

Connecticut's Race to the Top Phase I Application Framework

Application Goal - Improve the educational success of all students from the preschool years through post secondary education by taking the following actions:

- Drive Substantial Gains in Student Achievement
- Improve High School Graduation Rates
- Increase College Enrollment
- Narrow the Achievement Gaps

Aligned Under the Four Federal Assurances

Local Education Agency Responsibilities

Standards and Assessments	Data Systems to Support Instruction	Great Teachers and Leaders	Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools
<p>Required Initiatives</p> <p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National common standards and high-quality assessments • Secondary School Reform (SSR): Part I of the Connecticut Eight-Year Plan <p>The SSR Plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase in high school graduation credits; ○ Redistribution of high school courses with emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); ○ Capstone Experience that allows students to demonstrate skills and pursue personal interests; ○ Creation of Student Success Plans beginning in 6th grade; ○ Implementation of a continuum of family and student supports; and ○ Hiring of math and science teachers. <p>Elective Programs and Training</p> <p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College-High School Partnerships • A "Next Generation" Pilot School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Hartford's Our Piece of the Pie</i> ○ <i>National Academy Foundation of Schools</i> ○ <i>CT Technical High School System Comprehensive High School Partnership</i> 	<p>Required Initiatives</p> <p>Participate in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of the state longitudinal data system (SLDS) • Professional development on the use of data <p>Provide Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) to support state and federal evaluation of RTTT initiatives and on-going development of the State's integrated PK – 16 SLDS • For research and program evaluation <p>Integrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMT vertical scale results as a component of local accountability to measure student growth <p>Elective Programs and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the Grade 3-8 Benchmark Assessment System or an approved locally developed benchmark system to monitor student progress 	<p>Required Initiatives</p> <p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New, comprehensive system to support, supervise and evaluate teachers and principals, based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The Common Core of Teaching;</i> ○ <i>Connecticut's Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development;</i> ○ <i>The Common Core of Leading;</i> ○ Multiple measures of assessment to guide evaluation decisions for teachers and administrators (including student growth); ○ Current best practices in Connecticut; and ○ Statewide report indicators required by RTTT. <p>Utilize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New evaluation system developed to conduct annual evaluations to inform professional development & decisions around compensation, promotion, retention, tenure and removal <p>Collaborate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With State Board of Education to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals <p>Participate in initiatives/programs/activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching & Assessing Next Generation Learners • Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) to use data to improve instruction • Family engagement & parent leadership training activities • Connecticut's TEAM Mentoring Program 	<p>Required Initiatives</p> <p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements of Section 1003 (g) of the ESEA Title I School Improvement Grants within the context of the CALI Framework <p>Intervention Models-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Turnaround Model ○ Restart Model ○ School closure ○ Transformational Model <p><i>(18 schools identified as lowest 5 percent among low-achieving title 1 schools)</i></p> <p>Elective Program and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer School Year Initiative

Standards and Assessments

Data Systems to Support Instruction

Great Teachers and Leaders

Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools

Elective Programs and Training

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

Adopt:

- Common Core State Standards and Assessments and implement through Part I of the Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform

Develop:

- Curriculum Frameworks for common K-12 standards, by grade
- Model formative and summative assessments
- Design professional development

Create:

- Digital curriculum and assessment library
- A web-based information site for LEAs to inform parents, etc.
- System of online benchmark assessments

Integrate:

- Electronic Student Success Plans into the SLDS

Expand:

- Opportunities for all students in STEM

Complete:

- Six remaining AMERICA COMPETES SLDS data elements

Continue to provide and improve:

- Access to CT's standardized assessment results
- Public access to student data on CTReports web site
- Password protected access for LEAs to individual student performance data
- Training and survey on CEDaR for LEA personnel to improve its level of use
- Continue to implement CALI data-driven decision making

Require:

- LEA participation in CALI professional development and technical assistance on using data and establish a three-tiered accountability system

Ensure:

- Data from our SLDS and local instructional improvement systems are available and accessible to researchers

Adopt:

- Certification regulation, school leader standards and Evaluation Guide for Teachers and Administrators

Design and Implement:

- In collaboration with external partners, a new, comprehensive system to support, supervise and evaluate teachers and principals
- New model to measure student growth
- Professional development to support new evaluation systems
- Activities to support and monitor new performance systems
- Administration induction program
- Executive coaching
- Contract with outside evaluators to evaluate impact of initiatives on school improvement and student achievement

Ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals by:

- Design and implementation of the above LEA Elective programs, in particular, the STEM initiatives and the Teacher-in-Residence Master Teacher Placement Program

Continue to Implement:

- CALI

Design and Implement:

- The requirements of the School Improvement Grant intervention models in CT's lowest-achieving schools
- Funding opportunities to support the longer year initiative



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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Connecticut Race to the Top Application Executive Summary

Making the Application

On January 19, 2010, Governor M. Jodi Rell, along with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) submitted an application for \$192 million in federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funding to support the four-year implementation of Connecticut's comprehensive plan for education reform. RTTT is a highly competitive grant opportunity offered by the U.S. Department of Education using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The Goal of Race to the Top

The goal of the RTTT initiative is to improve the educational success of all students from the preschool years through postsecondary education and training. Specifically, U.S. Department of Education officials expect that RTTT grantee states will:

- drive substantial gains in student achievement;
- improve high school graduation rates;
- increase college enrollment; and
- narrow the achievement gaps.

Pillars of Education Reform in Connecticut

Connecticut's RTTT application is built upon a solid foundation of reform and accountability efforts that began over the past five years including: the Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform; the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI); and the 2010 release of proposed new regulations for certifying teachers and administrators by 2014. In addition, articulation of our RTTT reform agenda is completely concordant with the CSBE's Five-Year Comprehensive Plan, 2006-2011.

The Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform, adopted by the State Board of Education in 2007, sets out a series of reform requirements that have been incorporated into the state's RTTT application. These requirements include: an increase in credits required for high school graduation; the redistribution of high school courses to better reflect an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); the creation of Student Success Plans for all students beginning in the 6th grade; as well as implementation of a continuum of family and student supports designed to increase student academic success. While complete implementation of the Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform will require eight years of effort at the state and local levels (2010-2018), the RTTT initiative will allow for substantial implementation over the next four years, 2010 through 2014.

The Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) was established to provide professional development and coaching to accelerate the learning of all students and to close the achievement gap. The CALI initiative is based on the findings of nationally recognized researchers and provides support for data driven decision making, the use of standards based instruction, effective teaching strategies, quality assessments of student learning, and establishment of a strong culture and climate in schools to support learning. Over the past three years, the Department identified 15 Partner Districts based on their achievement data to implement all the elements of the CALI model and receive increased resources to support their efforts. This work is providing evidence that schools with high rates of poverty and high percentages of ethnic minorities in their student populations can achieve high academic performance.

Essential Elements of Connecticut's RTTT Plan

Connecticut's RTTT plan includes seven components, which are listed below with a section reference:

- Education Reform: Managing for Success (Section A);
- Standards and Assessments (Section B);
- Data Systems to Support Instruction and Guide Decision-Making (Section C);
- Great Teachers and Leaders (Section D);
- Turning Around Low Performing Schools (Section E);
- Choice Programs and Innovative Reform Models (Section F); and
- Sustainability through State Funds (Included within Section A).

Education Reform: Managing for Success

This section of the RTTT application requires a statement of the state's comprehensive reform agenda, a summary of trends in student achievement over time, and a plan to build strong statewide capacity to implement the broad reform agenda, including documented participation by local school districts.

Connecticut enters the RTTT competition with a record of increasing student achievement on the state's assessments over the period 2003 through 2009. The rate of increase has been greater for students identified as eligible for free and reduced meals than for student growth overall, a trend that will reduce the state's achievement gap over time.

To manage its RTTT initiative, support the work of local districts, and engage with external stakeholders and experts, the CSDE will establish a statewide RTTT management structure staffed by three positions (two of them funded with new federal dollars), and will add 20-25 positions to its various divisions and bureaus. The Department will establish an External Expert Advisory Panel to guide and support implementation of the statewide effort and will formalize a broad set of relationships with external partners in Connecticut. These partners include state agencies, statewide service organizations and the nonprofit and foundation sectors.

Adopting Common Core Standards and Common Assessments

The goal of this section is to make certain that all students have access to a rigorous course of study and high-quality instruction that ensures they will graduate from high school with college- and career-ready skills. A core element in this work is the adoption of common core State standards in mathematics and English language arts, assessments related to these standards, and support for local school districts in transitioning to these new, more rigorous standards and assessments.

The CSBE will adopt the common core State standards for mathematics and English language arts by August 1, 2010. As national assessments for each of the areas of standards are developed, the CSBE will adopt these as well. The CSDE will also continue as a member of the New England Secondary School Consortium along with Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to bring greater coherence to secondary school education in the region and will also promote National Educational Technology Standards for Students, Teachers, and Administrators prepared by the International Society for Technology in Education.

To support school district transition to the use of the common core State standards, the CSDE will develop curriculum frameworks aligned with the common K-12 standards, by grade, and will post them, along with support materials, on the CTcurriculum.org Web site. CSDE will also develop a series of assessments for use by school districts to measure implementation of the standards and track student learning associated with them. Throughout this work, CSDE and local districts will expand rigorous, meaningful opportunities for all students in the STEM curricula.

Beginning in 2010, the local board of education for each Participating LEA will: adopt the Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform; commit to accommodating Connecticut standards to the common core standards; implement a staffing plan for new mathematics and science courses; develop and implement a new student success planning system; and implement enhanced student/family support systems for Grades 6 through 12. In addition, 59 school districts have signed on to implement a College-High School Partnership to support instruction using the new standards, and 14 districts have signed on to implement a “Next Generation” pilot school. A “Next Generation” pilot school encompasses a partnership between the LEA and the National Academy Foundation of Schools or Our Piece of the Pie or the Connecticut Technical High School System, to design alternative programs for high school students. This work will be accomplished over the period 2010 to 2014.

Completing the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and Making Data Available for Use

The goal of improving access to and use of data to inform instruction and promote student achievement is central to each element of Connecticut’s RTTT Plan and is the core process underlying the CALI. There are three components within this area of work: fully implementing a Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS); implementing a statewide plan to ensure that this

system is accessible and used to inform key stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, educators, unions and community members, researchers and policy makers); and supporting local school districts to increase the use of data for instructional improvement.

The CSDE will complete its SDLS by the end of the 2011-2012 school year. This will include the collection of student attendance and enrollment information and implementation of a teacher identifier that can be matched with student records and to the institutions of higher education at which the teachers trained. The CSDE will continue to enhance public access to student performance data through its new CEDaR Web site and improve LEA protected access to individual student records and other data. In addition, the Department will develop and implement a model by which to measure student growth over time, including further development of the Grades 3 through 8 Benchmark Assessment System and CSDE vertical scales.

Over the period 2010-2014, all Participating LEAs will fully implement the SLDS; the evolving student growth measurement models; participate in professional development on the use of data for instructional improvement; and make local data available for research and program evaluation. In addition, 80 of the 122 LEA signatories to the RTTT application will participate in the Department's Grades 3 through 8 Benchmark Assessment System designed to provide local districts with real time data on student achievement and growth.

Great Teachers and Leaders: Improving All Aspects of Teacher and Principal Effectiveness

This section of the RTTT initiative is the most complex and requires the involvement of the CSDE, LEAs, local and state teacher and administrator unions and Connecticut's statewide associations of superintendents and boards of education. While Connecticut has largely achieved the goal of placing highly qualified teachers in virtually all of our K-12 classrooms, the national RTTT effort now requires a focus on teacher and principal "effectiveness." An "effective" teacher/principal is one whose students make at least one grade level of growth for each year of schooling. "Highly effective" means that students make a year and one-half of progress (or more) for each year of schooling.

At the core of Connecticut's application is the commitment to build a new system to support the development of effective and highly effective teachers and principals. This effort will include: re-issuance of key policy documents and regulations related to teaching and supervision; the development of enhanced methods of measuring student growth and linking student growth to a new statewide system to evaluate teachers and principals; vastly expanded statewide professional development; and specialized training opportunities related to teaching the current generation of technology- and media-skilled students, as well as training in customizing instruction for students who face learning challenges, including English language learners. The creation of an

English Language Learning Institute, developed jointly with scholars at Connecticut's Eastern State University, is defining a new direction for CSDE and Participating LEAs.

Fundamental to the development and support of effective instruction and supervision, the CSDE will expand access to CALI for all Participating LEAs. In addition, the CSDE will implement a new teacher mentoring program (T.E.A.M.) and establish the following new programs: STEM Teacher Regional Exchange program; Teacher-in-Residence Master Teacher program; and a program to mentor school principals. Moreover, the Department is developing a methodology to link information on teacher and principal performance back to the Connecticut institutions at which they trained, in order to give feedback to the state's institutions of higher education on *their* effectiveness in preparing the state's education workforce. Finally, the CSDE will utilize RTTT funding to support an expansion of advanced placement courses for students, as well the expansion of student and family support programs through a partnership with local school districts.

Turning Around Low Performing Schools

In 2007, the Connecticut General Assembly passed landmark legislation providing significant authority to the CSBE and Commissioner of Education to take a broad range of actions to intervene in low performing schools. CSDE has employed sanctions using CALI as the primary intervention process. The sanctions have included, but are not limited to the following: conducted instructional and financial assessments at the LEA level; required LEAs to revise their district improvement plans (DIP), along with aligning their school improvement plans to their DIP; assigned CSDE staff to LEAs; required formation of a LEA accountability system by creating district-, school- and instructional-level data teams; and ongoing monitoring visits. Evidence that this process of intensive engagement with local school districts is working can be seen in the removal of five CALI schools from the NCLB "needs improvement" list. An additional 36 schools that had not made adequately yearly progress (AYP) in the previous year, made AYP or Safe Harbor in the following year.

As required by the RTTT application and utilizing the specified methodology, the CSDE has identified 18 schools as constituting the lowest 5 percent among low-achieving Title I schools. Two of these are high schools - one is a charter school operated in Stamford and one is a high school operated in Hartford. The balance are elementary schools in the cities of Hartford (7 schools), Bridgeport (3), New Haven (2), New Britain (3), Windham (1), and one charter school operated by Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) in the greater New Haven area. These schools (and their Participating LEAs) will implement the CALI model and will incorporate one of the four school intervention models: turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model. In addition, several LEAs will work on implementing a longer school year.

LEA Participation and Stakeholder Support

Acknowledging the central role of LEAs in achieving the state's goals for student learning, the RTTT initiative requires a demonstrable commitment from LEAs to partner with the state in its plans for education reform. Of the 166 LEAs and the 31 additional schools eligible to join Connecticut's RTTT partnership (including its 18 charter schools), 122 LEAs signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to participate and implement all or substantially all of the Connecticut agenda for educational reform as described in the RTTT application. Within the MOU, LEAs were also strongly encouraged to sign on to additional electives under each reform area in order to further achieve the goals of RTTT. This participation represents 61.9 percent of the state's total districts, including 30 out of the 32 districts with the most economically disadvantaged populations, and all of the state's charter schools. In addition, the 122 participating LEAs enroll 87.7 percent of the state's K-12 students in poverty.

RTTT makes a distinction between types of LEA partnerships funded by the grant and gives state applicants wide latitude to craft the nature of these engagements. The primary type of partnership involves LEAs who sign on to implement the entire initiative, known as Participating LEAs. The Title I Participating LEAs are eligible to receive at least 50 percent of the total federal funds awarded to a RTTT state. Within this group of Participating LEAs, a smaller group has been designated by Connecticut as Collaborating Districts – the most at-risk communities. These LEAs will receive additional funds to implement the state's entire plan.

The final amount of funding for each LEA, for each year will be determined within 90 days after Connecticut has been notified that we were awarded a RTTT grant, based on the total funding awarded the state. Also within the 90-day period, each Participating LEA will develop a detailed work plan and budget to support their RTTT plan.

In addition to the strong support from LEAs, Connecticut's application included more than 80 letters of support from various stakeholders, including both statewide teacher union associations; the State Legislature's Education Committee; many education organizations; institutions of higher education; and others.

Making Education Funding a Priority

The goal of this section of the RTTT application is to ensure that state education funding remains a priority in each state, to ensure successful conditions for high-performing charters, and to ensure that conditions exist to promote innovative, autonomous, high-performing schools. Connecticut's RTTT application documents the state's rich history with public school choice programs designed to increase student achievement and graduation rates and narrow achievement gaps. These programs include: charter schools, interdistrict magnet schools, the Open Choice Program; Interdistrict Cooperative Grant Program; Regional Agriculture Science and Technology Education Centers; and the Connecticut Technical High School System. Connecticut currently has eighteen charter schools that receive nearly equitable funding

compared to traditional public schools and which are subject to strict accountability laws to help ensure their success. Additionally Connecticut enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools through CommPACT schools and interdistrict magnet schools. Finally, Connecticut's application addresses initiatives that further support the efforts to improve student achievement, including: drop-out prevention programs; family engagement and parent leadership training activities; and Developing Tomorrow's Professionals, a program predominantly aimed at adolescent minority males to provide critical information and encourage the practice of essential life skills associated with mitigating the effects of racism.

Utilizing a series of fiscal analyses, Connecticut's RTTT application demonstrates that state revenues for elementary, secondary and public higher education actually increased from \$3.9 billion to \$4 billion from fiscal year 2008 to 2009 and the percentage of total revenues that Connecticut made available to support education remained virtually flat at 23 percent. The RTTT application also commits to a multi-year strategic planning process to align existing and discretionary state grants to support effective RTTT state initiatives and propose ways of repurposing state and local education funds to continue the student achievement gains that are anticipated to occur from Connecticut's RTTT initiatives and programs, at the statewide and local levels.

A Final Note

Connecticut entered the RTTT competition because the RTTT requirements align very well with the reform agenda and processes already being developed within the state; and the RTTT program provides a significant base of funding to enable the state to advance its reform goals for many more districts than now possible given this state's current fiscal challenges.

Connecticut's RTTT application will advance instructional quality for all students and all school systems in the state. We also believe that it will provide the push and resources needed to leap forward in ensuring that all students – particularly those whose academic performance lags behind where they should be – complete high school with strong 21st century skills and able to enter college, other training programs or the workforce with little or no need for remediation, fully ready for the challenges and opportunities of postsecondary education, training and employment.

Online Resources for Further Information

Connecticut's Race to the Top Application (including appendices)

Application online at:

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/arra/CT_RTTT_Grant_Application.pdf

Appendices online at:

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/arra/CT_RTTT_Appendices.pdf

Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform

Plan online at:

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/TheConnecticutPlan.pdf

Two-page brochure online at:

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/ssreform/ssreformbrochure.pdf

Other resources online at: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2702&Q=322264

Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative

CALI online at: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&Q=321754

Connecticut's Five-Year Comprehensive Plan, 2006-2011

Online at -- www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/commish/comp_plan06-11.p