



A SUPERIOR EDUCATION

FOR CONNECTICUT'S 21st CENTURY LEARNERS

Five-year Comprehensive Plan for Education 2006-2011

Adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education on January 3, 2007

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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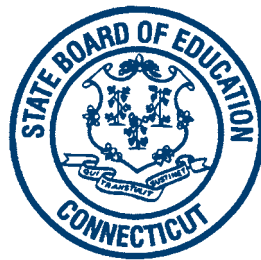
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Connecticut State Board of Education



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“Schools, families, communities and businesses all contribute to student success and the best results come when all partners work together.”



PREFACE

A SUPERIOR EDUCATION FOR CONNECTICUT'S 21st CENTURY LEARNERS

Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-4(c) requires the Connecticut State Board of Education to develop, every five years, a five-year *Comprehensive Plan for Elementary, Secondary, Vocational, Career and Adult Education*. Upon adoption by the Board, the plan is submitted to the Governor and the Education Committee of the General Assembly.

As required by the statute, the State Board of Education appointed, in December 2005, an advisory committee to help prepare the comprehensive plan. Members represented education organizations, parent organizations, student organizations, organized labor, and business and industry.

The 2006-2011 comprehensive plan emphasizes three priority areas and presents the rationale, actions and outcomes for each.

1. **High-quality preschool education for all students**, including preschool programs aligned with *Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework and Preschool Assessment Framework* and linked to the *Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards*. This will require alignment of research-based curriculum implemented by high-quality teachers in preschool through Grade 3, with a monitoring and assessment system aligned to the state standards.

2. **High academic achievement of all students in reading, writing, mathematics and science**, with a focus on students in high-need schools and districts. High achievement will result only if all students are *expected* to achieve at high levels and have equal access to challenging curriculum and instruction, and adequate and equitable resources; and are taught by excellent educators who believe that all students, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, can achieve at high levels.

3. **High school reform**, so all students graduate and are prepared for lifelong learning and careers in a competitive, global economy. This will require all high schools to provide a rigorous, literacy-based curriculum linked to authentic, real-life experiences; performance-based assessments; a school climate in which personal and social responsibility is practiced; and school-business partnerships that offer students tangible knowledge and experience.

While the State Department of Education's outstanding work in promoting career and adult education will continue, the Board selected these three priority areas to address the unacceptable achievement gaps that continue to widen in reading and mathematics among students who differ in gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The rigor of curriculums and instruction across all

continued ►



“All students must have access to a rigorous curriculum taught by highly effective and qualified educators ...”

PREFACE, continued

grade levels must be equal in urban, suburban and rural schools. If we are to close these growing, persistent gaps and prepare all our students to be successful in the 21st century, we — the State Board of Education, policymakers, educators, citizens and students — must provide the necessary resources and expect that all our students can and will achieve at high levels.

We must ensure that all our students are proficient in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The Board is directing the Department to address these priorities with a sense of urgency and deliberate speed.

The Board believes that the amount and use of time for instruction, including the structure and length of the school day and school year, is important to high academic achievement. Each of the three priority areas in this comprehensive plan addresses the necessary extended learning opportunities students must receive, such as before- and after-school programs, weekend programs, tutoring, homework help, summer school and other supports.

The State Board of Education also believes that education is a shared responsibility throughout a student’s life. Schools, families, communities and businesses all contribute to student success and the best results come when all partners work together. These partnerships are

necessary to support student success and help adults coordinate their efforts to promote learning. The State Board of Education will provide leadership in developing and promoting partnership programs that contribute to success for all students, including the development of parents’ literacy skills, and that ensure schools are safe and supportive for all members of the school community.

To close the large and unacceptable gaps in achievement, resources and opportunities for Connecticut students, the Board must address all three priorities simultaneously. All students must receive a high-quality preschool education. All students must have access to a rigorous curriculum taught by highly effective and qualified educators who believe that every student at every grade level can achieve at high levels. All students must graduate from high school prepared for lifelong learning and careers in a competitive, global economy.

The State Board of Education will work with the Governor, state legislators and key stakeholders to accomplish this extremely important agenda and to advocate for the critical resources needed to support these priorities during the next five years. The Board knows that partnerships must engage multiple community stakeholders and recognize, respect and address families’ diverse interests, needs and talents, as well as economic and cultural differences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A SUPERIOR EDUCATION FOR CONNECTICUT'S 21st CENTURY LEARNERS

The State Board of Education would like to recognize the work of the following individuals who served on the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and helped to develop the ideas set forth in this document:

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“The State Board of Education will provide leadership in developing and promoting partnership programs that contribute to success for all students ...”



PRIORITY I



HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

Rationale

High-quality preschool education plays a significant role in the development of competent learners. Many reports have documented the achievement gap in Connecticut between our poorest students and their wealthier counterparts. The wide disparity in access to and the availability of high-quality preschool education is a major contributor to this achievement gap. A high-quality preschool education provides children with the foundation essential for future school success — a healthy attitude toward learning and the necessary skills for learning to read, write, listen and speak. In addition, a high-quality preschool education provides for the development of positive social, emotional and physical skills.

Currently, the state funds preschool education for about 8,500 children from high-need districts. However, in these same districts, it is estimated that 7,700 children still do not participate in preschool programs because state funding is inadequate to establish spaces for these children. Beyond state-funded programs that serve children from high-need districts, many families living in other communities cannot afford the costs of preschool education.

Finally, in both state- and privately supported preschool programs, a large disparity exists in preschool teachers' credentials, knowledge and skills. These large disparities contribute significantly to the uneven preparation of young children and the resulting achievement gap.

Actions

The State Board of Education will take the necessary steps to support the following state actions to address this priority:

- Provide funding for high-quality preschool education for all 3- and 4-year-old children living in high-need districts, as well as those children most in need throughout the state
- Provide incentives to districts to assume increased responsibility for high-quality preschool education
- Increase funds to existing state programs, such as School Readiness and Head Start, to support high-quality preschool education
- Revise current statute to increase funding for both school construction and the child-care facilities loan funds to expand capacity for preschool education
- Provide assistance to enable children of families most in need to receive a high-quality preschool education
- Collaborate with Connecticut higher education to establish a seamless system between two- and four-year programs to prepare high-quality early childhood educators
- Collaborate with Connecticut higher education institutions to provide incentives, such as scholarships, tuition waivers and forgivable loans, to candidates seeking an early childhood credential

continued ►



“A high-quality preschool education provides children with the foundation essential for future school success.”

Priority I Actions, continued

- Expand early childhood educator preparation programs to allow alternate forms of obtaining a required credential, such as distance learning, off-campus and satellite learning centers, employment-based and credit-granting courses, and supervised practicum; emphasis will be placed on increasing minority candidate participation
- Provide ongoing, systematic professional development in the use of *Connecticut’s Preschool Curriculum Framework* and *Preschool Assessment Framework* to ensure that all early childhood educators have the knowledge and skills to prepare children for future school success
- Collaborate with the Department of Public Health to modify the role of the education consultant to support early childhood educators in effective instructional practices consistent with *Connecticut’s Preschool Curriculum Framework* and *Preschool Assessment Framework*
- Establish a system of monitoring and technical assistance to support effective instructional practices consistent with *Connecticut’s Preschool Curriculum Framework* and *Preschool Assessment Framework* and aligned with the *Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards*
- Support the design and implementation of a developmentally appropriate measure of children’s readiness for and progress in kindergarten

Outcomes

The expected outcome is a high-quality preschool education for all young children in Connecticut. The following indicators will serve as measures of success:

- More children will participate in high-quality, state-funded preschool programs, and there will be greater access to high-quality preschool programs statewide.
- More teachers will have specialized credentials in early childhood education and the skills and knowledge to provide a high-quality preschool education.
- All preschool programs will include a rigorous curriculum and an assessment system aligned to *Connecticut’s Preschool Curriculum Framework* and *Preschool Assessment Framework*.
- Children who participate in all preschool programs will enter kindergarten fully prepared for further learning in literacy and numeracy.
- All children will have competencies in areas that support their learning and academic success, which include physical and motor development, creative and aesthetic expression, and personal, social and emotional skills.

PRIORITY II



HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL STUDENTS IN READING, WRITING, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

Rationale

We expect all students to achieve at high levels and the rigor of curriculums and instruction to be equal in urban, suburban and rural schools. The achievement gaps in reading, writing, mathematics and science between high-performing and low-performing students in Connecticut are unacceptable. There are achievement gaps between males and females, and students of different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Equally disturbing are the gaps in the expectations held for these students.

The most significant achievement gap exists between our poorest students and their wealthier counterparts. On the 2006 Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), students who paid full price for meals outperformed those who were eligible for free or reduced-price¹ meals in reading, writing and mathematics. When the scores were averaged across the three content areas, there was a 39 percentage-point difference in performance at the state goal level between students who paid full price for meals and those who were eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Sufficient and appropriate resources must be provided to ensure that the achievement gap is closed quickly. We must provide high-quality, academically focused extended learning opportunities to refine and strengthen our students' skills. Schools must be safe and supportive for all members of the school community.

¹ Eligibility for free and reduced-price meals serves as a measure of poverty.

Actions

The State Board of Education will take the necessary steps to support the following state actions to address this priority:

- Develop model curriculums in reading, mathematics and science for prekindergarten through Grade 8
- Develop model curriculums for algebra and geometry
- Provide training and technical support for educators in the implementation of curriculums and monitor implementation in high-need districts
- Develop formative assessments, aligned to model curriculums, and provide training in the use of formative assessments
- Require low-performing districts to administer formative assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and science at all grade levels and use the information to improve instruction
- Establish incentives to attract, support and retain highly qualified and effective teachers in high-need districts, with priority given to attracting minority teachers
- Support “grow-your-own” programs in high-need districts by identifying (1) mentors for classroom-based support programs to increase teacher retention, (2) outstanding paraprofessionals to become certified teachers and (3) teachers who exhibit strong leadership skills to become school leaders/administrators

continued ►



Priority II Actions, continued

- Provide communication and outreach to middle and high school students from high-need districts on incentives available after high school graduation to those who attend educator preparation programs in Connecticut
 - Collaborate with higher education in Connecticut to provide tuition assistance to students most in need to pursue teaching careers in mathematics and science
 - Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all components of the BEST Program and implement appropriate changes based on evaluation findings to ensure that all beginning teachers provide high-quality, effective instruction
 - Develop and provide an induction program for all new administrators, beginning in high-need districts
 - Establish pilot programs for extended learning opportunities beyond the regular school day and year, such as before- and after-school programs, weekend programs, tutoring, homework help and summer school, with expansion to additional schools based on results of the pilot
 - Align preservice training with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards on partnering with families and communities
 - Provide professional development to school and district staff members in developing effective school-family-community/business partnerships based on State Board of Education standards
- Continue to expand the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) and support schools and districts identified by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in Year 3 of “in need of improvement” by:
 - requiring schoolwide instructional assessment by an external evaluator;
 - requiring the review of reading and mathematics curriculums in these districts and, if not standards-based, requiring implementation of State Department of Education model curriculums;
 - requiring on-site coaching of superintendents and principals in these districts, using as coaches administrators with records of high student achievement;
 - requiring leadership training for superintendents and principals in these districts in developing and implementing high-level instruction in reading and mathematics across all grade levels;
 - requiring the use of formative assessments in each of these districts to improve instruction; and
 - requiring the use of a longitudinal data system to track student indicators having direct impact on student achievement

“We expect all students to achieve at high levels, and the rigor of curriculums and instruction to be equal in urban, suburban and rural schools.”



Outcomes

The expected outcome for each of these actions is increased achievement of all students and a significant closing of the achievement gap in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

The following indicators, which are closely linked to student achievement, will serve as measures of success:

- Curriculums aligned to the *Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards* implemented in every school
- District implementation of the full range of assessment options available, including common grade-level or subject-area assessments, benchmark assessments and formative classroom assessments
- Increased teacher retention rates and the number of minority teachers in high-need districts
- Increased retention of high-quality, new administrators in high-need districts
- Enhanced BEST Program so all beginning teachers are provided the necessary support for effective teaching of all students
- Fewer districts and schools identified as “in need of improvement” and “in need of corrective action”
- Implementation of a data system to measure student growth longitudinally

- Significant increases in reading, writing, mathematics and science achievement within one year at schools with pilot programs for extended learning opportunities
- Increased family participation in the planning and improvement of school programs
- Increased support to families for supporting children’s learning at home
- Improved district policies on school-family-community/business involvement and consistent implementation of these policies



PRIORITY III

HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

Rationale

Redefining Connecticut’s high schools is critical to preparing all our young people to be successful in today’s challenging world. Connecticut’s economy depends on a highly skilled and highly educated work force. As the demographics of the job market and Connecticut’s work force change, it will become even more important to ensure that there is a new vision for Connecticut’s high schools. Every year, schools in our state lose thousands of young men and women who choose to leave school without graduating. When Connecticut’s data is disaggregated for subgroups of students, the percentage of students who drop out is three times greater for Hispanics and two times greater for blacks than their white counterparts. In addition, thousands of high school graduates are leaving our schools without the skills and knowledge to be contributing citizens in our state and local economies. The primary focus of Connecticut’s high schools must be to ensure that all students graduate and will be second to none in a global marketplace.

The current minimum standard for earning a high school diploma in Connecticut is 20 credits, as defined by Carnegie units, but in too many cases this standard allows for low performance. Closing the gap between the skills of high school graduates and the skills needed in college and the work force is essential. The high school experience must prepare students for the challenges, intellectual demands, opportunities and possibilities that await them. Providing the level of challenge necessary for student success requires a curriculum that includes rigorous content and concepts connected to relevant and authentic experiences and educators who hold high expectations for all students. Connecticut students need to be better prepared with 21st century skills, and ready for life, work and the world after high school.

Actions

The State Board of Education will take the necessary steps to support the following state actions to address this priority:

- Increase graduation requirements to reflect the skills needed to ensure success in a global society as follows:

| GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS – CURRENT | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Minimum 20 credits | |
| English | No fewer than 4 credits |
| Mathematics | No fewer than 3 credits |
| Social studies | No fewer than 3 credits |
| Science | No fewer than 2 credits |
| Arts or vocational education | No less than 1 credit |
| Physical education | No less than 1 credit |

| GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS – PROPOSED | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Minimum 20 credits | |
| English | No fewer than 4 credits |
| Mathematics | No fewer than 4 credits |
| Social studies | No fewer than 3 credits |
| Science | No fewer than 3 credits |
| Arts or vocational education | No less than 1 credit |
| Physical education | No less than 1 credit |
| World Language | No fewer than 2 credits |



“The primary focus of Connecticut’s high schools must be to ensure that all students graduate and will be second to none in a global marketplace.”

Outcomes

- Establish competencies stating what students should know and be able to do upon graduation from Connecticut’s high schools in order to be successful in postsecondary activities, and require districts to align local graduation requirements with the established competencies
- Ensure that all districts develop and implement rigorous, standards-based curriculums to meet the changing needs of the workplace, technology and a global economy
- Allow standards-based alternatives for demonstrating knowledge, skills and understanding as a way to earn high school and/or college credits
- Require access to meaningful out-of-school learning experiences for all students
- Develop strategies to reduce the number of students who are suspended from and/or drop out of high school, including alternate programs for students most in need
- Create and sustain a data warehouse to track students’ performance from preschool through college
- Attract, support and retain highly effective secondary school administrators to meet the challenges and demands of redesigning Connecticut’s high schools
- Require that all students have a personal education plan that includes career development, in- and out-of-school coursework and/or activities, and transition to postsecondary education and/or the workplace.

All Connecticut high schools will be redefined using the research-based standards in the *Framework for Connecticut’s High School: A Working Guide for High School Redesign*. The expected outcome from the preceding action is to have every student graduate from high school prepared for college and work.

Each high school will fully prepare students when the following are in place:

- a clear mission defining what it seeks to achieve;
- a rigorous, standards-based curriculum;
- a strong school community focused on the school’s mission and high expectations for student learning;
- a small, safe, personalized and positive learning environment;
- embedded professional development with the single purpose of improving teaching and learning;
- a system using accurate data to inform and transform teaching, learning, leadership and management practices; and
- learning opportunities for all students that extend into the community.

“We must create a world-class education system for all Connecticut students – one that respects the uniqueness of every child and enables all students to succeed at high levels.”



CONCLUSION

A SUPERIOR EDUCATION FOR CONNECTICUT'S 21st CENTURY LEARNERS

The State Board of Education's *Comprehensive Plan for Elementary, Secondary, Vocational, Career and Adult Education: A Superior Education for Connecticut's 21st Century Learners* demonstrates an unprecedented commitment to addressing the most urgent issue of our time: high academic achievement of **all** students in reading, writing, mathematics and science. We must be bold and focused if we are to close the large and unacceptable gaps in achievement, resources and opportunities for students in Connecticut.

The Board has selected three priority areas to address these gaps that continue to widen between students who differ in gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. We must expect high academic achievement of all students in reading, writing, mathematics and science, with a focus on students in high-need schools and districts. We must provide a high-quality preschool education for all

students. And, last, but of equal importance, we must reform Connecticut's high schools so all students graduate and are prepared for lifelong learning and careers in a competitive, global economy.

Our plan is straightforward, pushing Connecticut to set and maintain high academic standards for teaching and learning, advocating for the critical resources needed, and engaging key stakeholders to invest in our greatest asset. We must continue to build on recent progress. Where current approaches are not working, we must work strategically with educators, families, communities and businesses to generate new ones.

We must create a world-class education system for all Connecticut students — one that respects the uniqueness of every child and enables all students to succeed at high levels.



APPENDIX

A SUPERIOR EDUCATION FOR CONNECTICUT'S 21st CENTURY LEARNERS

Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 10-4. Duties of board. Reports. Comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career and adult education.

(c) Said board shall prepare every five years a five-year comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career and adult education. Said comprehensive plan shall include, but not be limited to, a policy statement of the State Board of Education's long-term goals and short-term objectives, an analysis of cost implications and measurement criteria and how said board's programs and operations relate to such goals and objectives and specific action plans, target dates and strategies and methods of implementation for achieving such goals and objectives. The State Board of Education shall establish every five years an advisory committee to assist the board in the preparation of the comprehensive plan. Members of the advisory committee shall be appointed by the State Board of Education with representation on the committee to include, but not be limited to, representatives of the Connecticut Advisory Council on Vocational and Career Education, education organizations, parent organizations,

student organizations, business and industry, organized labor and appropriate state agencies. Notwithstanding any requirement for submission of a plan for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1984, pursuant to section 10-96a of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 1983, the State Board of Education shall not be required to submit the master plan for vocational and career education but shall submit, pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the comprehensive plan for elementary and secondary, vocational, career and adult education to the Governor and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education on or before September 1, 1996, and every five years thereafter provided, the master plan currently in effect shall remain in effect until the comprehensive plan is submitted. The State Board of Education shall be responsible for annually updating the progress in implementing the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan and shall report on such progress to the Governor and to said standing committee annually. The State Board of Education shall provide opportunity for public comment prior to its adoption of a plan.

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