Economics, University of Northern Colorado

Kentia Murren, director of curriculum and instruction at Stamford Academy, started her career as an educator over five years ago as a 9<sup>th</sup> grade literacy teacher in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, serving traditionally under-educated and under-served students. She supported students in grades 9 through 12 (for three years) in her roles as English teacher, lead teacher, and college advisor at a high school in East New York, Brooklyn. Her work with inquiry teams, professional learning communities, curriculum and professional development, and active participation in the school's college partnership helped contribute to the school earning an A on their New York City School Progress Report. Kentia is very well-positioned as the director of curriculum and instruction as she is passionately dedicated to ensuring that teachers receive transformational professional development that would lead to comprehensive curricula and learner-centered instruction. She will oversee the use of data-driven instructional practices and decision making to ensure that the school achieves its vision to successfully transition its students to post-secondary opportunities while filling in the gaps that their under-education has caused.

Ed.M. in Educational Leadership, Teachers College at Columbia University  
M.A. in English Education, Brooklyn College CUNY  
B.A. in English Education, Brooklyn College CUNY

- 2. Using rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that:**
- **take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates; and**

Stamford Academy is purchasing a student information system that will allow for the robust capture of data around attendance, credit accumulation, transcripts, discipline records for students, and interim and summative assessments such as Common Formative Assessments (CFA), CAPT, NWEA, and other important student demographic information. We have researched the best program for our needs by visiting three schools using three different systems and observing their applications in those settings. This student information system will collect information that is different from that which we collect in our other data collection efforts with our Efforts to Outcomes software. The compilation of this data will allow Stamford Academy to make regular assessments of their progress toward making adequate yearly progress against their stated student academic achievement, community connections, well-being, and next steps targets.

Each staff member will receive a salary and will have a chance to earn a bonus of up to 20 percent of base-pay based on his or her contributions to students and the school community. Stamford Academy is proposing a new method for merit pay for leaders, teachers, and family advocates based upon each staff member's individual performance in three major categories: Family Goals, Domus Core Principles, and Student Achievement Goals. The first two categories, Family Goals and Domus Core Principles, will apply to every staff member. The Student Achievement Goals will be designed differently depending upon which classification the employee falls into – a leader, teacher, or a family advocate. Family Goals and Domus Core Principles will carry a 25% weighting each and Student Achievement Goals will carry a 50% weighting in the calculation of the bonus. Each question has a scale assigned to it, and performance will determine how many points the staff member earns for their performance on each question. The staff member has to achieve at least a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, in order to accrue any points. An individual's bonus is determined by multiplying all scores that equal 3 or above under each category by the weight percentage and then adding the totals together to get a total percentage. The percentage is then applied to the total possible merit bonus to determine the merit bonus. For instance, a person making a base salary of \$50,000 could earn up to a \$10,000 bonus. If the staff member received a total weighted score of 60, their merit bonus would be \$6,000 or 60% of \$10,000.

Family Goals will assess:

- The percentage of students who have received at least one acceptance letter to a post-secondary educational opportunity and have a definitive plan on how to successfully transition;
- Students' daily attendance;
- Percentage of students who increased 1.5 grade levels according to NWEA score;
- Graduation rate; and
- The percentage of families that participate in 4 out of 7 family nights and 15 volunteer hours.

Domus Core Principles are:

- I show up on-time every day with a positive attitude and greet youth and staff with a smile;
- When working with students in challenging circumstances, I treat them with dignity and respect and give consequences that teach new skills regardless of how many times it takes;
- I take the initiative to respond to the changing needs of young people regardless of my work schedule and I collaborate with my fellow colleagues to meet these needs;
- I consistently contribute to driving a culture of high expectations by reflecting on my own practice, learning from mistakes, and encouraging students and families to do the same; and

- I help to empower young people and families to engage in the SA and larger community in positive and productive ways.

Student achievement goals will be set differently for leaders, teachers, or family advocates and will look at seven different goals around the following categories, including but not limited to goals regarding:

- Post-secondary benchmarks;
- Passing classes or student achievement on CAPT, SAT, or NWEA standardized tests;
- Behavior;
- Student attendance;
- Family involvement;
- The percentage of students who report that their leader/teacher/family advocate cares about them and sets high expectations; and
- A final to-be-determined goal set at the supervisor's discretion.

- **are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.**

The benchmarks are set each year and can be revised from year-to-year. They require teacher and school director involvement, particularly as they relate to the setting of the supervisory goal. The goals for each staff member will be reviewed with the staff members prior to the beginning of the year. Staff feedback is requested periodically so that the benchmarks remain relevant and dovetail with our overall goals.

The performance review process occurs in several steps. The entire leadership team at the school reviews all performance reviews before they are given by the immediate supervisor to the employee. Once the employee sees the performance review and has a chance to review it with his or her immediate supervisor, the employee can address any issues he or she feels are relevant. The supervisor would then be able to take those comments or concerns back to the leadership team, if necessary.

**3. Identifying and rewarding school leaders, teachers and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identifying and removing those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.**

Staff performance is evaluated twice yearly – once after the mid-year point at which they have received and analyzed data relating to student achievement on standardized tests and once at year-end. Merit pay calculations will take place at both of those times. There will be financial incentives awarded at those times. In addition, the merit pay calculations will help determine the high performers. This plan looks to build capacity so high performers will also have the opportunity to advance to higher-level jobs such as grade-level leads, instructional coaches, director of curriculum and instruction, or director of social services.

Staff who do not meet a Satisfactory or above rating in their performance reviews will be subject to corrective action plans or termination. Terminations will be made early enough in the planning period so that suitable replacements can be found prior to the beginning of the school year. Immediate actions regarding any staff will be taken if necessary.

**4. Providing staff ongoing, high quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.**

All of the professional development that occurs at Stamford Academy will be designed to help improve student academic achievement and improve graduation rates. Training will focus on professionals at the school attending to academic learning as well as those attending to the social and emotional well-being of

students, which we know must be in order for the student to succeed academically. Training will also allow staff to use the data that is collected, in ways that can better inform instruction. Teachers will be trained by CALI regarding the newly revised curriculum. It will assure that the curriculum is closely aligned with state standards. Working out from those standards, the program allows innovation and develops skills to prepare the students for the future in ways that are relevant and exciting. Professional development will also occur to teach staff how to input information into the student information system, and then use the compiled data to stay on track to achieve our academic achievement goals. Training will be provided to our staff of family advocates on best practices to engage parents in their student's lives, which we know helps to improve academic success, and best practices in social and emotional learning. All of these professional training modules will be shared with other groups to leverage the benefit of the training.

In order to develop the highly qualified teachers we need to drive this model, we will promote from within an instructional coach to work with teachers around their teaching style and skills improvement. This person will act as an instructional coach for two and one-half hours per day, in addition to their current teaching load, and will have been chosen for his or her excellent teaching skills.

**5. Implementing such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.**

The financial incentives outlined earlier provide tangible financial reward to those individual staff members who help their students achieve certain clearly articulated goals around student achievement, adherence to the Domus culture, and the inclusion of the family into the school. Included in each staff member's goals is an emphasis on helping students make a successful transition from high school into post-secondary education.

There is a strong culture within Domus to look for candidates for promotion within our organization. This model will allow some promotions and we will seek to hire from within. If none exist, then we broaden our search. Because of this, we expect that there will be a few opportunities for staff to move into more senior roles within Stamford Academy. If performance reviews show a person to be a high performer, the staff member will become a candidate. For instance, we expect to recruit our best teacher into the new role of instructional coach. This person will not relinquish their day-to-day classroom responsibilities with students but will become a coach to the teachers, helping them improve their teaching skills so that they consistently employ appropriate and effective strategies which will move the students along the necessary continuum to help them score well on standardized tests and meet the goals set out at the beginning of each year. We will be looking within our ranks for high performing teachers to become grade level leads, one for the ninth and tenth grades and one for the eleventh and twelfth grades.

**B. Describe how you plan to implement comprehensive instructional reform strategies by:**

**1. Using data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with state academic standards.**

Using the research of Douglas Reeves, Grant Wiggins, Jay McTighe, and Robert Marzano, Stamford Academy will work to set rigorous standards based on the Connecticut State standards and grade-level expectations for our students and provide high-quality curriculum and ongoing professional development. We will set up a calendar where teachers regularly analyze student data to drive their daily instruction and long-term planning. With the help of an outside consultant this summer, we will develop curricula which are backwards-mapped against end-of-year standards and vertically aligned from grade-to-grade and to advanced college-readiness standards.

When our revamped curriculum is in place, each class will have measurable and standards-aligned daily

objectives. Whether the objective is to predict the actions of a character in a novel or to solve for an algebraic variable, the objective will drive the content in the lesson. Using multiple forms of assessments, teachers will be trained to track their students' mastery of the objective and progress toward our overall academic goals.

Our curriculum will be divided into four to six cycles (approximately four to six weeks in length), each of which will culminate in a cumulative assessment where students demonstrate mastery of the standards they have learned throughout the year. A school-wide, day-long professional development day will follow each cycle, giving teachers the time and opportunity to examine data-and-make decisions based on data such as editing their unit plans, targeting their instruction, and scheduling interventions for struggling students. This process will give our faculty the flexibility to cater the curriculum for each individual student and anticipate challenges.

Over the 2010 summer, we will engage consultants and teachers to design this comprehensive and vertically-aligned curriculum, taking into consideration data concerning our particular groups of students and state academic standards. The curricular approach will be research-based. We would also look to identify and purchase relevant and grade-level appropriate reading materials, including text books, free reading books, class novel sets, and leveled reading books. These added resources will allow students to be met exactly where they are in their literacy development, and they will provide the right balance between challenge and support.

As mentioned earlier, Stamford Academy will purchase and implement a new data software system which will allow for the capture of information important to making regular assessments of student achievement, credit accumulation, attendance, and other important demographic information. We plan to use our existing information technology manager to manage these data systems and compile data into useable formats which will be used by school leaders for decision-making and planning purposes.

## **2. Promoting the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim and summative assessments) in order to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students.**

The composition of our student body at Stamford Academy requires us to take extra efforts to understand the entire picture that each and every student presents. Academic performance is only one aspect, and it is one that we work hard to improve. Data collected on academic performance is critical to our ability to make achievement assessments. However, without researching, strategizing, and then implementing an effective plan incorporating the social and emotional pieces of each student, our best efforts in education may not bring about the results we strive to achieve. Each student's individual situation determines our approach, but we constantly look to the whole student and engage both internal and external services, if necessary.

Data teams began full implementation in the 2009/2010 year. Grade level staff members – teachers, the family advocates, and administrators – meet every other week to discuss grades, attendance, and discipline. On the other week, they review formative assessments (measures baseline and then every-two-weeks student progress toward State learning standards) in a macro and micro way. The macro review seeks to ID patterns and trends. For instance, we saw that across a grade students struggled with measurement, so we implemented instruction involving measurement across all classes in all content areas. The micro review looks student-by-student. For instance, if a student is not making progress toward the state goal, we identify specific skills that the teacher is teaching where progress is not occurring so the teacher changes the way they teach that skill.

Our director of curriculum and instruction spends 80% of her time in the classrooms observing the class using research-based key indicators for effective teaching to insure that the teachers use the most

effective strategies for their students' needs.

**C. Describe how you plan to increase learning time and create community-oriented schools by:**  
**1. Establishing schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time.**

All students at Stamford Academy will attend classes from 8:15am to 3:15pm. Certain students will be identified if they need to accelerate their basic skills and recover credits in order to move on to the next grade level. In order to do this, these students may sign up to take online courses offered through the State. A certain number of courses will be provided free of charge, but then further requests for free courses would be granted if the previous students have attained certain minimum grades. The post-secondary academic advisor will oversee this function. In addition, our move to establish core subject classes in English, math, social studies, and science in 76 minute blocks (versus the current 63 minutes) will also add to our ability to help the students obtain the necessary credits they need to move from grade-to-grade and then to graduate.

**2. Providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.**

Stamford Academy has had a strong vision of how parents play a role in the education of SA students. SA employs Domus' family advocate model, which utilizes trained professionals who work closely with students and families to remove non-academic barriers to learning. Families also commit, upon enrolling their children in the school, to volunteering a minimum of 30 hours per school year; almost all reach that goal every year. They help out in the office, hosting poetry or writing classes, and making calls home. We also look for opportunities to encourage parents to provide mentoring to younger people.

Parenting Journey is a 13-session course designed for parents who want to be supported in learning more about themselves as parents, about their relationships, their strengths, and the resources and skills they need to effectively parent their children. Over meals in a warm and nurturing environment, parents are supported and encouraged to care for themselves, and each other, while participating in a series of experiential exercises and activities. The Parenting Journey was developed by Massachusetts-based The Family Center. We can accommodate up to 14 participants in each session, and we recruit the participants through other programs held at Domus, such as the two charter schools, Project Hope, or our Chester Addison Community Center.

Parenting workshops are organized and posted get-togethers for parents where we have a parent share their expertise in a subject of interest to other parents. For instance, we might organize and host a workshop in finding public housing, acquiring computer skills, learning computer graphics, parenting skills, or cooking workshop where a parent demonstrates their cooking talents for others to enjoy and learn from. Our family advocates organize four or five of these workshops each year. They take place at Stamford Academy but are available to a parent of any Domus program participant.

Parent Academy is a model in which parents inform us of issues of interest to them and Domus holds a monthly gathering for parents at one of three locations operated by Domus – Stamford Academy, Trailblazers Academy, or Chester Addison Community Center. Dinner will be served to the attendees. Topics will likely be seasonally appropriate, such as energy assistance, tax preparation, or summer programming. They have also included sessions on special education or bullying. We offer the programming in different languages in an attempt to engage as many of our parents as possible.

In addition, Domus' director of training services occasionally engages parents in training classes as he is trained to host classes for parents in:

- Parenting Your Out-Of-Control Teen (Certified facilitator, Savanna Family Institute)
- Can We Talk (opening a dialogue between teens and their parents around sex, drugs, self esteem, peer pressure, bullying)
- Common Sense Parenting (younger children)

- Active Parenting (younger children)
- STEP/Teen: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens

**D. Describe your plans to provide operational flexibility and sustained support by:**

**1. Giving the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates.**

Stamford Academy has significant flexibility in its day-to-day operations since it operates as a charter school and is the only school within its district. Staffing decisions can occur without the confines of negotiated contracts. We can shift and add responsibilities to staff members as situations develop at the school. Our size and structure allows us to be reactive very quickly so that we can address changes in student needs. We have the ability to add staff development training time to our schedule if it becomes necessary. In addition, our data compilation systems will collect significant amounts of data which will be analyzed regularly, and findings indicating a necessary change to approach can be implemented immediately. The charter school status gives the leadership team the ability to adjust scheduling, adjust what they teach, and when they teach it. Students with extenuating circumstances often go to Stamford Academy, and it is often a lack of flexibility at other schools that points them to Stamford Academy. A student at Stamford Academy will be accommodated as best as possible, as it is our mission to take these struggling students and find a way to help them succeed. For instance, a student who has fallen behind in their necessary credit accumulation will have opportunities to catch up. We have implemented longer school days, provided the opportunity to take on-line courses under the guidance of a Stamford Academy staff person, and instituted the PGA as ways to facilitate this, but we can also adjust our overall plan if we find we need to meet other student needs. We set a target for attendance which we know is a strong contributor to successful completion of the program and contributes to our higher-than-average graduation rates for this population. Once the budget is established, movement of monies from one line to another can occur with speed and few levels of approval, as opposed to many. Stamford Academy has complete autonomy when it comes to determining the scope, breadth, and depth of summer school offerings, for instance. Once the budget is established, the director can determine many aspects of the program, within a short amount of time. This flexibility has proven essential given the circumstances of our students and the behavior issues many of them face. We have devised our plans for the future of Stamford Academy to take into account our student body and our desire to help them transition successfully to college, vocational training, or the skilled workforce.

Stamford Academy is proposing the establishment of a new program into which all of our students will enroll. The program will be called Pre-Graduation Academy (PGA). Our school will continue to attract the same academically, socially, and emotionally struggling students who have not found success in the traditional public schools available in Stamford. It will be our goal to take these students and through intensive targeted instruction and a longer school day, provide them the incentive and tools to help them succeed in transitioning from high school into post-secondary programming. We will develop a curriculum that allows students to sharpen and explore their strengths and areas of interest. They will participate in traditional classroom learning but will begin to explore the world through internship, travel, and employment opportunities which will better prepare the student to transition into life after high school. Ninth and tenth grade students will continue to take their required courses in the areas of math, science, English, and social studies, but their classroom times will be increased from 63 minutes to 76 minutes a day in each core subject. Those who successfully earn the additional credits that accrue due to these longer classroom periods will have a chance to customize their program for their eleventh and twelfth grade years. If they have accumulated at least 14 credits by the end of their tenth grade year, they will work closely with their family advocate to develop an individual post-secondary plan. Through the Pre-Graduation Academy, students will have the chance to participate in internships, job-shadowing, part-time or full-time employment, formalized volunteering, job and career training, college level courses

(online), leadership in student activities, pre-AP classes, SAT/ACT prep classes, civil service exam preparation, or entrepreneurial activities. Students will need to accumulate the same number of credits in math and English but will be able to reduce by one-half of a year's credit the requirements in history and science. Due to the longer school day, students will be able to gain additional credits in physical education and the arts, Spanish, and the Pre-Graduation Academy offerings listed earlier. The State of Connecticut requires 20 credits for graduation while traditionally Stamford Academy required 24. This will require 26 credits.

The recently approved school reform bill passed by the CT State Senate requires high school students in the Class of 2018 to increase their credit requirements for graduation as well as accomplish certain distribution requirements not currently required in high schools across the state. Through the Pre-Graduation Academy, Stamford Academy students will accumulate 26 credits versus the new state-mandated number of 25 and will have the language, math, and science credits required. These students also will be completing a multidisciplinary capstone project in their senior years. These projects are lengthy papers that students will write after spending an extended amount of time researching one particular subject for a course. The immediate roll-out of these new requirements through the Pre-Graduation Academy will assure that Stamford Academy is years ahead of the newly-outlined high school graduation requirements.

Students who have not acquired sufficient credits to make the successful transition from grade-to-grade will have the chance to make up credits by taking on-line courses. We plan to make every effort to provide these students the chance to acquire the academic proficiency they need to transition successfully from grade to grade and then on to post-secondary education.

Staffing will be flexible in that the core curriculum will be consistent from year to year, but specific offerings in the electives portion of the PGA will depend upon interest, applicability to the student body, and arrangements we can make in the community. Our size and autonomy allow us to remain flexible regarding budgetary issues, so we can adjust our budget according to demand, student needs, and availability of funds.

We expect to see an increase in our student body as we implement these changes and show results. The current facility in which we operate Stamford Academy does not have much ability to accommodate more than about five more students, but we would hope to expand our offerings to other locations as we establish a good track record with this model. Our funding stream would need to increase proportionately for us to be able to make this kind of an expansion to our program.

## **2. Ensuring that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the district, the CSDE or a designated external lead partner organization.**

Stamford Academy will receive ongoing, technical assistance from the Connecticut State Department of Education. Stamford Academy will continue to work with CALI to support and supplement the intensive technical assistance we propose to obtain from an outside vendor. This technical assistance will come in the form of ongoing, imbedded professional development in the areas of curriculum development, formative assessment development, and data analysis. We have proposed getting close to 60 days per school year, over the next three years, of ongoing coaching and development.

**Note:** SIG funds may be awarded to a district for a Tier I or Tier II school that has implemented, in whole or in part, a turnaround model, restart model or transformation model within the last two years so that the district and school can continue or complete their implementation of the model.

**G. BUDGET: Please complete the following budget information.**

Each applicant must complete the following for FY 2011 (school year 2010-11), FY 2012 (school year 2011-12) and FY 2013 (school year 2012-13):

- a district summary budget;
- a district summary budget narrative;
- a school-level budget for each school the district commits to serve; and
- a school-level budget narrative for each school the district commits to serve.

The budgets and budget narratives must indicate the amount of SIG funds that the district plans to use to:

- implement the selected model (turnaround, restart, closure or transformation) in each Tier I and Tier II school the district commits to serve;
- conduct district-level activities designed to support implementation of the selected school intervention models in the Tier I and Tier II schools; and
- support school improvement activities, at the school or district level, for each Tier III school the district commits to serve over the three-year period.

The budget request for each Tier I and Tier II school must be of sufficient size and scope to support full and effective implementation of the selected intervention over a period of three years. First-year budgets (school year 2010-11) may be higher than in subsequent years due to one-time start-up costs. A district may request funds for district-level activities that will support the implementation of school intervention models in Tier I and Tier II schools.

Include not less than \$50,000 per year or more than \$2 million per year for each Tier I, Tier II and Tier III school the district commits to serve. The budget for each of the fiscal years cannot exceed the number of Tier I, Tier II and Tier III schools the district commits to serve multiplied by \$2 million.

SIG funds must be used to supplement, and not supplant, state and local funds. Each of the Tier I, Tier II and Tier III schools the district commits to serve must receive all of the state and local funds it would have received in the absence of the SIG funds.

**Please see Appendix D for more information and examples.**

District: Stamford Academy

Town Code 282

**ED114 DISTRICT SUMMARY BUDGET WORKSHEET  
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG)**

CODE	OBJECT	FUND 12060 SPID 20910 <b>FY 2011</b> (School Year 2010-11) Program 22223 Chartfield 1: 170002	FUND 12060 SPID 20910 <b>FY 2012</b> (School Year 2011-12) Program 22223 Chartfield 1: 170002	FUND 12060 SPID 20910 <b>FY 2013</b> (School Year 2012-13) Program 22223 Chartfield 1: 170002
100	Personal Services/ Salaries	240,000	236,000	224,000
200	Personal Services/ Employee Benefits	60,000	59,000	56,000
300	Purchased Professional & Technical Services	225,000	37,500	12,500
400	Purchased Property Services			
500	Other Purchased Services			
600	Supplies			
700	Property	35,000	5,000	10,000
890	Other Objects			
	<b>TOTALS</b>	560,000	337,500	302,500

**DISTRICT SUMMARY GRANT BUDGET NARRATIVE**

DISTRICT: Stamford Academy

TOWN CODE: 282

FY 2010-2011

<b>CODE</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>Amount</b>
100	<b>PERSONAL SERVICES – SALARIES.</b> Amounts paid to both permanent and temporary grantee employees including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. This includes gross salary for personal services rendered while on the payroll of the grantees.	\$240,000
	Yearly performance bonus-\$112,000, Academic/Post Secondary Advisor-\$64,000, Teaching Fellow-\$48,000, Summer School Teachers-\$16,000	
200	<b>PERSONAL SERVICES – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.</b> Amounts paid by the grantee on behalf of employees; these amounts are not included in the gross salary, but are in addition to that amount. Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, nevertheless are parts of the cost of personal services.	\$60,000
	Includes FICA, health insurance and retirement plan matching.	
300	<b>PURCHASED PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES.</b> Services, which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided. Included are the services of architects, engineers, auditors, dentists, medical doctors, lawyers, consultants, teachers, accountants, etc.	\$225,000
	Training (Student Information Software)-\$20,000, Outside vendor for development of interim assessments-\$160,000, Family Advocate Training-\$5,000, Instructional Coach Consultant-\$40,000	
400	<b>PURCHASED PROPERTY SERVICES.</b> Services purchased to operate, repair, maintain, and rent property owned or used by the grantee. Persons other than grantee employees perform these services. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.	

CODE	OBJECT	Amount
500	<b>OTHER PURCHASED SERVICES.</b> Amounts paid for services rendered by organizations or personnel not on the payroll of the grantee (separate from Professional and Technical Services or Property Services). While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.	
600	<b>SUPPLIES.</b> Amounts paid for items that are consumed, worn out, or deteriorated through use; or items that lose their identity through fabrication or incorporation into different or more complex units or substances.	
700	<b>PROPERTY.</b> Expenditures for acquiring fixed assets, including land or existing buildings, improvements of grounds, initial equipment, additional equipment, and replacement of equipment.	\$35,000
	Leveled Books/Textbooks-\$25,000, Online Credit Recovery Software-\$10,000	
890	<b>OTHER OBJECTS.</b> (Miscellaneous Expenditures) Expenditures for goods or services not properly classified in one of the above objects. Included in the category could be expenditures for dues and fees, judgments against a grantee that are not covered by liability insurance, and interest payments on bonds and notes.	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 560,000

**DISTRICT SUMMARY GRANT BUDGET NARRATIVE**

DISTRICT: Stamford Academy

TOWN CODE: 282

FY 2011-2012

CODE	OBJECT	Amount
100	<b>PERSONAL SERVICES – SALARIES.</b> Amounts paid to both permanent and temporary grantee employees including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. This includes gross salary for personal services rendered while on the payroll of the grantees.	\$236,000
	Yearly performance bonus-\$112,000, Academic/Post Secondary Advisor-\$64,000, Teaching Fellow-\$48,000, Summer School Teachers-\$12,000	
200	<b>PERSONAL SERVICES – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.</b> Amounts paid by the grantee on behalf of employees; these amounts are not included in the gross salary, but are in addition to that amount. Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, nevertheless are parts of the cost of personal services.	\$59,000
	Includes FICA, health insurance and retirement plan matching.	
300	<b>PURCHASED PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES.</b> Services, which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided. Included are the services of architects, engineers, auditors, dentists, medical doctors, lawyers, consultants, teachers, accountants, etc.	\$37,500
	Training (Student Information Software)-\$2,500, Family Advocate Training-\$5,000, Instructional Coach Consultant-\$30,000	
400	<b>PURCHASED PROPERTY SERVICES.</b> Services purchased to operate, repair, maintain, and rent property owned or used by the grantee. Persons other than grantee employees perform these services. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.	

CODE	OBJECT	Amount
500	<b>OTHER PURCHASED SERVICES.</b> Amounts paid for services rendered by organizations or personnel not on the payroll of the grantee (separate from Professional and Technical Services or Property Services). While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.	
600	<b>SUPPLIES.</b> Amounts paid for items that are consumed, worn out, or deteriorated through use; or items that lose their identity through fabrication or incorporation into different or more complex units or substances.	
700	<b>PROPERTY.</b> Expenditures for acquiring fixed assets, including land or existing buildings, improvements of grounds, initial equipment, additional equipment, and replacement of equipment.	\$5,000
	Online Credit Recovery Software \$5,000	
890	<b>OTHER OBJECTS.</b> (Miscellaneous Expenditures) Expenditures for goods or services not properly classified in one of the above objects. Included in the category could be expenditures for dues and fees, judgments against a grantee that are not covered by liability insurance, and interest payments on bonds and notes.	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	\$337,500

**DISTRICT SUMMARY GRANT BUDGET NARRATIVE**

DISTRICT: Stamford Academy

TOWN CODE: 282

FY 2012-2013

CODE	OBJECT	Amount
100	<b>PERSONAL SERVICES – SALARIES.</b> Amounts paid to both permanent and temporary grantee employees including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. This includes gross salary for personal services rendered while on the payroll of the grantees.	\$224,000
	Yearly performance bonus-\$112,000, Academic/Post Secondary Advisor-\$64,000, Teaching Fellow-\$48,000	
200	<b>PERSONAL SERVICES – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.</b> Amounts paid by the grantee on behalf of employees; these amounts are not included in the gross salary, but are in addition to that amount. Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, nevertheless are parts of the cost of personal services.	\$56,000
	Includes FICA, health insurance and retirement plan matching.	
300	<b>PURCHASED PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES.</b> Services, which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided. Included are the services of architects, engineers, auditors, dentists, medical doctors, lawyers, consultants, teachers, accountants, etc.	\$12,500
	Training (Student Information Session)-\$2,500, Instructional Coach Consultant-\$10,000	
400	<b>PURCHASED PROPERTY SERVICES.</b> Services purchased to operate, repair, maintain, and rent property owned or used by the grantee. Persons other than grantee employees perform these services. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.	

CODE	OBJECT	Amount
500	<b>OTHER PURCHASED SERVICES.</b> Amounts paid for services rendered by organizations or personnel not on the payroll of the grantee (separate from Professional and Technical Services or Property Services). While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.	
600	<b>SUPPLIES.</b> Amounts paid for items that are consumed, worn out, or deteriorated through use; or items that lose their identity through fabrication or incorporation into different or more complex units or substances.	
700	<b>PROPERTY.</b> Expenditures for acquiring fixed assets, including land or existing buildings, improvements of grounds, initial equipment, additional equipment, and replacement of equipment.	\$10,000
	Online Credit Recovery Software-\$10,000	
890	<b>OTHER OBJECTS.</b> (Miscellaneous Expenditures) Expenditures for goods or services not properly classified in one of the above objects. Included in the category could be expenditures for dues and fees, judgments against a grantee that are not covered by liability insurance, and interest payments on bonds and notes.	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	\$302,500

## H. WAIVERS

Please check each waiver that your district will implement. If the district does not intend to implement the waiver with respect to each applicable school, please indicate for which schools it will implement the waiver.

- “Starting over” in the school improvement timeline for Tier I schools implementing a turnaround or restart model (please check only one)

\_\_\_\_\_ All Tier I schools

\_\_\_\_\_ The following Tier I

schools:\_\_\_\_\_

- Implementing a schoolwide program in a Tier I school that does not meet the 40 percent poverty eligibility threshold (please check only one).

\_\_\_\_\_ All Tier I schools

\_\_\_\_\_ The following Tier I

schools:\_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVENTION MODEL CHECKLISTS**

In order to ensure that the district has addressed the requirements for the intervention models selected for each Tier I and Tier II school the district commits to serve, complete the relevant checklist that follows for each school.

<b>District: Stamford Academy</b>	
<b>School: Stamford Academy</b>	
<b>Transformation Model</b>	
<b>Requirements Addressed in Application:</b>	<b>Please Check</b>
<b>A. Develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness:</b>	
1. Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.	X
2. Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take into account data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates; and</li> <li>• are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.</li> </ul>	X
3. Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.	X
4. Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.	X

5. Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.	X
<b>B. Implement comprehensive instructional reform strategies:</b>	
1. Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with state academic standards.	X
<b>C. Increase learning time and create community-oriented schools:</b>	
1. Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time.	X
2. Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.	X
<b>D. Provide operational flexibility and sustained support:</b>	
1. Give the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates.	X
2. Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the district, the CSDE or a designated external lead partner organization.	X