

# Connecticut's Race to the Top (RTTT) State Reform Plan State Reform Plan Elements December 30, 2009

## Goal 1: Standards and Assessments

### Required Initiatives

1. Support the transition to and implementation of the national common standards and assessments.
2. Implementation of Secondary School Reform: Part I of the Connecticut Eight-Year Plan.

### Elective Programs and Training

1. Implementation of College - High School Partnerships.
2. Implementation of a "Next Generation" Pilot School.

## Goal 2: Data Systems to Support Instruction

### Required Initiatives

1. Participation in the expansion of the state longitudinal data system (SLDS) to include student schedule and staff modules.
2. Providing data to the Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) to support the state and federal evaluation of the Race to the Top initiatives and on-going development of the state's integrated PK – 16 SLDS.
3. Integration of the CMT vertical scale results as a component of local accountability to measure student growth.
4. Participation in professional development on the use of data and use data to improve instruction.
5. Make available appropriate data for research and program evaluation.

### Elective Program and Training

1. Use of Grade 3-8 Benchmark Assessment System or an approved locally developed benchmark system to monitor student progress.

## Goal 3: Great Teachers and Leaders

### Required Initiatives

1. Implementation of a new, comprehensive system for supporting, supervising and evaluating teachers and principals, to be developed by Connecticut State Department of Education in collaboration with external partners and LEAs, based on:
  - *The Common Core of Teaching,*
  - *Connecticut's Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development,*
  - *The Common Core of Leading,*
  - Multiple measures of assessment (including student growth),

- Current best practices in Connecticut, and
  - Statewide reporting indicators required by RTTT;
2. Utilization of the new evaluation system developed to conduct annual evaluations that will inform professional development and decisions around compensation, promotion, retention, tenure and removal;
  3. Collaboration with CSBE to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals;
  4. Participation in Teaching and Assessing Next Generation Learners Initiative;
  5. Participation in Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) to use data to improve instruction;
  6. Family Engagement and parent leadership training activities (e.g., Parent Leadership Training Institute); and
  7. Connecticut’s TEAM Mentoring Program.

Elective Programs and Training

1. Initiatives to Foster Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (e.g., Developing Tomorrow’s Professionals).
2. Connecticut Institute for the Teaching of English Language Learners.
3. The Connecticut STEM Teacher Regional Exchange Program.
4. Teacher-in-Residence Master Teacher Placement Program.
5. Advanced Placement Course Expansion.
6. The Elementary and Middle School Math and Science Coaching Academy.
7. Hartford Science Center STEM Curriculum and Assessment Projects Grades 4-6.

**Goal 4: Turning Around the Lowest Achieving-Schools**

*Tentative Districts Identified: Bridgeport, New Britain, Hartford, New Haven, Windham*

1. Implementation of requirements of Section 1003 (g) of the ESEA Title 1 School Improvement Grants within the context of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) Framework.

Elective Program and Training

1. Longer School Year Initiative

# Connecticut's Race to the Top (RTTT) State Reform Plan

## Working Descriptions of Projects Supported Through Race to the Top Funds December 30, 2009

### Goal 1: Standards and Assessments

#### Required Initiatives

##### National Common Standards and Assessments Initiative

Connecticut is among the 49 states nationwide that have agreed to adopt and implement common K-12 standards and assessment tools in mathematics and English language arts to better prepare students for college and workforce readiness. The common standards movement has been launched by states, not the Federal government, as a way of overcoming the wide variation in standards and measures of academic achievement from state to state. This variation has made it next to impossible to compare how effective states have been in preparing and training students to compete in today's global economy. No assessment system, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), effectively measures all of the important academic and performance skills that colleges and business leaders say matter.

To combat the disparities we see in proficiency scores from state to state, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Achieve Inc., and the National Governors Alliance (NGA), have partnered to enlist states in the adoption of new, common standards that will serve as the basis for curricular reforms and the creation of new assessment tools that will better serve our schools and country as a whole.

All participating districts in Connecticut will collaborate with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and in particular the CSDE's "College and Career Workforce Steering Committee" to revise Connecticut's current K-12 standards, develop new tools for measuring student growth, and bring these decisions into the larger task of writing and implementing model curricula and end-of-course examinations called for in the Connecticut Plan.

This foundational work will serve as the first part of secondary school reform, with districts being supported by the CSDE, the National Commission for Education and the Economy (NCEE), and the New England Secondary School Consortium. For further information on the Common Standards and Assessment Project, consult the CCSSO website at <http://www.ccsso.org/federal%5Fprograms/>.

##### Secondary School Reform: Part I of the Connecticut Eight-Year Plan

Please consult "The Connecticut Plan: Personal and Academic Success for Every Middle and High School Student" in which all of the components of secondary reform—from student success plans to model for curricula—are defined and explained. This document describes how public high schools throughout the state will be redesigned so that every student is engaged, learns rigorous and significant content, and develops skills essential for success in the 21st century. The framework

requires varied and flexible educational opportunities (including creative ways to extend time), personal connections, academic challenges, targeted supports, and a customized course of studies tied to each student’s education and/or career goals. World Language is now a requirement of the core curriculum; whereas, in the 2007 draft of the plan, it was not.

Participating districts will be called upon to adopt and implement the Connecticut Plan in two phases over a period of eight years. (See below for a description of Parts I and II). In Part I, districts will work with CSDE and external partners (SERC, the RESC Alliance, CAPSS, CAS, CABE, CEA, AFT and higher education) to implement the initial or foundational work needed to effectuate the changes called for in the Plan, including the hiring of additional mathematics and science teachers, in anticipation of the new core curriculum. In Part II, participating districts will complete the work needed to staff their schools and prepare teachers for implementing the full set of graduation requirements for the class of 2018—students who are now in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

A key component of the preparation work in Part I will be the development of family and student support programs needed to sustain the thousands of students who will enroll in middle and high school unprepared for the new challenging curriculum and course requirements of the Connecticut Plan. These support systems must include specific program interventions to prevent students from dropping out of high school, as well as others providing summer and after school remediation in literacy, mathematics, language acquisition, and more. Teachers and principals will be required to learn how best to intervene with such learners throughout the course of implementing the changes anticipated with the Connecticut Plan.

<i>Secondary School Reform: The Connecticut Plan</i>			
<b>Part I Activities</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Complete Date</b>
Board Votes to Adopt the Eight-Year Connecticut Plan and to implement Part I	Participating LEAs	2010	NA
Accommodate CT Standards to the National Common Core	CSDE and All LEAs	2010	2011
Build Student/Family Support Systems for Grades 6-10	Participating LEAs	2010	2014
Implement Staffing Plan for New Mathematics and Science courses	Participating LEAs	2011	2014
Develop and Implement Student Success Program System	CSDE & Participating LEAs	2010	2014
<b>Part II Activities</b>			
Board Votes to Accept the Graduation Requirements of the Connecticut plan	Participating LEAs	2013	NA
Board Votes to Implement Part II of the Connecticut Plan	Participating LEAs	2013	NA
Develop, Pilot Model Core Curricula:	CSDE	2012	2013
English 6-12	CSDE	2012	2013
Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Statistics and Probability	CSDE	2012	2013
Biology	CSDE	2012	2013
American History	CSDE	2012	2013
Develop, Pilot Capstone Project Protocols	CSDE	2012	2013
Implement Staffing Plan for World Language Courses	Participating LEAs	2013	2014
Develop, Pilot Final, End-of-Course Examinations for Courses	CSDE & Participating LEAs	2013	2014
Implement Model Curricula and New End-of-Course examinations	CSDE & Participating LEAs	2013	2014
Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2018 Begin	Participating LEAs	2014	2018

## **Elective Programs and Training**

### **College-High School Partnerships**

Several different community colleges and high schools have engaged in partnerships to encourage students to enroll in college-level courses while in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Some, like Connecticut Tech Prep Program under the Carl D. Perkins Act, enable students to enroll in technical courses while in high school, whereas others like the Bridges Program, offered through Housatonic Community College, work to prepare students at Bridgeport High School for entry into college. Still others, like the Danbury High School / Western Connecticut State University teacher-exchange, have university personnel and high school faculty exchanging classes and reflecting together on student expectations, student engagement, research-based strategies, standards and curriculum.

The objective of this initiative is to prepare cohorts of teachers and faculty members from paired colleges and high schools to implement the Connecticut Plan. The pilot is intended to integrate all features of other partnership programs, including faculty exchanges, as a way of transitioning Connecticut's higher education institutions into the new course demands of the Connecticut Plan and the state's new requirements for admission to state colleges starting in 2016.

### **"Next Generation" Pilot Schools**

Participating districts may, as part of their secondary school reform planning, partner with the National Academy Foundation of Schools or Hartford's Our Piece of the Pie (OPP), to design alternative programs for high school students in danger of dropping out or in need of high quality options for pursuing careers in health, business, advertising or other 21st century professions. Participating districts may also choose to partner with the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), to implement a trial apprentice trade program. *For further details of the OPP and the National Academy Foundation of Schools*, consult their web sites at <http://www.opp.org> and <http://naf.org/>.

#### *Details of the CTHSS -Comprehensive High School Partnerships:*

In the true spirit of RTTT, this new hybrid secondary school model maximizes cross-pollination opportunities between Connecticut's regular and technical high school resources. The goal of this innovative approach to merging comprehensive academic preparation with trade technology skills and performance will be to provide meaningful technical education experiences to students who would otherwise have only post-graduate training options among their transition choices.

This collaboration bridges the Technical Education Center (TEC) Model located in Bristol, CT with the CTHSS four-year high school model to form a more comprehensive and expanded program of offerings through CTHSS trade technologies regionally. As a regional school district, CTHSS schools span the state. Local school districts connect with CTHSS schools as many of their resident students choose to attend a regional technical high school through a competitive admissions process. Many more students desire career-connected technical training as part of their high school education than CTHSS schools have seats available. This collaborative would offer many more students the opportunity to do both; complete their local high school plan of study and augment their academics with fully transferable trade skills.

Briefly, students selected to attend the partnership program would blend summer programs two school years (junior and senior). During the summer between sophomore and junior years, they would attend an eight week exploratory program and essentially complete the summer in their selected trade. An extended day program would bring them to the technical school for after-school training during their junior and senior years, and would include the summer between those years. The total program would culminate in approximately 36 weeks of technical trade training or a level one apprenticeship endorsement from CTHSS upon their graduation from their local high schools.

The post-graduate/transition benefits to students would include:

- options to enter into paid apprenticeships within CTHSS network of businesses and industries
- options to continue training through industry connected proprietary training programs;
- options to enter community colleges to pursue a college degree and advancement in their trade technologies;
- options to attend CTHSS post graduate trainings to advance to level two apprenticeships;
- significant earning power while attending college or before, going to college with less debt; and
- exposure to green technology or sustainable career pathways.

## **Goal 2: Data Systems to Support Instruction**

### **Required Initiatives**

#### State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)

The bulk, if not all, of the work associated with the creation of the SLDS and enhancing the facility of Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) will rest with CSDE, working with higher education institutions and other agencies, with funding provided by the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) grants. **Participating districts will, however, be required to implement modules that link mathematics and English language arts teachers to high school students, create transcripts of the courses students took, and integrate the grades students earned in those courses.** This will create the state's capacity to track student course-taking patterns and grades in which they are enrolled in specific courses, and by district, school and teacher.

#### CEDaR

Participating districts will be required to have staff trained to provide data, through CEDaR, to support state and federal evaluations of this RTTT initiative.

#### Vertical Scales and Growth Models

With the initial administration of the Fourth Generation of the Connecticut Mastery (CMT) Test in 2006, Connecticut began the development of a Vertical Scale that districts could use to measure change in student performance, or growth, from Grades 3 through 8 in mathematics and reading.

The vertical scales were constructed so that each vertical scale score represents the same theoretical achievement level whether derived from a Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, Grade 6, Grade 7, or Grade 8 CMT scale score. Each grade-level CMT scale score (range 100 – 400) in mathematics or reading corresponds to a specific value on a common mathematics or reading vertical scale score (range 200

– 700). Thus, students in different grades taking different tests can have the same vertical scale score representing the same level of achievement defined by the vertical scale. This vertical scale score allows for valid interpretations of growth across time using tests differing in content, length, and item difficulty.

School district personnel can apply the vertical scales to their own CMT data through the password-protected [www.ctreports.com](http://www.ctreports.com) secure Web site. The general public can access the vertical scale reports for individual schools, school districts, and for various subgroups (e.g., ethnicity, lunch status) through the [www.ctreports.com](http://www.ctreports.com) public Web site. The vertical scale reports can be used to track the mathematics and reading performance of groups of students as they progress through the grades. These reports may also be useful to educators when making instructional decisions in order to improve student achievement.

The CSDE has been examining a variety of models for measuring student growth using the vertical scale. Professional development will be made available to participating districts to inform staff of the various models and assist them in appropriately incorporating a growth component in their accountability models.

## **Elective Programs and Training**

### **Benchmark Assessment System**

The CSDE began work on the articulation of a balanced comprehensive assessment system in 2005. This effort focused on creating a continuum of assessment activities that ranged from formative assessments to assist with instructional planning, to summative assessments to evaluate student competencies. At the heart of this effort was the development of interim benchmark assessments that could be used to supplement more established summative tests, e.g., the CMT, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), Advance Placement (AP) Tests and the ACT college entrance exam. Following a series of discussions with representatives from local education agencies (LEAs), regional organizations and national experts, the CSDE launched its first attempt at implementing interim assessments: The Connecticut Grade 3-5 Mathematics Formative Assessment Pilot Project.

The CSDE learned valuable lessons through this pilot effort. During the next three years, the Connecticut Grade 3-5 Mathematics Formative Assessment Pilot project evolved into the Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System. Throughout this period there was much discussion about the purposes of and differences among various types of interim assessments, e.g., formative, benchmark, diagnostic, screening, as well as the role of the CSDE in relation to these various assessments. The changes that were finally implemented represent a response to the concerns of students and educators who were involved in these initial efforts.

During the 2008-09 school year, the CSDE, in cooperation with local school districts, pilot-tested online benchmark assessments in reading and mathematics. Three forms in each content area were developed for administration three times a year (fall, winter and spring). These assessments are based on state curriculum standards as expressed in the CSDE's sequenced mathematics grade-level expectations (GLEs) in Grades 3-5, the Mathematics Curriculum Pacing Guides for Grades 6-8, and

the Grades 3-8 reading comprehension assessment strands. For more information see CSDE 2009-2010 Circular Letter C-5 at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/circ/circ09-10/C5.pdf>.

### **Goal 3: Great Teachers and Leaders**

#### **Required Initiatives**

Participating districts will implement a new, comprehensive system for supporting, supervising and evaluating teachers and principals, to be developed by CSDE in collaboration with external partners and LEAs, based on:

- *Connecticut's Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development*
- *The Common Core of Teaching*
- *The Common Core of Leading*
- Multiple measures of assessment
- Current best practices in Connecticut and nationally
- Statewide performance indicators required in the Race to the Top application

Connecticut's State Reform Plan will focus on instructional improvement in its broadest sense. Our plan for great teachers and leaders will integrate all of the innovations contemplated for secondary school reform, school and district improvement, CALI, and more. It will build upon nationally recognized programs and practices that have historically placed Connecticut as a leader in teacher quality, and it will consciously strive to build a new framework for training teachers and administrators over the next decade. Measuring the complexity of student learning with new tools and tapping new technologies to engage students differently are essential factors in our approach.

Our approach will begin with revising, updating, and expanding upon systems already in place to bring excellent teachers to our classrooms. Chief among these is Connecticut's regulatory system for certifying teachers and administrators, *Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permit and Authorizations*, which, now in its final year of development, will be submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly for approval in 2010 and implementation in July 2014.

This document is significant for several reasons. Among other things, *Regulations* delineates new competencies that teachers and administrators must master before being licensed to practice. It identifies new career paths for aspiring teachers and administrators; it defines the standards and evaluation systems that will be in place to supervise teachers and principals in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context; and it provides the basis for updating and expanding such standards documents as Connecticut's *Common Core of Teaching*; *the Common Core of Leading*, and most significantly, Connecticut's *Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development*. It is this work, the culmination of five years of dialogue with universities and school districts that will be revised and published as the *2010 Guidelines for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation*. This document in particular will drive much of what we hope to accomplish over the next four years.

Five themes will underwrite the *2010 Guidelines*:

1. Effectively teaching "next generation" learners who have grown up entirely surrounded by the new technologies of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—computers, the internet, hand-held devices etc—

- and who will demand instructors equally able to use these technologies to plan, deliver, and evaluate lessons;
2. Effectively leading schools driven by cultures of high expectation and the will to reach all learners, particularly those who have historically lagged behind in student achievement in Connecticut —African Americans, Hispanics, students with disabilities etc.;
  3. Building collaborative, professional learning communities in schools to promote best practices in recruiting, inducting, mentoring, and evaluating teachers and principals
  4. Using data and multiple assessment tools to measure student performance and, by implication, to gauge teacher and leader effectiveness; and
  5. Adapting instruction and leadership to address the cultural and linguistic needs of Connecticut’s rapidly diversifying student population, and growing numbers of children living in poverty.

These themes also underwrite the State’s plans for secondary school reform, the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative, and the CSDE’s comprehensive approach to hold schools and districts to high standards of performance. In a more specific sense, however, these themes will also animate the specific initiatives aimed at bringing a high quality teacher workforce to Connecticut’s neediest school districts. These initiatives include the STEM Teacher Regional Exchange, the Connecticut Teacher in Residence Program, the Connecticut Math and Science Coaching Academies, and others, like Developing Tomorrow’s Professionals, aimed at distributing teachers more equitably in cities and towns where student achievement has been depressed for years.

Collectively, all of these initiatives (and the activities needed to implement them) will form the basis of instructional renewal statewide over the next eight years. As districts undergo the professional development and technical training needed to implement common standards for our secondary schools in Part I of the Connecticut Eight-Year Plan; as teachers learn how to coach students through success planning and developing capstone projects; and as schools prepare to restructure time and schedules for online learning, so will all participating districts change their behaviors and practices to meet the conditions required by our 2014 certification regulations and our *2010 Guidelines*.

A renewal of this kind, however, can only occur in a context of widespread collaboration and shared leadership. It is to this end, that we draw readers’ attentions to the structures and mechanisms the CSDE will put in place to guide the work of building the great teachers and leaders for our next generation of learners. Among these are (1) the Connecticut Institute for English Language Learning; (2) the Connecticut Teachers’ and Leadership Center; and (3) the Connecticut P20 Council. Together with Connecticut’s RESC Alliance, SERC, our state universities and community colleges, the infrastructure and capacity needed to carry out the work sketched above is now in place. Unlike most other states, Connecticut is fully organized and small enough geographically to bring this work to scale in a short time frame.

### Teaching and Assessing Next Generation Learners

All teachers and administrators in Connecticut must become deeply acquainted with the new technologies of instruction, the power of the internet, and the essential role data must play in promoting human development and learning. This initiative aims to ensure that every teacher and administrator in Connecticut attains basic fluency in each of these areas, particularly as they pertain

to engaging and evaluating students at each stage of development PK-12, and in turn, undergoing evaluations of themselves under the new comprehensive evaluation system planned for teachers and principals in 2012.

A robust, four-year program of professional development is planned for all participating districts. The program will include these learning modules:

- *Great Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Overview:* Incorporating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, technology teaching tools, NETS-S, NETS-T, (National Educational Technology Standards for Students and Teachers).
- *Education and the Internet:* Using Connecticut Education Network resources, online learning environments, Moodle; managing technology-integrated learning environments.
- *Subject Specific Technology Integration:* Investigating technology tools and resources specifically designed for learning mathematics, science, English/language arts, social studies.
- *Using Student Data:* Collecting, managing and analyzing data to inform instruction and advance achievement; formative and benchmark assessment tools.
- *Project Based Learning and Capstone Projects:* Creating authentic and meaningful learning activities, supporting project based learning.
- *Student Success Plans:* Coaching, monitoring, and mentoring.

An additional module will be available for administrators and teacher leaders:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Supervision and Evaluation: NETS-S, NETS-T, NETS-A, Supporting technology integrated classrooms, evaluating project-based and technology-integrated learning.

Teachers from participating districts will engage in 1-2 modules each year. In addition to the intensive multi-day summer sessions for each module, online learning communities will be created to provide support and continued learning opportunities for teachers throughout the year. Teams of teachers from schools will be encouraged to attend sessions together, thereby offering additional school-based support from colleagues.

### Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI)

The Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative was established to accelerate the learning of all students and to close the achievement gap. The mission of CALI is to offer a model of state support to districts and schools to support the process of continuous school and district improvement. CALI provides a comprehensive system to assist schools and districts with analyzing and using data to improve instruction, classroom management and school culture. Implementation of CALI relies on changing the culture in schools and districts from one of practicing in isolation to one characterized by collaboration and shared work to improve teaching and learning and adult practices. In order to impact student learning, teachers and leaders must understand the work of instructional leadership and the implementation of the CALI principles with fidelity. For a full description of the initiative, consult the CSDE website at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/CALI>.

### Family engagement and parent leadership training activities (e.g., Parent Leadership Training Institute)

Districts participating in the State's Reform Plan will be called upon to engage families in ways that will help parents understand the broad, systemic reforms contemplated by the Obama administration. What these reforms represent - as opportunities and challenges - is the broad knowledge parents must possess if they are to help their children navigate their paths in school and in their communities. Understanding, for example, how Title I funding impacts the State's work in underperforming schools is an essential part of knowing how to make certain that students obtain the services required under federal law. Similarly, learning more about the national common standards and assessment movement is an important base of information parents will need if they are to understand what changes are coming to schools and what implications these new standards will have for classrooms and assessing student growth; and how they can help their children to engage rigorous and challenging learning. Parent engagement and parent leadership training activities in systemic school reforms is an essential in Connecticut must make to change the working and living conditions of all its citizens, present and future.

Districts will need to make family engagement and parent leadership training activities available in their communities. One such program, the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), is a nationally recognized program developed by the Connecticut Commission for Children. The Institute provides leadership training for parents and families on a wide range of topics, including important competencies at being an effective parent, spouse, and actively engaged citizen in one's community. Links to PLTI training programs can be found on the Commission for Children's website or consult PLTI directly at [www.wcgmf.org/CFI/Plti.html](http://www.wcgmf.org/CFI/Plti.html). Other family engagement activities and resources are available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/board/SFCPPolicyGuidance.pdf>.

### Teacher Education and Mentor (TEAM) Program

New legislation has just been passed regarding the implementation of a newly designed teacher induction program, TEAM program. The TEAM program will pair mentor teachers with beginning teachers during their first two years of teaching to enhance their teaching skills and improve their teaching practice. Each beginning teacher will be required to complete five professional growth modules during the two-year period in the following Common Core of Teaching (CCT) domains: classroom management, planning lessons, instructing, assessing students' understanding and achievement and professional responsibility. Each module will include the completion of a reflection paper that must be deemed by a district or regional review committee as successfully completed for all five modules before the beginning teacher can be awarded a provisional teaching certificate (the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier certificate in Connecticut's 3-tier certification system). This new program will be fully implemented beginning fall 2010 and will serve as a major building block in Connecticut's comprehensive system for inducting, mentoring and evaluating professional teaching staff.

## Elective Programs and Training

### Initiatives to Foster Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The majority of Connecticut's racial and language minority students reside in seven of the state's 169 towns. Conditions related to how school districts are funded; decline of urban cities; insufficient targeted teacher preparation to focus on the unique needs and approaches for addressing language, racial and cultural diversity in schools; and deep-seeded disadvantages within families and communities affect equitable opportunities for effective student learning and development. This RTTT application will expand engagement around these issues and conditions at all levels including policy, administration and classroom services and support to students.

***Courageous Conversations about Race:*** In 2004, the CSDE in response to long-standing state data identifying racial and English Language Learners (ELL) dimensions of the state's achievement gap, engaged its staff, local boards of education members and local school district staff in a voluntary facilitated initiative called *Courageous Conversations about Race*. The initiative assists those with responsibility to effect student learning in diverse communities with the skills required to professionally engage inquiry about the impact of race and culture on learning and to apply knowledge and strategies that improves learning and career outcomes for racial and language minority students.

***Developing Tomorrow's Professionals (DTP):*** DTP is a program predominately aimed at adolescent minority males. The program provides specific information to participants and encourages the practice of essential life skills associated with mitigating the effects of racism along with the barriers cited above. School principals are required to support students in taking higher level courses and exercise school leadership. Students learn to use the full resources of the school to support personal learning, plan course taking sequences leading to higher education requirements for college enrollment and career goal attainment. Each student is mentored by an enrolled successful minority college student and a career businessman or professional.

This program has been overwhelmingly successful for the 60-80 minority males that participate each year. In participating students, the DTP has proven to foster school success, prevent school drop out, increase college attendance and connect participants with careers, including public school teaching. Through RTTT we expect to increase the opportunity for participation, especially among districts with high concentrations of minority male students and conduct a program evaluation to validate its success and recommend ways for program improvement.

In 2009, at the request of parents and schools districts, the CSDE was encouraged to expand the program to support the development of initiatives to increase minority **female** student success. The initiative proposes to address: school academic performance, access to post-secondary professional careers, life skills development, and generational and cross-generational mentoring/networking. Planning for this program will be accelerated and objectives further defined with funding from RTTT.

### The Connecticut Institute for the Teaching of English Language Learners

The Connecticut Department of Education will partner with the Haskins Reading Lab and Eastern Connecticut State University, the Commission for Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, and other

groups to design the state’s first public-private organization dedicated to the research and teaching of immigrant students and English language learners in Connecticut’s public schools. The Center will be supported by state funding, foundations, grants, and revenues earned through training programs conducted for public school teachers and administrators. Teachers in districts with high proportions of underperforming ELL students-- who are either recent immigrants to the United States or children from non-English speaking families--will attend training initiatives planned by the Institute and delivered through the Lab or the RESC Alliance. Activities will include workshops in areas such as language acquisition, early literacy development, language assessment, working with students learning English for the first time, and/or job-embedded training in classrooms enrolling significant numbers of non-English speakers. State funding will provide for training, coaching, software purchases, and materials customized to the language populations being served.

The Connecticut STEM Teacher Regional Exchange

Four participating districts—two urban and two suburban/rural districts, preferably—will form consortia to revise their contracts to permit the hiring of a team of 8-12 new or experienced secondary math and science teachers to serve Grades 6-12. These teachers will serve in the four districts for a period of six years, teaching in each district two to three years, based on the districts’ common plan.

Districts will establish common contract language to permit the hiring of these shared personnel, who will be paid at a rate equal to the average of the four districts’ salaries, relative to step and track. Participating teachers, known as Connecticut STEM Leaders, will receive signing bonuses of \$5000 each, and thereafter every two additional years, plus an additional stipend of \$3000 to lead statewide professional development activities organized by the RESC Alliance each summer of employment. Teachers selected must serve a minimum of six years, and may reapply at the end for another three-year term.

At the conclusion of the six-year cycle, teachers will be free to return to the district of their first choice at the end of the six-year cycle, where they will continue to earn the average of the four districts’ salaries, relative to step and track for an additional three years **or** the selected district’s salary, whichever is higher. Each teacher will be considered tenured in all four districts, at the end of the fourth year, and will be free to retain the benefits package of whichever district they choose in their final year of the program. This program will require a combination of local and state funding, as well as a willingness of local unions to engage in the collective bargaining needed to secure the common new features in their local contracts.

Financing Example

Salary	Degree									
	MA	District A	District B	District C	District D		Average	Bonus	Stipend	Total Earnings
Step 1		38000	39000	40000	41000	158000	39500	5000	3000	<b>47500</b>
Step 2		40000	41000	42000	43000	166000	41500		3000	<b>44500</b>
Step 3		42000	43000	44000	45000	174000	43500	5000	3000	<b>51500</b>
Step 4		44000	45000	46000	47000	182000	45500		3000	<b>48500</b>
Step 5		46000	47000	48000	49000	190000	47500		3000	<b>50500</b>
Step 6		49000	50000	51000	52000	202000	50500	5000	3000	<b>58500</b>

## Teachers-in-Residence Master Teacher Placement Program

A new program to assist with providing effective teachers to high poverty/high minority districts is the Connecticut Teacher-in-Residence Master Teacher program. This program will be a state-administered program in which master level teachers will be “loaned” to the CSDE for 80 percent of their teaching week from a participating district. The 80% of the master teacher’s time purchased with ARRA funds will be used to coach teachers in the high poverty/high minority districts and provide high quality professional growth opportunities for newer teachers in the shortage area subjects. The master teacher continues to be paid by the district and accrue seniority and other benefits at his/her normal rate. Through a contract with the state, the loaning district will be provided financial reimbursement for the equivalent of a replacement beginning teacher’s salary for the year that the master teacher is released. The master teacher will continue to provide 20 percent of his/her time to the public school district in which s/he is employed to offset the “fringe costs” of the replacement teacher; during this time, the master teacher can be used to teach a class, re-write curriculum, serve as a teacher leader to mentor or coach new teachers in the district or work on other projects that would meet the needs of the district.

Benefits to the “loaning” district and master teacher include:

1. Significant professional development experiences and “professional renewal” for the master teacher;
2. “Growing” of future teacher leaders/administrative aspirants;
3. Capacity building in the district when the master teacher returns and is able to offer professional development to other teachers and administrators in district; and
4. Continuation of the salary, benefits and tenure for the master teacher while other teachers in high poverty/high minority districts grow professionally based on the knowledge and skill-set of the master teacher.

## Advanced Placement Course Expansion

Please consult the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) website at <http://www.cbia.com/pod/> for a description of Project Opening Doors (POD), its goals, training programs, and incentives for students and teachers who successfully take AP examinations in math, science, or English. The goal of participating in this initiative is to expand the number of courses available to disadvantaged students in their schools. Currently, several collaborating districts are already involved in the POD, but alternative approaches, such as those pursued in the West Hartford Public Schools will serve as acceptable variations of a program aimed at recruiting more disadvantaged students into taking more challenging courses, while expanding the range of options in high schools where AP courses are too narrow. Evidence suggests clearly that students will rise to the challenges of AP courses and will far exceed expectations if only encouraged to enroll.

## The Elementary and Middle School Math and Science Coaching Academies

Since 2005, CSDE has targeted its U.S. Department of Education Title II Mathematics and Science Partnership (MSP) funds to support three-year academies that prepare master teachers to assume new roles as instructional coaches in mathematics or science. Elementary, middle school and high school instructional coaches receive extensive training in math or science content, research-based

pedagogies and coaching techniques from higher-ed faculty and national experts. Research conducted by CSDE indicates that when highly-trained instructional coaches are fully implemented in a school, they:

- enhance the LEA's capacity to provide on-going, content-specific improvement to mathematics and science teaching;
- improve student performance in mathematics and science;
- offer new career advancement opportunities to master teachers who want to contribute to whole school improvement in mathematics and science; and
- improve teacher morale, efficacy and collaborative work environments, all of which are leading factors in promoting teacher retention, especially in high-poverty schools.

To demonstrate a strong STEM emphasis in the application, participating districts can elect to participate in the Elementary and Middle School Math and Science Coaching Academies. This three-year program provides graduate coursework for teacher-coaches to advance their knowledge of the subject matter they teach, professional development in leading and coaching teachers, and opportunities to practice in classrooms in participating districts. This initiative aligns with plans for the creation of teacher-leader positions within the state's new certification regulations, scheduled to go into effect in 2014.

#### Hartford Science Center STEM Curriculum and Assessment Project Grades 4 - 6

Participating districts seeking to enhance science instruction in Grades 4-6 are asked to partner with CSDE staff and consultants at the Science Center in Hartford to provide grade-level units of instruction aligned to Connecticut's science standards with exhibits and displays permanently housed at the Center.

The objective of this project is to design structures that will connect preliminary instruction in classrooms with hands-on experiences linked directly to the exhibits at the center then followed up at school with culminating projects that demonstrate learning. This structure is designed to provide students in disadvantaged communities enrichment experiences while establishing the importance of hands-on-learning. The culminating projects would be modeled after those required in Grades 8 and 12 of the Connecticut Plan. Model curriculum units will be made available online, and participating districts supported by personnel and resources furnished through the Science Center.

### **Goal 4: Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools**

#### Title I Redesign Schools: Four School Intervention Models

For a full description of the four types of school intervention models outlined for schools scoring in the lowest 5% of a state's total achievement profile, consult Section 1003 (g) of ESEA Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG.) The four types of intervention models include the Turnaround Model, Restart Model, School Closure and Transformational Model. Implementation of one of the models is required of districts in receipt of SIG funds. The work within these small numbers of identified schools will be guided by the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI), reinforced by community and parental outreach, and where possible or required, supplemented by increased instruction time made possible through a longer school year.

## **Elective Program and Training**

### **Longer School Year Program**

Many of Connecticut's magnet and charter schools currently offer a longer school year, coupled with extended learning time after school. Connecticut's Longer School Year Program is being made available on a limited basis to districts willing to discard the traditional 900 hours/180 day school year requirements and implement a program for a middle or high school based on a 210-day school year. Districts selected for the program will be given funding to plan and experiment with different schedules, program designs, and the community partnerships necessary to provide more learning time for secondary students. Preference shall be given to districts defined by CSDE as *collaborating* districts.