

Commissioner's Update

November 10, 2009

Dear Connecticut Educator:

I have five items for you in this update.

Connecticut prepares application for federal Race to the Top funding

The Connecticut State Department of Education issued a news release today on the Department's preparations to apply for \$150 million from the highly competitive federal Race to the Top fund announced by President Obama earlier this year, as part of a \$4.35 billion reform package designed to spur bold action for reforming America's public schools.

The Department has been working since August to respond to the complex requirements of the grant and has assembled a team of educators and business leaders to help fashion Connecticut's proposal for reform.

Please go to [November 10, 2009 News Release](#) to read the full text of the release.

Guidance on closing schools and reporting H1N1-related school closings

Four "guidance documents" are available to assist educators in deciding whether to close schools during the onset of H1N1 influenza.

In addition, the federal Centers for Disease Control and the U.S Department of Education have established a national reporting system for H1N1-related school closings. The CDC has asked that school districts in Connecticut provide information about such closings to better track the virus.

A common reporting form has been created that requires only the name and zip code of the school or school district, the date you first dismiss students, and the projected date you plan to re-open. School districts and local public health agencies may complete this form via the Web (www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal), e-mail (FluSchoolDismissal@cdc.gov), or fax (770-488-6156). All Web and e-mail submissions will be sent simultaneously to CDC and the Connecticut State Department of Education. All faxed submissions to CDC will be e-mailed as a PDF file to the CSDE.

The guidance documents include: 1) [CSDE Reminders and Updates on H1N1 Guidance for Schools](#); 2) [USDOE Flexibility and Waivers Guidance](#); 3) [Information on Immunizing School Nurses](#); and 4) [Information on the Distribution of Surgical Masks to School Nurses](#).

Input needed on new Connecticut teaching standards

The State Department of Education would like your feedback on revisions to the Common Core of Teaching (CCT) standards.

The Department is asking educators to complete a survey before the new standards are presented to the State Board of Education for adoption in 2010. The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. Participation is anonymous.

The Common Core of Teaching standards articulate the art and science of the teaching profession. The CCT is linked by state law and regulations to the preparation, training, induction and evaluation of Connecticut's teachers.

Your feedback on the CCT will guide the final stage of revisions to these important standards. As you review the CCT standards, you will find that they are grouped by domains, but in practice, they are integrated parts of the complex and dynamic process of effective teaching.

Please go to <http://www.ctlearning.net/cct> to access the survey. Responses are due by November 25, 2009.

Results of superintendent survey released

In late spring 2009, the State Department of Education conducted a survey of the state's superintendents. The survey sought their ratings regarding how effectively superintendents viewed the Department in conducting seven aspects of its work. The response rate was about 70 percent. The statements were rated using a four-point scale (1 = don't know, 2 = limited, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = meets district needs). The percentages of respondents who gave a 3 or higher rating to a statement are included with each item below.

1. The SDE provides clearly defined competitive and entitlement grant procedures, including award criteria, and supports districts in the application process so that they can access funds in a timely manner. **89%**
2. The SDE provides useful information to districts about the condition of public school education in Connecticut, so your district's staff can communicate to their constituents and improve student and school performance. **81%**
3. The SDE provides to districts quality training programs and resources (handbooks, guidelines, curriculum frameworks, etc.) that emphasize Connecticut's expectations for what all students should know and be able to do. **80%**
4. The SDE provides guidelines and training for the appropriate administration of assessments and assessment information that helps my district determine how well our local curriculum aligns with state standards and how well our students are progressing toward meeting those standards. **77%**
5. The SDE communicates clear and timely guidance to districts about the implementation of state and federal laws. **77%**
6. The SDE provides state curricula that are useful for planning my local district curriculum and instructional programs. **73%**
7. The SDE communicates clearly defined teacher and administration standards to districts so our staff have the appropriate information to hire, retain and develop high-quality teachers and leaders. **78%**

The responses, along with those of the two open-ended questions, are being used to develop an agency plan to increase the quality of services that the agency provides to superintendents and your staff.

Board revises position on measuring success of Connecticut students

On November 4, 2009, the State Board of Education revised a position statement on measuring the success of Connecticut public school students. The purpose of the statement is to guide districts in ensuring that all students meet challenging academic standards, which, in turn, will reduce the gaps in performance among subgroups of public school students. These are two of the primary elements of the Connecticut State Board of Education's second priority, high academic achievement of all students, from its Five-year Comprehensive Plan for Education. The Board originally adopted the position statement at its September 13, 2000, meeting.

Please go to [Measuring Success](#) to read the new statement.

Sincerely,

Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education