Connecticut Race to the Top Phase 2 Application Executive Summary

On June 1, 2010, Governor M. Jodi Rell, along with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) submitted an application for $175 million in federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funding to implement sweeping reforms in public education. The Application outlines a comprehensive plan for education reform and accountability in Connecticut based on the education reform legislation signed into law in May, the *Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform,* the *2006-2011 Comprehensive Five-Year Plan,* and a bold Education Reform Agenda which accelerates the pace and broadens the opportunities in a system of strategies, some of which are already underway. The Phase 2 RTTT Application and full appendices can be found online at www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322572. It is available as a whole document or can be downloaded/viewed individually by section.

OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICATION

In the Application, Connecticut lays out its Education Reform Agenda and bold but achievable goals that support the vision that all students will be both academically and personally successful and will progress from "proficiency" on state assessments to the state's "goal level and beyond."

As required the Application is divided into six sections that describe Connecticut's Reform Agenda. However, the common themes of Connecticut's reform initiatives are integrated throughout the sections, including the Competitive Preference Priority – Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the two Invitational Priorities – Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes and School-Level Conditions for Reform, Innovation and Learning. A brief description of the requirements for Sections A – F plus the Competitive and Invitational Priorities is summarized below and is followed by a more detailed explanation of the specific elements in the Connecticut approach.

REQUIREMENTS

Section A - *State Success Factors* – articulates the state context, the Education Reform Agenda, the participation of the state's local education agencies (LEAs) the state's capacity to implement, scale up and sustain the plan with documented support from a broad group of stakeholders; as well as evidence of the state's significant progress in raising achievement and closing the gaps.

Section B – *Standards and Assessments* – describes the development and adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and high-quality assessments for Connecticut.

Section C – *Data Systems to Support Instruction* – articulates the full implementation of the statewide longitudinal data system, the plan to ensure accessibility and engage, inform and support key stakeholders (parents, LEA staff, community members, researchers and policy makers) and the state's plan for collaboration with the LEAs on use of data to improve instruction.

Section D – *Great Teachers and Leaders* – includes the provision of high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals (alternative routes to certification), the process for monitoring, evaluating and improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, the plan for equitable distribution of

effective teachers and principals in disadvantaged communities, improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs and the plan to provide student support systems to ensure the success of all students (early warning systems, remedial programs, Student Success Plans).

Section E- *Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools* – articulates the process and authority to intervene in the lowest-achieving schools and in the schools in need of improvement/corrective action and the state's plan to identify and support LEAs in the use of one of the four school intervention models (turnaround model, restart model, school closure or transformation).

Section F – *General* – describes the extent of the education funding priorities in percent of total revenue available and the policies for equitable funding distribution in and between high need LEAs and schools and other LEAs and schools, the provisions for ensuring high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools and current conditions or efforts that demonstrate significant reform that leads to increased student achievement and graduation rates while narrowing the achievement gap.

Competitive Preference Priority – *STEM* – describes the plan to offer a rigorous course of study in science, mathematics, technology and engineering including use of partnerships with industry, universities, museums and research centers to assist teachers and provide student learning opportunities and the development of strategies to prepare more students including the need to address underrepresented groups, women, and girls.

Invitational Priority (noncompetitive) – *Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes* – includes the state's practices/strategies/programs to improve educational outcomes for high-need children in prekindergarten through third grade by enhancing the quality of preschool programs and improving children's school readiness and their transitions between preschool and kindergarten.

Invitational Priority (noncompetitive) – *School-Level Conditions for Reform, Innovation and Learning* – describes Connecticut's CommPACT school model that facilitates student learning through flexibility and autonomy in selecting staff, new structures or formats for schedules, control of the budget, comprehensive services for high need students, enhanced school climates/cultures that remove obstacles and support students and effective engagement of families and communities in order to support student's academic success.

SECTION A – STATE SUCCESS FACTORS

In this section, Connecticut describes its approach to building comprehensive school reform based on our vision for success for all students, P.A. 10-111 – the new legislation for education reform, bold but achievable student goals, a theory of change, education reform agenda goals, financing for sustainable change and resource allocation.

Vision

In addition to the goal that all students will be both academically and personally successful, the Connecticut vision also looks to closing the achievement gap by setting target goals such as:

- by 2014 at least 60 percent of African American and Hispanic students who enter high school as freshman in the Fall of 2014 will be performing at goal level or above on state achievement tests;
- by Spring 2014, the high school graduation rate among at-risk and vulnerable students will increase from 60 to 80 percent, which reduces the gap by half; and

- students who have exceptional records and competencies will complete more advanced placement courses, participate in dual enrollment programs (college courses in high school) and, based on competencies and examinations, will be able to graduate from high school as early as the end of 10th grade.

To accomplish this, CSDE will look to the LEAs, magnet and charter schools, the Connecticut Technical High School System and an expanding set of partnerships that can commit to higher expectations and engagement and share leadership, resources and accountability.

P.A. 10-111

This landmark legislation provides strong support for the RTTT Application and sets requirements that include: increasing high school graduation requirements; increasing advanced placement courses in all districts; credit for online courses and coursework; Student Success Plans and support systems; piloting "board examination systems;" expansion of the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS); linking teacher evaluation to student performance; authorizing the Commissioner of Education to reconstitute local boards of education; authorizing parent-teacher governance councils; providing alternative certification routes for administrators; waiving enrollment limits for charter schools; making the charter school facility grant program permanent; and allowing creation of Innovative Schools in priority districts.

Student Goals

Although Connecticut scores high on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and from 2003 to 2009 there were some increases on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), the percentage of students meeting goal on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) reading and mathematics remained flat for 10th grade students. The gap in performance on the CMT and CAPT was about 40 percentage points among the lower performing subgroups (English Language Learners [ELL], black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities) and the higher performing subgroups (white, economically advantaged, non-ELL, nondisabled). Therefore, the bold but achievable goals that have been set are:

- *by spring of 2014, 60 to 65 percent of our 10th graders will score at the level of "goal" on the state's CAPT assessment*;
- *the higher performing subgroups will continue to increase at a rate of about 1 point per year while the performance of the African American and Hispanic students will need to increase by a substantially larger degree of 4-6 points per year, which then will cut the gaps in performance by approximately half; and*
- *the graduation rate for white students will continue to increase by 1 percentage point annually, while the graduation rate for the African American students will need to increase by 3 to 4 percentage points and the rates for Hispanic students will need to increase by 4 to 5 percentage points.*

In addition, the Connecticut Department of Higher Education (CDHE) is working with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) on a Connecticut-specific tool to develop realistic targets for increased college enrollment and completion with target setting being accomplished by the P-20 Council.

Theory of Change

To meet the goals and transform the system, Connecticut has identified six "Levers for Transformational Change." They are: (1) Family and community engagement; (2) Pre-service training and professional development; (3) Teacher, principal effectiveness and accountability; (4) Curriculum innovation; Application of technology to teaching and learning and greater emphasis on STEM competencies; (5) High school, college and workforce alignment; and (6) Financing sustainable change. Each of these levers will be supported through one of the six public-private Partnerships for Change, composed of both internal and external experts. Embedded within and across these levers is the expansion of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) which provides professional development (PD) and coaching to accelerate the learning of all students and to close the achievement gap; and the implementation of the *Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform*. Additionally, the following strategies and factors will continue to ensure success for all students:

- a solid PK-3 framework for early education in Connecticut;
- an increased role of STEM experiences for all students;
- targeted attention to the special needs of students with disabilities, English Language Learners and other subgroups that constitute Connecticut's significant achievement gaps; and
- the role of the Knowledge Network drawing upon Connecticut's vast but underutilized higher education and business research sectors.

Education Reform Agenda Goals

Connecticut's plan was developed to address the four assurances required in the RTTT Application and is supported by the education reform legislation, grounded in strong partnerships across the state and integrated throughout all of the state's actions as described in the Application in Section B – Standards and Assessments, Section C – Data Systems to Support Instruction, Section D – Great Teachers and Leaders and Section E – Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools.

Financing

Connecticut will examine current educational spending and propose a sustainability plan anchored in a public process of re-purposing existing educational funds. This work will be led by the Partnership for Financing Sustainable Change and will report on findings by December 2011.

Resource Allocation

If funded, and as required by Section 41006 (c) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Connecticut has allocated half of the $175 million directly to Title I LEAs. In addition to this required amount, CSDE has elected to allocate an additional $24 million out of the remaining 50 percent to all LEAs that participate in the RTTT Initiative. Approximately $15 million will be used by CSDE for infrastructure and building capacity to support LEAs and $49 million will be used to support specific initiatives related to the four federal assurances. An analysis of the funds indicates that the majority of the funds ($141 million) will be used to support the "Great Teachers and Leaders" component which clearly emphasizes the importance of their role in achieving the state's goal for academic and personal success of all of our students.

Partners

In Connecticut, 162 LEAs (82 percent of the LEAs eligible to participate) have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing to the state's plan and reform agenda. Out of the 162 LEAs, 91.4 percent of the local boards of education signed on and 87.8 percent of the local union leaders signed on. The LEAs participating constitute 95 percent of the state's K-12 students in poverty. Additionally, Connecticut received over 100 letters of support from various stakeholders, including support from Connecticut's two statewide teacher's union associations.

Capacity

Demonstrating its capacity and leadership to implement this work, this statewide effort will be led by the Gubernatorial and Legislative Leadership, the CSBE, the CSDE, the State Education Resource Center (SERC) and the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC) Alliance. The management structure shown in the organizational chart on page 42 of the Application has been designed to be broad based and ensure the multiple efforts are supported. It includes the P-20 Shared Leadership Council, an Office of RTTT (RTTT Management Team), the six Partnerships for Change (includes Leadership, Members, Liaisons), the assigned Administrative Support Centers and the designated CSDE Liaisons.

Progress in Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps

This section describes the progress that has been made by Connecticut on raising achievement and closing gaps. Connecticut's NAEP and CMT results suggest that overall Connecticut has made some progress. Initiatives and promising practices implemented under the four reform areas contributed to the progress made over the last several years.

SECTION B – STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

This section contains the details and references on the Connecticut efforts around standards and assessments, which are also integrated into other sections. It describes the process for adopting, disseminating and supporting the CCSS in English language arts and mathematics and developing and adopting high-quality common assessments that reflect the depth and breadth of the CCSS. Work on the standards is being supported through membership in the multi-state consortium (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], National Governor's Association [NGA], Center for Best Practices, in partnership with Achieve, ACT, the College Board and 47 other states, two territories, and the District of Columbia). In July 2010 the CSBE will vote on the adoption of the common standards. The CSDE has developed a comprehensive plan to address stakeholder understanding and transition to implementation which is outlined in this section of the Application.

Connecticut is partnering with several national groups to develop valid and reliable assessments. These include: the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium that plans to develop a comprehensive system of formative and summative assessments to evaluate student achievement and measure growth over time, which has applied for the RTTT Category A Assessment Grant; National Center for Education and the Economy – a group of eight states applying for the Investments in Innovations (i3) to support Board Examination Systems, which applied for a RTTT Category B Assessment Grant; and the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC), which is working to design and plan secondary school improvement initiatives on a regional basis.

The specific activities, timeframes and responsible parties for the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments are outlined in this section of the Application. They ensure the availability and fidelity to the work which is anchored in the progress described in Section A. The state's transition plan incorporates a variety of activities and partnerships that will:

- build stakeholder understanding for families, communities, teachers, administrators, statewide education associations, the general public and policy makers;
- align standards from prekindergarten to post secondary;
- provide in-depth and broad-based professional development through forums, conferences, training and workshops on CALI, Scientific Researched-Based Interventions (SRBI), benchmark assessments, early grade standards and assessments, teacher development of tests and scoring protocols, Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) website on Student Success Plans and Capstone Experiences;
- offer multiple pathways to high school graduation such as Board Examination Systems, virtual online high school and college courses and concurrent and dual course enrollment;
- enhance the digital library at www.CTcurriculum.org to include curriculum units, home schooling materials and tasks based on the standards available to LEAs, parents and community organization; and
- expand access to STEM learning opportunities for both students and LEA teachers through model curricula and end of course assessments for STEM courses, offer hybrid courses such as BIO21, CHEM21, PHYS21, provide standards-based online multimedia science resources, provide online course access and professional development modules that support teachers in integrating the use of technology and other 21st century skills to support student learning.

Connecticut has set annual performance targets for student achievement from the baseline established in 2008-2009 through 2014.

SECTION C – DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

This section contains information regarding the implementation of a SLDS, accessing and using state data and using data to improve instruction.

As part of the 12 America COMPETES requirements, six requirements are already completed by Connecticut and progress is being made on the six remaining components yet to be completed. In order to meet the requirements around the sharing of data, the CSDE CEDaR website has been enhanced and expanded and will be used as a public web resource to perform basic searches and compare functions on aggregate school and LEA data. Reports will be available in either traditional or graphic format. The website will be available to key stakeholders such as parents, community leaders, practitioners, researchers and policymakers for their use in decisions on policy, operations, management and resource allocation. The CSDE will provide training and outreach on how to use CEDaR. In addition, Connecticut is also working on building access for LEA staff to secure student, staff and faculty data through an online portal and will provide districts with training and workshops on how to access, analyze and use data appropriately in order to improve instructional effectiveness and measure student growth. CSDE will survey the LEAs and state constituencies on an annual basis to determine how the website is used and obtain suggestions for improvement.

Under P.A. 10-111 the Commissioner of Education is required to report annually, starting July 2011, on the status of the implementation of the new data requirements that include: tracking and reporting on student, teacher, school and district performances; making this data available to local boards of education for evaluations of educational performance of teachers and growth of students as described in Section D; expanding demographic data information collected; expansion of teacher data to include credentials, preparation programs completed, certifications, performance assessments on teacher effectiveness, presence of substitute teachers/aides and class absenteeism; graduate enrollment and post-secondary education; and developing the means for sharing of data with higher education.

Finally, CSDE will collaborate and support all participating LEAs in their implementation of an improvement system that includes CALI, SRBI, and professional development on the use of the improvement system and data resources. The state plan outlines the necessary steps, responsible parties, activities and timelines for this process. As part of this work, CSDE contracted with RMC Research Corporation for a two year evaluation for review of data, site visits and observations to determine the effectiveness of CALI. It will be completed this fall and the results will be used to further refine and enhance CALI.

SECTION D – GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS

The majority of the funds allocated through RTTT are targeted to this component which include: alternative pathways for aspiring teachers and leaders; monitoring and evaluating areas of teacher and principal shortages with a plan for recruitment; improving and evaluating effectiveness of teachers and leaders; ensuring equitable distribution; improving teacher and principal preparation programs; and providing teachers and leaders with effective supports.

Alternate Routes to Certification

Although alternative routes to certification (ARC) exist, P.A. 10-111 now requires CSBE approval of ARCs for school administrators. These ARCs must meet the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards and include: opportunities for various providers to participate; specific selection criteria for candidates including degrees and grade point averages, experience working with children and an ability to meet the testing requirements; the specifics for the supervision that must be provided; the limits for the coursework and duration of ARC programs; and assurances for a certification equivalent to traditional programs. Current ARC programs and plans for developing an administrative ARC program are presented along with the plan for monitoring, evaluating and identifying shortage areas for teachers and principals through the use of the annual Fall Hiring Survey, which identifies the top 10 shortage areas. As part of its plan to address shortages, CSDE will create incentives, flexibility in meeting certification criteria and an action plan that will expand the supply of new teachers. It will also design a new ARC that will train potential principals for urban districts in the turnaround and innovative models of school restructuring.

Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance

As part of its plan to determine teacher and principal effectiveness, the state will collaborate with participating LEAs in the LEA's design and implementation of an evaluation system for teachers and principals that will include: providing staff with student growth data in order to inform decisions on professional development; coaching; differentiating compensation; promoting and retaining highly effective teachers and granting tenure; and removing ineffective teachers and principals using fair and transparent procedures. Describing the state's accomplishments to date, the plan lays out five goals, the

actions and the timelines that will be completed in partnership with the Partnership for Teacher, Principal Effectiveness and Accountability and its subset, the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council. The goals are to:

1. Revise state regulations for teacher and administrator standards and evaluation guidelines, including core policies and revision of state documents, to be comprehensive and clear with multiple indicators of performance.
2. Build a new model to measure student growth that includes building on the Connecticut Mastery Test Vertical Scales, expanding implementation of the Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System, integrating LEA student growth and performance measures, developing K-2 interim assessments, and expanding the State's Longitudinal Data Systems.
3. Design a new system to evaluate principals and teachers to be piloted in 2011 with full implementation by 2012. Review current documents (Common Core for Teaching, Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics, Marshall's Principal Evaluation Rubrics, Vanderbilt Protocols) to develop the performance criteria and performance rubrics and ensure incorporation of classroom observations, self evaluation, agreed upon indicators of student growth, multiple sources of data and training for teachers and administrators.
4. Require LEAs to conduct evaluations on an annual basis using the system developed by CSDE and input data into the system in order to monitor teacher effectiveness and report on district progress in reporting evaluation data and teacher and administrator performance on a statewide basis starting in 2012.
5. Advise LEAs on the use of evaluations to inform decisions on issues such as: a) educator development – using training and coaching for administrators with focused monitoring and data collection on the use of the system with joint planning of professional development needs; b) compensation – using the framework developed by CSDE and the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council; c) tenure and certification – based on the evaluation processes, criteria and training identify criteria for teacher effectiveness for tenure and develop policy guidelines to ensure LEAs have a sound system based on state professional standards; and d) removal – using an intensive evaluation phase for teachers and administrators with performances below acceptable levels, provide supervision for a specific timeframe, external coaching and under the authority of Section 10-223e of the CGS CSDE may direct districts to transfer teachers to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals.

The RTTT Application includes a chart of the Performance Measures and the results of the April 2010 survey on the status of the participating LEAs that are currently using measures of student growth and the target dates to develop a prototype of a state model.

Equitable Distribution of Effective Teachers and Principals

Starting in 1994, Connecticut has collected data on teacher shortages which clearly demonstrate that the poorest and neediest districts in the District Reference Groups (DRG) are those that have the highest percentage of unfilled and hard-to-staff positions. However, hiring statistics do not reflect the retention of teachers, their race, ethnicity and language nor their effectiveness in teaching the students. To address this, Connecticut has developed a plan for a database that will support the resolution of inequities in teacher/principal distribution that include a staff identification system matched to student data and school specific data to identify trends and measurements to determine teacher/principal effectiveness. The data will then be applied to the new evaluation system in order to produce a report on equitable assignment by

September 2013. An interim system of distribution based on "proxy" measures of effectiveness will begin in 2011. Using Crandall Incentive Grants, Connecticut will implement a system of competitive grants for recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers in high-minority and high-poverty schools. Through the Partnership for Teacher, Principal Effectiveness and Accountability, a process called Pre-emptive Hiring, will provide organized data and planning tools that can assist high-poverty schools in accessing and competing for the best teacher and principal candidates by linking data on highly effective staff to LEAs with openings/vacancies. In addition, the plan will include strategies such as scholarships, LEA incentives and policy changes that will increase the number and equitable distribution of effective teachers in the hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas.

Using similar strategies but different approaches, CSDE will address the distribution of effective teachers in the shortage areas. Collecting the critical teacher demographic information that is not currently collected to meet the demand for additional world language, mathematics and science teachers to meet the new 25-credit high school graduation requirements will demand different approaches such as the ARC, loan deferrals, qualification for mortgage assistance, and use of retired teachers to expand the "supply pool." These strategies may also include media campaigns, contracts with professional teacher organizations and business leadership groups to recruit teachers from other states, scholarships, blogs on the CSDE Web site and expansion of the RESC Alliance Minority Teacher Recruitment Programs. Other strategies to consider are using funds as incentives for substitute teachers in districts to take courses that would allow them to qualify for endorsements in hard-to-staff areas and awarding Olmsted Grants to districts to support them in recruiting and retaining teachers in these shortage areas. Finally, CSDE will work on policy changes including implementing new legislation to provide additional financial aid to eligible undergraduates who opt to enroll in certification programs in the hard-to-staff areas, permitting the re-hiring of retired teachers in these areas without loss of pension benefits, ensuring prospective teachers with flexibility in meeting the requirements for a major, waiving the competency examination and assessment for out-of-state teachers with valid certificates and teaching experience, and providing a new resident teacher certificate for those participating in an ARC.

Improving the Effectiveness of Teacher and Principal Preparation Programs

Connecticut already has begun work on this effort through its collaboration with higher education. This has focused on curriculum revisions, alignment of statewide K-12 curricula to college-entry standards to reduce the need for remediation in mathematics and English language arts for college freshman, and the integration of higher education's theoretical learning with the demands of the college classroom. For the last few years CSDE has also been working on revising its regulations for certification, which are now more focused on applied training based on the learning needs of PK-12 students and pre-service competencies. These revised regulations will be adopted by the CSBE in July 2010. The leadership structure has been broadened to include a much more significant role for higher education as demonstrated by their participation as members in three of the six Partnerships for Change and the role of the P20 Shared Leadership Council (described in Section A of the Application), whose members include the Commissioners of Education and Higher Education, Chancellors of the Connecticut State University and Community College Systems and a representative from the University of Connecticut. Under the new education reform legislation CSDE will expand data collection to include a unique teacher identifier with information on credentials, degrees, teacher preparation programs completed, and certifications/endorsements. The legislation also provides for data exchanges between LEAs and the higher education institutions that train

the teachers, which will provide LEAs the opportunity to review the effectiveness of the schools of education in preparing their teachers, as well as the effectiveness of the K-12 schools producing the graduates who enter those programs. The goal for this work will be to use the SLDS to identify the preparation programs that best prepare their graduates to be effective and highly effective K-12 educators. The activities to accomplish this goal will require multiple partners such as higher education, Partnerships for Change and LEAs that will use research and data analysis that links student data and teacher data to teacher preparation programs in order to distinguish programs that do and do not produce effective educators. It will allow CSDE to report, on an institutional basis, the pattern of student growth by certification areas for all educators, conduct longitudinal research, issue publicly accessible reports and explore the possibility of linking the Title II Higher Education and Opportunity Act's institutional report card with the state report card data. CSDE will also increase accountability measures for educator preparation programs and develop criteria for a quality index to inform approval and accreditation processes for educator preparation programs.

Providing Effective Support to Teachers and Principals

Connecticut has designed a comprehensive plan for professional development and pre-service training to support teachers and principals that has two goals. They are to: improve the coordination of professional development opportunities, scheduling and content at the state level; and delineate how LEAs will receive professional development opportunities that are articulated in Connecticut's RTTT Education Reform Agenda. Connecticut's investment in teachers and leaders is built on a broad base of professional development, including CALI, teacher and principal effectiveness systems, recruitment, and educator retention, increased rigor and requirements for high school courses, focus on mathematics and sciences, model curriculum development, STEM innovations, advanced placement courses and strong linkages to parents and community around student support, equity and diversity.

The goals and timelines for the Connecticut Plan for Comprehensive State-Local Professional Development are described in the Application and they include the following:

<u>Goal 1 – LEAs provide student support systems necessary for the success of all students.</u>
These activities will encompass training in an early warning system that includes strategies to maximize before- and after-school remedial programs and work with family and community representatives on the implementation of Student Success Plans through conferences, professional development and presentations for parent and school communities.

<u>Goal 2 – Teachers and leaders will provide learning environments and employ teaching strategies that engage all learners</u>. Topics will include:

- Teaching and Assessing the Next Generation Learners (TANGL) – will focus on the technologies of instruction such as online learning, digital-age literacy for teachers and students, and understanding the role of data. Creation of a Connecticut Education Network Learning Community (CENCL) will provide access for educators, students and their parents to online and hybrid courses, resources, activities, professional development and home-school communication;
- Initiatives to Foster Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – based on the national program *Courageous Conversations about Race* and other research-based programs and methodologies, this topic will enable LEAs to understand the impact of race and culture on learning, lead discussions and monitor the impact

on systems accountability and develop skills necessary to apply the knowledge and strategies to improve the learning and outcomes for racial and language minority students;

- Family and Community Engagement – provides LEA training on School-Family-Community Partnerships in collaboration with CT Parent Information and Resource Center (CT PIRC), supports School Governance Councils established in schools in need of improvement, and expands the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) at the community level
- New Leaders Development – provides teacher leader academies for those interested in school administration through the RESC Alliance and the Urban School Leadership Fellowship program sponsored by the Center for School Change, and once certification regulations are approved, the academies will be recognized as an approved professional development program;
- STEM – in response to the need to increase the preparation of STEM-trained and knowledgeable educators, professional development, resources and access to the CENCL online/hybrid course delivery will be provided, higher education faculty skills will be enhanced through their participation in Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL) and its resources and regional K-8 Instructional Coaching Academies will prepare teachers to be school-based leaders of STEM improvement efforts; and
- CALI – provides certification training for LEAs to conduct their own training, expands the modules for principals, funds a minimum of 45 demonstration schools and supports them with an executive coach through the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), as well as a data team facilitator and stipends for teacher release time.

Goal 3 – Ongoing and planned PD is mapped statewide.
Survey, analyze and map existing professional development opportunities, create a crosswalk identifying redundancies, best practices, and target reduction of part-day LEA professional development events in order to maximize instructional time and issue a report with recommendations by March 2011.

Goal 4 – Coordinated PD schedule/calendar available.
The Partnership for Pre-Service Training and Professional Development will work with national organizations such as CCSSO and other RTTT states to determine best practices at the state and LEA level for online automated professional development calendars, scheduling and tracking, and will issue a report by December 2011.

Goal 5 – Guidelines for continuing education units are revised to promote engaged learning of all students.
Revise the guidelines for professional development and continuing education units (CEUs) to reflect more job-embedded learning, specific and rigorous CEU requirements in technology integration and teaching STEM subjects in the elementary grades and submit the recommendations to the CSBE by July 2011.

Goal 6 – External review of PD effectiveness and cost-efficiency.
Contract with one or more external evaluators to conduct a meta-analysis of the statewide and LEA level professional development in order to assist CSDE in determining if certification renewal should include demonstrated acquisition of skills and knowledge, and conduct data informed analysis on each of the initiatives under effective support for teachers and leaders in order to make recommendations by July 2011.

SECTION E – TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

As part of its reform agenda, Connecticut has pursued reform legislation and expanded its work in turning around low-performing schools through the CALI efforts. Existing legislation had some limitations which have been addressed by the passage of P.A. 10-111. This legislation specifically allows the CSBE to intervene in low-performing schools or districts without legislative or gubernatorial approval in order to reconstitute local or regional boards of education and create parent-teacher school governance councils with authority to petition the local board of education to reconstitute the school. Over the last few years Connecticut has employed a series of sanctions in LEAs that included requiring instructional and financial assessments, assigning CSDE staff and external consultants to the districts, identifying and implementing two demonstration schools in each LEA, conducting monitoring visits, and in one LEA requiring a comprehensive evaluation of the special education program. This work has been done in conjunction with The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) through a training project developed by the Iowa State Board of Education called "The Lighthouse Project" and has been implemented in five districts. A stronger relationship with the philanthropic sector has also expanded several initiatives in these same communities.

The state identifies 18 schools as the lowest 5 percent among the low-achieving Title I schools in Tier 1 and five non-Title I high schools in Tier II. Funding from the School Improvement Grant (SIG) will allow for adoption of one of the four intervention models in up to seven LEAs. The use of CALI, which has been integrated throughout the Application, is a core instructional improvement that has already been shown to be transformational at various levels. Connecticut's CALI districts and demonstration schools have reading and mathematics gains that outpace the statewide average and of the 15 CALI Partner Districts, five schools were removed from the federal NCLB In Need of Improvement Status and an additional 36 schools that had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the previous year, did so in 2009. CSDE had also identified seven LEAs that had been in need of improvement for three or more years and supported them in using a tool developed by the CCSSO and Center on Leadership in Technology to revise their district improvement plans (DIP). As a result, 17 of the schools in these districts that had not made AYP in the previous year made AYP. Although Connecticut has not implemented any of the four intervention models in RTTT at this point, as the state moves forward with the SIG, schools will be required to implement all of the requirements of the mandated model, as well as CALI. Connecticut has learned from the restructuring under NCLB work and understands that it must be done in the context of systemic change, ensures strong leadership at the LEA and building level and must incorporate a culture of collaboration anchored in an identified accountability model. This will require external pressure from a strong stakeholder group, sufficient resources, an evaluation process with continuous improvement and accountability. Currently 18 out of the 25 eligible Tier I and II schools have applied for SIG funding, which will be awarded by June 14, 2010. Since funding is only sufficient for these schools, CSDE has partnered with the Graustein Memorial Fund and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide technical assistance through its Technical Assistance Team to an Early Literacy Project that will contribute more than a million private dollars over three years in one community to support community and family literacy in a two generation approach that coordinates community and school elements to "Third Grade Level Reading." The lessons learned from this project will be used as catalysts for all of the CALI high-need communities and the unfunded Tier 3 SIG schools will be able to access a competitive RFP using RTTT funds to expand the CALI work with an emphasis on family literacy and community involvement. Using the data gathered in all of the work with the 18 SIG schools and input from teachers, principals and leaders, CSDE will design a pilot for the student growth model that will monitor progress.

SECTION F – GENERAL

Funding

In 2005-2006 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) listed Connecticut as having the third highest per pupil expenditure in the country and the highest capital outlay for facilities. This strong tradition of support for education is further carried out in the education funding formula that is based on a district's ability to raise tax dollars as well as sensitivity to the needs of subgroups as shown by the funding formulas for the DRG. Although the percentage of total revenues available for education were fairly flat for 2008-2009, the state's support for education increased by $126.6 million. Assuring equitable funding for high need and other LEAs is based on distribution of nearly 87 percent of the CSDE budget, to cities and towns through an "equalizing formula" that addresses the town's ability to pay (wealth) and the need of its students. This distribution formula encompasses nine grants that are allocated through Education Cost Sharing (ECS) or Categorical Reimbursements. ECS, which is the largest contributor to public elementary and secondary education, is currently set at $9,687 per student and the percentage that each town is entitled to receive ranges from 9 percent for the wealthiest towns to 91 percent for the poorest towns. The grouping of towns in the CSDE DRG reveals that the wealthiest towns are represented in DRG A and DRG I has the poorest communities. DRG I communities also align with the definition of high-need LEAs and include the seven LEAs in the state in which Title I poverty constitutes at least 20 percent of the student population. Categorical grants include adult education, school construction, public and nonpublic transportation and health services for private not-for-profit schools. Another source of aid for schools is targeted aid geared to the students in the poorest and neediest LEAs and is focused on magnet schools, school readiness, Head Start, family resource centers, interdistrict cooperation and attendance programs, breakfast initiatives, and summer and after-school programs.

School Choice

Connecticut has strived to offer families public school choice options in an effort to close the achievement gap and ensure all students access to high-quality programs. These choices include charter schools, innovation schools, interdistrict magnet schools, the Open Choice Program, the Interdistrict Cooperative Grant Program, the Connecticut Technical High School System and Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers. Some of the benefits these programs have demonstrated included: increased parent engagement, improved attendance, higher academic achievement, and decreased dropout rates. The 2010 legislative session made significant changes to the charter school law such as allowing CSDE to approve charter schools regardless of available appropriations and removing the enrollment cap for high-performing charter schools. However, funding still remains a potential barrier. The CSDE has formed an Ad Hoc Committee to Study Funding for Public School Choice Programs to develop recommendations for the next legislative session to address a more equitable funding structure.
Charter Schools – The approval process for State Charter Schools, which may be up to five years, is briefly described here. Charter Schools must be accountable to the laws and regulations that govern them and are monitored on an informal basis each year by CSDE. Schools that are not in compliance may be placed on probation for up to a year. Renewal for charters after the five year period is guided by CSDE policies and a site visit to determine compliance with the requirements. The history of revocation, closure and nonrenewal of charter schools since 1999 is described as well as the specifics required for the annual report/school profile that must be submitted to the Commissioner of Education. Charter schools must serve a diverse population, serve students from priority districts and demonstrate stability and

accomplishments. Regarding student achievement, except for two instances (8th grade writing and 10th grade science in one community) the charter school students exceed those of their LEA counterparts. This section also includes a description of the funding for charter schools and reveals that since 1997-98 charter schools have consistently received higher rates than traditional public schools and when two mandates that do not apply to charter schools, special education and transportation, are excluded, the expenditures per pupil reflects 244% of what was funded to traditional schools from state funding streams. Additional funding for charter school facilities has been available since 2002 to support building projects, general improvements to buildings and repayment of debt incurred for building projects. P.A. 10-111 makes this provision permanent. A request for additional bonding funds from the State Bond Commission for additional grants is currently pending. Amistad Academy in New Haven is the recipient of a pilot school construction grant to buy and renovate a facility and since 1999 CSDE has awarded funds to charter schools for technology infrastructure.

CommPACT Schools – An initiative led by the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education in collaboration with the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents, Connecticut Education Association and Connecticut Federation of School Administrators. This initiative provides LEA sponsored alternative schools staffed by faculty. The Neag School coordinates the network of eight schools in five communities and is the resource for research-based practices for curriculum and school reform. Highlights of this model include shared decision making, restructured school organization formats and staffing for the school day and year with demonstrated gains in parent and community engagement, student behaviors and a growth curve model to measure student achievement.

Interdistrict Magnet Schools – Currently there are 61 magnet schools in Connecticut that are organized by special learning themes and school focus. Governed by a board, they offer specialized high-quality curriculum designed to attract students and, although they must conform to public school laws and regulations, they vary in their formats and staffing for the school day and year with many offering longer days, before- and after-school programs, extended year, vacation week programming and college-style scheduling. Enrollment is open to all students in the region but if applications exceed capacity, then students are selected by a lottery. Student enrollment must include more than one participating LEA and must ensure that at least 25 percent and not more than 75 percent of the students are racial minorities. A comparison of students in magnet schools and nonmagnet schools shows that on the CMT and CAPT assessments, magnet school students scoring at "met" or "exceeded proficiency" standards were higher than non-magnet schools students.

Innovation Schools – The new legislation authorizes the boards of education may convert an existing or new school to an innovation school through a plan developed by faculty, district leadership or an external partner. The plan must articulate the areas of autonomy and flexibility for curriculum, budget, school schedule and calendar, policies and procedures, professional development, staffing policies and procedures including waivers/modifications to contracts or collective bargaining agreements. Schools must have multiple measures to assess school performance, student achievement and goals for attendance, safety and discipline, promotion, graduation, dropout rates, mastery state test performance, progress in underperformance and among subgroups of students and reduction in the achievement gap among groups of students. The superintendent must annually evaluate the school and submit the evaluation to the board of education with documentation on whether they have met their goals.

Other Significant Reform Conditions

This section describes the other investments that Connecticut has made in programs and initiatives to increase student achievement, improve graduation rates and narrow the achievement gaps. These include

1. Dropout Prevention – In 2007, a report from CSDE was adopted by the CSBE. It contained seven recommendations including an interagency collaborative advisory committee to develop and implement programs and use of the Public School Information System to identify and monitor student data. A Governor's Summit on Dropout Prevention was held and a preliminary set of indicators was presented. Twenty-one LEAs developed action plans with strategies and will continue to meet to share data results, best practices and lessons learned. The Partnership for High School, College and Workforce Alignment will use the data and local initiatives to repurpose existing state education grants to support promising practices and online coursework will be available to students in danger of failing to graduate.
2. In-School Suspension Actions – P.A. 10-111 requires that all suspensions from school shall be in-school suspensions unless, using the guidelines developed by CSDE, a student is determined to pose a danger to a person or property or would disrupt the educational processes. Training for LEA staff has focused on examining student behavior in an attempt to reduce aberrant rates of out-of-school suspensions due to school policy infractions and the development of effective in-school suspension programs that are purposeful.
3. Developing Tomorrow's Professionals (DTP) – This program is aimed at adolescent minority males and provides specific information on essential life skills associated with mitigating the effects of racism. Students are mentored by successfully enrolled minority college students and a career businessman or professional. DTP fosters school success, prevents school dropout, increases college attendance and connects participants with careers including public school teaching. RTTT will be used to expand this program, increase opportunities for participation, expand the program to increase minority female success, conduct an evaluation to validate its effectiveness and recommend ways for program improvement.
4. Parent Leadership Training (PLTI) – A nationally known program developed by the Commission on Children, this effort provides leadership training for parents and families. Under P.A.10-111 the funds for this program have been transferred from DSS to CSDE for administration and RTTT funding will leverage these funds to expand the program to more families. CSDE will work through the Partnership for Family and Community Engagement and include PLTI as a critical feature of their parent leadership development.
5. Early Childhood Education – Connecticut directs significant funds to early childhood through its school readiness program, state funds to Head Start, professional development that supports intentional teaching and standards-based instruction and assessment-based decision-making. A professional registry that tracks education, credentials, training and employment experience is a valuable resource for individuals, programs, state agencies, policymakers and researchers. Other supports include the child care facility loan funds through the Connecticut Housing Educational and Health Facilities Authority, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet which has been named as the State Advisory Council, and public-private partnerships. The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and the Children's Fund of Connecticut are two private foundations that are committed to young children, families and their health, and in the past have been in a public-private partnership with CSDE to fund community planning. There are funds in the 2010-11 state budget for the public-private partnership that will be used to leverage the private funds to continue and support the implementation of the community planning initiatives.