



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



February 28, 2014

The Honorable Arne Duncan, Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I am writing to request a one-year extension of Connecticut's ESEA flexibility so that Connecticut can continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year.

ESEA flexibility, including the most recent field test flexibility, has allowed Connecticut schools to accelerate their transition to college- and career-ready standards and new assessments aligned to those standards.

- It is providing Connecticut districts a low-stakes opportunity to move forward and fully enter the Common Core era in 2013-14 by administering the Smarter Balanced Field Test in lieu of the legacy assessments.
- It is reducing the assessment burden on students, teachers, school and districts by not having to double-test students during this assessment transition.
- Students, including those with disabilities, can now experience current assessment content and get familiarized with the tools, supports, and accommodations in the new computer-based testing system.
- Schools can evaluate and address any issues regarding their technical capacity (including logistics) in preparation for the Smarter Balanced operational assessment in 2014-15.

ESEA Flexibility has been particularly effective in the area of school accountability.

- The new accountability model enabled a classification of all schools into one of five categories. The school and district performance reports that were subsequently disseminated provided valuable information to school/district leaders and constituent stakeholders on overall student achievement as well as subject and subgroup performance.
- Incorporating performance in subjects beyond mathematics and reading (i.e., writing and science), has allowed the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to emphasize the contribution made by more educators to the school accountability indicators.
- Raising expectations to the higher "goal" level and giving schools credit for improving student achievement across the performance continuum has focused attention on more students, not just those at the proficiency cusp.

- The model's spotlight on achievement gaps (by lowering the minimum n-size to 20 and dropping a school's classification by one level if gaps are evidenced) has brought new awareness and attention to low subgroup achievement. For instance, of the 282 schools with an overall index score ≥ 88 (our expected level), 151 school (54 percent) received the Progressing and not the highest Excelling classification; in a large majority of these schools, gaps for a majority of subgroups were 10 SPI points or greater.
- The recognition of schools of distinction (i.e., reward schools) has highlighted the positive and encouraged sharing of best practices.

ESEA Flexibility, coupled with state legislation and appropriation, has enabled the Turnaround Office to provide a comprehensive suite of interventions and supports in Connecticut's lowest performing schools and districts to improve student outcomes.

- Results from the new accountability model enabled the selection of schools for the Commissioner's Network – a rigorous intervention model that utilizes the locally tailored school turnaround approaches.
- Thirty districts with the lowest district performance indices were also designated as Alliance Districts. Of the 184 schools designated as Priority, Focus or Review (a Connecticut school classification for a low performing school), 91 percent of them are located in the 30 Alliance Districts, further confirming this focused approach to improvement efforts.

In summary, the ESEA flexibility received by Connecticut in May 2012 has enabled us to aim for higher standards, field test new assessments, provide professional development to educators during this significant transition, launch a new accountability system, and establish a structure for providing targeted interventions and supports to our lowest performing schools and districts. Maintaining momentum with the implementation of these reforms in 2014-15 is definitely in the public interest because these improvements are laying the groundwork for long term growth in student achievement and a substantial reduction in Connecticut's achievement gap.

With this letter, Connecticut affirms that it is implementing its ESEA flexibility request, as amended by the field test flexibility approved on January 30, 2014, without substantive changes. I understand that these documents will be reviewed to ensure that they comply with the principles and timelines of ESEA flexibility.

Please feel free to contact Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker at 860-713-6550 or charlene.russell-tucker@ct.gov if you have any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stefan Pryor
Commissioner of Education

Attachment: Red-lined version of ESEA flexibility request



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: United States Department of Education
FROM: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education *Stefan Pryor*
DATE: February 28, 2014
SUBJECT: ESEA Waiver Principle 3 Amendment

In March 2013, Connecticut received notification regarding the outcome of the United States Department of Education's (USED) review of the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as submitted in Principle 3 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver.

The letter of notification identified the areas that Connecticut still needed to address in order to receive final approval of its Principle 3 waiver. Specifically, the letter stated that *Connecticut must submit to USED for review and approval an amended request that incorporates its final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with all requirements for these systems under Principle 3 of ESEA flexibility*. Attached is Connecticut's amended version of Principle 3 in response to this request.

Summary

Connecticut recognizes that the educator evaluation and support system is a critical part of its comprehensive plan to ensure equity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students. Over the past two years, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has engaged the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) — a broadly represented stakeholder group consisting of educators, policymakers and advocates — in undertaking a major reform of Connecticut's policies and practices for educator evaluation and support. PEAC developed the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012) to serve as the foundation of Connecticut's educator effectiveness and evaluation system reform. In July 2012, the Department began taking important steps to plan for and ensure that high-quality evaluation and support systems are implemented in a timely manner by Connecticut Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Ten districts/consortia of districts piloted Connecticut's state model, the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED), during the 2012-13 school year. Simultaneously, the Department provided training and technical assistance to all Connecticut LEAs to assist them in the required development and submission of a district plan for educator evaluation and support for implementation in the 2013-14 school year.

The CSDE has added and/or expanded upon three components within Principle 3:

1. Flexibility on the inclusion of state test data as part of the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14 and 2014-15;

2. The determination of how most appropriately to measure growth for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, with an emphasis on teachers of students with disabilities and English Language Learners; and
3. An assessment of the fidelity of educator evaluation and support system implementation in 2013-14 and in subsequent years.

Consultation

As with our original waiver application, the CSDE provided notice and a public comment period to a diverse group of stakeholders Attachment B (see attached list). This process included:

1. A summary of the proposed amendment (Attachment A) was disseminated to stakeholders with an invitation to participate in a telephone conference call. Additionally, a dedicated e-mail address was created to receive written input. The stakeholders who were directly contacted included the following groups/organizations representing educators, parent and community organizations, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and the State's education associations, Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE). This summary document was also posted on the homepage of the CSDE website.
2. The aforementioned conference call, which was attended by superintendents and other school staff members, as well as a representative from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).
3. A convening of PEAC on January 29, 2014 in order to discuss the use of state test data within the educator evaluation and support system during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years, along with other proposed flexibilities to the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation.

Summary of Feedback/Input

Conference Call: There were 18 participants on the conference call, which was held on September 16, 2013. The broad themes that emerged included the following:

- Strong support for flexibility on the use of state test data in 2013-14 and a request for extending this to 2014-15;
- Desire for clarification between this waiver and the Title I flexibility waiver re: choice of state test (legacy tests vs. Smarter Balanced Assessment) for 2013-14 and a better sense of the timeline; and
- Appropriate measures to assess student growth and development in the absence of state test data.

E-mail and Letters: There were 22 e-mail correspondences and three additional letters/memos that addressed the waiver. The themes that emerged from those correspondences included:

- More explicit mention of the role of various stakeholders and input that would be gathered from said stakeholders; and
- More detail on student growth models and considerations for students with disabilities.

Impact of Feedback on the Proposed Amendment

As a result of all the feedback received, the CSDE took the following steps in preparing the final waiver request:

- Based on public feedback to the proposal, PEAC supported flexibility on the use of state test data for both 2013-14 and 2014-15. On February 6, 2014, the Connecticut State Board of Education approved and adopted this flexibility option, contingent upon federal approval;
- Included more detailed information on what to do in the absence of state test data;
- Expanded clarification on the student growth approach for students with disabilities;
- Provided more detail on how the teacher and educator evaluation and support system can be best applied to Student and Educator Support Specialists (SESS), as well as considerations for other non-tested grades and subjects; and
- Included more explanation of PEAC's involvement in the monitoring process, as well as other stakeholder feedback, as it applies to the overall monitoring protocol.

Thank you in advance for your assistance to date on the complex, yet very important body of work being undertaken in Connecticut. We look forward to continued collaboration as you review Connecticut's Principle 3, as amended.

Attachment A

Connecticut State Department of Education Request for Public Comment Principle 3 – ESEA Flexibility Waiver Request Amendment

Overview:

This document outlines Connecticut's request to waive certain provisions of Connecticut's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request, with a focus on Principle 3, which mandates administrator and teacher evaluation and support. This proposal will be submitted to the United States Department of Education following a period of public comment.

Interested parties may submit comments via e-mail to eseawaiver@ct.gov no later than September 20, 2013. In the subject header of the response, please write "Principle 3: (INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR NAME HERE)." A conference call will be held on Monday, September 16, 2013, at 8:30 a.m. to address any questions that stakeholders may have regarding the amendment. The toll free number to dial in for this call is 877-915-7817, and the participant code is 51356609#.

Summary:

Connecticut recognizes that teacher and administrator evaluation and support systems are a critical part of our comprehensive plan to build an environment that ensures equal opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students. Over the past two years, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has engaged the leadership and expertise of a council of educators, policy makers and advocates — the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) — in the undertaking of a major reform effort to develop new Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012). The Department has also begun taking important steps to plan for and ensure that high-quality evaluation and support systems are implemented in a timely manner by local school districts.

The CSDE has added and/or expanded upon three components within Principle 3 of the ESEA flexibility waiver request. These additions, if approved, will enable local education agencies (LEAs) to:

1. Decide whether to include state test data as part of the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14.
2. Determine how to most appropriately measure growth for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, with an emphasis on teachers of students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
3. Ensure successful implementation of the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14 and in subsequent years.

Component #1: Flexibility on the Use of State Test Data in Connecticut's Educator Evaluation and Support System for 2013-14

In 2013-14, all Connecticut districts and charter schools, including the Connecticut Technical High School System, (181 in total) are expected to implement Connecticut's new educator evaluation and support system with at least a third of their certified staff, inclusive of administrators. While the PEAC provided flexibility on the number of participating staff, more than 100 of the 181 LEAs and

charter schools statewide have committed to full implementation with 100% of their certified educators in 2013-14. In 2014-15, all districts and charter schools, as well as USD #1, USD #2, USD #3, adult education and private special education facilities, will fully implement Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system. The CSDE plans to submit a separate waiver which, if approved, would afford districts the option to administer the legacy state tests (CMT/CAPT) and/or the Common Core-aligned assessments produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) during the 2013-14 academic year.

Given this foreseen latitude in 2013-14, the CSDE plans to allow districts to decide whether they will incorporate state test results in measuring student growth and development as required by Connecticut's Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012). If a district elects not to include state test data in 2013-14, the Guidelines provide for the use of other standardized and non-standardized measures to assess the student learning portion of the educator's evaluation and support system.

Should a district choose not to use state test results as part of its educator evaluation and support system in the 2013-14 academic year, educators would be required to measure student growth and development using other appropriate standardized and non-standardized measures. Technical assistance from the CSDE will be provided to districts to support the transition beyond this year's flexibility regarding the use of state test data.

The CSDE is seeking the flexibility for districts to choose between legacy state tests and Common Core/SBAC for 2013-14. Since the 2013-14 academic year is a transition year for testing, the CSDE seeks to support districts as they determine the most appropriate approach to integration of state test data in the educator evaluation and support system. The CSDE is now requesting permission to authorize this approach.

Component #2: Non-tested Grades and Subjects

The CSDE has convened a Student and Educator Support Specialist (SESS) workgroup consisting of representatives from many disciplines including school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, literacy coaches, and others. The SESS workgroup considered how the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) state model could be applied in a fair and meaningful way to their respective disciplines. In response to these discussions, the CSDE will release a series of documents to guide the evaluation of SESS in the following disciplines:

- English language learner/world language educators;
- social workers;
- school psychologists;
- library media specialists;
- school counselors;
- speech and language pathologists;
- mathematics and English language arts coaches;
- transition coordinators; and
- teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

All documents are designed to supplement Connecticut's SEED state model. These guides include a description of the varying roles that these educators serve within a district, as well as sample student learning objectives (SLOs) that are rigorous and comparable across learning environments.

To support observation of educator performance and practice, which comprises 40% of an educator's evaluation and support summative rating, the SESS workgroup developed a rubric called the *Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Student and Educator Support Specialists*. This rubric is tightly-aligned with the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* that is used for observation of practice in the 2013 SEED state model. It was determined that the *CCT Rubric for Educator and Support Specialists* was most applicable to school psychologists, social workers, school counselors, and speech and language pathologists. All other groups agreed that the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* would apply to their practice.

Students with Disabilities

Districts will have several options for measuring the growth of students with disabilities in the 2013-14 year. The preferred option is the standard assessment – either the CMT/CAPT or the Common Core/SBAC field test for districts choosing to pilot those tests. Connecticut has two alternate assessments, the Modified Assessment System (MAS) and the Skills Checklist, available for students with disabilities. Each has its own eligibility requirements and a corresponding guide to help district staff determine the appropriate testing option for students with disabilities.

English Language Learners

All English language learners who are not identified as a student with a disability are expected to take the standard assessment of the CMT/CAPT or Common Core/SBAC. Therefore, growth across grades/years can be measured using Connecticut's growth model. English language learners who are enrolled for the first time in a United States school for ten calendar months or less may be excused from ELA Reading and Writing assessments; however, they must take mathematics in the Year one which can form the basis for growth in Year two using Connecticut's growth model.

Component #3: Monitoring Implementation of Educator Evaluation and Support, starting in 2013-14

The CSDE is currently planning an annual process by which to monitor implementation of Connecticut's new system for educator evaluation and support to ensure that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and administrators, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and administrator evaluation and support systems consistent with the state education agency's adopted Guidelines.

The CSDE proposes to develop a comprehensive system comprised of differentiated levels and types of monitoring. The levels will be designed as follows:

Level I: All Connecticut districts and charter schools will be required to complete a comprehensive progress report aligned to Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012) for both the teacher and administrator models in order to assess implementation progress.

Level II: Upon submission of the progress report to the CSDE and/or appropriate partners, approximately thirty districts, including charter schools, will be randomly selected for more in-depth monitoring. The random selection process will be designed to ensure approximately equal representation from each of the six regional educational service center (RESA) regions. Additional districts and charter schools may be monitored if the CSDE has questions or concerns regarding the district's responses during the Level I review process.

Level III: In addition to the districts selected for more in-depth monitoring, between five and ten districts and/or charter schools will be selected for a full site visit. The site review teams will be comprised of representatives from various offices of the CSDE, as well as other stakeholders.

At the end of the monitoring process and site visits, those districts observed will receive feedback reports. The tiered system outlined above is intended to serve as the formal monitoring of statewide implementation.

Conclusion:

The CSDE is committed to supporting all LEAs in the implementation of educator evaluation and support. Additionally, the CSDE is committed to moving toward high-quality Common Core implementation and college and career-ready assessments. We believe that the best way to make these transitions is to provide districts with the flexibility to choose whether to integrate state test data into their evaluation for the 2013-14 year. This will ensure that the learning process is not disrupted by districts attempting to quickly implement both new assessments and new educator evaluations simultaneously. We also believe that all types of educators working with all types of students should be supported in their effort to achieve progress on student growth and learning. Finally, we believe that educational stakeholders should be included in all stages of this process and appreciate their input. Please do not hesitate to submit comments as every effort will be made to address them.

Attachment B

List of Notified Stakeholders

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After School Advisory Committee • American Federation of Teachers • CT Education Association • CT Association of Boards of Ed • CT Assoc. of Public School Superintendents • Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education • School Governance Councils • State Advisory Council on Sp. Ed. – CONNCASE • RESC Directors • Superintendents of Schools • Parent Work Group of the IDEA State Performance Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> African & Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities Center for Children’s Advocacy CT Down Syndrome Congress CT Parent Advocacy Center CT Parent Information Center Connecticut Public School District Sp. Ed. Director Rep (East Hampton) CT Regional Educational Service Center representative (Capital Region Education Council) CT Special Education Parent Teacher Association Council CT State Advisory Council on Sp. Ed. CT State Dept. of Public Health CT Office of Protection & Advocacy CT State Surrogate Parent Program Sacred Heart Univ.-Ed. Prep. Program Sp. Ed. Connecticut, Inc. State Education Resource Center (SERC) Statewide Legal Services Univ. of Hartford-Ed Prep. Program • CT Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners • Committee of Practitioners • CT Parent & Advocacy Center • Office of Protection & Advocacy • African & Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities • Civil Rights Organization – NAACP • Title 1 Practitioners • SERC Family Organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branford Family Resource Center Catholic Charities’ Family Resource Centers: Ansonia; Centro San José; Meriden; Waterbury; Black Family Enrichment; El Centro; Inst. For the Hispanic Family; Parker Memorial 	<p>Community; Southside;</p> <p>Catholic Charities Family Service Ctr.</p> <p>Christian Community Action</p> <p>E Haven Family Resource Center</p> <p>Hamden Family Resource Center</p> <p>Meriden Children’s First Initiative</p> <p>Meriden Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Middletown Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Milford Family Resource Center</p> <p>Meriden Family Resource Center at New Haven Family Resource Centers</p> <p>No. Branford Family Resource Center</p> <p>Bridgeport Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Norwalk Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Stamford Family Resource Centers</p> <p>African American Affairs Commission</p> <p>African-Caribbean-American Parents of Children with Disabilities</p> <p>Asylum Hill Family Center</p> <p>Big Brothers Big Sisters/Nutmeg</p> <p>Bloomfield Family Resource Center</p> <p>Bristol Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Building Healthy Families, Inc.</p> <p>Children Trust Fund</p> <p>Commission on Children</p> <p>Community Child Guidance Clinic, Inc.</p> <p>COMPASS Youth Collaborative, Inc./Peace Builders</p> <p>CT Coalition to End Homelessness</p> <p>CT Parent Power</p> <p>E. Hartford Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Enfield Family Resource Center</p> <p>East Windsor Family Resource Center</p> <p>Family Development Center-Eastern</p> <p>Connecticut Health Network</p> <p>HARC, Inc.</p> <p>Hartford Parent Organization Council</p> <p>Hispanic Health Council</p> <p>Manchester Area Conferences of Churches</p> <p>Mi Casa Family Service & Educational Ctr.</p> <p>New Britain Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Padres Abriendo Puertas</p> <p>Puerto Rican & Latino Affairs Commission</p> <p>Real Dads Forever</p> <p>Students of Color</p> <p>The Village for Families and Children</p> <p>True Colors</p> <p>Urban League of Greater Hartford, Inc.</p> <p>Terry Smith Family Resource Center</p> <p>West Hartford Family Resource Center</p> <p>Danbury Family Resource Centers</p> <p>Hebron Family Resource</p> <p>Killingly Family Resource Center</p> <p>Groton Family Resource Center</p>	<p>Children First Norwich</p> <p>Plainfield Family Resource Center</p> <p>The Early Childhood Center</p> <p>Taftville Family Resource Center</p> <p>New London Family Resource Centers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autism Serv. & Resources of CT Central CT State University – Black and Latino Men of Color Initiative CT African American Affairs Commission CT Asian Pacific American Affairs Comm. CT Commission on Health Equity CT FAVOR, Inc. CT Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs CT Parent Leadership & Training Inst. CT Voices for Children CT Women’s Education & Legal Fund EASTCONNCT Regional Service Center Quinnipiac Univ. – School of Education Sacred Heart University – Isabelle Farrington College of Education SERC- Black and Latino Men’s Forum State of Black Connecticut UConn – Neag School of Education, School of Social Work, Institute of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Univ. of New Haven – Education, College of Arts & Sciences University of St Joseph – Latino Community Practice Program Western CT State University – Education and Educational Psychology Department.
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ESEA Flexibility Request

CONNECTICUT

May 24, 2012

Renewal Submission Date: February, 28, 2014



U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

OMB Number: 1810-0708

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1810-0708. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 336 hours per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4537.

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CSDE organizational strategy, January 2012	
Governor’s press release on Red Tape Review and Removal Taskforce	
PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER- READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS	
CSDE CCSS website	
ELA and mathematics crosswalk (on CSDE CCSS website)	
Unit studies (on CSDE CCSS website)	
Pacing guides (on CSDE CCSS website)	
Connecticut Career Pathways: Seasons of Change and Transition	
Career and Technical Education (CTE) performance standards and competencies	
CTE website	
Student success plans (SSP) core components	
SSP technical assistance videos	
Connecticut SERC website	
Directory of transition services in college, university, and community-based settings	
Developing an internationally comparable balanced assessment system that supports high-quality learning	
PRINCIPLE 2: STATE-DEVELOPED DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT	
School Governance Council (2.D)	
National Council of Teachers on English (NCTE) brief on writing	
National Academies brief	
PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP	
Public Act No. 10-111	
CSDE website—PEAC full committee meetings—with agendas and PowerPoint presentations	
Public Act 11-135	
Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR)	

COVER SHEET FOR ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

Legal Name of Requester: Connecticut State Department of Education	Requester's Mailing Address: 165 Capitol Avenue, 3 rd Floor, Room 303 Hartford, CT 06106
State Contact for the ESEA Flexibility Request Charlene Russell-Tucker Chief Operating Officer Connecticut State Department of Education 165 Capitol Avenue, 3 rd Floor, Room 303 Hartford, CT 06106 Telephone: 860-713-6550 Fax: 860-713-7022 E-mail address: charlene.russell-tucker@ct.gov	
Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Commissioner Stefan Pryor	Telephone: (860) 713-6500
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: X 	Date: February 28, 2012
The State, through its authorized representative, agrees to meet all principles of the ESEA Flexibility.	

WAIVERS

By submitting this flexibility request, the SEA requests flexibility through waivers of the ten ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements by checking each of the boxes below. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested; a chart appended to the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions* enumerates each specific provision of which the SEA requests a waiver, which the SEA incorporates into its request by reference.

- 1. The requirements in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E)-(H) that prescribe how an SEA must establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure that all students meet or exceed the State’s proficient level of academic achievement on the State’s assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013–2014 school year. The SEA requests this waiver to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that are used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, LEAs, schools, and student subgroups.
- 2. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA and its Title I schools need not comply with these requirements.
- 3. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) for an SEA to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and for an LEA so identified and its SEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that it need not comply with these requirements with respect to its LEAs.
- 4. The requirements in ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) that limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds may use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA makes AYP.
- 5. The requirement in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a schoolwide program. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA may implement interventions consistent with the turnaround principles or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in a school in any of its priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of “priority schools” and “focus schools,” respectively, set forth in

the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*, as appropriate, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more.

- 6. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs in order to serve any of the State’s priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of “priority schools” and “focus schools,” respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.
- 7. The provision in ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) that authorizes an SEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) for any of the State’s reward schools that meet the definition of “reward schools” set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.
- 8. The requirements in ESEA section 2141(a), (b), and (c) for an LEA and SEA to comply with certain requirements for improvement plans regarding highly qualified teachers. The SEA requests this waiver to allow the SEA and its LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems.
- 9. The limitations in ESEA section 6123 that limit the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs. The SEA requests this waiver so that it and its LEAs may transfer up to 100 percent of the funds it receives under the authorized programs among those programs and into Title I, Part A.
- 10. The requirements in ESEA section 1003(g)(4) and the definition of a Tier I school in Section I.A.3 of the School Improvement Grants (SIG) final requirements. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may award SIG funds to an LEA to implement one of the four SIG models in any of the State’s priority schools that meet the definition of “priority schools” set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

Optional Flexibilities:

If an SEA chooses to request waivers of any of the following requirements, it should check the corresponding box(es) below:

- 11. The requirements in ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). The SEA requests this waiver so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non-

school hours or periods when school is not in session.

- 12. The requirements in ESEA sections 1116(a)(1)(A)-(B) and 1116(c)(1)(A) that require LEAs and SEAs to make determinations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools and LEAs, respectively. The SEA requests this waiver because continuing to determine whether an LEA and its schools make AYP is inconsistent with the SEA’s State-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system included in its ESEA flexibility request. The SEA and its LEAs must report on their report cards performance against the AMOs for all subgroups identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v), and use performance against the AMOs to support continuous improvement in Title I schools that are not reward schools, priority schools, or focus schools.
- 13. The requirements in ESEA section 1113(a)(3)-(4) and (c)(1) that require an LEA to serve eligible schools under Title I in rank order of poverty and to allocate Title I, Part A funds based on that rank ordering. The SEA requests this waiver in order to permit its LEAs to serve a Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate below 60 percent that the SEA has identified as a priority school even if that school does not rank sufficiently high to be served.

ASSURANCES

By submitting this application, the SEA assures that:

- 1. It requests waivers of the above-referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1 through 4 of the flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.
- 2. It will adopt English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State’s college- and career-ready standards, consistent with the requirement in ESEA section 3113(b)(2), and that reflect the academic language skills necessary to access and meet the new college- and career-ready standards, no later than the 2013–2014 school year. (Principle 1)
- 3. It will develop and administer no later than the 2014–2015 school year alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that are consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2) and are aligned with the State’s college- and career-ready standards. (Principle 1)
- 4. It will develop and administer ELP assessments aligned with the State’s ELP standards, consistent with the requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(7), 3113(b)(2), and 3122(a)(3)(A)(ii). (Principle 1)

- 5. It will report annually to the public on college-going and college credit-accumulation rates for all students and subgroups of students in each LEA and each public high school in the State. (Principle 1)
- 6. If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and uses achievement on those assessments to identify priority and focus schools, it has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. (Principle 2)
- 7. It will report to the public its lists of reward schools, priority schools, and focus schools at the time the SEA is approved to implement the flexibility, and annually thereafter, it will publicly recognize its reward schools as well as make public its lists of priority and focus schools if it chooses to update those lists. (Principle 2)
- 8. Prior to submitting this request, it provided student growth data on their current students and the students they taught in the previous year to, at a minimum, all teachers of reading/language arts and mathematics in grades in which the State administers assessments in those subjects in a manner that is timely and informs instructional programs, or it will do so no later than the deadline required under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. (Principle 3)
- 9. It will evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on LEAs and schools. (Principle 4)
- 10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its request.
- 11. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs (Attachment 2).
- 12. Prior to submitting this request, it provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in the manner in which the State customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its website) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice (Attachment 3).

- 13. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding its progress in implementing the plans contained throughout this request.
- 14. It will report annually on its State report card, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report on their local report cards, for the “all students” group and for each subgroup described in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II): information on student achievement at each proficiency level; data comparing actual achievement levels to the State’s annual measurable objectives; the percentage of students not tested; performance on the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools; and graduation rates for high schools. It will also annually report, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report, all other information and data required by ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C) and 1111(h)(2)(B), respectively.

If the SEA selects Option A in section 3.A of its request, indicating that it has not yet developed and adopted all the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, it must also assure that:

- 15. It will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year. (Principle 3)

CONSULTATION

An SEA must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request. To demonstrate that an SEA has done so, the SEA must provide an assurance that it has consulted with the State’s Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in the request and provide the following:

1. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from teachers and their representatives.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.1) Did the SEA meaningfully engage and solicit input on its request from teachers and their representatives?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.2) Is the engagement likely to lead to successful implementation of the SEA’s request due to the input and commitment of teachers and their representatives at the outset of the planning and implementation process?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.3) Did the SEA indicate that it modified any aspect of its request based on input from teachers and their representatives?

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) strongly believes that it cannot move the state forward toward higher achievement for all students unless it involves key stakeholders in shaping its direction—especially teachers, school leaders, and other educators. Therefore, during the process of creating this ESEA Flexibility Request, the CSDE solicited input from a broad range of stakeholders, including teachers, principals, superintendents, advocacy groups, and community organizations. However, many of the initiatives described in this request have been in development prior to the flexibility process, including many parts of Principles 1 and 3 and several of the goals and interventions in Principle 2. This request builds upon existing reform efforts that have already been heavily influenced by stakeholder input.

Connecticut understands that the flexibility measures sought in this application will have a direct effect on the conditions in which educators work. Therefore, the CSDE has sought their guidance on both the waiver development process as well as in the specific content areas.

Modalities of Consultation

The CSDE used several forums to invite and enable teachers and their representatives to provide input and feedback on the waiver:

- Meetings with state leaders of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) and the Connecticut American Federation of Teachers (AFTCT);
- Committees and councils made up of teacher unions and administrators;
- Commissioner’s Listening Tour at schools and school districts across the state;
- A baseline statewide survey of superintendents;
- Public comment sessions at a regional facility open to everyone, with invitations sent to individuals and groups; and
- An [ESEA Flexibility Waiver webpage](#) on the CSDE website and an e-mail address specific to providing input on ESEA Flexibility application (title1waivers@ct.gov).

The forums were designed to engage teachers and representatives at various stages of the waiver process and to solicit different levels of involvement. The Commissioner’s Listening Tour and the state survey of superintendents took place early in the design period, which allowed the CSDE to gather qualitative and quantitative data to incorporate in the analysis and planning as well as to inform teachers of the CSDE’s plans. Council and committee representation by teacher unions and administrators, on the other hand, were the key channels to make sure that the CSDE proposed policies made sense at the school and classroom level. Finally, the public comment sessions and dedicated e-mail address provided the opportunity for teachers and administrators to share their comments.

Meetings with CEA and AFTCT Leaders and Committees and Councils Made Up of Teachers and Administrators. Over the past several months, the CSDE has met with each of the state’s two unions’ leadership over a dozen times about the Governor and Commissioner’s education reform package, which includes key elements addressed in our waiver application. The CSDE has met with each union individually and convened joint sessions with both unions. Throughout our consultations, we have aimed to incorporate stakeholders’ feedback and address their concerns. Consultations are ongoing to refine our approach as the Governor’s legislative proposal advances through the General Assembly and as the CSDE pursues its plans. Additionally, the CSDE has met with smaller groups that include teachers to discuss specific aspects of the reform package and the waiver application more generally.

Governor’s Workshop. On January 5, 2012, Governor Dannel P. Malloy hosted an education workshop called “2012: The Year for Education Reform” with more than 350 attendees. The workshop panels addressed each of the ESEA Flexibility principles, including college and career readiness, interventions in low-performing schools and districts, and preparing and supporting excellent teachers and school leaders. ([Agenda](#)) In the Commissioner’s opening remarks at the workshop, he confirmed Connecticut’s intent to apply for ESEA Flexibility.

Commissioner’s Listening Tour. The Commissioner’s Listening Tour covered 12 school districts and three educators’ groups over the course of approximately three months. The Commissioner visited both high- and low-performing districts and spoke with teachers, principals, students, and superintendents. During this tour, the Commissioner had conversations about many of the initiatives set forth in this waiver, including intervening in low-performing schools, evaluating teachers and principals, and reducing unnecessary burden on districts. These conversations helped to shape the vision for the Commissioner’s Network and the system of evaluation and support, as detailed later in Principles 2 and 3. For the Commissioner’s statewide Listening Tour schedule, see [Appendix CON 0.1](#).

Statewide Survey of Superintendents. A statewide survey of superintendents, conducted in December 2011, helped inform the Governor’s six principles, which were the foundation of his the 2012 legislative package of education reforms. Specifically, survey results that directly influenced the education agenda outlined in this waiver request include:

- 53.1% of superintendents believe the CSDE is not helping close the achievement gap in their district.

- Governor’s Principle: Authorize the intensive interventions and enable the supports necessary to turn around Connecticut’s lowest-performing schools and districts.
- 55% of superintendents believe the CSDE has not articulated a clear plan to help attract, retain, and develop teachers and administrators for Connecticut schools.
 - Governor’s Principle: Ensure that Connecticut’s schools are home to the very best teachers and principals—working within a fair system that values their skill and effectiveness over seniority and tenure.
- 67% of superintendents believe the state’s formulas for funding education are unfair or very unfair.
 - Governor’s Principle: Deliver more resources, targeted to districts with the greatest need—provided that they embrace key reforms that position Connecticut’s students for success.
- 66.9% of superintendents indicate the CSDE issues regulations too often.
 - Governor’s Principle: Unleash innovation by removing red tape and other barriers to success, especially in high-performing schools and districts.

The [full survey results](#) are available on the CSDE website.

ESEA Flexibility Waiver Webpage, E-Mail Address, and Public Comment Sessions. In January 2012, the CSDE created a [webpage](#) on the CSDE website with information on the flexibility request process. The CSDE posted drafts of this request in February 2012 and provided an e-mail address to receive feedback (title1waivers@ct.gov). Over one-third of the e-mails were from teachers and principals. For a log of e-mails, see **Appendix CON 0.2**. In February 2012, the CSDE held four public comment sessions at the State Education Resource Center (SERC). Several teachers and administrators attended and provided public comment that the CSDE has considered. For the invitation, list of invited organizations, and summary of the outreach process, see **Appendices CON 0.3, CON 0.4, and CON 0.5**. The following section describes the ways in which stakeholder feedback influenced this waiver application.

Outcomes of Consultation

In interaction with teachers and their representatives, the CSDE discussed Connecticut’s vision for improving its education system and plans for specific areas of policy, from the interventions in our lowest performing schools to new teacher and administrator evaluation systems. Specifically, the CSDE provided the union leaders with an overall summary of the waiver application and engaged in more substantive discussions of Principles 2 and 3. In a number of aspects of the waiver plan design, the CSDE considered such feedback in modifying or evolving its plan. Below are summaries of the consultation the CSDE has conducted on each waiver area and the policy changes made with the feedback received:

1. College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students (Principle 1). Connecticut’s educators were critical to the CCSS adoption process. In May 2010, over 50 experts in Connecticut’s English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards conducted a standards comparison study. In June 2010, the CSDE held a CCSS Stakeholder Engagement Conference to

share the results of the comparison study, to offer an opportunity for educators and other stakeholders from business, industry, and communities to provide their general impressions of the new CCSS, and to recommend resources and support systems needed for effective implementation. Nearly two-thirds of attendees represented educators.

Since the standards were adopted in July 2010, teachers and administrators have been involved in CCSS presentations and trainings, and their feedback has helped shape the standards transition process. The CSDE's submission for Principle 1 describes this consultation in greater detail.

The CSDE also discussed the CCSS adoption with teachers, parents, superintendents, and representatives of community organizations at the February 8 and 9 public comment sessions. The feedback from these sessions and from the online form resulted in several changes and clarifications to the plan:

- In response to an inquiry from the Committee of Practitioners about how the state can make it easier for parents to understand the new standards proposed under the waiver plan, the CSDE will modify the CCSS materials of the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to ensure they are user-friendly for parents. The CSDE is considering working with an outside organization to develop additional materials that help explain the new standards.
- To address a concern from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) regarding training for State Board of Education (SBE) members, the CSDE will include the availability of summer academies for members of the local boards of education in the implementation plan.
- In response to a second inquiry from CABE concerning how the state will build regional capacity for implementation, the CSDE clarified that it will develop tools for Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) – public entities that serve as intermediaries between the CSDE and the state's 166 districts – to use in assisting district-level implementation.

2. State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Principle 2). The CSDE consulted with the CEA and AFTCT, Connecticut's teachers' unions, as it developed policy, specifically on its model for intervention in low performing schools. The CSDE incorporated into the proposed model the groups' suggestion to include school-linked services (as part of a community school model) in the Commissioner's Network intervention. Union leaders also indicated their support for a process of diagnosis to inform intervening in low-performing schools in order to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

In focus groups, superintendents and principals requested that the new accountability system accord significant value to student growth and indicated a particular interest in the vertical scale. In response to this input, the CSDE is proposing integrating a model of individual student growth into our Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs).

The CSDE also engaged superintendents in this process, which was an important step because the survey showed that superintendents do not find current interventions useful and do not have the support they need to open new schools in their districts. The CSDE’s plans for recognition, accountability, and support were later posted online for comment by teachers and other representatives; they were also presented in person at four public comment sessions held at the SERC in early February. The sessions drew 70 participants, several of whom were teachers and superintendents. The CSDE also received several e-mails from science teachers throughout the state who voiced their support for the inclusion of science in the accountability system.

3. Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership (Principle 3). The involvement of teachers’ representatives in developing the new educator evaluation guidelines has been extensive and substantive. Union representatives, school and district administrators are represented on the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), a statutorily mandated council charged with the development of the new evaluation guidelines. PEAC members include the state Commissioners of Education and Higher Education or their designees, representatives from CABE, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, the CEA, the AFTCT, and others selected by the Commissioner of Education, including representatives from higher education and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), an organization that represents the state’s principals. PEAC must meet at least once every three months.

PEAC and the CSDE sought input from school districts—the entities that operate schools, including RESCs and charter schools—on the evaluation systems through a survey of districts. Through the survey, the CSDE conducted a baseline assessment of current district evaluation systems for teachers and leaders. Since this work began, teachers have had consistent representation at the table voicing their needs and concerns.

Earlier this month, the CSDE published the complete plan for the development of guidelines for the new evaluation and support system on the CSDE’s website for teachers, administrators, superintendents, students, and parents to view and comment (see following section for more details). Examples of feedback that the CSDE received include the following: the validity of performance indicators is critical to assessing performance levels of teachers; feedback from peers, students, and parents is very important to teachers’ professional development; and evaluators must be properly trained to ensure the evaluation systems work well. These echoed the points raised by PEAC members and will be addressed in the CSDE and PEAC’s work going forward.

2. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.4) Did the SEA meaningfully engage and solicit input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.5) Is the engagement likely to lead to successful implementation of the SEA’s request due to the input and commitment of relevant stakeholders at the outset of the planning and implementation process?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.6) Did the SEA indicate that it modified any aspect of its request based on stakeholder input?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (CON.7) Does the input represent feedback from a diverse mix of stakeholders representing various perspectives and interests, including stakeholders from high-need communities?

Modalities of Consultation

As with teachers and administrators, the CSDE has established a number of mechanisms to interact with and engage students, parents, community organizations, business leaders, as well as civil rights representatives in the policy design and planning process. The CSDE reached out in the following ways:

- Public comment sessions at regional facilities open to everyone and invitations sent to individuals and groups;
- An [ESEA Flexibility Waiver webpage](#) on the CSDE website and an e-mail address specific to providing input on ESEA Flexibility application (title1waivers@ct.gov);
- Group meetings with members of stakeholder organizations;
- Individual meetings with leaders of stakeholder organizations; and
- Press and public announcements.

Consultation Activities and Timeline

To date, the CSDE has completed the following engagement activities:

Table CON 0.1: Stakeholder Engagement Activities and Timeline

Key Activity	Stakeholder Group	Date	Person Responsible
Governor Malloy speaks to the press about Connecticut’s plans to apply for ESEA Flexibility.	Public	September 2011	Governor

Key Activity	Stakeholder Group	Date	Person Responsible
Commissioner visits 12 school districts during a statewide Listening Tour and requests their input on ESEA Flexibility (Windham, Meriden, New Haven, Fairfield, New Britain, Stamford, West Hartford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, New London, Colchester, and Berlin).	Principals, teachers, pupil services staff	October 18, 2011–January 9, 2012	Commissioner
The CSDE sends a survey to state superintendents to solicit feedback on all aspects of the CSDE. (Survey Results)	Superintendents	December 2011	Commissioner
The Commissioner addresses the Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents (CAUS) and requests its input on key elements of the waiver.	Superintendents	December 14, 2011	Commissioner
Governor Malloy’s hosts an Education Workshop, which addresses ESEA Flexibility areas (Agenda); Commissioner Pryor announces Connecticut’s intent to apply for ESEA Flexibility.	General public, policymakers, administrators	January 5, 2012	Commissioner
The CSDE meets with the Connecticut Afterschool Advisory Council to discuss optional waiver flexibility.	Practitioners, Funders, Policymakers	January 9, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets with a “red tape” focus group of superintendents and SBE members, convened to identify burdensome and duplicative state requirements.	Superintendents and SBE members	January 11, 2012	Deputy Chief of Staff
The CSDE meets with the Connecticut chapter of AFTCT and the CEA to discuss and receive input on ESEA Flexibility.	Union representatives	January 13, 2012	CSDE Education Consultant
The CSDE officially states its intention to apply for ESEA Flexibility on the state website.	General public	January 17, 2012	

Key Activity	Stakeholder Group	Date	Person Responsible
The CSDE has first meeting with Connecticut Committee of Practitioners to provide an overview of the waiver application.	Educators and parent organizations that represent families of ELLs and SWD	January 17, 2012	CSDE Education Consultant
SERC sends an invitation on behalf of the CSDE to over 140 stakeholder groups to the ESEA Flexibility meetings on February 8 and 9; SERC also announces the dates that drafts of the request will be available on the state website, and invites feedback via a state e-mail address.	General public	January 31, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE conducts a focus group on the ESEA waiver with the CABE.	Boards of Education and policymakers	January 31, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE posts a draft of Principles 1 and 3 on its website.	Educators, general public	February 1, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE extends an invitation to its information sessions on the waiver to the general public via its website.	General public	February 1, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE presents and receives feedback from CAPSS at the organization's board meeting.	Superintendents	February 3, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets with the Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL) to discuss and receive input on ESEA Flexibility.	Organization that represents English language learners (ELLs), program administrators	February 3, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE consults with leadership of the CAPSS, the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), and the CABE to discuss interventions in Priority/Turnaround Schools.	Superintendents, principals, SBE members	February 4, 2012	Commissioner

Key Activity	Stakeholder Group	Date	Person Responsible
The CSDE holds a second meeting with the Connecticut Community of Practitioners.	Educators and parent organizations that represent families of ELLs and SWD	February 6, 2012	CSDE Education Consultant
The CSDE posts a draft of Principle 2 on the state’s website.	Educators, general public	February 7, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets with the CAS student group to discuss and receive feedback on ESEA flexibility.	Students	February 7, 2012	CSDE Education Consultant
The CSDE holds a meeting with its staff to discuss and receive input on ESEA Flexibility.	CSDE employees	February 8, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets with parent/family organizations.	Parents and families	February 8, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE presents waiver components and discusses concerns at ESEA information/public comment sessions.	General public	February 8–9, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets with civil rights organizations to discuss and receive input on ESEA Flexibility.	Community organizations	February 9, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus in the state legislature to discuss the waiver application.	Policymakers	February 9, 2012	Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer
The SBE unanimously endorsed our application for ESEA flexibility following a presentation by the Commissioner. For the SBE letter of support, see Appendix CON 0.7 .	Policymakers	February 10, 2012	Commissioner
The CSDE holds a focus group discussion with the CAS to receive input on ESEA Flexibility.	Principals and policymakers	February 13, 2012	Chief Operating Officer

Key Activity	Stakeholder Group	Date	Person Responsible
The CSDE meets with the State Advisory Council on Special Education, which includes representatives from the Connecticut Speech, Language, and Hearing Association and the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC); the Department of Corrections; the Department of Children and Families; and parents of students with disabilities.	Parents, organizations that represent students with disabilities	February 15, 2012	Chief Operating Officer
The CSDE meets about the waiver application with the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education administrators (ConnCASE).	Organization that represents students with disabilities	February 15, 2012	Bureau Chief of Special Education
The CSDE meets with leaders of RESCs to discuss the role they can play in assisting in the implementation of the CCSS, providing interventions and supports to low-performing schools and assisting districts with the development of teacher and leader evaluation and support.	Regional Education Leaders	February 15, 2012	Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer

For a sample of notes from these meetings, see [Appendix CON 0.6](#).

In these meetings, the CSDE engaged diverse stakeholders throughout the state, including families of students with disabilities and English language learners.

The CSDE’s public comment sessions and the online e-mail address were the most extensive forums for stakeholder engagement. The sessions included four public meetings and two meetings focused on particular stakeholder groups held at various times over two days in the CSDE’s regional office. One session was held in the evening and was specifically designed for parents and parent groups. We invited individual parents and representatives from 70 parent organizations to this session. With the help of partners at the SERC, the CSDE invited more than 1,600 individuals and groups. The CSDE sent an e-mail invitation and two follow-up e-mails and placed phone calls to those who did not respond to encourage them to register for the events. Attendees were invited to provide public comment on the waiver proposal. These comments were recorded and were considered as we revised our waiver request.

We also held small-group meetings with more specific stakeholder groups in which we summarized the proposals in our waiver request and asked for feedback. We met with the State Advisory Council for special education, which included at least one parent of an English

language learner. We also held two meetings during January 2012 with the Title I Committee of Practitioners, where teacher and curriculum specialists from local districts were present. Parents of English language learners attended the first Committee of Practitioners meeting. In addition, representatives from Connecticut Parent Advisory Center, Real Dads Forever, and Parent-Student Association of Connecticut attended the Committee of Practitioners meetings. These organizations represent families of ELLs and students with disabilities. In these focus group meetings, participants were invited to ask questions about and provide feedback on the waiver proposal.

The CSDE received over 90 e-mails addressed to title1waivers@ct.gov. Over 33% of the e-mails were from teachers; 25% were from the general public, and nearly 10% came from institutions of higher education (IHEs), parents, and community-based organizations. We also received several of emails from LEA central office staff; these emails are included in Appendix 4.1. While several of the e-mails expressed opposition due to concerns about cost, timing, and testing, others expressed their support, particularly concerning the inclusion of science in the CSDE's accountability system.

For a log of e-mails and public comments, see [Appendix CON 0.2](#).

Outcomes of Consultation

In all engagements with stakeholder groups, the CSDE has informed the individuals and organizations of the state's plans, updated them on specific policy proposals, and solicited comments and feedback. All feedback has been documented, reviewed, and addressed by the CSDE teams and managers responsible for the development of the waiver. The CSDE went through the issues, considered them carefully, and determined the appropriate actions. Below are summaries of interactions and outcomes as they pertain to each section of the waiver application.

1. College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students (Principle 1). The CSDE engaged stakeholder groups during the CCSS adoption process. While nearly two-thirds of the June 2010 CCSS Stakeholder Conference attendees were educators, over 25% represented educational organizations, and just under 10% represented higher education institutions. Participants represented the P-20 Council, the CPAC, the CABE, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), the Connecticut Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Connecticut IHEs, and the RESCs Alliance.

The CSDE is in the process of convening a CCSS implementation team with the specific mandate to ensure all constituent groups are reached. The CCSS Implementation team will include CSDE staff members that support curriculum, assessment, instruction, ELLs and students with disabilities, as well as external partners. The internal CSDE team will meet quarterly and has a mandate to reach stakeholders in adult education, early childhood, and family engagement. The team that includes partners external to the CSDE will also meet quarterly and will include members that represent IHEs, professional organizations, district-level administrators, teachers'

organizations, parent organizations, and advocacy groups. The CSDE continues to seek educator input on the implementation process by providing surveys and other feedback mechanisms during statewide and local trainings. Furthermore, the CSDE has convened a stakeholder group of public and private agencies, parents, consumers, advocates, and district representatives to address the secondary transition needs of students with disabilities. This Special Education Transition Taskforce examines the CCSS and identifies those standards most appropriate for transition planning for students with disabilities.

2. State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Principle 2). In the first draft of this application, which was posted on the CSDE website and presented at the information sessions, the CSDE included students and teacher attendance as part of its accountability system. Participants at one of our information sessions and principals in our Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) focus group expressed concerns about the current research linking student attendance to achievement as well as the out-of-school factors that could influence student attendance. While the CSDE believes that student and teacher attendance is critical to the success of Connecticut students, it agrees that until it has developed more robust ways to assess school climate, it should remove these measures. Participants were also concerned about school tutoring and summer programs. The CSDE clarified that this application includes continuing summer and tutoring programs as optional interventions—rather than as requirements—for both Priority and Focus Schools.

3. Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership (Principle 3). The feedback the CSDE received on the development and implementation of new evaluation systems touched on three issues: 1) how to evaluate non-classroom teachers, 2) how to measure student learning, and 3) how to ensure that the process is not burdensome to teachers. As described in the implementation plan, PEAC is convening three evaluation workgroups to develop separate models for administrators, teachers, and support staff. The CSDE anticipates that the evaluation for non-classroom teachers will be addressed by either the teacher or support staff group. The state's requirements—which have just been approved by the SBE—specify that 45% of the evaluation must be based on student learning. Of this 45%, half (or 22.5%) must be based on the state test or a standardized test in grades and subjects for which no state test exists, while the other half must include other reliable and valid measures. Finally, to address concerns regarding potential burdens created by the system and inadequate support for teachers, the CSDE clarified that the state will provide additional resources to support the implementation of the new evaluation system and associated professional development. Specifically, the proposed legislative package includes \$7.5 million for additional professional development support and technical assistance linked to the new evaluation system.

Continuing Engagement

The CSDE will execute many initiatives over the next three years and remains committed to continuous engagement with stakeholders throughout this process. After the initial submission of this flexibility request, the CSDE plans to repeat certain aspects of the engagement process, including posting the submitted request for comments and requesting feedback through the

title1waivers@ct.gov e-mail address. Furthermore, the CSDE plans to solicit feedback through e-mails and face-to-face meetings with stakeholder groups specifically concerning the following areas:

- Transition to Common Core assessments;
- Interventions in Focus Schools;
- Implementation of educator evaluation; and
- Measures of school climate, student health, and arts and fitness to include in accountability system.

While the CSDE values the input of all stakeholders, because of the particular nature of the policies proposed in this flexibility request, CSDE staff will especially seek the input of teachers, administrators, superintendents, parents, students, and advocates for high-needs students, including students with disabilities, ELLs, and racial/ethnic minorities.

The CSDE plans to work with the state’s RESCs and SERC – which have a long history of providing information, professional development, and technical assistance to schools and districts – to identify mechanisms best suited for continuing to engage parents of ELLs. The CSDE is considering developing outreach plans, letters, and information sessions for district level staff to use in engaging parents. During May 2012, the CSDE, SERC, Connecticut Parent Information Resource Center (CT PIRC), CPAC, and CAPELL will develop a plan regarding parent partnerships and engagement. The plan will include various technology and face-to-face communication strategies. In addition, content tools and resources will be disseminated and discussed to assist parents of students with disabilities and parents of ELLs to support their children’s academic growth. Existing resources available through CCSSO and the National Parent Teacher Association will be utilized and, when necessary, expanded to meet the state’s needs.

Finally, stakeholder engagement specifically around the waiver request is strongly linked to the work being done throughout the state. The CSDE continues to work with other agencies to further the state’s shared goals of promoting excellence for all and closing the achievement gap. Beginning in January 2012, the statutorily mandated Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap will meet quarterly and will focus on the introduction of school-linked wrap-around services in low-performing schools. The CSDE Commissioner sits on the council, as do representatives from the Departments of Children and Families, Social Services, Public Health, Economic and Community Development, Administrative Services, and Policy and Management as well as the Office of the Governor and representatives from higher education.

Throughout the CSDE’s conversations with stakeholders, it has heard a consistent message: Connecticut will not improve outcomes for its students with more repackaged versions of the status quo. The CSDE is invigorated by the dedication of individuals and groups in all corners of the state to improve Connecticut schools. The CSDE looks forward to continuing the dialogue with these groups throughout the coming years as they work together toward the shared goals of achieving better results for all students and ambitious levels of growth for the state’s lowest-performing students.

EVALUATION

The Department encourages an SEA that receives approval to implement the flexibility to collaborate with the Department to evaluate at least one program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs implement under principle 1, 2, or 3. Upon receipt of approval of the flexibility, an interested SEA will need to nominate for evaluation a program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs will implement under principles 1, 2, or 3. The Department will work with the SEA to determine the feasibility and design of the evaluation and, if it is determined to be feasible and appropriate, will fund and conduct the evaluation in partnership with the SEA, ensuring that the implementation of the chosen program, practice, or strategy is consistent with the evaluation design.

Check here if you are interested in collaborating with the Department in this evaluation, if your request for the flexibility is approved.

OVERVIEW OF SEA’S REQUEST FOR THE ESEA FLEXIBILITY

Provide an overview (about 500 words) of the SEA’s request for the flexibility that:

1. explains the SEA’s comprehensive approach to implement the waivers and principles and describes the SEA’s strategy to ensure this approach is coherent within and across the principles; and
2. describes how the implementation of the waivers and principles will enhance the SEA’s and its LEAs’ ability to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement.

The CSDE requests ESEA Flexibility because it believes that the request’s principles align with the proposed direction Connecticut has developed in consultation with key stakeholders. Connecticut is committed to being a national leader in narrowing the achievement gap and creating academic excellence for all students. The initiatives proposed in this ESEA Flexibility Request and all CSDE initiatives this year—including Governor Malloy’s agenda and the CSDE reorganization described in this section—aim to create a system focused at every level on preparing students for success in college and careers. The CSDE will provide educators with the support they need and will embrace performance-based accountability as a lever for continuous improvement.

Connecticut is home to over 569,000 students and 51,500 staff members in 1,165 schools and 189 districts, including RESCs and public charter schools. The CSDE knows that to realize sustained progress over time, improvement cannot be limited to select groups of students. This is an ongoing challenge for the CSDE since the state’s performance data consistently reveals troubling achievement gaps. In fact, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data shows that Connecticut is among the top 10 states with the largest achievement gaps based on every subgroup comparison, including the single largest gap for the majority of subgroups. Additionally, state-level data confirms large gaps in academic progress, graduation rates, and other indicators between the highest- and lowest-performing students and subgroups, and

these gaps are widening. The CSDE believes that the proposed policy changes outlined in this waiver will move Connecticut closer to the goal of achieving better results for all students and ambitious levels of growth for the state’s lowest-performing students.

In February 2012, Governor Malloy declared 2012 the “year for education reform” and outlined Connecticut’s policy direction. Key components of the state’s strategy include the development of the very best teachers and principals, delivery of more resources to districts that embrace reform, intervention in the state’s chronically low-performing schools, and removal of red tape and other barriers to success, especially for the state’s highest performing schools. For a complete description of the Governor’s 2012 education agenda, see [the Governor’s proposal](#) on the CSDE website.

On May 8, 2012, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Bill 458, a 185-page piece of legislation with provisions that advance the Governor’s principles for education reform. The legislation appropriates more than \$90 million in new funding to support education statewide, and includes several significant initiatives, which are summarized below. The programs to be created by the Governor’s legislation, combined with the proposed accountability system in this waiver request, will allow the CSDE to focus increased resources and interventions on the schools and districts attended by our state’s most disadvantaged students – augmenting the CSDE’s existing work with these schools. And, importantly, the initiatives will enable us to elevate achievement statewide.

Principle: Enhance families’ access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities.	
<i>Current Statute</i>	<i>Final Legislation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No current state obligation to create a specific number of early childhood opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates 1000 new early education slots in low-income communities Launches a facilities study for the continued expansion of early education Calls for the development a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates pilot program to enhance literacy for students in kindergarten through third grade
Principle: Authorize the intensive interventions and enables the supports necessary to turn around Connecticut’s lowest-performing schools and districts.	
<i>Current Statute</i>	<i>Final Legislation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited and uncoordinated efforts for the state to intervene in the state’s struggling schools; responsibility to turn around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates the Commissioner’s Network, enabling the State to provide intensive supports and interventions in 25 of the lowest-performing schools over the next three years Each turnaround school will convene a Turnaround

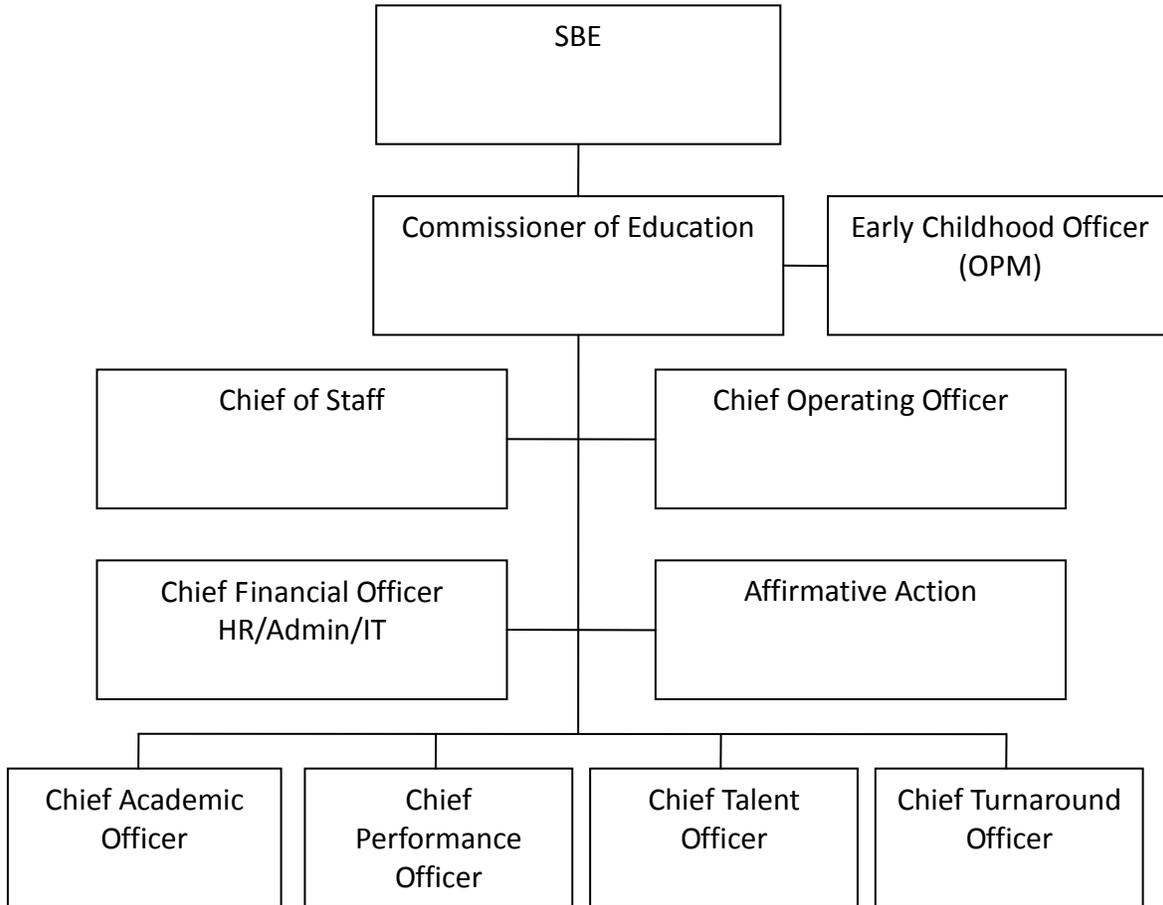
<p>low-performing schools largely rests with local districts</p>	<p>Committee made up of teachers, parents, and administrators, which will have the opportunity to submit a consensus plan for consideration by the Commissioner of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnaround plans can also be developed and implemented by the Commissioner • Enables high-performing non-profit school operators to operate a subset of the turnaround schools (6 of the 25) • Under specified circumstances, allows financial impact bargaining, on an expedited timeframe, regarding elements of the plan; permits election to work agreements and other labor flexibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient specificity for identification of struggling readers and interventions on their behalf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates an ambitious pilot program to enhance literacy for students in kindergarten through third grade with specific interventions
<p>Principle: Expand the availability of high-quality school models, including traditional schools, magnets, charters, and others.</p>	
<p><i>Current Statute</i></p>	<p><i>Final Legislation</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State charter schools receive \$9,400 per pupil • State law does not give special consideration to charters with special missions to serve individual student populations • No incentive to create local charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases charter per pupil funding to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$10,500 for 2012-2013 ○ \$11,000 for 2013-2014 ○ \$11,500 for 2014-2015 • Requires state charters to submit a recruitment and retention plan detailing efforts to serve priority student populations. The State Board will hold schools accountable for adherence to these plans. • Requires the State Department of Education to endeavor to launch two charter schools focused on English Language Learners/dual language programs in the coming years. • Offer incentives to local Boards of Education that reach agreement with their bargaining unit regarding staffing flexibility, to launch local charter schools – such districts are eligible for \$500,000 startup grants and \$3000 per pupil operating grants beginning in the 2013-2014 school year.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Science High Schools receive \$1,355 per pupil in state funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional funding for Agricultural Science High Schools, magnet schools, and vocational-technical schools.
<p>Principle: Ensure that our schools are home to the very best teachers and principals – working within a fair system that values skill and effectiveness over seniority and tenure</p>	
<p><i>Current Statute</i></p>	<p><i>Final Legislation</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluations are ongoing but no time period is specified and implementation varies by district • Teachers are required to have a specific number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires annual performance evaluations of principals, administrators, and teachers, based upon the framework developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council. • Strengthens professional development for educators, requiring job-embedded coaching as the predominant form of training. • Requires an evaluation system to be piloted in a diverse group of 8-10 school districts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenure is attained based on number of years of service: a teacher offered a fifth year of employment is automatically granted tenure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards tenure on the basis of effective practice. • Allows for ineffective teachers to be terminated. • Focuses termination hearings on whether the evaluation ratings were reasonable and in accordance with the new evaluation program. • Limits, for the first time, the number of hours of evidence and testimony.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No designation exists for excellent teaching performance to enable career advancement within teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes excellent educators with a “distinguished educator” designation; creating a career ladder within the teaching profession

Principle: Deliver more resources, targeted to districts with the greatest need – provided that they embrace key reforms that position our students for success	
<i>Current Statute</i>	<i>Final Legislation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases ECS funding by \$50 million, with \$39.5 million targeted to the Alliance Districts – the state’s 30 lowest-performing districts. • Introduces new accountability for funding for low-performing districts. • Provides for a “Common Chart of Accounts” as a budgetary template, enhancing transparency for education spending at the local level.

While structural and governance changes will be central to the reform strategy, the CSDE recognizes that this work requires great talent at all levels. In January 2012, the SBE approved the Commissioner’s reorganization plan for the CSDE (*Figure OV 0.1*). The reorganization will result in a department structure based on strategic priorities rather than compliance and lays essential reform groundwork by creating the structure and capacity to implement legislative priorities and initiatives outlined in the waiver.

Figure OV 0.1: CSDE Reorganization



The reorganization aligns with Governor Malloy’s six principles of education reform (Table OV 0.2).

Table OV 0.2: Governor’s Principles and CSDE Leadership

Governor’s Principles	CSDE Leader
1) Enhance families’ access to early childhood education opportunities	Early Childhood Education Office
2) State support and intervention in low-performing schools	Chief Turnaround Officer
3) Expand high-quality school models	Chief Turnaround Officer
4) Remove red tape and other barriers to success	Chief Operating Officer
5) Develop the very best teachers and principals	Chief Talent Officer
6) Deliver more resources to districts that embrace reform	Chief Performance Officer and Chief Academic Officer

See the CSDE website for a full [presentation](#) on the CSDE reorganization.

The CSDE showed its commitment to move toward its goals when it adopted the CCSS in July 2010 (Principle 1). The CCSS adoption signaled Connecticut’s belief that all students can learn and achieve at high levels. In addition to increasing rigor for all students, common standards will yield better results for highly mobile students and help decrease college remediation rates—a concern voiced by the CSDE’s higher education partners.

The CSDE recognizes that Connecticut’s educators will need to deeply engage with the standards and look carefully at how and what they teach. The CSDE will work diligently to provide guidance and support to all districts during these next few years of transition. Connecticut is a governing member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and will administer SBAC-developed assessments aligned to the CCSS in 2014–15. Until then, the CSDE will prepare students for the new assessments by adding field-test items aligned with the new college- and career-ready standards to current state assessments.

The CSDE’s proposed accountability system holds the state, districts, and schools accountable for improving the performance of all students (Principle 2). The CSDE’s aim is to offer greater flexibility and freedom to districts and schools that are high performing or improving rapidly and to provide the greatest support to the lowest-performing schools. Supporting goals include recognizing and rewarding student progress at every level and eliminating a one-size-fits-all approach to accountability and support, which several stakeholders, including superintendents, consider unhelpful.

The CSDE’s accountability system will work towards closing gaps in both performance and graduation rates. The new system features three components: a new set of measures for school performance and growth, a new classification system for all Connecticut schools, and an accompanying intervention strategy. The primary metric within the new accountability system is the School Performance Index (SPI), which measures the status of student achievement in a school. The new accountability system also includes measures of change in student achievement and college and career readiness, and is sensitive to subgroup performance. Rather than focusing exclusively on mathematics and reading, our new system will hold schools accountable for mathematics, reading, writing, and science.

The CSDE’s primary aim is for all students and subgroups to achieve, in aggregate, “Goal” on the state standardized tests. This is a higher level of performance than NCLB’s Proficient standard and it indicates that students are prepared for college and career. Our short-term target is to reduce our state’s performance deficit by half by 2018 for all schools and subgroups. To meet this goal, the state’s schools and subgroups will need to make sufficient progress each year such that, in six years, they are halfway to achieving our ultimate goal. This target requires the greatest gains for the students and subgroups that are the farthest behind in order to close the achievement gap.

Annually, the CSDE will recognize Title I or Title I-eligible schools that meet our criteria for high subgroup performance, high-progress, or high growth. Title I or Title I-eligible schools with the

lowest performance for all students will be identified as Priority Schools, referred to in this request as “Turnaround Schools.” Additionally, any Title I or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate lower than 60 percent will automatically be included as a Turnaround School, as well as any school that is presently a SIG Tier I or Tier II school. To identify Focus Schools, the CSDE has created a “High Needs” subgroup that includes ELLs, students with disabilities, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. We created this High Needs subgroup for Focus School identification to avoid the unwieldy process of treating each subgroup individually. To ensure that this race-neutral High Needs subgroup does not mask racial and ethnic achievement gaps, CSDE will examine all schools in the state to determine whether Hispanic or African-American subgroups perform as low as the identified High Needs subgroup. Any schools with equally low-performing Hispanic or African-American students will also be identified as Focus Schools.

The CSDE will classify all schools into five levels – Excelling, Progressing, Transition, Review, and Turnaround. The CSDE’s Turnaround and Performance Teams will partner with districts to ensure that schools in each of these categories receive appropriate levels of support. The CSDE will help build district and school capacity by increasing financial resources to the districts that need it most, partnering with districts as they plan for school intervention, and removing barriers and duplication. The CSDE will provide additional funding to the state’s lowest-performing districts, conditional on district plans for reform in key areas defined by the state. The CSDE’s new Turnaround Team will act as a resource to districts as they plan for and monitor interventions in their struggling schools. The CSDE will also work to reduce barriers for districts by reducing unnecessary reporting requirements. The CSDE’s Chief Performance Officer (CPO) will utilize Connecticut’s data infrastructure to identify opportunities for improvement. The Chief Turnaround Officer (CTO) will work to turn around schools with records of persistent underperformance by providing supports, guidance, interventions, and new strategies.

Connecticut recognizes that teacher and principal evaluation and support systems are critical to fostering an environment that ensures equal opportunity and excellence for all students (Principle 3). In July 2010, state legislation created PEAC solely to assist the CSDE in developing new teacher evaluation guidelines and a data collection and evaluation support system. The CSDE has worked with PEAC on a rigorous schedule and ambitious action plan to develop the new guidelines and evaluation support systems. PEAC made several important decisions over the past several months, including the adoption of evaluation principles and the selection of the policy design approach that will allow districts to adopt a state model or design their own evaluation systems based on core requirements. In February 2012, the SBE unanimously approved the evaluation framework. Connecticut will pilot the evaluation system in select districts in 2012–13, with complete statewide rollout in 2013–14.

Finally, Connecticut plans to reduce the burden of red tape and state mandates faced by school districts (Principle 4). Based in part on the needs of school districts identified in a statewide [superintendents’ survey](#), Governor Malloy’s proposed changes to state policies will, in the short term, provide local school districts greater flexibility to hire and develop teachers as well as free districts from excessive and redundant data reporting. To ensure continued focus in this area,

Governor Malloy will convene a Red Tape Review and Removal Taskforce to examine comprehensive solutions to fixing unnecessarily burdensome state regulations and mandates. The taskforce will then review and meet over the next year, soliciting input from all stakeholders, specifically boards of education, superintendents, school leaders, teachers, and parents. The taskforce will develop initial recommendations and report to Governor Malloy and the Commissioner of Education by December 2012, ahead of the 2013 legislative session. Plans that address this principle are interwoven throughout the three sections of the flexibility request. The Governor’s [press release](#) on the Red Tape Review and Removal Taskforce can be found on the state website.

Throughout this work, Connecticut has committed itself to continuous improvement. All of the CSDE’s proposed initiatives, including this ESEA Flexibility Request, reflect a clear pathway for Connecticut to achieve its goals. The CSDE is committed to a rigorous analysis of data and student results—as well as to continuous conversations with teachers, principals, superintendents, parents, and other stakeholders—to ensure that the course it has chosen works for Connecticut’s students.

PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

1.A ADOPT COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

Option A

- The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of States, consistent with part (1) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.
- i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State’s standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)

Option B

- The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that have been approved and certified by a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs), consistent with part (2) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.
- i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State’s standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)
- ii. Attach a copy of the memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of IHEs certifying that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. (Attachment 5)

1.B TRANSITION TO COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Provide the SEA’s plan to transition to and implement no later than the 2013–2014 school year college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and schools and include an explanation of how this transition plan is likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with such standards. The Department encourages an SEA to include in its plan activities related to each of the italicized questions in the corresponding section of the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance*, or to explain why one or more of those activities is not necessary to its plan.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.1) Is the SEA’s plan to transition to and implement college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the 2013–2014 school year realistic, of high quality? Is the SEA’s plan likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with the college- and career-ready standards?

College and Career Readiness

Connecticut has endorsed the Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) and National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) definition of college and career readiness, which states that readiness “involves three major skill areas: core academic skills and the ability to apply those skills to concrete situations to function in the workplace and in routine daily activities; employability skills (such as critical thinking and responsibility) that are essential in any career area; and technical, job-specific skills related to a specific career pathway. These skills have been emphasized across numerous pieces of research and allow students to enter true career pathways that offer family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement.”

The state signaled its commitment to college and career readiness in January 2009 when an executive order established the Connecticut P-20 Council. The P-20 Council has a mandate to prepare students for college and careers, and its tasks were defined specifically as:

- Developing a public policy framework for state leaders that increases collaboration across the systems at their current and potential points of intersection;
- Exploring how the systems can work more effectively together to deliver services; and
- Realigning existing activities and operations in ways that makes the education pipeline more responsive to the diverse needs of students.

The P-20 Council has increased collaboration, information sharing, and planning among the early childhood, K–12, higher education, and workforce training sectors by disseminating meaningful data and research to educators and employers. As a result, deeper conversations have occurred between districts, IHEs, and businesses. In addition to organizing workshops and working groups on specific policy issues, it has developed a Connecticut Career and College Readiness tool kit to inform educators, workforce representatives, parents, and other stakeholders on how to improve college and career readiness for all students.

On July 7, 2010, with a unanimous vote, Connecticut’s SBE, along with 44 states and the District of Columbia adopted new academic standards in ELA and mathematics—known as the CCSS—that establish what Connecticut’s public school students should know and be able to do as they progress through grades K–12.

The CCSS were designed to consist of fewer, clearer, and higher-level standards; to be aligned with college and work expectations; to include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills; to build upon the strengths of current state standards; to be internationally benchmarked so that all students will be prepared to succeed in the global economy; and to be based on evidence and research.

By adopting and implementing the CCSS, Connecticut affirms its belief that all students can and should achieve at higher levels. The CSDE has worked diligently to provide guidance and support to all districts as they transition from Connecticut’s old frameworks and standards to the CCSS. The CSDE has provided support at several levels in a deliberate manner to ensure horizontal and

vertical alignment of instruction based on the CCSS within the PK–16 system. Connecticut has a Preschool Curriculum Framework (PCF) for ages two and one-half through five. Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics from the PCF were aligned to the new kindergarten CCSS. The alignment reinforces that all Connecticut learners must be provided access to the CCSS-based curricula to fully prepare for college and careers.

To efficiently and effectively serve the needs of districts and relevant stakeholders, the CSDE has developed an approach to target four key areas of implementation: curriculum frameworks and materials, assessment, professional development, and communication. The CSDE CCSS leadership team will continually review and update the current implementation plan (**Appendix 1.1**). The CSDE’s CCSS leadership team, associate commissioners, bureau chiefs, content area staff, and many local partners including RESCs and districts are designing a self-assessment tool to help monitor the implementation process.

The CSDE believes that the implementation of the CCSS in every classroom will transform teaching and learning by requiring teachers to focus on high-priority areas, which in turn will provide all students the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of important content and develop higher-order thinking skills and will reduce the need for college remediation.

Foundation for Implementation: History and Timeline of the CCSS Adoption

The CSDE has conducted a multistep process to inform and engage educators and public stakeholders during the adoption process that included the following key activities:

Table 1.1: CCSS Adoption Timeline

Milestones	Timeline
CSDE personnel and members of professional organizations reviewed the draft CCSS documents and provided feedback to the developers.	November 2009 and February 2010
Standards Comparison Study. In the months leading up to the adoption of the recommendation to the SBE, the CSDE conducted a thorough standards comparison study. In February 2010, the CSDE was invited to be the first SEA to field-test a Web-based program developed by Achieve, a non-profit education organization that provides technical assistance to states on their standards, assessments, curriculum, and accountability systems. A team of CSDE curriculum consultants met with representatives of Achieve in April 2010 to learn how to use the Common Core Comparison Tool (CCCT) and to suggest improvements for its further development. The tool analyzes matches made by state standards experts and generates reports summarizing the percentage of matches and the strength of each match. It also indicates where grade-level differences exist. On May 28, 2010, CSDE content specialists and representatives from Achieve brought together over 50 experts in Connecticut’s ELA and mathematics standards to use the tool to conduct the standards comparison study. After	May 2010

<p>receiving training on how to use the CCCT, the content specialists worked in pairs to identify a Connecticut standard or a set of standards that were similar in their essence to each standard. It was determined that approximately 80% of the CCSS match the Connecticut ELA standards, and 92% of the CCSS match the Connecticut mathematics standards.</p>	
<p>Stakeholders Conference. On June 17, 2010, a CCSS Stakeholder Engagement Conference was held to share the results of the comparison study and to provide an opportunity for educators and other stakeholders from businesses and communities to provide their general impressions of the new CCSS and to recommend resources and support systems necessary for effective implementation. An invitation was e-mailed to 180 stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, education organizations, higher education faculty, business leaders, and community advocacy groups. Participants represented the P-20 Council, the CEA, the CPAC for students with disabilities, the CABE, the CBIA, the Connecticut ASCD, the Connecticut Reading Association, CAS, the Connecticut Association of School Principals, the CAPSS, the CSDE, Connecticut IHEs, the CAPELL, the RESC Alliance, and the Connecticut Parent Information and Resource Center. Over 100 individuals attended the Stakeholder Engagement Conference (Appendix 1.2). Of these individuals, 64.4% represented districts, 26.7% were from educational organizations, and 8.9% represented higher education institutions. Additionally, CSDE gave presentations to the Connecticut State Advisory Council on Special Education, which is an advisory council to the CSDE and the state’s legislative General Assembly. The council is composed of parents, legislators, state agency representatives, and school district personnel. The CSDE also briefed the special education parent advisory committee on the CCSS and Next Generation assessments.</p>	<p>June 2010</p>
<p>SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The Connecticut educational leadership (the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the SBE Chair, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Chancellor of the state university system, and the Chancellor of the community college system) signed a memorandum of understanding to become a governing member of the SBAC and join with 30 other states to seek federal funds under the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant to develop new systems of assessment.</p>	<p>June 2010</p>
<p>Adoption of the CCSS. The SBE adopted the CCSS in ELA and mathematics with a unanimous vote.</p>	<p>July 2010</p>

CCSS Implementation Timeline

The CSDE commissioned a study of the CCSS adoption process which was published in June 2010 (**Appendix 1.3**). Since the adoption of the CCSS, the CSDE has significantly increased communication, professional development activities, and curriculum development/revision work with districts and state and national partners. Below is the timeline of key activities.

Table 1.2: CCSS Implementation Timeline

Milestones	Timeline
CSDE science content and assessment experts review Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS); state science leadership team composed of CSDE state policymakers, RESC leaders, IHE faculty, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industry representatives convenes to lead planning for NGSS adoption.	March 2010–current
The SBE adopts the CCSS.	July 2010
The CSDE launches the CCSS webpage.	August 2010
ELA and mathematics content experts develop crosswalks.	August 2010
The CSDE joins the SBAC as a governing state; five CSDE staff members participate in SBAC work groups, with two members serving as co-chairs; the CSDE hosts two statewide summer institutes on Next Generation assessments.	August 2010–present
The CSDE begins statewide transition to CCSS professional development.	October 2010
CAPELL quarterly meetings are held; biannual RESC ELL Consortia Meetings are held.	2011–12
The CSDE sponsors Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD).	January 2011–March 2011
The CSDE aligns the ELL framework to the CCSS ELA and the CCSS Mathematical Practices.	January 2011–March 2011
The CSDE joins the State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS).	January 2011–March 2011
The CSDE joins the Implementing Common Core System (ICCS) SCASS and names a state leadership team.	January 2011–March 2011
The CSDE begins realignment of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) training modules to CCSS.	March 2011
The CSDE sponsors an IHE symposium.	April 2011
The CSDE continues professional development activities, including RCD and crosswalk development; the state leadership team develops a multi-tiered implementation plan.	May 2011–August 2011
The CSDE attends the ICCS SCASS.	August 2011
The CSDE aligns the Career and Technical Education (CTE) standards with the CCSS mathematics.	September 2011

The CSDE provides an overview of the CCSS and Next Generation assessments to administrators of special education in public and private schools.	September 2011
Connecticut and select states create the State Collaborative on English Language Acquisition (SCELA) Standards project.	October 2011
The CSDE develops and provides a regional professional development program in collaboration with RESCs.	December 2011
The CSDE attends ICCS SCASS.	December 2011
The CSDE develops a special education professional development series: Designing Standards-Based Individual Education Programs (IEPs) to Support Progress in the General Education Curriculum.	January 2012
The CSDE collaborates with RESCs and the SERC and continues to offer regional professional development.	January 2012–15
The CSDE aligns the ELA CCSS to the CTE standards.	February 2012
The CSDE conducts the Spring Language Arts Council Meeting series.	April 2012
The CSDE sponsors the second annual IHE symposium.	April 2012
The CSDE attends the ICCS SCASS.	April 2012
The CSDE sponsors the Data Showcase Conference with a focus on CCSS implementation.	April 2012
The CSDE aligns statewide professional development to Next Generation assessments for grades 3–8 and high school.	2013–15
The CSDE pilots assessment items for the SBAC.	2013–15
The CSDE provides technical assistance for the CCSS-based curriculum.	2013–15
The CSDE provides updates to stakeholders through the Web and e-alerts.	2013–15

The leadership team will continue to revise and update Connecticut’s ICCS Implementation Plan ([see Appendix 1.1](#)), which will serve as the action plan through 2015.

From 2010 to the beginning of this year, the CSDE has focused primarily on building state capacity to support training and technical assistance, aligning the CCSS with ELL and CTE standards, supporting educators of ELL students and students with disabilities, creating instructional materials to support curriculum development in districts, and engaging stakeholders across the state. With this strong foundation in place, the CSDE will continue to offer regional professional development through collaboration with local partners, provide technical assistance on CCSS-based curriculum, transition to new assessment items, and continue communication with educators, districts, and other stakeholders.

The CSDE views the CCSS implementation as a process and not an event. Therefore, the CSDE is using a tiered approach to support CCSS implementation, knowing that different target audiences have unique needs and require specialized support. The CSDE CCSS leadership team has developed an implementation plan that consists of four key areas: communication and public outreach, curriculum frameworks and materials, professional development, and assessment.

Each key area is intended to work in tandem and complement each other. Table 1.3 provides some examples of CSDE’s support to PK–16 educators and other stakeholders. The alignment between PK–12 and higher education is critical; however, no one aspect is more important than another.

Achieve is a non-profit education organization that provides technical assistance to states on their standards, assessments, curriculum, and accountability systems. Currently, Achieve is working with identified states in the development of rubrics to evaluate the quality and alignment of textbooks and other instructional materials to the CCSS. The CSDE is interested in working with Achieve and potentially utilizing the rubrics.

Table 1.3: Key Areas of CSDE Support around CCSS

Key Area	State Support
Communication and Public Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSDE/CCSS website • E-alerts • Face-to-face meetings and presentations for districts, professional organizations, and stakeholder groups • Collaboration with higher education
Curriculum Frameworks and Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple crosswalk departments • K–12 ELA and mathematics units of study • Pacing guides • Individualized technical assistance
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and in-district trainings • Content-specific training • Symposia for higher education
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze existing assessments and determine possible changes to align with the CCSS

College- and Career-Ready Standards in the Reorganized CSDE

CSDE’s first-ever Chief Academic Officer (CAO) will be charged with improving academic excellence across all schools and leading efforts to implement clearer standards aligned with national and international benchmarks. This work includes aligning summative assessments to college and career benchmarks and collaborating with districts and schools to facilitate more expansive use of formative assessments to help inform instructional practices—helping educators identify problems and prescribe interventions. The CAO will also lead Connecticut’s collaboration with 44 other states and the District of Columbia that are implementing the CCSS, helping the CSDE identify and introduce best practices. The CAO will work with the Chief Talent Officer to align professional development activities with the CCSS.

Direct responsibility for implementing the new standards and assessments will fall to the Bureau of Standards, Curriculum and Instruction and the Bureau of Assessments. To increase alignment between PK–16 standards and assessments, a newly created Early Learning and Development function, led by the Chief Academic Officer, will also fall under this area.

To ensure that the CSDE provides the best support to Connecticut’s educators during the transition to the CCSS, the CSDE has been an active participant in several national and multistate collaboratives on assessment and student standards. For a full list of Connecticut’s participation in these multistate collaboratives, see [Appendix 1.4](#).

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.2) Does the SEA intend to analyze the extent of alignment between the State’s current content standards and the college- and career-ready standards to determine similarities and differences between those two sets of standards? If so, will the results be used to inform the transition to college- and career-ready standards?

Alignment with Current State Standards

In May 2010, the CSDE conducted a thorough standards comparison study to identify alignment between the state’s existing standards and the CCSS.

English Language Arts (ELA). Results from the comparison study indicated that approximately 80% of the CCSS match the Connecticut ELA standards. The study identified 200 ELA standards not currently included in the Connecticut standards for grades K–12. Between 64 and 90% of the CCSS ELA standards match Connecticut standards for each grade from K to 8.

To increase the districts’ understanding of the CCSS as they compare to Connecticut standards, the CSDE provided a series of professional development sessions to district curriculum writing teams during the summer of 2011. Based on the data from the comparison study and the districts’ current curriculum documents, the districts were able to determine where best to begin their curriculum revisions. While there were a high percentage of matches between Connecticut standards and the CCSS, the skills and competencies in the CCSS were introduced at different grade levels. For ELA, most of the matches between the CCSS and Connecticut standards occurred at the same grade level; there were few or no grade differences (e.g., grade 3 CCSS matched grade 3 in Connecticut’s old standards). However, based on the percentage of matches at the middle school level, the CSDE has advised districts to emphasize curriculum revisions at the middle school level. In addition, the CSDE has advised districts to emphasize K–2, placing importance on these foundational years of literacy development.

The matches for high school ELA standards were not indicated by grade level because the CCSS document has two grade bands, 9–10 and 11–12, whereas the Connecticut standards document has a 9–12 grade band. The results of the comparison study indicated that 92% of the Connecticut standards at grades 9–10 match the CCSS, and 93% of the Connecticut standards at grades 11–12 match the CCSS, revealing an even greater percentage of matches at the high school level.

The greater percentage of matches allows high school teachers to focus on infusing the ELA CCSS across other content areas so that students understand the importance of literacy beyond traditional ELA courses. The CCSS set requirements for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects and specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and

career readiness in multiple disciplines. This degree of match will also allow for ELL, special education, and related service professionals to focus more on the necessary supports and services to assist ELLs and students with disabilities than on entirely new standards.

Mathematics. Results from the comparison study indicated that, overall, approximately 92% of the CCSS for mathematics matched the Connecticut standards. In grades K to 8, 86% to 100% of the CCSS matched Connecticut standards. While there were a high percentage of overall matches between the CCSS and Connecticut standards, many involved collective matches, indicating that the CCSS content at a single grade was addressed at multiple grade levels in the Connecticut standards (**Appendix 1.5**).

Matches for high school mathematics standards were not indicated by grade level because the CCSS are organized into five conceptual categories across grades 9–12, as opposed to the four categories in the Connecticut standards. Content for Connecticut’s grades 9–12 standards were grouped into 9–12 Core (C) and 9–12 Extended (E). The 9–12 (C) Standards specified the content that could potentially be tested on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), as well as concepts and skills that students should know and be proficient at prior to high school graduation. Grades 9–12 (E) standards represented concepts that students could typically encounter in a variety of advanced courses beginning with Algebra II and beyond. The study found that 89% of Connecticut standards for grades 9–12 matched the CCSS, though 48% of the matches characterized as weak indicating that major aspects of the CCSS were not addressed. In addition, the comparison study identified 40 CCSS that were not included in the Connecticut standards. The results of the study have guided the CSDE’s work on the development of crosswalks and the composition of recommendations for the CCSS implementation.

States were allowed to supplement the CCSS with an additional 15% of state-specific standards. As a follow-up to the May 2010 standards comparison study, the CSDE content specialists reconvened a core group of the ELA and math comparison study team members in November 2010 to review the Connecticut standards that did not match the CCSS. The groups spent a day reviewing all unmatched standards to determine whether any should be considered for part of the additional 15% option. They decided that Connecticut would not add state-specific standards for ELA and mathematics.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.3) Does the SEA intend to analyze the linguistic demands of the State’s college- and career-ready standards to inform the development of ELP standards corresponding to the college- and career-ready standards and to ensure that English Learners will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-ready standards? If so, will the results be used to inform revision of the ELP standards and support English Learners in accessing the college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students?

English Language Learners (ELLs). Approximately 5% of Connecticut students are ELLs. To support ELLs in the content areas, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), bilingual, and ELA experts met in January 2011 to create crosswalk documents that show the connection between the ELL Framework and the CCSS. The goal of the project was to identify instructional

links between the CCSS and ELL Framework indicators so that district professionals can have meaningful ways to help students access the CCSS, regardless of their English language proficiency. Teams of ELA practitioners and CSDE content area experts reviewed the CCSS ELA standards with English as a second language (ESL)/bilingual education practitioners and K–12 CCSS for Mathematical Practice with mathematics practitioners. The experts linked Connecticut ELL Framework indicators to the CCSS. This work is in final review and will imminently be available to districts. Ultimately, there will be a complete document for each grade level or secondary grade span in which the Connecticut ELL Framework indicators are linked to the CCSS. For a timeline of all CCSS and ELL-related activities, see [Appendix 1.6](#).

In addition to state-level work, content area experts at the CSDE are participating in an interstate collaborative focused on English language proficiency and standards, as related to the CCSS. As a part of the CSDE’s membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) SCASS, two content area experts have attended the ELL SCASS meetings, which focus on assessment issues related to ELLs and provide a forum for interstate collaboration.

During the October 2011 meeting, a new group composed of a subset of members of the ELL SCASS was convened. The goals of the State Collaborative on English Language Acquisition (SCELA) Standards project are to develop common ELP expectations that align with the CCSS—which have been adopted by all participating states—and to systematically examine current ELP/English language development (ELD) standards in participating states and subsequently identify commonalities and differences among them.

On January 30, 2014, the U.S. Department of Education approved the CSDE’s application for Field Test Flexibility for 2013-14. This federal approval enables the CSDE to relieve Connecticut’s schools and districts from the burden of having to “double-test” students during the period of assessment transition. Approximately 90 percent of Connecticut’s districts have chosen to administer the Smarter Balanced Field Test (SB-FT) in 2013-14 in lieu of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)/Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in the subject areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

For students in Grades 3-8 and high school, the CSDE recognizes that performance on the CMT/CAPT is an integral component of the criteria used to determine exit from English language instruction programs for **English learners** (ELs). Districts that choose the CMT/CAPT for 2013-14 can continue to use those results as in the past for EL exit criteria. Districts that choose the SB-FT may use the English language proficiency (ELP - LAS Links Form C) assessment results as exit criteria for 2013-14 but must increase the required proficiency level to level five; this criterion applies for the 2013-14 year only.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.4) Does the SEA intend to analyze the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-ready standards? If so, will the results be used to support students with disabilities in accessing the college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students?

Students with Disabilities. Nearly 12% of Connecticut students require special education services. The CSDE believes that students with disabilities can and should access rigorous grade-level content. Connecticut does not modify academic achievement standards for students with disabilities (SWD); however, the CSDE does administer alternate assessments designed to assess the state standards for students with cognitive disabilities. Approximately 2% of Connecticut’s students take the computer-based modified assessment system (MAS) and are particularly well positioned for the 2014-2015 assessment due to their experience with a computer-based assessment system.

While Connecticut believes many of its current practices have prepared students for this next generation assessment system, the CSDE has planned additional activities to successfully transition districts, educators, and students to the SBAC computer-based assessment in the 2014-2015 school year. A community of special education practitioners has been formed to review and respond to the SBAC work. In addition, CSDE content and assessment specialists are ongoing participants in the SBAC Access and Accommodations work group. CSDE is developing a mandatory online course for the 2012-13 school year for teachers who work with SWD. This course will include information about how to prepare students who presently take our modified assessment for the SBAC assessment. The CSDE is also updating the testing accommodation manual to provide information to districts on how the new assessment system will impact access for students who currently take the MAS. Additionally, the CSDE will provide teachers with opportunities to meet with special education directors and other stakeholders through upcoming conferences and regularly scheduled meetings to share information and answer questions about anticipated changes.

To support districts, the CSDE has identified a Special Education College to Career Ready Team that includes staff from the Bureau of Student Assessment and the Bureau of Special Education along with secondary special education district transition staff. This team has identified a series of next steps specific to special education within the CSDE and districts, including the expansion of professional development guidance documents and additional resources for districts, IHEs, and parents of students with disabilities.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.5) Does the SEA intend to conduct outreach on and dissemination of the college- and career-ready standards? If so, does the SEA’s plan reach the appropriate stakeholders, including educators, administrators, families, and IHEs? Is it likely that the plan will result in all stakeholders increasing their awareness of the State’s college- and career-ready standards?

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement began during the adoption process and included a statewide Stakeholder Engagement Conference in June 2010. The CSDE is cognizant of the need to provide clear, consistent messages and support to districts and its partner organizations. The CSDE is committed to working with all districts (which include charter and magnet schools), approved private special education programs (APSEPs), RESCs, and IHEs to assist them in fully

implementing the CCSS. Additionally, the business community, parents, and the public at large will be actively involved in the process and are committed to the notion that by implementing the CCSS, students will be better prepared to compete on the international stage.

Coordination across CSDE Divisions. To efficiently and effectively serve the needs of districts and relevant stakeholders, the CSDE has developed a three-tiered approach to target four key areas of implementation, including communication and public outreach, curriculum frameworks and materials, professional development, and assessment. For a list of participants on state leadership teams, see [Appendix 1.7](#). The three tiers are described below.

- **Tier I–Leadership** comprises 13 members, including the eight members of the national state team who serve on Connecticut’s national ICCS SCASS team and work to build capacity for implementing the CCSS, ensuring systematic dissemination of information and collaborating with other states. The leadership team meets monthly and consists of the state-level team members and other CSDE personnel representing mathematics, ELA, assessment, special education, and ELLs.
- **Tier II–Internal** has 20 members, including members of the national state and leadership teams. The internal team will meet quarterly and consists of managers and consultants of other CSDE divisions and bureaus including adult education, early childhood, certification, family engagement, information technology, and public relations.
- **Tier III–External** has 30 members, including members of the national state and leadership teams. The external team will meet quarterly and consists of members who represent IHEs, professional organizations, district administrators, teacher organizations, parent organizations, and advocacy groups.

To reach a wide range of stakeholders, the CSDE will continue to share CCSS-related information to stakeholders through online modalities, including the following:

- **Website.** In August 2010, the CSDE created a dedicated webpage to provide information about Connecticut’s work in implementing the CCSS, providing school districts with access to curriculum development materials, PowerPoint slides, national resources such as the CCSS Toolkit, and a CCSS implementation guideline. The website is regularly updated with new curriculum-related documents. From January 2011 to January 2012, the site received 224,255 hits. [Connecticut’s CCSS website](#) can be reached via the main CSDE website.
- **E-Alerts.** The CSDE sends quarterly statewide e-alerts to over 4,000 stakeholders with regular updates on the CCSS and the SBAC assessment system. Recipients of e-alerts include educators in Curriculum and Instruction (2,524), Mathematics (1,353), and Student Assessment (355).

The Chief Academic Officer (CAO) will assist in these efforts as well. The CAO is a newly created position whose primary responsibility will be: to lead the state’s efforts to build capacity at the local level for adoption of the CCSS; to align the CCSS with local ongoing formative assessment, instruction, and curriculum; and to work with the Chief Talent Officer to ensure that existing teachers and teacher preparation programs are synchronized to this vision.

Further, the CAO will lead efforts to work with SERC and our RESCs, other states, and our own districts to identify and build capacity to replicate best practices that help shift our state to a competency based system of differentiated instruction instead of a seat time based system – particularly in our lowest performing schools and with our lowest performing student groups.

The CSDE continues to seek educator input on the implementation process by providing surveys and other feedback mechanisms during statewide and local trainings. In addition, the CSDE believes it is essential to engage parents in this work. The CSDE will do so by modifying the National PTA’s CCSS materials so the documents are more user-friendly and by working with the School-Family-Community Partnerships consultant to develop additional parent materials, as parental engagement was identified as a critical area of focus through consultation with the Committee of Practitioners.

Some of our districts have already built competency-based report cards for K-2 math that will reinforce understanding among teachers, parents, and students about progress on CCSS competencies. We believe this is a best practice and intend to encourage replication of these and other creative approaches to deepen awareness and alignment of the standards and also help point to differentiated resources that can help parents, teachers, and students at specific points in their teaching and learning progressions.

Finally, the CSDE, in collaboration with CABE, will provide professional development for SBE members, which will be similar to upcoming summer academies for principals and superintendents.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.6) Does the SEA intend to provide professional development and other supports to prepare teachers to teach all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, to the new standards? If so, will the planned professional development and supports prepare teachers to teach to the new standards, use instructional materials aligned with those standards, and use data on multiple measures of student performance (e.g., data from formative, benchmark, and summative assessments) to inform instruction?

Supporting Current Educators

Through professional development, Connecticut has engaged a broad and diverse group of stakeholders, making them aware of the importance and impact of the CCSS on higher-quality education. Thus far, the implementation process has been delivered at multiple levels: stakeholders, districts, and staff within the CSDE. At each level, the CSDE provided an overview of the key instructional shifts in ELA and mathematics. Over the next three years, the CSDE will continue to offer regional professional development by working with local partners and by providing technical assistance on CCSS-based curriculum. For the CSDE’s timelines of training sessions and other forms of professional development, see **Appendices 1.8 and 1.9**.

As mentioned, the CSDE is organized to target four key areas of implementation: communication and public outreach, curriculum frameworks and materials, professional development, and assessment. This approach will directly support educators in Priority School Districts and partner school districts. In addition, the CSDE will also deliver ongoing professional development and technical assistance through statewide professional ELA and mathematics organizations, SERC

and RESC Alliance meetings, and Title III and special education focused technical assistance. The CSDE is particularly helping to develop local capacity by collaborating with the RESC Alliance on presentations and state-developed tools for use by RESCs with districts. The CSDE's CCSS leadership, internal, and external committees will coordinate and disseminate this extensive range of professional development.

ELA-Specific Training. The CSDE has provided ELA-specific training at regional language arts council meetings and the Connecticut Reading Association Conference. These training programs provide an understanding of the major instructional shifts outlined in the standards, guidance for the CCSS-aligned curriculum revisions, and an understanding of how the CCSS will directly affect their daily instructional practice, with an emphasis on text complexity. IHE faculty were active participants both in the training programs and the Reading Association Conference.

Mathematics-Specific Training. The CSDE has provided mathematics-specific training for RESC Mathematics Council bimonthly and quarterly meetings; RESC Curriculum Council meetings, the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators in Connecticut (AMTEC) conference, the Connecticut Council of Leaders of Math meeting, the Math Leadership Academy presentation, and the Associated Teachers of Mathematics in Connecticut (ATOMIC) conference. Of particular note are the following points:

- Elementary-level instructional program user groups, e.g., Investigations and Trailblazers, are working collaboratively, with the support of the CSDE content area experts, to align their curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments with the CCSS.
- With the support of the CSDE content area experts, regional consortia and work groups are collaborating through RESCs to update the curriculum and identify resources to support instruction.
- Over 400 educators and leaders of PK–16 mathematics attended the fall 2011 ATOMIC conference, which featured presentations by the CCSS K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and high school curriculum unit design teams, facilitated and supported by the CSDE mathematics content expert. Team members reviewed the development process, answered questions about their work, discussed implications for districts, and shared implementation strategies and resources from their districts.
- In January and February 2012, the CSDE trained 30 K–8 classroom teachers and instructional coaches from Priority School Districts to participate in the nationally acclaimed 80-hour Intel® Math course designed to increase content knowledge and pedagogy required to effectively implement and instruct students in the rigorous mathematics outlined in the CCSS. Evaluation of learning is an integral part of the course; those who successfully complete the course will receive six graduate credits in mathematics education. The CSDE plans to offer this professional learning support statewide over the next three years to better equip K–8 teachers of mathematics to teach according to the new standards.

Supporting Partner Districts. The CSDE is working to ensure that support of Partner Districts is aligned with the CCSS. Partner Districts are districts that have been identified as “in need of improvement” for three or more years at the whole district level according to status determination under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). To meet NCLB legislation, the CSDE developed

the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). This initiative focuses on the use of data-driven decision-making and standard-based instruction to address the learning needs of each student to accelerate the closing of Connecticut’s achievement gap and to ensure that all students achieve at high standards. In 2007, the initiative was significantly strengthened by state accountability legislation, which supported the CSDE’s efforts to identify and work with underperforming schools and districts. These districts are in various stages of developing, implementing, and monitoring district improvement plans, all of which must be approved by the SBE. Districts continuously collect and analyze data to report progress to their local board of education and the SBE.

To support the districts and schools in the school improvement process, CALI provides ongoing professional development and technical assistance focused on a series of training modules and state consultation services. The CSDE, RESCs, and the SERC collaborate to provide the delivery system for this ongoing support. Four professional development modules serve as the foundation for CALI professional development and technical assistance. These four modules are Using Differentiated Instruction to Implement the CCSS, Getting Ready for the Next Generation of Assessments, School and Instructional Data Teams, and Improving School Climate to Support Student Achievement: Creating Climates of Respect.

Since the CCSS adoption, the CSDE content area and accountability and improvement experts, along with IHE faculty, RESCs, the SERC, and district staff, have worked with CALI module developers to revise professional development for Partner Districts. During the revision process, the group maintained a focus on creating content to support an understanding of both the CCSS and the new SBAC assessment system. Last year, over 1,500 educators attended statewide CALI training.

The CALI continues to be flexible, and modules are redesigned or refined based on participant feedback, the changing needs of the districts, and other state or national initiatives. The modules are offered free of charge to educators in the Partner Districts as well as in any Title I school identified as “in need of improvement.”

CSDE content area experts and staff from the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement serve as members of technical assistance teams assigned to Partner Districts. As appropriate to the needs of the Partner District, consultants from other bureaus provide assistance. Meanwhile, external consultants, who are retired superintendents, provide support at the superintendent level. The CSDE, in collaboration with the AFTCT and the CEA, has been meeting over the last three years with the union leadership from each of the Partner Districts to develop union support and involvement in the school improvement efforts.

From 2009 to 2010, the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement contracted with RMC Research to evaluate the CALI. For the CALI evaluation report, see [Appendix 1.10](#). One of the challenges identified in the evaluation is the need for greater fidelity of implementation at the school and district level. To address the monitoring of professional development and technical assistance, the CSDE accountability and school improvement consultants have implemented a

quality assurance plan to ensure continuous alignment of the redesigned modules. CSDE consultants representing content expertise, ELL, special education, and accountability and school improvement have observed statewide training sessions and given feedback to presenters using the trainer evaluation form. One of the nine areas included in the trainer evaluation form assesses the presenters' demonstration of the alignment to other modules and CSDE initiatives, specifically the CCSS and SBAC assessment system. In addition, the CSDE accountability and school improvement content area experts will continue to meet on a quarterly basis with lead module developers to ensure continuous alignment of the redesigned modules.

Supporting All Districts. In addition to regional and subject-specific training sessions, CALI training modules are available to all districts and schools across Connecticut. A common dialogue, language, and expectations now exist for student achievement within the state.

Supporting Priority Districts. Each year, the CSDE provides professional development for the legislatively defined 15 Priority Districts in Connecticut (not related to Priority Schools as defined in this waiver). Traditionally, the professional development sessions were for literacy personnel. In the past two years, however, it has become common practice to have other teams from each district attend the professional development sessions as well. Teams include literacy specialists, TESOL/bilingual teachers, and special education teachers. Approximately 270 educators have participated in these sessions. The most recent Priority District training sessions have included using multiple data sets to inform instruction and making the CCSS accessible to students.

In addition to the professional development sessions, Priority Districts are supported through on-site visits by CSDE content area experts who look for evidence of best practice and provide written feedback after each visit.

Supporting Teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs). The CSDE provides trainings for general educators, administrators, and other district staff focused on effective instructional strategies for ELLs and will ensure that these trainings are aligned to the CCSS. Examples include Priority District training on ELLs and mathematics (October 2010 to February 2011) and the ELL literacy trainings for those districts (November 2011). For a timeline of all ELL-related trainings, see [Appendix 1.6](#).

The CSDE has worked to reach not only ESL/Bilingual education teachers but also general educators and administrators. The upcoming Data Showcase Conference, which is intended largely for general educators and administrators, will focus on the CCSS. Jo Guzman, a renowned expert of ELL strategies, will provide the lunchtime address on how to help ELLs access the CCSS. Prior to the event, she will speak at two RESCs on the same topic.

Supporting Teachers of Students with Disabilities. To successfully include a student with disabilities in the general education curriculum, general and special educators along with student support services professionals must collaborate in new ways to meet the demands of developing high-quality IEPs based on the CCSS. To that end, the CSDE, in collaboration with SERC, has provided a series of job-embedded workshops on assessment methods, IEP alignment, specially designed instruction, and assistive technology use. Participants in these professional development activities were to determine whether the design of a student's IEP yielded

educational benefit; determine the types of assessments that provide present levels of performance data; monitor the progress of IEP goals and objectives; analyze the gap between the expected performance of all students and a particular student’s current level of achievement; and write standards-based, specific, and measurable objectives. In 2010 and 2011, 22 participants attended from three districts. Since January 2012, 30 participants from two additional districts have registered to attend.

Specific training for secondary transition specialists included how to identify transition-related standards and how to access the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) and labor statistics/information from the U.S. and Connecticut Departments of Labor so that transition planning is meaningful and reflected in IEPs.

During the 2011–12 school year, the CSDE’s Bureau of Special Education Bureau Chief and staff have addressed the membership of the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education administrators (ConnCASE), as well as the Council of Administrators of Private Special Education Facilities (CAPSEF), regarding the implementation of the CCSS and Next Generation assessments. These meetings have reached over 300 public and private school teachers and administrators of special education. Topics have included transition to the CCSS, including an emphasis on reading nonfiction text in the language arts standards, developmental aspects of the math standards, and the online and “smart test” design of the assessments. Discussions identified concerns from the field and future steps for professional development, policy guidance, and resource allocation. Some topics have already been identified, including aligning IEP vendors with the CCSS, providing written guidance on IEP development aligned to the CCSS and new assessments, developing Universal Design for Learning strategies, and using assistive technology. The CSDE also solicited the assistance of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Partnership staff and held discussions with staff from the CCSSO to work with the CSDE specifically on addressing issues related to the implementation of the standards for students with disabilities.

Increasing Capacity for Training and Support. To increase training capacity and reach more districts and educators, the CSDE plans to look to district personnel, newly retired teachers, and administrators with expertise in content subjects or grade levels and those with expertise in ESL/bilingual education and special education to help deliver sessions in the next year. The CSDE previously used this model to support the statewide Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program. Based on the model’s success, the CSDE will determine whether a similar model could be used to support the implementation of the CCSS in the districts. While the specifics of the program may need modifications, the basic design would reflect the BEST model.

A hallmark of this model is that newly retired teachers and administrators and high-quality teachers “on loan” from districts will work at the CSDE part-time. These individuals will work with CSDE content area experts to develop their knowledge of the CCSS, and in turn, provide support in coordinating implementation of the CCSS in districts. Additionally, they will assist CSDE staff in fielding questions and providing information from direct queries from the districts. They will also serve on the CSDE CCSS internal team to address challenges and questions from the field and help facilitate a cohesive implementation structure that connects the work at the CSDE to the

work in the districts. These individuals will serve a critical role in providing two-way communication and enhancing the consistent and clear messaging from the CSDE to the districts.

The CSDE CCSS leadership team will develop a realistic timeline for the model’s inception for the 2012–13 and 2013–14 school years and a monitoring structure to determine the effectiveness of the model and its related activities.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.7) Does the SEA intend to provide professional development and supports to prepare principals to provide strong, supportive instructional leadership based on the new standards? If so, will this plan prepare principals to do so?

Training for District and School Leaders. The CSDE will work with SERC to offer two annual Common Core State Standards Summer Leadership Academies (CCSS-SLA) for principals and assistant principals, directors of special education, and directors of ESL/bilingual education in partnership with the CAS, the public school principals’ membership organization. The two-day CCSS-SLAs will provide administrators with knowledge of the major instructional shifts for both ELA and math and an overview of the new CCSS-based assessment system currently under development. The CCSS-SLAs will support administrators as they use new tools and assessments for observing classroom instruction and providing feedback to teachers on their implementation of the CCSS at all grade levels. In addition, the CCSS-SLA will provide strategies for engaging families, including families of students with disabilities and ELLs, in understanding the new standards and ways they can support students at home. The CSDE will conduct an annual evaluation of the CCSS-SLAs to determine their efficacy in meeting the ongoing needs of school leaders. The CCSS-SLAs will be offered twice each summer, once immediately after the school year closes in June and again in late August before school opens. It is anticipated that approximately 150 school leaders will attend each of the two annual summer academies. CCSS district coordinators will track enrollment to ensure that leaders are participating at both the elementary and secondary levels as well as in special education and ESL/bilingual education.

In the summer of 2012, half-day overview sessions will be offered at each of the six RESCs to district central office staff, including the superintendent and assistant superintendent, and the directors of curriculum, student assessment, ESL/bilingual education, and special education. These sessions will provide an overview of the new standards in ELA and math and the SBAC assessment system. The Commissioner of Education, along with the Chief Academic Officer, will provide the welcome and introductory remarks highlighting the importance of this work in closing Connecticut’s achievement gap.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.8) Does the SEA propose to develop and disseminate high-quality instructional materials aligned with the new standards? If so, are the instructional materials designed (or will they be designed) to support the teaching and learning of all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students?

Aligning Curriculum/Instructional Material

During the winter and spring of 2011, the CSDE created foundational documents for designing rigorous CCSS-based curricula in K–12 ELA and mathematics. State-level teams of content specialists from the districts, RESCs, the SERC, and IHEs convened to develop this set of guiding documents, which consists of frameworks for units of study that comprise priority and related supporting standards and pacing calendars. The documents, for use by districts, are part of a statewide system of technical assistance to facilitate ongoing effective implementation of the standards. This set of guiding documents, together with the crosswalk documents, provides districts with tools for revising curriculum documents and for implementing the standards at the classroom level. The crosswalks, unit-planning organizers, and pacing guides are on the [CSDE CCSS website](#).

Crosswalks. The ELA and mathematics crosswalk documents show the correlation between the CCSS and Connecticut standards and the alignment of the CCSS to the Fourth Generation Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Third Generation CAPT. Districts are encouraged to use the documents to begin the curriculum revision process by first understanding the differences between the sets of standards. The crosswalks are the foundational documents for transitioning to the CCSS from the Connecticut standards.

Unit-Planning Organizers. The CSDE created unit-planning organizers in ELA and mathematics for each grade level. The unit-planning organizers are designed to provide a framework for organizing instruction and assessment and to be a resource for curriculum developers. The information in the unit-planning organizers can easily be placed into local curriculum models during the revision process. CSDE expects that local and/or regional curriculum development teams determine the “Big Ideas” and accompanying “Essential Questions” as they complete the units with critical vocabulary, suggested instructional strategies, activities, and resources.

The CSDE believes and emphasizes that all standards are important and are eligible for inclusion on the large-scale assessment to be administered during the 2014–15 school year. However, the CSDE identified standards as either *priority* or *supporting* based on the critical areas of focus described in the Connecticut standards, as well as the connections of the content within and across the K–12 domains and conceptual categories. In some instances, a standard identified as priority actually functions as a supporting standard in a particular unit. No stratification or omission of practice or content standards is suggested by the system of organization utilized in the units.

Pacing Guides. The CSDE created pacing guides to provide consistent expectations of the standards to be covered in each subject at each grade level. The pacing guides are a critical component of a high-quality curriculum to ensure that administrators and teachers plan appropriate instruction that addresses all standards in a targeted and explicit manner. The pacing guides assist in establishing curricular continuity across schools, especially within large districts or regional districts. Educators can access ELA and mathematics pacing guides for grades 3 through 8 on the CSDE Common Core website. These guides are also intended to assist Planning and

Placement Team (PPT) members in the development, implementation, and progress reporting on the goals and objectives that are aligned to the CCSS in the IEP for students with disabilities.

Connecticut is not a textbook adoption state. Therefore, the CSDE does not endorse specific products or materials. Each district purchases instructional materials through its local education budget. As previously mentioned, Achieve is working with identified states in the development of rubrics to evaluate the quality and alignment of textbooks and other instructional materials to the CCSS. In the future, the CSDE may issue rubrics to guide the districts' choices of instructional materials and will possibly develop model curricula. Connecticut has also discussed embarking on the process of developing model curricula through discussions with the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC). CSDE staff representing ELLs and students with disabilities will also participate in the discussion to ensure that the model curricula support universal design.

In addition, the state is considering working with other states to develop a platform for distribution of free and for-fee CCSS resources. The platform will be required to meet some threshold of scrutiny by state or other expert and will both expand and increase the diversity of CCSS resources that will inevitably emerge in the coming years as 44 other states work to implement the standards.

CCSS in Other Subjects. In addition to ELA and mathematics, the CSDE has infused the CCSS throughout science, social studies, and technical subjects. Where there are gaps, the CSDE will supplement the standards with other college- and career-ready standards.

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). In keeping with its commitment to a well-rounded education for all students, and to embrace rigorous college- and career-ready standards in common with other states, Connecticut has been proactively preparing for the adoption of NGSS, slated for completion in late 2012. These new national science education standards follow logically on the heels of the CCSS ELA and mathematics. They will identify the science and engineering ideas and practices that students should be reading, writing, speaking, and using mathematics to comprehend.

Since April 2010, the CSDE has been laying the groundwork for state adoption of the NGSS. Numerous internal meetings have occurred to keep educators apprised of the NGSS development timeline and plan for transition to Next Generation science assessments. Tentative plans have been made based on the assumption that the SBE will vote in favor of adopting the NGSS. The transition plan calls for extensive professional development and curriculum development support from 2013 through 2016, with the introduction of new science assessments based on NGSS possibly in 2016. It is too early to know whether the SBAC will be funded to develop a science assessment system or whether new regional assessment consortia will take shape. The CSDE is likely to collaborate with other states to devise an improved science assessment system that will provide more timely and specific data about student learning over time.

A state science leadership team—consisting of CSDE content area experts, state policymakers, RESC and SERC professional development specialists, higher education faculty, and STEM industry

representatives—is being assembled to lead strategic planning for NGSS adoption, rollout, and effective implementation in classrooms. Ongoing activities have informed stakeholders of the vision of science education described in the National Research Council (NRC) Framework for K–12 Science Education and the changes anticipated in the NGSS (see [Appendix 1.11](#)) when they are completed in late 2012.

Social Studies. The Connecticut Social Studies Framework is a comprehensive document that provides a road map for teachers to understand what students should know and be able to do from prekindergarten through high school. The framework assists educators in teaching content from a variety of history and social studies disciplines at every grade level rather than teaching disciplines in isolation. Integration is a key tenet of this framework—the integration of the various social studies disciplines; the integration of content, literacy skills, and the application of knowledge; and the application of social studies to other areas. This framework is linked to the grade 6–12 ELA CCSS and technical subjects.

Career and Technical Education Standards (CTE). CTE and content area experts have begun the process of aligning CTE standards with the mathematics CCSS. As a result of this process, draft documents have been created that identify the concepts in the mathematics CCSS that are in the CTE standards. The CSDE will make these documents available to all mathematics and CTE teachers across the state. In addition, this analysis will assist in identifying senior-year CTE courses that provide practical application of concepts.

The CTE alignment work will be completed by March 2012. To date, the following draft documents have been developed:

- Grades 6–8 CCSS Mathematics Progressions aligned with CTE Personal Finance Performance Standards and Competencies
- Business and Finance Technology Education, Personal Finance Performance Standards and Competencies, grades 6–8 and 9–12
- Agricultural Science Education, grades 9–12
- Family and Consumer Sciences, grades 6–8 and 9–12

The CSDE is currently developing the following documents:

- Business and Finance Technology Education, Accounting and Computer Information Systems, grades 9–12
- Technology Education, grades 6–8 and 9–12
- Marketing Education, grades 9–12
- Medical Careers Education, grades 9–12

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.9) Does the SEA plan to expand access to college-level courses or their prerequisites, dual enrollment courses, or accelerated learning opportunities? If so, will this plan lead to more students having access to courses that prepare them for college and a career?

Accelerated Learning Opportunities and Student Transition to Higher Education

In recent years, the CSDE has identified the need for accelerated learning opportunities for low-income students. As a result, the majority of the CSDE's efforts to expand accelerated learning opportunities are focused on this population. Initiatives include the following:

- **Project Opening Doors (POD).** POD is an Advanced Placement (AP) course expansion project led by the CBIA in collaboration with the CSDE. This initiative is designed to increase the number of students taking AP courses in math, science, and English and passing the AP exam. The CBIA's POD is largely targeted at minority and underprivileged students. Funded by the National Math and Science Initiative, POD is helping to close the state's large achievement gap between white and non-white students.
- **Bridges Program.** Through the Bridges Program, college professors work with high school teachers to promote a deeper understanding of high school and college requirements.
- **Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP).** Connecticut has applied for a third round of the federal APIP grant program. Funding from this program will expand access to AP courses for students in Priority Districts.
- **Dual Enrollment.** Many of Connecticut's secondary schools participate in dual enrollment programs, which allow high school students to earn college credit at several participating IHEs. Connecticut-specific programs include College and Career Pathways and the Early College Experience in collaboration with the University of Connecticut.
 - **The College Career Pathways (CCP)** program (formally Tech Prep) of study with Connecticut's 12 community colleges is designed to encourage and prepare Connecticut public high school students, including those enrolled in the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) administered by the CSDE, to pursue an associate or baccalaureate degree in their chosen career area. The CSDE partnered with the Departments of Labor and Economic Development, the CBIA, and the Connecticut Community College System to establish the CCP program in response to Connecticut's labor needs. Through a planned sequence of academic and career courses, CCP prepares juniors and seniors for advanced courses required by two-year and four-year IHEs. Over the past 15 years, approximately 6,000 students participated in the program each year. The partnership resulted in the publication [*Connecticut Career Pathways: Seasons of Change and Transition*](#), located on the state website.
 - **University of Connecticut Early College Experience (ECE)** is a dual enrollment program that allows high school students to enroll in University of Connecticut courses at their high schools or on campus for both high school and college credit. Every course taken through the University of Connecticut ECE is equivalent to the same course at the University of Connecticut. The University of Connecticut also participates in CCP by offering its Individual and Family Development course to high school juniors and seniors through the Family and Consumer Sciences programs. There are approximately 40 high schools within Connecticut that participate in this program. This course is required for University of Connecticut students who plan to enter teaching, nursing, or human development. Students can also use this course as a general elective at the University of Connecticut.

Furthermore, the Governor's 2012 legislative proposal includes \$500,000 to enhance the accessibility of a college education by providing nonprofit organizations, including Volunteer

Income Tax Assistance groups, the opportunity to receive grants to assist families in preparing college financial aid forms, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Academic Foundation Competencies

The CTE competencies provide a context for the development of academic teaching and learning. The CSDE's commitment to CTE to enhance academic achievement in high school programs and courses has led to the identification of a set of Academic Foundation Standards. The CSDE annually assesses students in their area of concentration and on academic components consistent with the CAPT. See [CTE Performance Standards and Competencies](#) for a full list of CTE areas of concentration.

According to research conducted by Georgetown University, the NASDCTEc, and the National Research Center for Career Technical Education in *Career Clusters, Forecasting Demand for High School Through College Jobs, 2008–2018*, Connecticut has the largest career cluster needs in business management and administration, information technology, health occupations, and travel and tourism. Programs of study offered in districts and IHEs are therefore designed to ensure students are prepared to meet future labor demands in the state.

The CSDE has offered statewide professional development to ensure an understanding of the role of CTE in supporting college- and career-readiness standards. See [Appendix 1.12](#) for the 2010–11 CTE Professional Development Timeline. In addition, the CSDE held a conference featuring Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and Kim Green, Executive Director of the NASDCTEc, to unveil the new vision for CTE to Connecticut policy leaders in education, business and industry, and the community. A detailed description of this vision can be found at www.careertech.org.

Student Success Plans (SSP) and Capstone Projects. *The Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform*, authorized under Public Act 10-111 and more specifically in the amendments to Public Act 11-135, will require SSPs for every student in grades 6–12. Each district is required to establish the SSP for all students by July 2012, which will support students' academic and career goals. The [core components of the SSP](#) are located on the CSDE website. A [series of videos](#) highlighting districts' "promising practices" for the SSP can be found on [the SERC website](#).

The SSP is focused on student engagement and relies on critical adults to help students create, monitor, and revise their plans and to guide them through their secondary and postsecondary career to future employment. It should be noted that while students may choose to align to a career pathway or area of interest, the intent of the SSP in no way tracks or bifurcates students toward a designated postsecondary or career pursuit. Rather, the SSP is designed to allow students to explore their interests, enabling them to make better decisions for the future.

Under the student success umbrella, the Capstone Experience, scheduled to begin in 2016, is a culminating activity for students to apply key knowledge and skills by planning, completing, and presenting a project linked to one or more areas of personal interest. Capstone engages students in a project/experience that focuses on an interest, a career path, or an academic pursuit that synthesizes classroom study and real-world perspectives. The Capstone Experience may include an in-depth project, a reflective portfolio, community service, and/or an internship. As part of the experience, the student will demonstrate research, communication, and technology skills, including additional relevant 21st century skills. Work on the Capstone Experience may begin as early as ninth grade; successful completion will earn the student one credit toward high school graduation.

Vocational Agriculture and Technical Programs. Connecticut’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) Academic Foundation Competencies are augmented by vocational agriculture and technical programs. The 2012 legislative agenda proposes increased funding on these career-focused programs.

Vocational Agriculture. Connecticut’s Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers prepare students for careers in the environmental, natural resources and agriculture fields. The program is hands-on and combines rigorous academics, occupational skill development, and a work-based component. Connecticut has 19 centers located across the state.

During the 2012 legislative session, the CSDE will propose a new formula that allows vocational agriculture schools to apply for competitive grants with the goal to improve socioeconomic and racial diversity in these centers.

Vocational Technical. The CTHSS provides students with academic and technical education leading to a high school diploma and specific technical skills. There are 17 technical high schools throughout the state. Connecticut has one two-year school in Bristol that has combined programs with local high schools. There are 29 technical offerings, with students selecting an area of specialization after participating in a ninth-grade technical exploratory program. Connecticut technical high school students acquire skills in the trades and technologies, preparing them to attend two- or four-year colleges or for careers. Opportunities to earn college credit during the high school years through Tech Prep programs with community colleges also are available.

Proposed plans for the CTHSS will tailor programming to the needs of employers so that students are better prepared for real-world employment when they graduate. The plan will set high standards for students as well as for schools, and will be benchmarked against national and global models in the area of vocational and technical training. The process will be led by the CSDE, the Board of Regents (higher education), the Department of Labor, and the Department of Economic and Community Development. Governor Malloy proposes to allocate additional \$500,000 in 2012 funding to increase the training resources and supplies for students.

In addition to the new programming, the governance of the CTHSS will be transferred to an

independent board of 11 appointed members, per the recommendation of a legislature-created taskforce that studied the finance, management, and enrollment structure of the regional vocational technical school system. The board will include four members who are executives of Connecticut employers, nominated by regional chambers of commerce and other business organizations and appointed by the Governor, and five members appointed by the SBE. The Commissioners of the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Labor will serve in an ex-officio capacity. Governor Malloy will appoint the new board's chair, who will also serve ex-officio on the SBE. This moves the vocational technical school system to the purview of a board dedicated solely to its operations.

Transition to College and Career for Students with Disabilities. Connecticut districts provide additional transition services to about 25% of students who have completed graduation requirements but need additional preparation to become college or career ready. Students who are 18 to 21 years old might participate in district or private community-based transition services either at a college or university, in a business, in a community setting (e.g., library, administration building, apartment, house), or in a combination of settings. The CSDE catalogs these opportunities in the [*Directory of Transition Services in College, University, and Community-Based Settings*](#), which currently contains more than 30 settings. Partnerships with IHEs account for about one-fourth of the settings. Beginning in March 2012 and continuing through 2013, the CSDE will provide training and technical assistance to support districts in developing new settings or collaborations and assist college-based settings to promote the enrollment of more students with disabilities into certificate, continuing education, and degree-granting programs.

Since the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 and 2004, districts have been required to provide IEP transition goals and objectives for all students between the ages of 16 and 21 to “facilitate the movement of students from high school to post-school activities,” such as college and/or a career path. The CSDE strongly believes that all students with disabilities should focus on academic, vocational, and related services (i.e., transition services) that can support them in exploring and selecting career paths that incorporate their interests, preferences, strengths, and needs. Furthermore, the CSDE supports the continued learning of students with disabilities beyond high school, whether through employment, a formal postsecondary education, or training programs. Specifically, the CSDE requires that at a minimum, students with an IEP have at least one postsecondary goal that addresses postsecondary education/training and one that addresses career/employment, as well as at least one annual goal and objectives that assist them in meeting their postsecondary goals. The CSDE and the SERC are providing training and support to assist districts in aligning these goals and objectives with the CCSS as they relate to college and career readiness.

Furthermore, the CSDE has convened a stakeholder group of public and private agencies, parents, consumers, advocates, and district representatives to address secondary transition needs of students with disabilities. This Special Education Transition Taskforce met in January 2012 to examine the CCSS and identify those standards most appropriate for transition planning for students with disabilities. The Transition Taskforce is also developing a crosswalk between the CSDE's SSP (i.e., individual learning plan) and other plans that legally document the specific

services and accommodations provided to students with disabilities, such as the IEP, section 504 plans, individualized healthcare plans, and the summary of performance. This crosswalk will help districts integrate students with disabilities into the general education SSP process and ensure that all students benefit from and have access to college- and career-readiness standards.

The CSDE participates in national meetings with IDEA Partnership to discuss CCSS implementation and Next Generation assessments and anticipates receiving technical assistance from IDEA Partnership Executive Director, Joanne Cashman, in February 2012. Special education staff have communicated with the CCSSO ICCS staff and National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) staff to assist these organizations in developing a national model for assistance to state special education departments on issues related to special education and CCSS. For more detailed information regarding the CCSS and special education, see the professional development timeline ([Appendix 1.9](#)).

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.10) Does the SEA intend to work with the State’s IHEs and other teacher and principal preparation programs to better prepare incoming teachers and principals to teach all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, to the new college- and career-ready standards. If so, will the implementation of the plan likely improve the preparation of incoming teachers and principals?

Preparing New Educators

The CSDE understands that IHEs play a critical role in providing the foundational skills necessary for producing high-quality educators. Therefore, the CSDE has worked to ensure that IHEs are integral partners at all levels.

The CSDE has been working with IHEs to incorporate the CCSS into the teacher preparation and induction process through symposiums. Specifically, activities include the following:

- CSDE content area experts presented on the CCSS and the SBAC assessment system for pre-service teachers at the University of Connecticut Mathematics Teacher Preparation Program (Fall 2010);
- CSDE content area experts presented on the CCSS and the SBAC assessment system for pre-service teachers at the Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) Mathematics Teacher Preparation Program (September 2011);
- CSDE mathematics content area experts incorporated CCSS into the usual manipulative-based instruction training for approximately 40 middle and high school prospective teachers trained through the Department of Higher Education’s Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) program (July 2011); and
- CSDE English Language Arts content area experts met quarterly with IHE teacher education faculty to discuss and plan incorporation of the ELA CCSS into course content (ongoing).

Since April 2011, the CSDE has worked to fully engage IHEs in the CCSS implementation to improve the quality of teacher and school leader preparation programs. This work began with the IHE symposium (April 2011) to share information regarding the adoption of the CCSS and the

implications for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Two higher education faculty members collaborated with the CSDE to provide leadership in planning the CSDE’s April 2012 IHE symposium. The theme for the April 2012 symposium was “How can Institutes of Higher Education prepare candidates to help all students become college and career ready?” Presentations and discussion topics focused on the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) and its relationship to the CCSS, what teacher and administrator candidates need to know so they can implement CCSS in their schools and LEAs, and how LEAs and IHEs can form genuine partnerships. Deans of Education, IHE department heads, LEA central office and building administrators, and CSDE staff conducted presentations and facilitated discussions on these topics. 147 educators and administrators, including representatives from 17 Connecticut universities and community colleges and Connecticut’s ARC program, attended the symposium. Participants included IHE faculty and deans, members of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, CSDE consultants, school district administrators, K-12 teachers, and representatives from AFT-CT, the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, and CAS, among others.

Since the first symposium in April 2011, the CSDE met several times with the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education–Connecticut (AACTE-CT) to foster collaboration between the CSDE and the IHEs. These meetings will continue to occur throughout the year to promote the CCSS leadership in teacher education and educational leadership programs.

The CSDE is also working with IHEs to ensure continuity between pre-service training and the CALI. The CSDE is developing documents that will delineate the core practices embedded in the redesigned CALI modules. These documents will serve as a resource for IHE faculty members to integrate this material into their course syllabi and pre-service field experiences. IHE faculty members are invited to attend statewide CALI trainings at no cost.

Other IHE faculty members have participated in conferences and work groups to provide input into the design and implementation of professional development in differentiating instruction for students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations and in understanding the components of a balanced assessment system (interim assessments, formative assessment tools and practices, and summative assessments) in alignment with the SBAC assessment system.

On March 7, 2012, the SBE approved the establishment of the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) to develop a new vision and strategy for improving the way Connecticut prepares educators so that all students will have well-prepared teachers and school leaders.

EPAC will be co-chaired by the Commissioner of Education and the Vice President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

The resolution states that EPAC membership shall consist of one representative from each of the following associations:

- CAFE,

- CAPSS,
- Connecticut Federation of School Administrators,
- CEA,
- AFT-CT, and
- Persons selected by the co-chairs, including but not limited to representatives from teacher and administrator preparation programs in public and independent colleges and universities and from alternate route programs. The SDE and BOR are still discussing the complete membership list, but they have confirmed that members will include representatives from independent colleges and universities as well as external stakeholders.

EPAC’s charge is to advise the SBE in revising regulations and policies regarding standards and procedures for the approval and continued accreditation of Connecticut teacher and administrator preparation programs. The Council’s work will be focused on:

- Available research regarding effective preparation of teachers and administrators;
- Reducing the reliance on input- and other compliance-based mechanisms of oversight and accreditation; and
- Shifting to a system of oversight and accreditation that includes multiple indicators of program performance such as: (1) performance evaluation of graduates in the years immediately following graduation based on multiple measures including but not limited to indicators of student learning; (2) the quality of entering students as measured by academic achievement, personal accomplishments, recruitment efforts among top tier university students, and professional dispositions; (3) feedback from school districts regarding the quality of student-teacher candidates; (4) graduation requirements, including pass rates and attempts on Department-required exit examinations; (5) rates of employment for graduating students, with consideration of employment rates in hard-to-staff and low-performing districts; and (6) retention rates, both within districts and the education profession, for graduating students.

EPAC will meet over the next year as determined by the co-chairs. The co-chairs of EPAC will present the overall recommendations to the SBE for consideration and further action by April 2013.

Finally, the CSDE is required to report on disaggregated college-going rates and credit accumulation as part of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program (requirements (c)11 and (c)12). This will require the CSDE to collaborate with higher education to match student-level credit records with State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) numbers.

For full timeline of engagement with IHEs, see [Appendix 1.13](#).

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.11) Does the SEA plan to evaluate its current assessments and increase the rigor of those assessments and their alignment with the State’s college- and career-ready standards, in order to better prepare students and teachers for the new assessments through one or more of the following strategies:

(i) Raising the State’s academic achievement standards on its current assessments to ensure that they reflect a level of postsecondary readiness, or are being increased over time to that level of rigor? (E.g., the SEA might compare current achievement standards to a measure of postsecondary readiness by back-mapping from college entrance requirements or remediation rates, analyzing the relationship between proficient scores on the State assessments and the ACT or SAT scores accepted by most of the State’s 4-year public IHEs, or conducting NAEP mapping studies.)

(ii) Augmenting or revising current State assessments by adding questions, removing questions, or varying formats in order to better align those assessments with the State’s college- and career-ready standards?

(iii) Implementing another strategy to increase the rigor of current assessments, such as using the “advanced” performance level on State assessments instead of the “proficient” performance level as the goal for individual student performance or using college-preparatory assessments or other advanced tests on which IHEs grant course credits to entering college students to determine whether students are prepared for postsecondary success?

If so, is this activity likely to result in an increase in the rigor of the State’s current assessments and their alignment with college- and career-ready standards?

Transition to Next Generation Assessments

The CSDE has joined the SBAC and intends to adopt SBAC assessments in the 2014–15 school year. Until then, the CSDE has begun implementing an assessment transition plan that is piloting new assessment items designed to measure the CCSS. Additionally, through “double-testing” flexibility, LEAs may elect to have all students in tested grades in all schools within the LEA administer the full form of the Smarter Balanced field test (SB-FT) in English language arts and mathematics during 2013-14 in lieu of Connecticut’s legacy assessments (CMT and CAPT). All students in Grades 5, 8, and 10, regardless of LEA choice for English language arts and mathematics assessments, will be required to participate in the State’s Science assessments. During 2012, the content area experts along with the CSDE psychometricians will review the current assessments based on the CSDE’s content frameworks that were in place prior to adoption of the CCSS and identify items that do not align with the CCSS. The goal of this work will be to remove questions measuring skills that are not required under the CCSS. The CSDE believes this approach will encourage educators to focus more intensely on the CCSS. Depending on the costs, Connecticut plans to participate in the optional formative assessments, an option available to SBAC members.

The CSDE’s Bureau of Assessment content area experts work directly with contractors charged with developing assessment blueprints, item specifications, and sample items, allowing for firsthand knowledge of the new assessments. The in-depth work by the CSDE content area experts on the content specifications for mathematics provides the necessary expertise to develop and deliver professional learning experiences for educators on item and task development, scoring, and alignment. The CSDE is uniquely positioned to critically analyze existing assessments and determine possible changes.

The CSDE intends to use the pilot data collected in 2011–12 to create items based on the CCSS that could be administered as a supplemental component of the CSDE state assessments beginning in 2012–13 and continuing in 2013–14.

The results of the supplemental component of the assessments will not be used in the formal accountability system, but the data will provide districts and schools with information regarding the extent to which their educators have successfully implemented the CCSS in classroom-based instruction.

Furthermore, Governor Malloy’s 2012 legislative proposal includes the following assessment-related initiatives:

- **Common Core and International Standards.** To improve Connecticut students’ international academic competitiveness, the 2012 legislative proposal includes \$500,000 in funding to map CCSS with international standards and to provide aligned curricular materials online. We are particularly encouraged by SBAC’s recent decision to integrate NAEP and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) items into its test design.
- **College Readiness Assessment.** With far too many Connecticut students entering college needing to take remedial courses to catch up with what they should have learned in high school, there is a need to have an assessment to determine whether students are indeed ready for college. Governor Malloy’s proposal includes \$500,000 in funding for the development of an assessment to be administered to high school juniors to assess college readiness and assist in course-taking planning for their senior year.

SBAC Participation. The CSDE’s leadership in the SBAC has also informed the assessment transition plan. The CSDE has been a governing member in the SBAC since 2010, and five CSDE content area experts in the Bureau of Assessment actively participated in SBAC work groups, including two-co-chairs, which included participation in consortium-sponsored webinars, weekly meetings, and U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) public meetings. For the letter to superintendents on SBAC participation, see [Appendix 1.14](#).

Table 1.4: Connecticut SBAC Participation

Milestones	Timeline
Participate in two SBAC “all states” meetings in New Orleans and Minneapolis.	April and August 2011
Participate in the development of SBAC RFPs.	July 2011
Attend USDOE public meeting on accessibility and accommodations.	August 2011
Participate in on-site and virtual meetings with SBAC contractors to inform the processes needed to develop an assessment system.	September 2011
Participate in a series of three SBAC technology architecture meetings in Chicago, New Hampshire, and Las Vegas.	September–October 2011

Work with the authors of SBAC’s math content specifications and authors of the CCSS for mathematics to incorporate public feedback into the second draft of SBAC mathematics content specifications for summative assessment.	October–December 2011
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Attendance at these meetings has allowed the CSDE’s Bureau of Assessment content area experts to increase their understanding of key changes that will occur as the CSDE transitions from the current assessment system to a new assessment system. Some of these key changes include the use and benefits of computer adaptive testing; the current status of artificial intelligence scoring and how it will be used to deliver more timely results; the consortium’s development of policy around accessibility and accommodations; and the requirements necessary for building the delivery system for computerized assessments. Additionally, these content area experts have contributed extensively to the overall development of the assessments, allowing for information to be delivered to key stakeholders as soon as decisions are made.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1.B.12) Does the SEA intend to analyze the factors that need to be addressed in preparing teachers of students with disabilities participating in a State’s alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards (AA-MAAS) in order to ensure these students can participate in the assessments that will be aligned with college and career-ready standards?

In addition to joining SBAC, the CSDE has joined the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) to develop a multistate comprehensive assessment system for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This consortium applies current research-based lessons for alternate assessment based upon alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS).

The CSDE’s Bureau of Assessment content area experts work directly with consortium management through monthly conference calls and webinars. They also participate in one of the work groups to develop professional development associated with the project. Activities have included the following:

- Creation of a NCSC Community of Practice (CoP), which includes 25 members from various districts, grade levels, and areas of expertise;
- Participation in the first CoP meeting with NCSC team leadership and Connecticut CoP members;
- Participation in the first of six CoP webinars.

The CSDE’s Bureau of Student Assessment content area experts participated in the CCSSO SCASS Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) group. The work groups and discussions have focused on the implementation of the CCSS for students with special needs. One of the outcomes of these discussions was a summit for students with disabilities and Common Core college and career readiness held in December 2011. Steering committee members for both ASES and the summit included one CSDE content area expert.

Participation in these activities has provided opportunities for the CSDE’s Bureau of Assessment

content area experts, in conjunction with the CSDE’s stakeholders, to make informed decisions and to influence the development of the new assessment system for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

SBAC and College and Career Readiness. While the CCSS themselves lay out a vision for college and career readiness, the CSDE’s role as a governing state in the SBAC takes this vision a step further. The CSDE shares the consortium goal of using evidence collected as students progress through formal schooling to understand whether they are on track to achieve college and career readiness. The consortium has a detailed plan to define what this looks like at each grade level with respect to the overarching goals of the CCSS and content specifications. The CSDE will work with the consortium to define achievement level descriptors at each grade. These descriptors will allow the CSDE to work with educators to use multiple sources of data to inform the progress of students with respect to college and career-readiness standards at each grade and effectively implement changes based on these data.

Monitoring and Sustaining Progress

It is essential to monitor the progress of the CCSS implementation across the state, and Connecticut’s three-tiered system of committees will help ensure that this takes place. The leadership committee will serve as the primary structure, and communication will take place internally at the CSDE between both the leadership and internal committees and externally between the leadership, internal committees, and the external committee. The monitoring system will incorporate all tiers in an intentional, coordinated manner. In addition, the Connecticut CCSS Implementation Plan will be consulted to determine whether some monitoring is already planned and how this can be incorporated into a cohesive, comprehensive system for monitoring implementation activities at the CSDE, district, and school levels.

To reduce duplication of efforts, increase efficiency, and decrease gaps, the leadership committee is tasked with reviewing the CSDE’s existing federal and state monitoring systems. For existing state quality assurance and monitoring plans used in the CALI, see [Appendices 1.15 and 1.16](#). By fall 2012, an initial plan will be developed that will include resources, timelines, and evidence of implementation. As the internal and external committees are convened, they will be introduced to the monitoring plan, and their input will be solicited to streamline the process. This, in turn, will assist the leadership, internal, and external committees identify and replicate effective techniques and best practices for the district transition to the CCSS.

Progress will be monitored and sustained through ongoing meetings of the leadership, internal, and external committees, as well as through the range of activities planned by RESCs and the SERC. Close coordination and collaboration on the part of the teams will help to ensure clear, concise, and consistent messaging throughout the state.

The CSDE will require superintendents to attest in writing that their district has developed a timeline and process for monitoring and sustaining the CCSS, through the existing state assurance process.

Students with Disabilities. Every summer, approximately 1% (600) of all IEPs of students with disabilities aged 6 to 21 will be examined for alignment of goals to the CCSS. Additionally, as a component of special education focused monitoring (annually winter/spring), five to ten districts will have IEPs reviewed for alignment to the CCSS as they pertain to the area of monitoring (e.g., if secondary transition is the focus, then IEPs of students reviewed to address this topic would be reviewed for the CCSS alignment).

Over the next several years, planned training will occur on an annual basis that addresses the CCSS and special education to assist new staff (administrators and teachers) and continuing staff to be current on the CCSS and Next Generation assessment relating to IEP development, implementation, and progress monitoring.

Reducing Duplication and Unnecessary Burden on Districts

It is paramount to identify opportunities to lessen the burden and reduce duplication on districts and schools so they can more effectively focus on enhancing achievement and educational outcomes for students. While the CSDE is obligated to maintain certain reporting practices to comply with state and federal mandates, there may be areas where reporting can be streamlined.

The implementation of the CCSS will encourage districts and schools to collaborate regarding curricular development and revision. This will result in reduced duplication of efforts and a shared, and therefore reduced, financial burden across districts and schools. Collaboration is beneficial for schools and districts of all demographics; for example, in small districts, collaboration will allow professionals who may have worked individually to now work as members of a group. In larger districts that, in many cases, have been able to convene curriculum development and revision teams, the financial burden will be offset by sharing costs. In addition, the flexibility to reallocate Title I funds would allow districts to plan and provide extended-day and school-year services to benefit at-risk students. This shift will allow for increased program continuity and communication between classroom teachers and in-district support personnel.

Additionally, the three-tiered system of the CCSS teams will ensure clear and consistent messages between the SEA and districts. This system will help to coordinate activities at both of these levels, as well as with other stakeholders, such as RESCs, the SERC, and professional organizations. This further reduces duplication and burden on the part of districts and schools by coordinating the transition, implementation, and communication related to the CCSS. The leadership team has proposed that each district designate a CCSS District Coordinator who will serve as the single point of contact between the CSDE and the district.

Conclusion

Today's demands for college and career readiness are expanding, and they require students to achieve at higher levels to succeed in education and in a global economy. Far too many

Connecticut students are unable to perform complex tasks, including critical thinking and problem solving, which are critical for success in today's world.

Connecticut strives to increase academic achievement for its youth and adults. These efforts resulted in the implementation of a variety of major state initiatives. The goal now is to coordinate, expand, and sustain these initiatives in support of the implementation of the CCSS.

To achieve this goal, Connecticut schools must ensure that curriculum and instruction are relevant and responsive to all students, including ELLs, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students. Curriculum and instruction must be coupled with valid and reliable measures and processes to screen, diagnose, and monitor student progress. Effective teacher and administrator pre-service and ongoing professional development programs with adequate resources must be developed to increase the capacity to support the academic achievement of all students. The CSDE must meaningfully engage families and communities as essential partners in promoting student achievement in Connecticut. These actions will be incorporated into the next stages of the CSDE's work to provide Connecticut's schools with a strong foundation upon which to continue their implementation of a CCSS-based curriculum to ensure that all students can succeed with these standards.

1.C DEVELOP AND ADMINISTER ANNUAL, STATEWIDE, ALIGNED, HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS THAT MEASURE STUDENT GROWTH

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The SEA is participating in one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition.</p> <p>i. Attach the State’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under that competition. (Attachment 6)</p>	<p>Option B</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA is not participating in either one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition, and has not yet developed or administered statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Provide the SEA’s plan to develop and administer annually, beginning no later than the 2014–2015 school year, statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs, as well as set academic achievement standards for those assessments.</p>	<p>Option C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA has developed and begun annually administering statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the SEA has submitted these assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review or attach a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review. (Attachment 7)</p>
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ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

2.A DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STATE-BASED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

- 2.A.i Provide a description of the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that includes all the components listed in Principle 2, the SEA’s plan for implementation of the differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, and an explanation of how the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is designed to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.1) Did the SEA propose a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, and a high-quality plan to implement this system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, that is likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.2) Does the SEA’s accountability system provide differentiated recognition, accountability, and support for all LEAs in the State and for all Title I schools in those LEAs based on (1) student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, and other subjects at the State’s discretion, for all students and all subgroups of students identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II); (2) graduation rates for all students and all subgroups; and (3) school performance and progress over time, including the performance and progress of all subgroups?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.3) Does the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system create incentives and provide support that is likely to be effective in closing achievement gaps for all subgroups of students?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.4) Did the SEA provide a plan that ensures that the system will be implemented in LEAs and schools no later than the 2012-2013 school year?

Connecticut’s waiver proposal aims to build accountability and differentiated intervention systems that help to: (1) transform low-performing schools to ensure that they can drive and sustain academic improvement year after year and (2) enable all other schools to uncover new ways to boost their students’ academic outcomes on a continuous basis.

Connecticut schools and districts are currently classified based on the requirements of the NCLB Act, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This act, among other things, provides funding for professional development, instructional materials, and other educational programs. Furthermore, it emphasizes equal access to education; aims to reduce achievement gaps; and requires school accountability. While accountability systems under the NCLB Act are intended to raise expectations for students and to hold districts and schools accountable for student progress, the existing system does not adequately recognize school progress across all bands of performance. The CSDE believes the

proposed recognition, accountability, and support system outlined below is a more appropriate system for Connecticut.

The state’s lower-performing subgroups lag far behind their peers, so the CSDE must address this disparity with a sense of urgency. On the NAEP, Connecticut’s achievement gap is among the ten widest in the nation for every subgroup comparison and is the single largest for the majority of subgroups. Additionally, state-level data confirm large and widening gaps in academic progress, graduation rates, and other indicators between the highest-performing students and subgroups. The proposed accountability system is designed to address Connecticut’s large achievement gaps by requiring higher rates of growth for historically underperforming subgroups. The CSDE also elected to reduce the minimum threshold for school-level subgroup size (*n* size) from 40 to 20 to ensure that more students are included in the accountability calculations. This standard matches the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) standard, which is the smallest threshold allowed for Connecticut and ensures the broadest viable reach of subgroup accountability. The CSDE’s accountability system—including its Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) and School Performance Index (SPI), which are described in the following sections—is also designed to focus on closing gaps in both performance and graduation rates.

Furthermore, Connecticut will hold the state, its districts, and its schools accountable for improving student performance with the aim of ensuring that all students and subgroups are increasing performance toward the Goal level on the state assessments. Connecticut is therefore using this waiver as an opportunity to raise the bar for its schools and districts from the minimal Proficiency standard required under NCLB to the more rigorous Goal standard, which is an indicator of college- and career-readiness.

Ambitious yet Achievable

The CSDE believes that its goals must be both ambitious and achievable and acknowledges a productive tension between these values. Past performance should not dictate Connecticut’s future aspirations, but – at the same time – the state owes it to our schools, educators, parents, and students to set goals within their reach.

The CSDE therefore proposes that a dual approach – one that incorporates both accountability and incentives– will best drive school improvement and increase student achievement. The CSDE will set both accountability performance targets and aspirational performance targets for all schools and subgroups in the state.

If schools fail to meet their Accountability Performance Targets over a three-year period, the school will be classified in a lower category, triggering greater state and district oversight as well as more intensive interventions. The accountability goals are aligned so that schools that meet their performance targets are on track to meet the state’s ultimate goals, but the CSDE will ensure that these targets are reasonable by using the past performance of our high progress schools as a guide for achievability.

Aspirational performance targets better reflect our true ambitions. With the reforms laid out in this waiver application and in the Governor’s proposed legislative package, we aim for our schools to achieve at ever higher levels – enabling our students to defy current expectations. We believe this is possible, and we are looking to our schools to pave the way forward. To this end, the CSDE is offering significant incentives to schools in order to encourage unprecedented growth and performance. The CSDE stands ready to recognize and reward this achievement and to ensure that the practices that enable it are shared throughout the state. Our plan for recognizing, rewarding, and replicating these achievements through “Schools of Distinction” is explained in more detail in Section 2.C.

Setting Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

At the center of the proposed accountability system are three components: a new set of measures for school performance and growth, a new classification system for all Connecticut schools, and an accompanying intervention strategy. Rather than focusing exclusively on math and reading, the new system will hold schools accountable for mathematics, reading, writing, and science.

The primary metric within the new accountability system is the SPI, which measures the status of student achievement in a school. The new accountability system also includes measures of change in student achievement and college and career readiness, and it is sensitive to subgroup performance.

The SPI is a measure of student achievement on Connecticut’s standardized assessments – the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). The CMT is the standard assessment administered to students in Grades 3 through 8. Students are assessed in the content areas of reading, mathematics and writing in each of these grades and science in grades 5 and 8. Reports of individual student achievement relative to performance standards in each of these content areas are provided to the school districts and parents/guardians of each student tested. The CMT provides information about achievement that is used for many purposes including: setting high expectations and standards for student achievement; testing a comprehensive range of academic skills; disseminating useful test achievement information about students, schools, and districts; identifying students in need of intervention; assessing equitable educational opportunities; and monitoring student progress in Grades 3 through 8 over time. The CAPT is the standard assessment administered to students in Grade 10. Students are assessed in the content areas of reading, mathematics, writing and science. Reports of individual student achievement relative to performance standards in each of these content areas are provided to school districts and parents/guardians of each student tested. Students in Grades 11 and 12 may retest in any subtest of the CAPT in which they did not meet the Goal level. The CAPT provides information about achievement that is used for many purposes including: establishing high performance standards for all Grade 10 students on a comprehensive range of important skills and knowledge; emphasizing the application and integration of skills and knowledge in realistic contexts; promoting better instruction and

curriculum by providing information on student, school, and district strengths and weaknesses; and providing an expanded measure of accountability for Connecticut’s educational system at the high school level.

The edits in sections 2A and 2B are technical in nature and intended primarily to bring Connecticut’s approved ESEA Flexibility Request in alignment with its approved Waiver Addendum (i.e., accountability workbook) and the implications resulting from its approved Field Test Flexibility.

The SPI is calculated by assigning a weight value to the five categories of performance on Connecticut’s assessments. For each subject tested on the CMT and CAPT—mathematics, reading, writing, and science—Connecticut reports performance for five achievement levels: Below Basic (BB), Basic (B), Proficient (P), Goal (G), and Advanced (A). These achievement levels are well understood throughout the state.

The current measure of student achievement—the percentage of students who score Proficient or higher—is limited because it fails to acknowledge performance at all levels. Even more importantly, it only recognizes improvement when schools move students from the Basic level to the Proficient level. The CSDE believes that schools should increase the performance of all students—including those scoring at the lowest and highest levels. The CSDE believes that its proposed metric—the SPI—better captures the performance and increase in performance of all students.

Every student contributes to an SPI. The SPI is calculated~~In addition to an overall school level, the SPI is calculated and reported by subject and subgroup for each subject tested, and then the subject-specific SPIs are averaged. Additionally, district-level indices are calculated and referred to as DPis. These SPI indices calculated~~ for each district, school, ~~and subgroup, and subject are calculated~~ based on all tested students. ~~Districts, schools, and subgroups are credited~~Credit is awarded in the following way:

- Students who score Below Basic (BB) = 0.00 points;
- Students who score Basic (B) = 0.3333 points;
- Students who score Proficient (P) = 0.6767 points; and
- Students who score Goal (G) or Advanced = 1.0100 points

The result is an index score ranging from 0 to 100, where 0 indicates that all students scored at the Below Basic level and 100 indicates that all students scored at the Goal or Advanced level. The SPI is further explained in section 2.B.

The CSDE is using this waiver application as an opportunity to raise the bar for students throughout the state. Its primary goal is for all students and subgroups to achieve an SPI of 88. An SPI of 67 would indicate that students were, on average, performing at the Proficient level. With this higher SPI target of 88, Connecticut raises its expectations for students, schools, and districts by holding them accountable for making progress toward a higher standard. Schools will only be able to meet this higher standard if they refuse to settle for Proficiency and raise

the achievement of all students and subgroups of students toward the Goal standard. The Goal level of performance, unlike the Proficient standard, shows that students are prepared for college and career. The CSDE's short-term target is to reduce the state's performance deficit by half by 2018. To meet this goal, most schools and subgroups in the state will need to make enough progress each year so that, in six years, they are halfway to achieving an SPI of 88. The state's lowest performing schools will be required to increase their performance by no more than 3 points on the SPI each year, which requires the greatest gains for the students and subgroups that are the farthest behind. The CSDE believes that these targets are ambitious yet achievable. Section 2.B outlines in greater detail the CSDE's other goals in the areas of individual student growth and graduation rates.

Reward Schools

The CSDE will recognize as "Schools of Distinction" schools that defy expectations in one of three ways:

1. By achieving the highest levels of performance with traditionally underperforming subgroups of students;
2. By increasing the performance of students – either the performance of students who have not yet reached Goal or the performance of students who are already performing at Goal – by substantially more than the accountability system requires; or
3. By achieving the highest levels of performance for all students.

The CSDE will further recognize schools that sustain their high performance or increases in performance for a three-year period by awarding monetary grants coupled with the responsibility to share best practices with lower-performing schools.

Priority Schools

The ESEA Flexibility Request defines "Priority Schools" as among the lowest-performing schools in the state based on the achievement of all students. Therefore, the CSDE will identify Title I or Title I-eligible schools with the lowest SPIs over time for all students as Priority Schools. Additionally, the CSDE may classify any Title I or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate lower than 60% as a Priority School. Finally, the CSDE will include any school that is presently a School Improvement Grant (SIG) Tier I or Tier II school. The total number of Priority Schools in the state will equal at least 5% of its Title I schools.

In previous legislation, Connecticut identified the state's highest poverty and lowest performing districts "Priority School Districts." In order to prevent confusion between the "Priority School Districts" and "Priority Schools," the CSDE has elected to refer to Priority Schools as "Turnaround Schools."

Connecticut will launch the Commissioner’s Network—a system of state supports and interventions—to improve chronically low-performing schools including Turnaround Schools. The Network will serve as a vehicle for innovative initiatives, a platform for sharing effective practices, and a model for other schools and districts throughout the state.

Focus Schools

The ESEA Flexibility Request defines “Focus Schools” as Title I schools that are contributing the most to the achievement gap in the state. The total number of Focus Schools in a state must equal at least 10% of the Title I schools in the state.

The CSDE has elected to define Focus Schools as schools with the lowest performance for subgroups. To identify Focus Schools, the CSDE has created a high-needs subgroup that includes ELLs, students with disabilities, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The CSDE created this high-needs subgroup for Focus School identification purposes to avoid the unwieldy process of treating each subgroup individually. More than 80% of the state’s African-American and Hispanic students fall into the high-needs subgroup because they are either ELLs, students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, or students with disabilities. This subgroup therefore captures most students in the two historically underperforming racial and ethnic subgroups. However, the CSDE wants to ensure that this race-neutral high-needs subgroup does not mask racial and ethnic achievement gaps. The CSDE will therefore reexamine all schools in the state to determine whether there are any schools with Hispanic or African-American subgroups with performance as low as the identified high-needs subgroup in identified Focus Schools. Any schools with Hispanic or African-American students that are low-performing in the way described will also be identified as Focus Schools. Finally, the CSDE will classify as Focus schools any Title I –eligible high schools with graduation rates lower than 60% that were not classified as Turnaround Schools.

The CSDE will ensure that districts have the information, resources, and capacity to design and implement effective, targeted interventions in Focus Schools.

Supporting Connecticut’s Other Schools

The CSDE will classify all schools into five levels—Excelling, Progressing, Transitioning, Review (includes Focus Schools), and Turnaround. The CSDE’s Turnaround and Performance Teams will partner with districts to ensure that schools in each of these categories receive appropriate levels of support. The lower-performing schools will receive more support from the state, their home districts, and RESCs and will be required to engage in a process of diagnosis, planning, intervention, and monitoring. The higher-performing schools, however, will be given the information they need to drive their own improvement. All schools will be given school performance reports that provide detailed information about student performance across numerous metrics and provide comparisons not only to accountability targets but also to regional and demographic peers across the state.

Building State, District, and School Capacity

The CSDE will help build district and school capacity by increasing financial resources to the districts that need it most, partnering with districts as they plan for school intervention, and removing barriers and duplication. The state’s 30 lowest-performing districts will receive substantial increases in funding, conditional on district plans for reform in key areas defined by the state. The state’s new Turnaround Team will act as a resource to districts as they plan for and monitor interventions in their struggling schools. Finally, the state is working to reduce barriers for districts by reducing unnecessary reporting requirements.

Accountability and Support in the Realigned CSDE

Connecticut’s Chief Performance Officer will lead efforts to provide the CSDE and districts with actionable information about student learning. The Chief Performance Officer will complete and leverage Connecticut’s data infrastructure, providing ongoing research and data analysis that will help inform more precisely where problems and opportunities lie in Connecticut’s schools at the school, student, and even the standard level. We intend to identify opportunities for improvement not just in broad percentages or score categories but to speak explicitly about the numbers of children needing improvement to remind all audiences that we are reporting about children’s lives rather than just statistics. Identification of effective practices for narrowing the achievement gap—and improving student performance overall—will be an important function of this research office.

The Chief Performance Officer will work with the Commissioner and the SBE to develop clear metrics for status, progress, and goals for every school, district, and student group in the state as required by the ESEA waiver process. The CSDE’s accountability system will also help inform the CSDE’s interventions in low-performing schools and will provide districts with the information they need to more effectively intervene in their low-performing schools. In this role, the Chief Performance Officer will provide a central pipeline of information to the Chief Academic Officer, the Chief Talent Officer, and the Chief Turnaround Officer functions.

The Chief Turnaround Officer will work to turn around schools with records of persistent underperformance by providing supports, guidance, interventions, and new strategies. This office will analyze low-performing schools and identify the nuanced leadership, assessment, curriculum, professional development, technology, or other changes necessary to improve educational outcomes. This office will seek out effective practices from the state and nation, identifying partners that work successfully with public schools to create the conditions for change.

2.A.ii Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding information, if any.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA includes student achievement only on reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and focus schools.</p>	<p>Option B</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or to identify reward, priority, and focus schools, it must:</p> <p>a. provide the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at the proficient level on the State’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and</p> <p>b. include an explanation of how the included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.</p>
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ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.5) Did the SEA include student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and focus schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.6) Did the SEA provide the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at the proficient level on the State’s most recent administration of each additional assessment for all grades assessed?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.A.7) Does the SEA’s weighting of the included assessments result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve the State’s college- and career-ready standards?

The CSDE proposes incorporating the results of writing and science assessments into the accountability framework along with results from reading and mathematics. When the CSDE developed its accountability system to comply with the requirements of the NCLB Act, it was not required to assess writing, but it continued to do so at considerable expense because of the importance it assigns to writing. The CSDE is in full agreement with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), which asserts that writing is a “tool for thinking” (2004). The 2007 results of the NAEP Writing Assessment suggest that the continuous efforts that Connecticut educators have directed toward writing instruction have benefited students. The NAEP 2007 results showed that Connecticut’s eighth-grade students had claimed the nation’s top spot in writing performance.

The new accountability model will hold schools and districts accountable for student performance in writing through the SPI, as explained in section 2.B. While a vertical scale to measure student growth in reading and mathematics is in place, individual student growth data is not available for the writing assessment. Therefore, writing will be included in the status and change measures but cannot be included as an individual growth measure.

Connecticut’s new system also will hold schools accountable for science, which is tested in the fifth, eighth, and tenth grades. This is an important shift that raises expectations for Connecticut students. The CSDE recognizes the strong relationship between mathematics and science and the potential through strong STEM programs to nurture students’ abilities to reason analytically and to apply knowledge to solve complex problems of all types. The CSDE is in full agreement with the Board on Science Education within the National Academy of Sciences that “science, engineering, and technology permeate every aspect of modern life . . . and some knowledge of science and engineering is required to understand and participate in many major public policy issues of today, as well as to make informed everyday decisions.”¹

In future years, the CSDE will look to improve the current science assessments by adding end-of-grade and end-of-standard benchmark assessments. These assessments would measure fewer topics and skills and provide teachers and parents with more specific data about what students have learned. These new assessments will hold districts accountable for teaching the standards assigned to each grade by the Next Generation National Science Education Standards and will yield more actionable detail about what students know and can do year-by-year.

Table 2.1 provides the percentage of all students who performed at the Proficient level on Connecticut’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed. In the future, Connecticut will replace proficiency as measure of achievement with the SPI, described in greater detail below.

Table 2.1 CMT and CAPT Percent Proficient for Writing and Science

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
2010–11 CMT/CAPT Writing Percentage at/above Proficient	81.1	85.4	88.0	86.1	79.8	81.6	88.6
2010–11 CMT/CAPT Science Percentage at/above Proficient	N/A	N/A	82.4	N/A	N/A	75.9	81.7

¹ Board on Science Education (2011). *A framework for K-12 science education: Practices, crosscutting concepts, and core ideas*. Retrieved from http://www7.nationalacademies.org/bose/Frameworks_Report_Brief.pdf

2.B SET AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Select the method the SEA will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts. If the SEA sets AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, the AMOs for LEAs, schools, or subgroups that are further behind must require greater rates of annual progress.

Option A	Option B	Option C
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Set AMOs in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the “all students” group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years. The SEA must use current proficiency rates based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Set AMOs that increase in annual equal increments and result in 100 percent of students achieving proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year. The SEA must use the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p> <p>ii. Provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs in the text box below.</p> <p>iii. Provide a link to the State’s report card or attach a copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the “all students” group and all subgroups. (Attachment 8)</p>

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.1) Did the SEA describe the method it will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics, for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups, that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts through one of the three options?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.2) *Option C* – Did the SEA describe another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.3) Did the SEA provide the new AMOs and the method used to set these AMOs?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.4) Did the SEA provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.5) If the SEA set AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, do the AMOs require LEAs, schools, and subgroups that are further behind to make greater rates of annual progress?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.6) Did the SEA attach a copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the “all students” group and all subgroups? (Attachment 8)

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.7) Are these AMOs similarly ambitious to the AMOs that would result from using Option A or B above?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.8) Are these AMOs ambitious but achievable given the State’s existing proficiency rates and any other relevant circumstances in the State?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.B.9) Will these AMOs result in a significant number of children being on track to be college- and career-ready?

Connecticut’s Goals

To ensure that all Connecticut students are prepared for college and career, the CSDE has set its goals high: students should perform at the Goal level on standardized exams, and at least 96% of students should graduate from high school (94% within four years). The CSDE believes all Connecticut students—including members of historically underperforming subgroups—can and must meet these targets. By 2018, schools, districts, and the state as a whole will achieve increases in student performance and graduation rates such that they are halfway to achieving these state targets.

The CSDE will measure student achievement using an SPI, which will provide schools with a score between 0 and 100 that captures student performance at the Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Goal levels on state standardized tests. The CSDE will measure graduation rates using both a cohort graduation rate (which measures the percentage of students who graduate

within four years) and the Holding Power Rate (which will give high schools credit for all students who graduate even if they require more years of instruction; it is calculated using 1 – dropout rate). These measures are described in more detail in this section.

Connecticut Performance Targets. To meet statewide goals, Connecticut must make significant annual progress. Meeting the statewide annual targets shown in Table 2.2 will put the CSDE on track to meet its 2018 goals. The CSDE will set accountability targets in the following areas: Connecticut Performance Index (CPI) for the CMT, Connecticut Performance Index (CPI) for the CAPT, Four-Year Graduation Rate, and the Holding Power Rate.

In light of Connecticut’s approved Field Test Flexibility, nearly 90 percent of Connecticut districts will administer the Smarter Balanced field test in lieu of the CMT and CAPT in 2013-2014. Therefore, it is not possible to compute CPI for 2014 or evaluate performance against the 2014 CPI targets. Additionally, since the CSDE will begin administering the Smarter Balanced operational assessment that is aligned to college and career ready standards in 2014-15, a new baseline and annual targets toward a yet-to-be-determined ultimate target cannot be established until after the administration of that assessment in 2014-15. Therefore, CPI targets for 2014-15 and beyond in the table below are subject to change.

Table 2.2 Statewide Annual Accountability Targets, 2012–18

Reporting Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Target
Cohort Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
CAPT CPI	72.1	73.2	74.4	75.5	76.6	77.8	78.9	88.0
CMT CPI	77.1	77.9	78.7	79.4	80.2	81.0	81.8	88.0
Four-Year Graduation Rate	81.8 82.7	82.7 83.7	83.5 84.6	84.4 85.6	85.3 86.5	86.2 87.4	87.0 88.4	94.0
Holding Power Rate	88.3 89.1	88.9 89.7	89.4 90.3	90.0 90.8	90.5 91.4	91.1 92.0	91.6 92.6	96.0

School Performance Targets. All Connecticut schools will be expected to meet AMOs, or performance targets, that are aligned with the state targets and with the criteria in the proposed system of school classification. Schools that meet all of their performance targets are helping to ensure that Connecticut meets its state goals; are on track to increase by a level in the school classification system; and, most importantly, are making significant progress toward ensuring that all students are prepared for college and career.

Connecticut’s goal for all schools is to achieve an SPI of 88. A baseline SPI will be calculated for every school based on the three most recent years of CMT/CAPT data (2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12). Schools with a baseline SPI at or above 88 will maintain their SPI above that level. If these schools have any subgroups of students with SPIs lower than 88, then, by 2018, they will reduce by half the gap between their 2011 subgroup baseline SPIs and an SPI of 88. All schools with an SPI below 88 will, by 2018, reduce by half the gap between their 2011 baseline SPIs and an SPI of 88 for all students and all subgroups. When Connecticut achieves this target, the state

will have made significant progress towards ensuring that its students are not merely Proficient, but are performing at Goal – a level indicative of college and career readiness.

Subject-Specific School Targets: In addition to these accountability targets, Connecticut will also track the progress schools, districts, and the state are making toward increasing performance in each subject considered separately. These subject-specific performance targets are shown in Table 2.3.

In light of Connecticut’s approved Field Test Flexibility, nearly 90 percent of Connecticut districts will administer the Smarter Balanced field test in lieu of the CMT and CAPT in 2013-2014. Therefore, it is not possible to compute Subject CPIs in reading, writing and mathematics for 2014 or evaluate performance against the 2014 CPI targets. Additionally, since the CSDE will begin administering the Smarter Balanced operational assessment that is aligned to college and career ready standards in 2014-15, a new baseline and annual targets toward a yet-to-be-determined ultimate target cannot be established until after the administration of that assessment in 2014-15. Therefore, CPI targets in Math, Reading, and Writing for 2014-15 and beyond are subject to change.

Table 2.3 Statewide Annual SPI Performance Targets by Subject for Science, 2012-18

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Target
Math CMT CPI	80.7	81.2	81.7	82.3	82.8	83.3	83.8	84.4	88.0
Reading CMT CPI	76.1	77.0	77.8	78.7	79.5	80.4	81.2	82.1	88.0
Writing CMT CPI	79.0	79.6	80.3	80.9	81.6	82.2	82.9	83.5	88.0
Science CMT CPI	75.9	76.8	77.6	78.5	79.4	80.2	81.1	82.0	88.0
Math CAPT CPI	69.6	70.9	72.2	73.5	74.8	76.2	77.5	78.8	88.0
Reading CAPT CPI	69.8	71.1	72.4	73.7	75.0	76.3	77.6	78.9	88.0
Writing CAPT CPI	77.6	78.3	79.1	79.8	80.5	81.3	82.0	82.8	88.0
Science CAPT CPI	70.7	71.9	73.1	74.4	75.6	76.9	78.1	79.3	88.0

The CSDE will use the aggregate SPI, instead of only subject specific SPIs for reading and math, to classify schools and trigger interventions. As described previously, the CSDE believes that schools should place equal value on reading, math, writing, and science and wants to ensure that the proposed accountability system does not create incentives for schools to focus time and resources on reading and math to the exclusion of science and writing.

The CSDE believes that using the aggregate SPI to classify schools will not mask low reading and math performance. These data indicate that the combined SPI is a good indicator of school performance in reading and math and supports the use of an aggregate SPI as the basis of school classification. School performance reports will include subject specific performance targets and information about whether the school met each target so that schools and districts can use these data to select appropriate interventions.

At the high school level, schools will reduce by half the gap between their 2011 four-year cohort graduation rate and the Holding Power Rate of 94% and 96%, respectively. Schools will

be classified, in part, based on whether they meet or miss these SPI and graduation rate annual accountability targets.

The CSDE also plans to set performance targets for vertical scale growth at the elementary and middle school level, which it will incorporate into its accountability system for the 2013-2014 school year. These vertical scale targets, called “student success rates” are described in more detail below.

However, in light of the field test and determination flexibilities granted to Connecticut in January 2014 and Connecticut’s approach to local assessment choice with almost 90 percent of districts choosing the Smarter Balanced field test, Connecticut will defer full incorporation of student growth and related metrics into the school accountability system until after implementation of the Smarter Balanced operational assessments in 2014-15. Individual student growth data was used in the pilot phase of teacher evaluation in 2012-13 and districts participating in the legacy assessments will have the option to receive “student success rates” based on vertical scale targets for informational purposes following the 2013-14 school year.

Every Connecticut school will receive an annual performance report that provides information about whether the school has met its performance targets and how the school’s performance compares to other district schools, other schools across the state, and peer schools that serve similar populations of students. The performance reports will indicate whether the school met each of these performance targets for the “all students” group and for all ESEA subgroups. Schools will be held accountable for their progress with the “all students” group and each of the following historically underperforming subgroups: ELLs, students with disabilities, black students, Hispanic students, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Accountability Measures: Now and in the Future

The CSDE’s proposed accountability system includes measures of the following:

- *Student achievement*, measured by performance on Connecticut’s state tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and science;
- *Change in student achievement*, measured by the change in performance on Connecticut’s state tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and science;
- ~~*Student growth*, measured by the vertical scale growth of individual students on Connecticut’s state tests in reading and math (to be incorporated in 2013-2014)~~
- *College and career readiness*, measured by graduation rates; and
- *Subgroup performance and college and career readiness*, measured by subgroup achievement, change in achievement, and growth on Connecticut’s state tests and subgroup graduation rates for high schools.

The CSDE believes that the state has a responsibility to educate the whole student—not just in academics, but also in civics, arts, and fitness. The CSDE also believes that school quality cannot be fully captured by test scores. Therefore, the Performance Team will consider incorporating

additional metrics in categories such as civics, arts, fitness, college and career readiness, and school climate into the accountability system at a later date.

The CSDE is also considering supporting personalized learning in select schools. Connecticut superintendents, through their representative organization CAPSS, have recommended that the state explore the possibility of using assessments that are more personalized in order to be more effective, more dynamic, and better able to meet the needs of today’s learners. A personalized learning system would base instruction, pacing, and assessment plans on the student’s learning needs; incorporate learning styles of the learner into the learning plan; and integrate the student’s interests into the learning plan. We plan to use pilot in select schools as a way to explore alternatives to the traditional instruction and assessment model, which is based on the accumulation of Carnegie units and passing standardized summative assessments administered for all students of all skill levels at the same time. Outcomes of the pilot may inform future revisions of the accountability system, either through district-by-district exceptions or through a broader evolution of our approach in future years.

The office of the Chief Performance Officer will be responsible for exploring ways to add measures to the accountability system that will provide a fuller, more accurate picture of school performance. The CSDE is committed to continuous improvement of its AMOs both through rigorous evaluation of the usefulness of the metrics it has selected as well as engaging with stakeholders as the system is implemented. Additionally, the Performance Team will add other measures to its school performance reports that will help schools and districts drive the process of improvement but will not be part of the CSDE’s system of accountability.

Table 2.4 Proposed and Future Accountability Measures

	Proposed Accountability Measures for Immediate Incorporation	Measures the CSDE Will Consider Incorporating in Future Years
Student Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecticut’s state tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and science and subgroup achievement for grades 3–8 and 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable measures of literacy and numeracy for grades K–3 Proficiency or access measures for civics, arts, and fitness End-of-course exams
Change in Student Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in performance on Connecticut’s state tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable measures of literacy and numeracy for grades K–3 Proficiency or access measures for civics, arts, and fitness End-of-course exams
Student Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Percentage of students who meet individual growth targets on the vertical scale (plan is to incorporate in 2013-2014 school year)</u> <u>Given that nearly 90 percent of</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT growth <u>PSAT/SAT growth</u> <u>Smarter Balanced growth measures will be incorporated when available following the full implementation of operational assessments.</u>

	<u>districts will be administering the Smarter Balanced field test in lieu of the CMT in 2013-14, it will not be possible to incorporate a student growth measure at this time.</u>	
College and Career Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College enrollment and completion • AP and IB: participation and success rates • SAT/ACT: participation and success rates • Industry certification and exam pass rates • Postsecondary remediation rate in CT
Subgroup Performance and College and Career Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement, change in achievement, and growth of subgroups on Connecticut’s state tests; subgroup graduation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See all measures above
School Climate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent, staff, and student surveys • Teacher and staff attendance • Staff turnover • Disciplinary measures, including suspension rates

In the initial year of implementing the new accountability system, the CSDE has elected to use measures and data for which it is most confident in using and that the CSDE has the most experience collecting and reporting. This will help to ensure that districts, schools, and parents can easily understand how schools will be measured and classified.

Table 2.5 Accountability Measures and Metrics

	Accountability Measures	Metrics
Student Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State tests in ELA, mathematics, writing, and science, and subgroup achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPI • % Advanced
Change in Student Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in performance on state tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the SPI
Student Growth (Elementary and Middle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical scale growth (to be incorporated in 2013-2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students who meet individual targets on vertical scales

College and Career Readiness (High School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort high school graduation rate • Holding Power Rate
Subgroup Performance, Growth, and College and Career Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement, change in achievement, and vertical scale growth on state tests; graduation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SPI for each subgroup • Change in the SPI for each subgroup • Percentage of students in each subgroup who meet individual targets on vertical scales • Cohort high school graduation rate for each subgroup • Holding Power Rate for each subgroup

Connecticut will classify schools on the basis of their performance across six components. These six components of our accountability system reflect the CSDE's beliefs, and each captures a different element of school performance. First, the CSDE believes that schools should ensure that all their students are prepared for college and career. The proposed system will therefore measure and classify schools based on their students' absolute achievement, with the expectation that students are performing at levels so that schools and subgroups achieve an SPI of 88. As described in more detail in Section 2.B, performing at Goal ~~in~~is an indicator of college and career readiness. Second, the CSDE believes that schools should value increasing the achievement of students across any of the performance thresholds, rather than only when students increase from, for example, Basic to Proficient. Therefore, the proposed system credits schools for increases in achievement across any of three performance thresholds on the state exams (as measured by change in SPI). Further, the proposed system reserves the highest classification of schools for schools with more than one-fourth of students scoring at the Advanced level in 3 of the 4 a majority of subjects. Third, we recognize that schools may make substantial and important progress with students within bands of performance rather than between them, and we believe that such growth should be recognized as well. Thus, we propose introducing student success rates, which capture individual student growth within bands of performance (as measured by the vertical scale) in the 2013-14 school year. However, since most Connecticut districts will be administering the Smarter Balanced field tests in lieu of the CMT/CAPT, Connecticut must wait until data from the Smarter Balanced operational assessments are available in order to measure student growth and to incorporate that information as a component of the accountability system. Fourth, the CSDE believes that high schools have the responsibility not only to set high standards but also to create paths for all students to meet them. Consequently, the proposed system requires that schools decrease their dropout rates and increase their four-year graduation rates. Fifth, the CSDE believes that all students can and must achieve at high levels. Therefore, the proposed classification system requires schools to meet performance targets for subgroups that have historically

underperformed in Connecticut: ELLs, students with disabilities, black students, Hispanic students, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Finally, the CSDE believes that full information about students is necessary for setting goals and driving improvement. Therefore, our proposed system continues to emphasize the importance of high testing participation rates.

The components, how they are computed, and how they are used to classify schools are described below.

Special Note Regarding the 2013-14 School Year: Given Connecticut’s request for both the *double-testing* and *determination* flexibilities offered by the USED, the components below, with the exception of graduation rates and Science SPI, will be computed and reported only for schools that administer the legacy assessments (CMT and CAPT). For any LEA (and all its schools) that participates in the SB-FT in lieu of the current state assessment, the CSDE will refrain from reporting performance against AMOs for English Language Arts and Mathematics, and will retain for the 2014-15 school year, the same Federal accountability determinations as they have for the 2013-14 school year. The CSDE, however, will report performance against AMOs, as applicable based on grades tested, for Science for all LEAs and schools statewide.

1. The SPI: Measuring Student Achievement at All Levels. The SPI will be used as the baseline measure for every school and subgroup in the state and will be a key component in measuring progress over time.

As mentioned in section 2.A, the CSDE believes that the SPI is a better measure of student performance than the percentage of students who score Proficient because it more accurately captures the distribution of performance of all students.

For each subject tested on the CMT and CAPT—mathematics, reading, writing, and science—Connecticut reports performance for five achievement levels: Below Basic (BB), Basic (B), Proficient (P), Goal (G), and Advanced (A). These achievement levels are well understood throughout the state.

A student’s Individual Performance Index (IPI) is calculated for every student by averaging the amount of credit a student earns across tested subjects (mathematics, reading, writing, and science). Students are awarded credit based on the performance level reached in the following way:

~~The SPI is calculated for each subject tested, and then the subject-specific SPIs are averaged. The SPI is calculated for each district, school, and subgroup based on all tested students. Districts, schools, and subgroups are credited in the following way:~~

- Students who score Below Basic (BB) = ~~0.00~~ points;
- Students who score Basic (B) = ~~0.33~~ points;
- Students who score Proficient (P) = ~~0.67~~ points; and
- Students who score Goal (G) or Advanced (A) = 1.00 points.

After summing the values a particular student earns, an average is taken to establish the IPI. To calculate the school’s SPI, the IPIs for all of the school’s students are averaged. The result is an index score ranging from 0 to 100, where 0 would indicate that all students scored in the Below Basic level and 100 would indicate that all students scored at the Goal or Advanced level.

Subject-level indices may also be calculated for schools. A Subject-specific SPI is calculated by averaging the credit earned in the subject across all tested students.

Table 2.6 Calculating the SPI

	Level	Calculation
Step 1	Subject specific SPI	$SPI_{\text{Subject}} = (\%BB * 0.0) + (\%B * 0.33) + (\%P * 0.67) + (\%G \text{ or } A * 1.0)$
Step 2	Aggregate SPI	<p>High schools: $SPI = (SPI_{\text{Mathematics}} + SPI_{\text{Reading}} + SPI_{\text{Writing}} + SPI_{\text{Science}}) / 4$</p> <p>Elementary/middle schools with grades in which science is tested: $SPI = (SPI_{\text{Mathematics}} * 0.3) + (SPI_{\text{Reading}} * 0.3) + (SPI_{\text{Writing}} * 0.3) + (SPI_{\text{Science}} * 0.1)$</p> <p>Elementary/middle schools with grades in which science is NOT tested: $SPI = (SPI_{\text{Mathematics}} + SPI_{\text{Reading}} + SPI_{\text{Writing}}) / 3$</p>

Note the two different calculations for elementary and middle schools. In grades 3 through 8, mathematics, reading, and writing are tested in all six grades, while science is tested in only two grades (grades 5 and 8). As a result, if science is tested in the school, mathematics, reading, and writing are each weighted at 0.3 and science is weighted at 0.1. The weighting is based on the relative number of grades in which each subject is tested, so there is a 3:1 ratio in the number of students tested in mathematics, reading, and writing compared to science. A relatively small number of schools—109 schools out of 798—do not have grade spans that include grades 5 or 8 where science is tested. For these schools, the school SPI is the average of the subject-specific SPIs for mathematics, reading, and writing.

The SPI will be calculated annually to provide a status measure of performance for schools and subgroups. The CSDE will use the SPI to compare changes in performance over time by calculating the difference in SPI values between consecutive years or over a period of several years.

The table below (Table 2.7) shows the average subgroup SPI in the 2010-2011 school year for Connecticut’s five traditionally underperforming subgroups and the “all students” group across schools with a sufficient number of students to meet the subgroup *n*-size requirement of 20. The student achievement data reveals clear differences in SPIs by subgroup. SPIs for black, Hispanic, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch are lower than those for the “all

students” group. The gap in achievement is even wider for students with disabilities and English language learners.

Table 2.7 Connecticut 2010-2011 School Performance Indices by Subgroup

	Average School Performance Indices for Each Subgroup			
	CMT SPI	2010 # of students	CAPT SPI	2010 # of students
All Students	77.1	250,599	72.1	42,821
Black	60.0	32,847	50.1	5,686
Hispanic	59.6	46,198	51.8	7,016
Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	60.3	89,970	51.2	13,167
English Language Learners	45.4	13,053	29.2	1,770
Students With Disabilities	44.8	31,211	37.5	5,075

The CSDE’s goal is that all schools and subgroups will achieve an SPI of 88. If the CSDE set its target so that, on average, students were Proficient, then the goal SPI would equal 67. By choosing an SPI of 88 as the target, Connecticut creates an accountability system that sets student achievement targets at Goal on state assessments. **This target represents a shift toward higher expectations: the NCLB system set student achievement targets at Proficient, which is a lower target on the state assessments.**

Scoring at or above Goal is a challenging yet reasonable expectation for Connecticut students. In 2010–11, 18% of elementary and middle schools achieved at or above this SPI level. Goal requires students to demonstrate extensive knowledge of grade-level content. In mathematics, for example, elementary and middle school students that take the CMT demonstrate well-developed conceptual understanding, computational skills, and problem-solving skills, as well as an ability to solve complex and abstract mathematical problems. For reading, these students scoring at Goal are likely to demonstrate the consistent ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary and informational texts with minimal assistance. Students at this level will also consistently use effective strategies before, during, and after reading to understand, interpret, and evaluate grade-appropriate text.

Furthermore, an independent study of Connecticut’s assessments confirms that students who score Goal on high school state tests (CAPT) are more likely to be college and career ready, as measured by SAT performance, remedial course-taking patterns in college, college GPA, and postsecondary degree attainment. A second study found that a student’s performance on the grade 8 state test (CMT) in each discipline highly correlates with grade 10 CAPT performance. Setting the target at Goal standard at all grade levels represents an ambitious and appropriate

target for Connecticut’s students.² For the 2010–11 school year, the SPI was 77.1 for the CMT and 72.1 for the CAPT.

During 2013-14, it will not be possible for the CSDE to calculate and report an overall or subgroup SPI for schools that are participating in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments. However, a Science SPI will be reported for all schools that enroll students in Grades 5, 8, or 10.

2. Percent at Advanced. The CSDE seeks to recognize performance at all levels – including the highest levels of performance. However, the SPI only credits schools for achievement at four levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and at or above Goal. Considered alone, the SPI does not distinguish between schools with many students performing at Goal and schools with the many students performing at Advanced. The CSDE believes that truly excellent schools drive student performance to the highest levels. The CSDE will therefore measure the percentage of students at Advanced for each school in addition to the SPI. “Excelling” status will only be awarded to schools with ~~at least~~ at least more than 25% of students performing at the Advanced level on three out of four assessments. Additionally, schools that increase the performance of a significant percentage of their students from the Goal to Advanced levels (measured by $\Delta\%$ A) will be recognized as “High Progress Schools of Distinction.” This distinction is explained further in Section 2.C.

During 2013-14, it will not be possible to calculate Percent at Advanced for schools that have elected to participate in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments.

3. Change in the SPI: Measuring Change in Performance at All Levels. While the SPI is used to measure a school’s current level of student achievement, the change in SPI can be used to compare changes in performance over time by calculating the difference in SPI values between consecutive years or over a period of several years. The state will use a school’s SPI score from the 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12 school years to establish the baseline, and will expect schools with baseline SPIs lower than 88 to increase their SPIs over time. **The change in SPI measure gives schools credit for moving students across any of three thresholds: from Below Basic to Basic, from Basic to Proficient, or from Proficient to Goal.** Statewide, an increase of one point on the SPI between two consecutive school years represents a net gain of approximately 1,800 students increasing their performance by one level across the three performance bands.

The change in SPI measure allows the CSDE to see a more complete picture of how a school has moved its students across any of three performance thresholds. Moreover, the SPI change measure avoids creating the inappropriate incentive to focus only on students who are on the

² Coelen, S., & Wilson, B. (2006, January 11). *First steps: An evaluation of the success of Connecticut students beyond high school*. Paper presented to the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Governors of Connecticut Department of Higher Education, Hartford, CT. Retrieved from http://centerforeducationstrategies.org/site/pdf/CT_FirstStep.pdf; Coelen, S., Rende, S., & Fulton, D. (2008, April). *Next steps: Preparing a quality workforce*. Storrs, CT: Department of Economics and Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis, University of Connecticut. Retrieved from http://ctmirror.org/sites/default/files/documents/08apr_NextSteps.pdf

culsp of proficiency and creates the more appropriate incentive to focus on students at all levels as schools work to increase the performance of all students to the ambitious Goal standard. During 2013-14, it will not be possible for the CSDE to calculate an overall SPI for schools that are participating in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments. Consequently, no SPI change measure can be calculated for these schools.

Connecticut Student Achievement Goals. By 2018, each school and district will achieve the following goals:

1. If the baseline SPI (average score from the previous three years ending in 201~~0~~¹–1~~4~~²) is below 88, it will reduce—by half—the gap between its baseline SPI and an SPI of 88 for all students and all subgroups.
2. If the baseline SPI is above 88, it will maintain an SPI above 88.
3. If the baseline SPI is less than 52, it will improve SPI growth by three points each year (ambitious, but achievable growth); this three-point goal is explained in detail below.

The CSDE will calculate the required annual change in the SPI by finding the difference between the baseline SPI and the goal SPI of 88, requiring enough growth each year so that if the school makes adequate progress, it will increase its SPI halfway to 88 by 2018.

However, the CSDE will modify its goal for the lowest-performing schools. An analysis of historical school growth shows that fewer than 15% of all schools from the previous three years achieved average annual growth greater than three points per year on the SPI. Therefore, to make the state’s growth goals achievable for all schools, the CSDE has set the required growth at three points on the SPI for schools with an SPI below 52. This rule applies to schools with SPIs below 52 because to close their performance gaps by half, they would need to increase their SPIs by more than three points per year. The three-point SPI performance target is intended to provide a realistic, achievable annual goal for principals and teachers.

For example, school calculation scenarios include:

- If a school’s current baseline SPI is 88, then it has already reached the target, so it receives full credit for change in the SPI as long as it maintains an SPI over 88.
- If a school’s current baseline SPI for “all students” is 76, then the ultimate goal is to increase that number to 88. By 2018, the school’s goal is to move halfway to that target. This school will need to be on track to reach an SPI of 82 (a six-point increase) by 2018. Over six years, this means the school’s “all students” group must show a change of approximately one point on the SPI each year to receive full credit for this category.
- If a school’s current SPI for “all students” is 46, then the ultimate goal is to increase that number to 88. By 2018, the school’s goal is to move halfway to that target. This school will need to be on track to reach an SPI of 67 (a 21-point increase) by 2018. Over six years, this means the school’s “all students” group would need to show a change of 3.5 points on the SPI each year. The CSDE will require this school to increase performance by at least 3 SPI points per year, which it believes is a challenging but reasonable performance target.

For the 2010–11 school year, the SPI was 77.1 for the CMT and 72.1 for the CAPT. To make adequate growth—to reach halfway to 88 in six years—the SPI would have to grow each year by an average of 0.8 points on the CMT and 1.1 points on the CAPT. The CSDE believes that this target is achievable and that reaching it will indicate that the state is preparing more students for college and careers and closing its achievement gaps.

4. Vertical Scale Growth: Measuring Individual Student Growth (for 2013-14 school year). In focus groups with principals, superintendents, teachers, and organizations that represent students with disabilities, the CSDE was asked whether it is possible to use measures in the system of accountability that recognize students who make significant progress but fall short of moving from one testing level to another. They also asked for a measure that would compare an individual student’s performance to the same student’s performance in the previous year, rather than measuring a school’s performance in one year against the entire school’s performance in the previous year.

Like these stakeholders, the CSDE wants its accountability system to recognize students who make significant growth regardless of whether they are able to cross a threshold into the next level. The CSDE therefore provided vertical scale scores based student growth results at the elementary and middle school levels in the 2012-13 school year to districts that piloted Connecticut’s new system for educator evaluation and support.

The CSDE’s vertical scales were developed to measure changes in student performance across grades. A vertical scale can also be used to interpret growth for individual students, schools, or districts and for various subgroups (e.g., ethnicity, lunch status, special education). The vertical scales were developed through a linking study in 2007 and are available for the CMT mathematics and reading tests for grades 3 through 8.³

School Success Rate: Each school was assigned a School Success Rate, which combines the percentage of students who: (1) score Below Basic but experience sufficient growth such that they are on track to achieve Basic within three years; (2) score Basic and experience sufficient growth such that they are on track to achieve Proficient within three years; (3) score Proficient and experience sufficient growth such that they are on track to achieve Goal within three years; (4) score Goal and experience sufficient growth such that they are on track to achieve Advanced within three years; and (5) maintain their Advanced score.

School calculation scenarios include:

- A school of 100 students, with all 100 students scoring at Advanced, would automatically receive a School Success Rate of 100%.
- A school of 100 students with 30 students scoring Advanced, 10 students who score Goal, 10 students who score Proficient, 30 students at Basic, and 20 students who score Below Basic would have its School Success Rate measured in the following way:

³ Sinclair, N., & Dirir, M. (2011, Feb.). *Research bulletin: The development of Connecticut’s vertical scale and growth model*. Retrieved from http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/cmt/resources/misc_cmt/VSR-ResearchBulletin-Feb2011.pdf

- Full credit for the 30 students scoring at Advanced.
- Credit for any of the 20 students scoring at Below Basic who made enough vertical scale growth to meet their individualized target (which means— at the current growth trajectory—the student is on track to score at Basic within three years). Specifically, if all of the 20 students in this group met their individual growth targets, then the school would get credit for these 20 students.
- Credit for any of the 30 students scoring at Basic who made enough vertical scale growth to meet their individualized target (which means— at the current growth trajectory—the student is on track to score at Proficient within three years). Specifically, if 20 of the 30 students in this group met their individual growth targets, then the school would get credit for these 20 students.
- Credit for any of the 10 students scoring at Proficient who made enough vertical scale growth to meet their individualized target (i.e., at the current growth trajectory the student is on track to score at Goal within three years). Specifically, if 5 of the 10 students scoring at Proficient met their individual growth targets, then the school would get credit for each of these 5 students.
- Credit for any of the 10 students scoring at Goal who made enough vertical scale growth to meet their individualized target (i.e., at the current growth trajectory the student is on track to score at Advanced within three years). Specifically, if 5 of the 10 students scoring at Goal met their individual growth targets, then the school would get credit for each of these 5 students.
- In this example, the school received credit for its 30 students who scored Advanced, 20 students who scored Below Basic and met their individual growth targets, 20 students who scored Basic and met their individual growth targets, 5 students who scored Proficient and met their individual growth targets, and 5 students who scored Goal and met their individual growth targets. Because this school met its growth goal for 80 of its 100 students, its School Success Rate is 80%.

Growth for individual students from one year to another year is defined as [Vertical Scale Score Year 2] – [Vertical Scale Score Year 1]. Growth for groups of students from one year to another year is defined as [Mean Vertical Scale Score Year 2] – [Mean Vertical Scale Score Year 1]. The CSDE has not identified expected growth on the vertical scale. Vertical scales are not available for the CAPT because it is a single grade-level test. Additionally, no vertical scale relates CMT performance to CAPT performance.

The CSDE had elected to delay the full incorporation of this metric into its accountability system until 2013-14 because Connecticut had not yet used the student success rate as an accountability metric for schools, and the CSDE wanted to ensure that the targets its sets for schools are indicative of significant growth but also attainable. Given the large number of schools that have elected to administer the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments, the CSDE will not incorporate vertical scale growth into the accountability system in 2013-14. Instead, the CSDE is working as a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to develop a

robust system that can measure individual student growth longitudinally and can be incorporated into its school/district accountability model.

5. Graduation and Dropout Rates. Starting with the graduating class of 2010, the CSDE has used student-level data from the state’s public school information system to track an individual cohort of students from their initial entrance into ninth grade until they exited public schools or graduated from high school. This new methodology is based on the NCLB/ESEA four-year cohort graduation rate calculation rules. This methodology is more accurate than previous methods used for calculating the school, district, and state graduation rates and provides a uniform system across states for tracking and comparing student graduation rates.

The data indicates that for the 2010 cohort, 81.8% graduated in four years, 6.1% are still enrolled in high school, and 0.4% are non-completers who have received a certificate of attendance. Additionally, 11.7% of the 2010 cohort did not graduate, were not still enrolled, or did not receive a certificate of attendance. This group of students represents the state’s dropout population.

The graduation data reveals clear differences in subgroup four-year graduation rates (Table 2.8). Graduation rates for black (68.7%) and Hispanic (64.0%) students are far lower than those for white (88.7%) and Asian (88.8%) students. Economically disadvantaged students (62.7%) graduate at substantially lower rates than their more advantaged counterparts (88.4%). Similar patterns hold when ELLs (60.1%) are compared to students whose primary language is English (82.7%) and students with disabilities (62.5%) to their nondisabled peers (84.3%)

Table 2.8 Connecticut 2010 Cohort Graduation Rates by Subgroup

Category	2010 Cohort #	Graduates	Non-Graduates		
		Four-Year Graduation Rate	Still Enrolled	Non-Completers (Certificate of Attendance)	Drop-out
All Students	44,461	81.8	6.1	0.4	11.7
Hispanic	6,917	64.0	11.4	0.5	24.1
Non-Hispanic	37,544	85.2	5.1	0.4	9.3
Indian	146	72.9	6.9	0.0	20.2
Asian	1,562	88.8	3.3	0.1	7.8
Black	6,431	68.7	10.5	1.2	19.6
White	29,405	88.7	4.0	0.2	7.1
ELL	1,938	60.1	11.0	0.0	28.9
Non-ELL	42,523	82.7	5.8	0.4	11.1
Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	11,368	62.7	12.0	1.3	24.0
Not Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	33,093	88.4	4.0	0.1	7.5
Special Education	5,091	62.5	21.3	0.8	15.4
Non-Special Education	39,370	84.3	4.0	0.4	11.3

Connecticut proposes to use the 2011 graduation rate as one of its indicators for initially classifying its lowest-performing high schools, which have rates at or below 60%. The CSDE will use two indicators for subsequent AMOs. For all students and subgroups, the CSDE will use the simple cohort graduation rate as well as the 1 – dropout rate. The CSDE proposes using the 1 – dropout rate calculation, which it calls the Holding Power Rate, as an additional indicator of school performance because it believes that schools should be rewarded—not penalized—for giving students the opportunity to graduate after being enrolled for more than four years.

The CSDE’s goal is to increase the state’s Holding Power Rate to 96% and cohort graduation rate to 94%. This accounts for the students who do not graduate in four years but remain enrolled in school.

Connecticut Graduation Goals. By 2018, each high school and district will achieve the following goals:

Four-year cohort graduation rates:

- 1) If the cohort graduation rate in 2011 is below 94%, it will reduce—by half—the gap between its 2011 cohort graduation rate and a cohort graduation rate of 94% for all students and all subgroups.
- 2) If the cohort graduation rate in 2011 is above 94%, it will maintain its cohort graduation rate above 94%.

Holding Power Rates:

- 1) If the Holding Power Rate in 2011 is below 96%, it will reduce—by half—the gap between its 2011 Holding Power Rate and a Holding Power Rate of 96% for all students and all subgroups.
- 2) If the Holding Power Rate in 2011 is above 96%, it will maintain its Holding Power Rate above 96%.

In 2011, about 25% of Connecticut high schools achieved each of these ambitious graduation rates.

6. Subgroup Performance. The CSDE has chosen to focus on all the NCLB subgroups that have historically underperformed as compared to the “all students” group: African-American, Hispanic, ELLs, students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and students with disabilities. The CSDE will continue to monitor the performance of other subgroups and will incorporate them into the subgroup performance section if they begin to underperform.

The CSDE has elected to reduce the minimum threshold for school-level subgroup size (*n* size) included in accountability calculations from 40 under the NCLB Act to 20. This standard matches the FERPA standard and is the smallest threshold allowed in Connecticut; furthermore, it ensures the broadest viable reach of subgroup accountability. More specifically, this change in *n* size has substantially increased the number of schools that are accountable for subgroups. The number of schools accountable for black subgroups increased from 280 to 414, Hispanic from

356 to 548, students with disabilities from 276 to 683, ELLs from 97 to 209, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch from 757 to 928.

School subgroup performance targets will use the same major components of aggregate targets: the SPI, change in the SPI, and cohort graduation rates and Holding Power Rates for high schools. Annual targets for each subgroup will be calculated in the same way as whole-school targets (described in the previous sections).

For example, to calculate the change in the SPI that will enable the subgroup to reduce its performance gap by half:

- If subgroup A had a ~~baseline~~ SPI of 76 ~~in 2011~~, subgroup performance would need to grow roughly one point annually to reach its target of 82 SPI by 2018.
- If subgroup B had a ~~baseline~~ SPI of 50 ~~in 2011~~, then the maximum required growth of three points per year would govern, and the subgroup performance would need to grow an average of three points annually to reach its target of 70 SPI by 2018.

A single school, then, will likely have different change in SPI targets for different subgroups—meeting subgroup AMOs will require that the school make the most progress for the subgroups with the lowest performance.⁴

During 2013-14, it will not be possible for the CSDE to calculate an overall SPI for schools that are participating in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments. Consequently, subgroup performance in these schools cannot be measured against AMOs in mathematics or English language arts in 2013-14.

Connecticut is committed to an accountability system that considers the performance of all students, including students with disabilities who take Connecticut’s modified and alternate assessments. To be evaluated on the state assessments, students with disabilities must have IEPs that specify that these modified or alternate assessments are appropriate.

Since 2006, the CSDE has administered the CMT and CAPT Alternate Assessment, also known as the Skills Checklist, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. In April 2007, the US Department of Education announced an option for states to develop and administer an alternate statewide assessment based on modified academic achievement standards (MAS) for students with disabilities. This assessment is appropriate for the small group of students whose disabilities do not allow them to achieve grade-level proficiency at the same rate as their nondisabled peers but whose disabilities are not so significant that they require the Skills Checklist. Neither the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist nor the standard CMT/CAPT, with or without

⁴ The CSDE would like to initiate the process of applying for separate waivers from current ELL and SWD accountability provisions by submitting more concrete proposals for review at a later date. The CSDE requests that the ELL and SWD waivers be considered separately from the larger ESEA Flexibility waiver. Specifically, the CSDE is in the process of developing a request for a waiver from the third AMAO requirement under Title III, which will also have implications for the treatment of the ELL subgroup in this proposed Title I Accountability system.

accommodations, may be appropriate for these students, as they do not provide a suitable assessment for what these students know and can do. The CMT/CAPT MAS is intended to evaluate individual learning needs and reveal results that more accurately reflect students' academic progress, while also guiding instruction based on these students' needs.

Students participating in the CMT/CAPT MAS or the Skills Checklist will be included in the SPI, DPI, and CPI. Students who score at the Independent level on the Skills Checklist will be factored into the SPI as 1.0, students who score at the Proficient level will be assigned 0.50, and the students who score Basic will be assigned 0.0. On the MAS, students scoring at the Goal level will be factored into the SPI as 1.0, students who score at the Proficient level will be assigned 0.50, and the students who score Basic will be assigned 0.

Table 2.9: MAS and Skills Checklist SPI Values

Skills Checklist (1%)	MAS (2%)	SPI Value
Basic	Basic	0.0
Proficient	Proficient	0.50
Independent	Goal	1.0

For the purpose of accountability, at the district level, the number of students who score at the Independent level on the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist shall not exceed 1% of all students in the grades tested. Additionally, the number of student who score at the Goal level on the CMT/CAPT MAS shall not exceed 2% percent of all students in the grades tested unless scores on the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist at the Independent level do not reach the 1% cap. The scores of the students who exceed the percentage cap, at the district level, will be factored into the DPI as Basic. However, there is no cap on how many students in a district can participate in the CMT/CAPT MAS if they meet the eligibility criteria. Eligibility is based on identifying the appropriate assessment, given each student's disability.

The CSDE will include any students who exited SWD status in the SWD subgroup for two years after they exit. These students will be included in the performance index calculations for the SWD subgroup, schools, districts, and the state. This practice is aligned with our federally approved Accountability Workbook.

Schools that will administer the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments should not administer the MAS to their students with disabilities. However, the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist continues to be an appropriate choice in 2013-14 for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist will be administered regardless of whether an LEA has selected to participate in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments.

7. Participation Rate. The CSDE expects schools to test at least 95% of their student population. In the past school year, 98% of Connecticut schools met this standard. Schools that do not meet this standard are expected to meet the standard the subsequent year. Missing this target will also result in a lower classification (see the following section for more detail).

Regardless of the assessments that districts select to administer in their schools, the 95% participation rate standard remains in place in 2013-14 and beyond. The CSDE will continue to publicly report participation rates for all schools.

School Classification System

The CSDE will classify Connecticut schools into five categories based on their performance on the five accountability indicators. See table 2.11 for more details. Each category of schools will receive a different level of intervention and support. See section 2.F for more details about the differentiated monitoring, support, and intervention.

Table 2.10 CSDE School Classification System

Category	Description	Degree of Intervention
★★★★★	Excelling Schools that have achieved state target for achievement (SPI and % Advanced) and graduation rates for all students; these schools do not have significant gaps in performance for the majority of their subgroups	Self-assessment tool and information available as resources to enable schools to drive own improvement
★★★★	Progressing Schools that achieved the state target for achievement for all students but missed their targets for change in SPI or graduation rates or have significant gaps in performance for the majority of subgroups AND Schools that are approaching the state target for achievement (SPI) for all students and also (1) met targets for change in the SPI, (2) graduation rates for all students, and (3) do not have significant gaps in performance for the majority of their subgroups	Self-assessment required; no School Improvement Plan (SIP) necessary
★★★	Transition Schools that are approaching the state target for achievement but miss one or more of the following: (1) change in the SPI (2) graduation rate, or (3) have significant gaps in performance for the majority of their subgroups	Self-assessment required; used to create SIP, which must be approved by district
★★	Review (including Focus Schools) Schools with low achievement (SPI <64) AND Schools identified as Focus Schools AND Schools with participation rate under 95%	District conducts needs assessment; district and school develop SIP; approved by local school board and Turnaround Team
★	Turnaround Schools with among the 5% lowest achievement (SPI) and high schools with graduation rates below 60%	Districts and Turnaround Team implement aggressive turnaround interventions

Table 2.11 CSDE School Classification Criteria

	Excelling	Progressing	Transitioning		Review*	Turnaround*
SPI	88 or above	88 or above	64–87	64–87	Below 64	Lowest 5%
SPI Change	N/A	N/A	Meets target	Meets target	N/A	N/A
% Advanced	More than 25% Advanced in ¾ subjects	Misses one or more of the Excelling criteria		Misses target		
Four Year Graduation Rate	94% or above		90% or above	Misses one or more of the Progressing criteria	N/A	Under 60%
Holding Power Rate	96% or above		93% or above			
Subgroup Performance	Gaps between majority of subgroups and aggregate do not exceed <u>less than -10 SPI points</u>	Gaps between majority of subgroups and aggregate do not exceed <u>less than 10 SPI points</u>			One or more subgroups among lowest performing (identified as Focus School)	N/A
Participation	95% or above				Below 95%	N/A
Focus Status	Not Focus				Focus	N/A

*For these categories of schools, schools that meet any of the criteria are automatically classified in the category.

Excelling Schools. This classification is reserved for schools that exhibit high performance across several categories. Based on data from the 2010–11 school year, 85 schools would be classified as Excelling.

The SPI. Excelling Schools must maintain an SPI of at least 88. This is ambitious in that it indicates that most students in the school are achieving at the Goal level or are approaching that level. In 2010–11, 18% of elementary and middle schools achieved at or above this SPI level.

SPI Change. Because Excelling Schools have already reached the state target, which indicates college and career readiness, they are not required to meet any SPI change requirements as long as they maintain an SPI above 88. The CSDE encourages these schools to allocate their resources to set and meet other goals for their students. It wants these Excelling Schools to have the autonomy to focus on improving other indicators of school success, which—though they currently fall outside the accountability system—are nonetheless important for ensuring all students are college and career ready. These indicators include success in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, performance on the ACT and SAT, and enrollment in college level courses. By freeing these schools from SPI change, AMOs, and comparing Excelling Schools to each other—their peer schools—for each of these indicators, the CSDE will give these schools the information and autonomy they need to drive their own improvement. We will continue to explore accountability mechanisms that will create incentives for continuous improvement in our highest performing schools so that they aspire for higher student achievement.

Individual Growth Targets (~~Elementary and Middle Schools, to be incorporated following the full implementation of the Smarter Balanced operational assessments in 2013–14~~).

Graduation Rates (High Schools). The CSDE finds value in considering both the four-year cohort rate (referred to as “cohort” throughout this section) and the 1 – dropout rate (referred to as “Holding Power Rate” throughout this section). The cohort rate determines whether a student graduated with the cohort of students who entered ninth grade at the same time. As previously discussed, the CSDE now tracks an individual cohort of students from their initial entrance into ninth grade until they exit public schools or graduate from high school, using student-level data from the state’s public school information system. The CSDE requires that Excelling high schools graduate 94% of students under the cohort calculation and 96% under the Holding Power Rate calculation. These targets ambitiously require near-universal graduation rates. In 2011, approximately 25% of schools achieved each of these ambitious graduation rates.

Subgroup Criteria (All Schools). To achieve Excelling status, schools must ensure that their aggregate performance extends to a majority of groups of students, including ELLs, students with disabilities, Hispanic students, black students, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Therefore, schools with large within-school gaps for subgroups are excluded from the Excelling category. If the difference in the SPI between the “all students” group and a majority of these historically underperforming subgroups ~~is exceeds~~ 10 points or greater, then the school is excluded from the Excelling category. In 2011, 22 of the 167 elementary and middle schools with an SPI above 88 would be excluded because of their large within-school performance gaps. The CSDE will also use a “Conditional Status” designation to ensure that schools improve the performance of all subgroups. Conditional Status is described further below.

Participation Rate for State Assessments. Excelling elementary, middle (CMT), and high schools (CAPT) must meet a 95% participation rate. The NCLB Act requires at least 95% student participation for every school. The new classification system carries forward the importance of participation in determining the extent of a school’s success. This standard provides an ambitious goal of near-universal test participation rates and is consistently achieved by the majority of Connecticut schools.

Focus Status. Schools identified as Focus Schools for the low performance of their subgroups (see section 2.E for more details) cannot be classified as Excelling Schools. Schools identified as Focus Schools will automatically be classified as Review Schools.

Progressing Schools. Connecticut awards Progressing classification to two broad subcategories of schools: those with (1) SPIs above 88 (referred to as “Excelling SPI” in this section) that fail to meet other Excelling criteria or (2) SPIs between 64 and 88 (referred to as “Progressing SPI” in this section) that achieve all other Progressing criteria outcomes. Progressing Schools have not achieved the top-level classification but do not require the aggressive interventions necessary for Review and Turnaround Schools.

The SPI. Progressing Schools must maintain an SPI of at least 64. This SPI indicates that students, on average, score just below the Proficient level. It is a provisional step that indicates that, in the aggregate, schools are expected to be Proficient even as they work toward Excelling status.

SPI Change. Progressing Schools are required to meet individualized SPI change requirements. The requirement is for an annual increment that will result in halving the deficit between the school’s baseline and the 88 SPI goal in six years. For example, a school with a baseline SPI of 64 (the lowest possible SPI for Progressing and Transition Schools) would need to increase its SPI by two points each year. If an Progressing SPI-School fails to meet this target over a three-year period, then it will be designated a Transitioning School.

Individual Growth Targets (To be incorporated following the full implementation of the Smarter Balanced operational assessments).
(Elementary and Middle Schools, to be incorporated in 2013-14).

Graduation Rates (High Schools). The CSDE requires that Progressing high schools graduate at least 93% of students under the Holding Power Rate calculation and a minimum of 90% under

the cohort calculation. These cutoffs are the respective medians for Connecticut high schools; a Progressing SPI School that does not have graduation rates above these standards is automatically designated a Transition School.

Subgroup Criteria (All Schools). For a school to be classified as Progressing, a majority of its subgroups (recall that subgroups have a minimum n size of 20) cannot have significant within-school gaps when compared to the “all students” group. If the difference in the SPI between the “all students” group and a majority of these historically underperforming subgroups exceeds 10 points, then the school is excluded from the Progressing category and will be designated a Transition School. Please see the section that describes “Conditional Status” below for a more detailed description of additional subgroup protections.

Participation Rate for State Assessments. Like Excelling Schools, Progressing elementary, middle (CMT), and high schools (CAPT) must meet a 95% participation rate. The NCLB Act requires at least 95% student participation for every school.

Focus Status. Schools identified as Focus Schools cannot be classified as Progressing Schools. Schools identified as Focus Schools will automatically be classified as Review Schools.

Transitioning Schools. Connecticut awards Transitioning classification to schools that meet the Progressing SPI criteria but fail to meet one or more of the following Progressing sub-criteria:

- SPI change performance target
- Four-year graduation rate of 90%
- Holding Power Rate of 93%
- Subgroup gaps for the majority of subgroups less than 10 SPI points

Participation Rate for State Assessments. Transitioning elementary, middle (CMT), and high schools (CAPT) must meet a 95% participation rate.

Focus Status. Schools identified as Focus Schools cannot be classified as Transitioning schools. Schools identified as Focus Schools will automatically be classified as Review Schools.

Review Schools. Any school with a participation rate under 95%, an SPI below 64, a graduation rate below 60%, or that has been identified as a Focus Schools will be classified as a Review School.

Turnaround Schools. Schools with the lowest SPIs over time are designated as Turnaround Schools. In addition, high schools with graduation rates under 60% may be designated as a Turnaround School. Finally, all Tier II and III SIG schools are Turnaround Schools.

School Classification and Performance Targets

Connecticut’s proposed accountability system speaks to schools and students at all levels of performance. While we believe that these accountability goals must be ambitious, we are equally committed to ensuring that the performance targets we set for schools and districts are achievable. For this reason, whenever possible, we have set our performance targets for each

category of schools at a level that about 20-25% of schools in that category have achieved historically.

During 2013-14, it will not be possible for the CSDE to calculate an overall SPI or subgroup SPIs for schools that are participating in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments. Consequently, the CSDE cannot determine performance against SPI targets/AMOs for these schools and their subgroups in 2013-14.

Table 2.12 School Performance Targets by CSDE Classification

School Type	Performance Targets/Annual Measurable Objectives
Excelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an SPI above 88 • Maintain cohort graduation rate of 94% or higher • Maintain Holding Power Rate of 96% or higher <p>For every subgroup with an SPI lower than 88, increase the subgroup SPI by an annual increment such that the difference between the current SPI and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 or by three points, whichever is lower</p>
Progressing/ Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the SPI by an annual increment such that the difference between the current SPI and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 • Increase cohort graduation rate by annual increment such that the difference between current cohort graduation rate and a graduation rate of 94% is reduced by half by 2018 • Increase Holding Power Rate by annual increments such that the difference between current Holding Power Rate and a Holding Power Rate of 96% is reduced by half by 2018 • Increase the SPI of each subgroup by an annual increment such that the difference between the current SPI for each subgroup and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 or by three points, whichever is lower
Review/ Turnaround	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the SPI by an annual increment such that the difference between the current SPI and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 or by three points, whichever is lower • Increase cohort graduation rate by annual increment such that the difference between current cohort graduation rate and a cohort graduation rate of 94% is cut in half by 2018 • Increase Holding Power Rate by annual increment such that the difference between current Holding Power Rate and a Holding Power Rate of 96% is cut in half by 2018 • Increase the SPI of each subgroup by an annual increment such that the difference between the current SPI for each subgroup and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 or by three points, whichever is lower

Conditional Status: An additional subgroup safeguard

As described above, Excelling and Progressing Schools will be reclassified into a lower category if they have gaps in achievement that are greater than 10 SPI points between the “all students” group and individual subgroups for a majority of their subgroups. However, the CSDE seeks to ensure that schools increase the performance of all subgroups, especially subgroups with gaps that are greater than 10 SPI points.

If a school’s performance for students within a particular subgroup is more than 10 points lower than for the “all students” group, then the school is expected – at a minimum – to meet its performance targets for that subgroup. If the school is meeting its subgroup performance targets, it indicates that the school is on track to closing its gap in achievement. However, if the school fails to meet its subgroup performance target for one of these subgroups, it will be assigned “Conditional Status.”

Schools that are assigned “conditional” status will be required to engage in a process of diagnosis, planning, and intervention to improve the performance of these students. This focused intervention cycle is explained further in Section 2.E (Focus Schools). For example, if a Progressing school meets its performance targets for “all students,” has only one subgroup SPI gap that is larger than 10, but fails to meet its performance target for that subgroup, then it will be labeled “Progressing with a condition” and will be required to design and deliver targeted interventions to address the needs of the particular group. The CSDE’s Turnaround Team will require the school to develop a plan and to implement a targeted intervention during the next school year. Districts, with the support of the CSDE Performance Team, will monitor the achievement of the particular subgroup over the next three years. If the school still fails to improve over that period, it will drop a category and become a Transition school.

Upon implementation, it became evident that the “conditional” status as written was redundant. It penalized schools that already received a lower classification, and it did not succeed in highlighting those schools without majority subgroup gaps that failed to make subgroup targets.

School Performance Reports

The CSDE believes that schools and districts need a wide array of information to begin the process of improvement. The Performance Team will facilitate the examination of data by presenting schools with clear information about key aspects of their performance. The CSDE is committed to developing data-rich school- and district-level performance reports and analytical tools that support all participants in the public school system as they work towards improving student outcomes.

Connecticut schools will receive annual performance reports that provide information about its performance targets, and the school’s performance relative to other district schools, schools across the state, and “peer” schools that serve similar populations of students. These performance reports may be incorporated in the state’s current strategic school profiles.

These reports will include the core performance metrics used for accountability (the SPI, change in the SPI, vertical scale growth, and graduation rates), but they will also include other indicators of school performance, including college and career readiness along with school climate that paint a more robust picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

While these reports have not yet been developed, the CSDE will ensure that they include a broad spectrum of indicators, potentially including student and teacher attendance, disciplinary actions, AP and end-of-course exam scores, and college entrance and completion rates—all reported in the aggregate and disaggregated by subgroup.

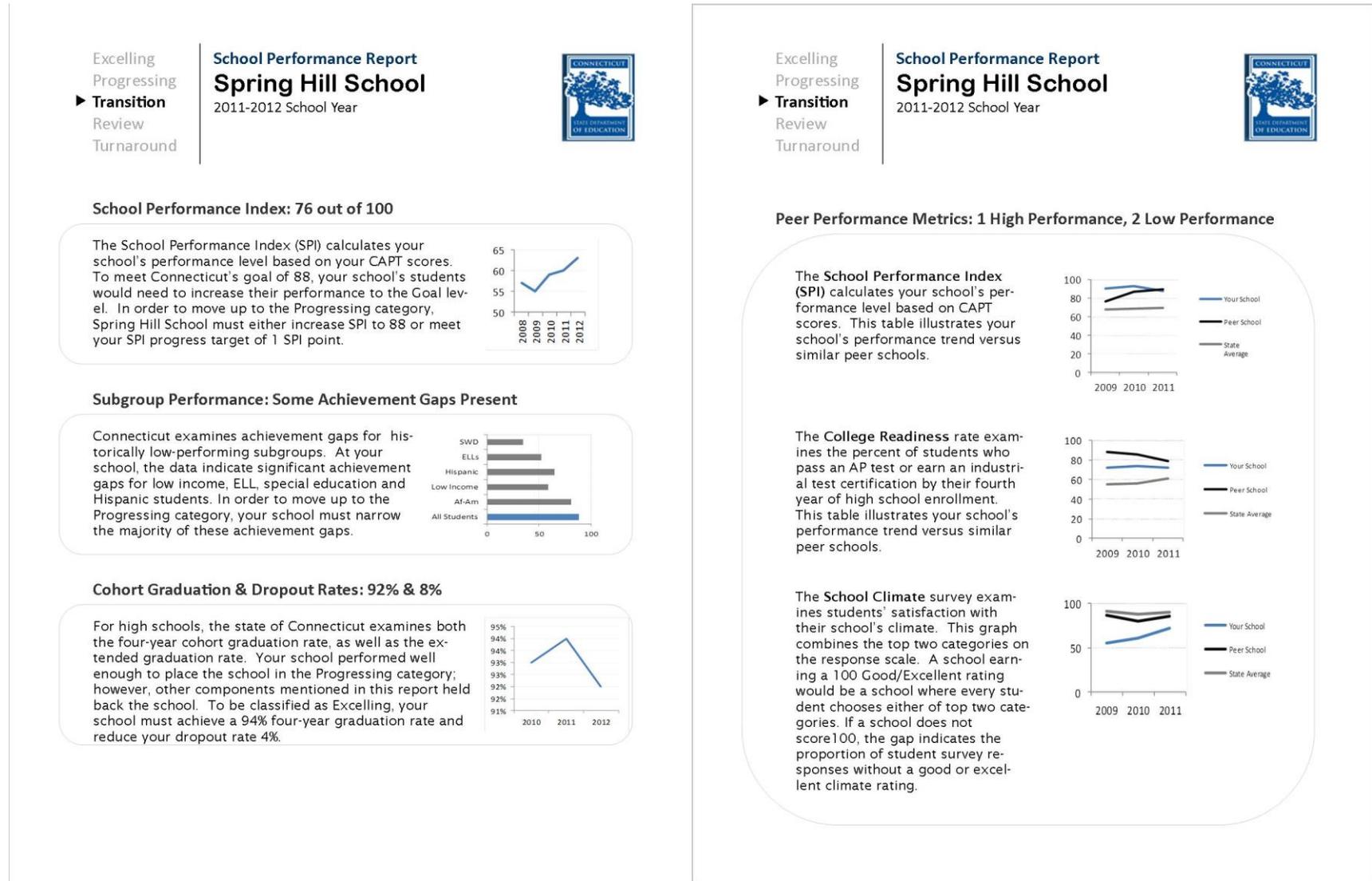
CSDE is also interested in assessing the viability of other types of data in its accountability reporting system to better leverage our student-level longitudinal data system. Additional forms of data that are of interest to the CSDE include Early Warning metrics, College and Career tools, and customized recommendations for teacher or parent action.

Below is a sample report that provides this data with a combination of explanatory narratives and data visualizations to provide a concrete example of the CSDE's principles as it refreshes its report designs and reporting tools. The first page focuses on AMOs, while the second page includes a peer comparison based on some of the additional metrics under consideration. Core principles driving the CSDE's examination of its reporting tools are:

- 1) Providing a single, high profile website through which educators, policymakers, and parents can engage, but that provides a customized experience;
- 2) Providing meaningful information that inspires action;
- 3) Recognizing the different information needs of the diverse stakeholders, from principals to parents.
- 4) Incorporating established best practices in information architecture, visualization, and interface design

As the CSDE reexamines its reporting designs and tools, it will focus on making the nuances of the accountability and intervention systems more clear and coherent for users of the reporting system. The CSDE will aim to incrementally transform its existing reporting system into a model system based on the best practices learned from other states across the nation (e.g. Colorado's SchoolView, Massachusetts) as well as standout district systems (Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's County), along with leading expertise from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (e.g., the Dell Foundation). As the CSDE develops its reports, it will seek feedback from educators, parents, principals, superintendents, and other key stakeholders. For Connecticut's 2010-2011 NCLB State Report Card and an example of a current school AYP report, see [Appendices 2.1 and 2.2](#).

Figure 2.13 CSDE Performance Report Prototype



District Goals and Accountability

The district goals and measures of success will be aligned with the school goals and measures of success. A District Performance Index (DPI) will be calculated in a manner that captures the achievement of students at all levels – Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Goal, and Advanced.

The DPI is calculated by averaging all of a given district’s student IPIs. Unlike the SPI, the DPI accounts for students with disabilities who attend outplacement facilities. The CSDE has already used this CMT DPI to calculate the lowest-performing 30 districts and to identify them as Alliance Districts. These Alliance Districts are the subject of recently passed legislation described in more detail in later sections.

Like the SPI, the DPI uses the current state tests and achievement levels that are well understood throughout the state to credit districts for their students’ movement over time to higher levels of achievement.

The DPI is calculated as shown in Table 2.14.

Table 2.14 Calculating the DPI

	Level	Calculation
Step 1	Subject-specific DPI	$DPI_{\text{Subject}} = (\%BB * 0.0) + (\%B * 0.33) + (\%P * 0.67) + (\%G * 1.00) + (\%A * 1.00)$
Step 2	Aggregate DPI	<p>Elementary and middle schools:</p> <p>$DPI = (0.3 * DPI_{\text{Mathematics}}) + (0.3 * DPI_{\text{Reading}}) + (0.3 * DPI_{\text{Writing}}) + (0.1 * DPI_{\text{Science}})$</p> <p>High schools:</p> <p>$DPI = (DPI_{\text{Mathematics}} + DPI_{\text{Reading}} + DPI_{\text{Writing}} + DPI_{\text{Science}}) / 4$</p>

The district accountability system moves Connecticut forward by considering more subjects and holding districts accountable for all students for which they are responsible, including out-placed students with disabilities.

Districts with all schools participating in the SB-FT in lieu of the legacy assessments will not have an overall DPI reported in 2013-14.

2.C REWARD SCHOOLS

2.C.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools. If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of reward schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

2.C.ii Provide the SEA’s list of reward schools in Table 2.

2.C.iii Describe how the SEA will publicly recognize and, if possible, reward highest-performing and high-progress schools.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.C.1) Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools? If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of reward schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but is instead, e.g., based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), did the SEA also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools Meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.C.2) Did the SEA’s request identify both highest-performing and high-progress schools as part of its first set of identified reward schools? (Table 2)

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.C.3) Are the recognition and, if applicable rewards proposed by the SEA for its highest-performing and high-progress schools likely to be considered meaningful by the schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.C.4) Has the SEA consulted with LEAs and schools in designing its recognition and, where applicable, rewards?

Schools of Distinction

As described above, the proposed Accountability Performance Targets encourage schools to improve the performance of all students and are set at levels that past performance suggests are reasonable. However, the CSDE believes that we should go beyond these achievable accountability targets in order to signal and drive the level of transformation Connecticut students – especially the lowest-performing—deserve.

The CSDE will reserve “School of Distinction” recognition for schools that do more than meet challenging targets; these schools challenge notions of what we currently believe to be possible. The CSDE will therefore recognize as “Schools of Distinction” schools that defy expectations in one of three ways:

1. By achieving the highest levels of performance with traditionally underperforming subgroups of students;
2. By increasing the performance of students – either students who have not yet achieved Goal or students who have already reached the Goal target – by substantially more than the accountability system requires; or
3. By achieving the highest levels of performance for the all students group.

During 2013-14, though some LEAs and their schools will administer the current state assessments, most are participating in the SB-FT. Since the CSDE will be unable to calculate overall and subgroup SPIs for schools that participate in the SB-FT, it will be unable to compare performance of all schools in order to identify the Reward Schools. Therefore, the CSDE will not identify Schools of Distinction for 2013-14.

1. Highest Performing Subgroups

The CSDE will recognize as “High Subgroup Performance Schools of Distinction” Title I or Title I-eligible schools with the highest subgroup performance. As indicated previously, 20 students is the minimum threshold for school-level subgroup size (*n* size) to be included in subgroup calculations.

Specifically, the CSDE will recognize Title I or Title I-eligible schools that meet **one** the following five criteria:

- Highest SPIs in the state for the subgroup of students with disabilities
- Highest SPIs in the state for the subgroup of English language
- Highest SPIs in the state for the subgroup of Black students
- Highest SPIs in the state for the subgroup of Hispanic students
- Highest SPIs in the state for the subgroup of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch

2. Highest Progress

A. For students not yet at Goal: The CSDE will recognize as “Highest Progress Schools of Distinction” any Title I or Title I-eligible elementary or middle schools that meet the first two of the following criteria and any Title I or Title I-eligible high schools that meet all four of the following criteria:

- Increase in the SPI that is among the top 10% and is greater than 3 SPI points;
- Historically underperforming subgroups – ELLs, students with disabilities, students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, Black, and Hispanic –have an SPI that is no more than 10 points lower than the “all students” group;
- For high schools, increase cohort graduation rate by an increment such that the difference between current cohort graduation rate and a cohort graduation rate of 94% is cut in half by 2018; and

For high schools, increase Holding Power Rate by an increment such that the difference between current Holding Power Rate and a Holding Power Rate of 96% is cut in half by 2018

B. For students who have already reached Goal: The CSDE will recognize as “Highest Progress Schools of Distinction” any Title I or Title I-eligible elementary or middle schools that meet the first two of the following criteria and any Title I or Title I-eligible high schools that meet all four of the following criteria:

- Increase in the percentage of students who score Advanced that is among the top 10% of schools;
- Historically underperforming subgroups – ELLs, students with disabilities, students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, Black, and Hispanic –have an SPI that is no more than 10 points lower than the “all students” group;
- For high schools, increase cohort graduation rate by an increment such that the difference between current cohort graduation rate and a cohort graduation rate of 94% is cut in half by 2018; and
- For high schools, increase Holding Power Rate by an increment such that the difference between current Holding Power Rate and a Holding Power Rate of 96% is cut in half by 2018.

3. *Highest Performing*

The CSDE will recognize as “High Performing Schools of Distinction” Title I or Title I-eligible schools with the highest performance for the “all students.”

Specifically, the CSDE will recognize any Title I or Title I-eligible elementary or middle schools that meet the first two of the following criteria and any Title I or Title I-eligible high schools that meet all four of the following criteria:

- SPI for “all students” group is among the highest 10% and is higher than 88
- Historically underperforming subgroups – ELLs, students with disabilities, students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, Black, and Hispanic – have an SPI that is no more than 10 points lower than the “all students” group
- For high schools, graduation rate higher than 94%
- For high schools, Holding Power Rate higher than 96%

Note that these are the same criteria as Excelling Schools. The CSDE’s “Highest Performing Schools of Distinction” will be the subset of Excelling Schools that are Title I or Title I eligible.

Distinction for Sustained Progress. In addition to annually recognizing Reward Schools, the CSDE may award grants to schools that demonstrate the greatest sustained performance, progress, and growth over a period of three years. Specifically, pending legislative appropriation, the CSDE may award Schools of Distinction with the highest performing subgroups and the highest progress over a three-year period with grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000. These awards may be funded with re-purposed state funds or with a portion of

the state's increase in federal Title I, Part A funds (authorized by ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A)). The CSDE may decide to increase the frequency of the grants if funding resources permit.

The CSDE has elected to award these monetary grants only to the first two categories of Schools of Distinction, but not to those schools that are identified as the highest performing for the "all students" group. The CSDE's intent is to focus financial resources on schools that are likely to employ specific strategies that they could share with other schools if given the financial resources to do so. The CSDE believes that schools that show significant and sustained progress or that achieve the highest levels of performance with specific subgroups of students that have historically underperformed are most likely to have transferrable best practices from which other schools can benefit.

Schools can elect to use these grants for programs or strategies aimed toward increasing student achievement or enrichment opportunities for students. The grants will be coupled with the responsibility to participate in a partnership with low-performing schools to share and promote effective practices. RESCs will work with grant awardees to arrange partnerships with low-performing schools within their respective RESC regions.

Additionally, teachers and principals at each of these schools will have the option to nominate a teacher or administrator who has made a substantial contribution to the school's progress for a yearlong sabbatical. During this year, the chosen educator would be deployed by the state Turnaround Team to share effective practices with other schools in the Commissioner's Network (described in later sections).

The CSDE has consulted with stakeholders to determine the most meaningful recognition and rewards for schools, and this feedback helped with the design of the program. Originally, the CSDE had anticipated providing a conference to highlight effective practices in these schools, but feedback the CSDE received led to the creation of the partnership between Reward, Focus, and Turnaround Schools. Other feedback indicated that groups believed that money given to the Reward Schools should be used at the discretion of the schools and not for a specific state-required initiative.

2.D PRIORITY SCHOOLS

2.D.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State’s Title I schools as priority schools. If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of priority schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

2.D.ii Provide the SEA’s list of priority schools in Table 2.

2.D.iii Describe the meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles that an LEA with priority schools will implement.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.1) Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State’s Title I schools as priority schools? If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of priority schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but is instead, e.g., based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), did the SEA also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools Meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.2) Does the SEA’s request include a list of its priority schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.3) Did the SEA identify a number of priority schools equal to at least five percent of its Title I schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.4) Did the SEA’s methodology result in the identification of priority schools that are —

(i) among the lowest five percent of Title I schools in the State based on the achievement of the “all students” group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, combined, and have demonstrated a lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the “all students” group;

(ii) Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years; or

(iii) Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program that are using SIG funds to fully implement a school intervention model?

Identifying Turnaround Schools

The Title I or Title I-eligible schools with the lowest SPIs for “all students” that have been stagnant or decreasing over time will be identified as Turnaround Schools. Additionally, any Title I or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate lower than 60% will automatically be included as a Turnaround School. Finally, any school that is presently a SIG Tier I or Tier II school will be identified as a Turnaround School.

The Commissioner’s Network

The CSDE will ensure that Turnaround schools receive necessary interventions or supports ~~in~~ one of two ways by pursuing one of three main approaches available to Turnaround schools:

- ~~1. Continued SIG interventions~~
1. Commissioner’s Network interventions Participation in the Commissioner’s Network
2. Participation in the School Improvement Grant Program
3. District-led school turnaround process

The Commissioner’s Network

To address the challenges faced by Connecticut’s chronically low-performing schools and districts, Bill 458 authorizes the CSDE to create the Commissioner’s Network—a system of state supports and interventions designed to improve chronically low-performing schools. Bill No. 458, passed by the General Assembly on May 8, 2012, establishes the Commissioner’s Network, a strategy to turnaround low performing schools based on the combined efforts of the state and local school districts. The Network will serve as a vehicle for innovative initiatives, a platform for the sharing of effective practices, and a model for other schools and districts throughout the state.

The recently passed legislation gives the State Board of Education and the Commissioner the authority to select up to 25 schools over the next three years to be part of the Commissioner’s Network. All Turnaround and Review schools are eligible for the Network. Schools will be selected for the Network based on low student achievement and lack of progress. Because the state is currently overseeing intensive interventions in SIG schools, the state may refrain from mandating additional interventions in these schools until the turnaround phase is complete. At that point, the SIG schools will be reevaluated. Any SIG school that still falls below the Turnaround Schools’ report card threshold will then become eligible for the Network.

\$7.5 million in new turnaround funding provided by legislative appropriation will support the Commissioner’s Network for the first year. This allocation will provide each school with start-up funding for planning and support activities, additional training, necessary resources, and increased compensation for school staff. Up to 25 schools will join the Network in the next three years. A small subset of these schools may join the Network as soon as this fall; additional schools will join as the Turnaround Team builds its capacity to intervene in more schools in later years.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.5) Are the interventions that the SEA described aligned with the turnaround principles and are they likely to result in dramatic, systemic change in priority schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.6) Do the SEA's interventions include all of the following?

(i) providing strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) either replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the SEA that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget;

(ii) ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;

(iii) redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;

(iv) strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with State academic content standards;

(v) using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data;

(vi) establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs; and

(vii) providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.7) Are the identified interventions to be implemented in priority schools likely to —

(i) increase the quality of instruction in priority schools;

(ii) improve the effectiveness of the leadership and the teaching in these schools; and

(iii) improve student achievement and, where applicable, graduation rates for all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and the lowest-achieving students?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.8) Has the SEA indicated that it will ensure that each of its priority schools implements the selected intervention for at least three years?

Interventions in School Improvement Grant (SIG) Schools

The 19 schools currently identified as SIG schools are automatically classified as Turnaround Schools, and the Turnaround Office will continue implementing and monitoring these interventions, which are consistent with the turnaround principles outlined in the flexibility guidance.

A CSDE staff member works closely with SIG school staff to address implementation issues, support data teams, conduct walk-throughs, and engage in problem solving with leaders. The CSDE has developed a monitoring procedure with separate monitoring guides for restart, turnaround, and transformation models. The CSDE staff uses this tool to identify needs and leverage resources to help schools. During the on-site monthly monitoring meetings, the CSDE staff ensures that SIG schools have embedded professional development, common planning time for collaboration, use of data to drive decision making, instructional practices that are effective, and a sense of urgency.

Furthermore, the CSDE's technical assistance to SIG schools includes district involvement. The CSDE staff plays a critical role in acting as an intermediary between schools and districts. Districts are required to give SIG schools authority for budgeting and staffing. SIG schools often experience the greatest challenges in making prioritized, strategic choices and in sustaining reform efforts. The CSDE addresses these challenges through the monthly monitoring and meetings of the SIG External Advisory Council, which bring together districts, schools, and consultants to solve problems and share effective practices.

Process of Intervention in Commissioner's Network Schools:

Lessons learned from SIG schools will, in part, guide the CSDE's planning and work with the Turnaround Schools in the Commissioner's Network. The CSDE will partner with local boards of education, school governance councils, and district-level turnaround committees to design and implement the turnaround effort in the Commissioner's Network Schools. The following process will ensure that all stakeholders are given a voice in the selection of interventions and that the interventions are likely to result in increased student achievement.

Establish Local Turnaround Committees. Once the Commissioner has selected a school for the Commissioner's Network, the local board of education that governs the school will form a turnaround committee, which is tasked with assisting the CSDE as it conducts an operations and instructional audit, developing a turnaround plan for the school, and monitoring the implementation of the turnaround plan. The turnaround committee consists of the Commissioner of Education or his designee, members appointed by the board of education, and members appointed by the teachers' union. The bill requires that at least two of the members be parents of students in the district and that at least two members be teachers employed by the district. The superintendent of the district will serve as the nonvoting chair of the turnaround committee.

Conduct Operations and Instructional Audits. The CSDE will conduct an operations and instructional audit at the school to determine areas of strength and challenge for each school selected to be part of the Network. The goal of the audit is to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to school reform and instead provide differentiated support based on school needs and grade level. The CSDE will consult the local board of education, the school’s governance council, and the district turnaround committee as it conducts the audit.

This stage will include data analysis using detailed reports generated by the state’s Performance Team and an on-site assessment conducted by the Turnaround Team that examines the following key elements of school success: student achievement; quality of instruction (including teaching, professional development, and curriculum alignment to standards); effective use of time; assessment and the use of data; school climate; leadership and management; and partnerships with parents and the community. By statute, the audit is required to analyze pre-existing turnaround plans “to determine why such school improvement plans have not improved student academic performance and identify governance, legal, operational, staffing, or resource constraints that contributed to the lack of student academic performance at such school and should be addressed, modified, or removed for such school to improve student performance.” See lines 1120–1127 in **Attachment 4.2**.

Develop Turnaround Plans. The district-based turnaround committees, working in conjunction with the CSDE’s Turnaround Team, led by our newly-created office of the Chief Turnaround Officer (CTO), will design a turnaround plan for the Commissioner’s Network school in their district. This state’s Turnaround Team will also seek out effective practices from within the state and across the country and will work to promote high-quality school models in the Network. Informed by these best practices, the state’s Turnaround Team will develop and issue guidelines regarding the development of turnaround plans to guide the work of district-based turnaround committees.

The turnaround committee will develop a customized turnaround plan. The turnaround plan must describe how the proposed interventions will improve student academic achievement and must address deficiencies identified in the instructional and operations audit. Such turnaround plan may include proposals changing the hours and schedules of teachers and administrators at such school, the length and schedule of the school day, the length and calendar of the school year, the amount of time teachers shall be present in the school beyond the regular school day, and the hiring or reassignment of teachers or administrators at such school.

The turnaround plan will utilize one of the following operating models: a CommPACT approach (“Community, Parents, Administrators Children, and Teachers,” a Connecticut-developed approach that emphasizes collaboration and autonomy from the district), a social development model, or other research-based models with track records of success in increasing student achievement including strategies, methods, and best practices used at public schools, interdistrict magnet schools, and charter schools. The turnaround plan can propose that non-profit organizations partner in the operation of the school, including: universities, Regional

Education Service Centers, or non-profit educational management organizations with a record of success.

Partners will enter into management agreements with the local district that, among other features, specify student achievement and retention goals and terms and that include a variety of financial and operational reporting requirements. In some cases, the Network may phase in interventions in turnaround plans, beginning with a single or a few grade levels and expanding over time to transform the entire school.

Turnaround plans will be submitted to the CSDE for selection. In the event that a turnaround committee does not submit a plan, or if Commissioner and State Board of Education find that the plan is deficient, the Commissioner may modify a turnaround plan or develop a plan for the school. In selecting or modifying locally developed plans or in the event that the CSDE develops the turnaround plan, the CSDE will consider the capacity of the local district to implement the plan, whether the support of a university or non-profit partner will increase the likely success of the plan, or whether a special master should be appointed by the CSDE in order to implement the provisions of the turnaround plan.

Elements of the plan that address terms and conditions of employment will be negotiated on an expedited basis. In some instances, only the financial impact of the plan is required to be negotiated. In the event that negotiations reach impasse, a special arbitrator will make a final and binding decision, also on an expedited basis, and give highest priority to the educational interests of the state and the children attending the turnaround school.

Elements of Successful Schools

Research indicates that the following elements are key to increasing student achievement. Therefore the guidelines the CSDE issues to district turnaround committees for turnaround plans will aim to ensure that these essential components are addressed. The instructional and operations audit will also be designed to assess the extent to which each element is present in the selected school or requires change.

1. Effective Leadership. The CSDE, working with the local turnaround committee, will evaluate the current school leadership as part of the diagnosis process. If the school does not have strong leadership in place, the turnaround committee will be expected to propose viable solutions potentially including leadership coaching and management training, transitioning out, or a change of position. The CSDE will also expect turnaround plans to provide schools and school leaders with sufficient operational flexibility—including staffing, school calendar, budgeting, and general operations—to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates.

2. Effective Teachers. A key component of the Commissioner’s Network will be a platform of transformative talent policies. Network Schools will have the financial resources to innovate in the area of compensation to attract, retain, support, and advance the most talented teachers and leaders—professionals who can help create a new achievement-focused culture in their schools. These schools will be able to offer increased compensation to attract talented professionals. If the audit finds a deficiency in the area of effective instruction, the turnaround plan may include steps that ensure students have access to effective teachers. Statute now permits turnaround plans to modify the hiring or reassignment of teachers at such school. The bill also contemplates modifications to existing collective bargaining agreements that may include but are not limited to election to work agreements. This or related staffing mechanisms will aim to ensure that teachers in Commissioner’s Network schools are fully informed about the design and expectations of the turnaround plan and are willing and able to implement this plan.

3. Additional Time for Student Learning and Teacher Collaboration. The CSDE believes that all students must be held to high standards. The CSDE recognizes that some students will need more learning time to achieve this level of achievement. The traditional 180-day school calendar limits opportunities for the students who are farthest behind. Network Schools may extend the school day and year to provide more time for learning. In evaluating turnaround plans, the CSDE will assess whether proposed additional time will lead to improvements in student achievement by providing more time for core academic pursuits with opportunities for individualized support, teacher collaboration to strengthen instruction, and high-quality enrichment.

Turnaround Schools may incorporate any of the following illustrative effective practices, each of which would be focused on shifting from a seat-time based approach towards a competency-based approach to teaching and learning:

- Extend the school day to allocate more time to core academic classes and to allow teachers to provide differentiated instruction based on student needs;
- Implement alternative schedules that have been proven effective and/or reallocate existing time at all grade levels;
- Extend the school year for students to provide added opportunities to explore subject matter in more depth, to engage in project-based learning activities, or to offer a broader range of instructional programs and enrichment activities;
- Implement a plan to monitor and address absenteeism to ensure that all students are attending school and have opportunities to access learning;
- Provide after-school, online tutoring or coursework, hybrid learning tools, Saturday-school, vacation, and summer programs that offer students an opportunity to extend traditional, school-based learning beyond the school day (or week or year) and to explore new, less traditional areas of learning in conjunction with 21st Century Community Learning Center programs or independently; and

- Allocate time for teacher planning, professional development, and collaboration.

4. Strengthening the School’s Professional Development. The district or CSDE will enable Network Schools to provide ongoing, high-quality job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and the CCSS.

Bill 458 overhauls the current professional development system, including replacing current professional development requirements with evaluation-based professional development and support, requiring training for evaluators, and authorizing the SBE to withhold state funds from districts that fail to provide professional development and support. Furthermore each local and regional board of education is required to provide, at no cost to its certified employees, at least 18 hours of professional development.

The bill defines professional development as a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement that fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance. Professional development must consist of professional learning that (1) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards, (2) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other lead teachers, and (3) occurs frequently on an individual basis or among groups of teachers in a job-embedded process of continuous improvement. Professional development opportunities must provide meaningful support and opportunities for improved practice based on general findings from teacher evaluations. The CSDE will review the professional development and support programs provided by local boards of education to ensure they are high quality and meet these demanding standards.

5. Using Evidence to Inform Instruction and for Continuous Improvement. A critical goal of the Commissioner’s Network is to embed a culture of evidence-based decision making within schools—to use information to identify and implement the instructional program. Network schools will be encouraged to use multiple indicators of student learning to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic and social needs of individual students.

6. School Climate. The CSDE knows student learning cannot take place absent a safe school environment. Commissioner’s Network Schools will therefore be required to establish school environments that improve school safety and discipline and address other non-academic factors that affect student achievement. The Connecticut legislature recently recognized the importance of a safe school climate when it passed PA 11-232. This act requires that all Connecticut schools create a safe school climate plan, appoint a safe school climate specialist, and administer a biannual school climate survey. In compliance with these statutory requirements, Network Schools will use these tools and student survey tools to build and maintain a positive and safe school culture. Additionally, the CSDE will provide or link through referrals to appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students in identified schools.

7. Ongoing Mechanisms for Family and Community Engagement. The Commissioner’s Network is grounded in an understanding that schools cannot succeed without the full support of families and the community. The process of establishing a turnaround committee with teacher and parent representatives from the school’s home district is designed to ensure that families and communities have a direct and meaningful voice in the development and implementation of the turnaround.

The CSDE believes that a unified focus on academics, services, supports, and opportunities leads to improved student learning, behavior, and attendance; family involvement; and community engagement with public schools. The Network will work with families and the community to effect systemwide change to ensure that low performance is no longer tolerated. Family and school community survey tools will also help guide our understanding of each school community’s needs.

If the needs assessment reveals that parent and community engagement or support services for students are a particular area of weakness for the school, then the turnaround plan may require schools to strengthen wraparound services for students, with the goal of providing community school services, including health and social services as well as referrals to such services from the school site. For a summary of community school models see [Appendix 2.3](#). To accomplish this goal, Network Schools may employ a “lead agency” approach. The Network will employ community partnership coordinators who are responsible for identifying service needs and gaps within and across the schools, developing plans for meeting those needs, making connections between the schools and community partners to provide needed services, and communicating internally and externally to ensure effective implementation. These coordinators will also work with community partners to ensure the long-term sustainability of the services through resource development and by collecting and analyzing data for continuous program improvement.

The coordinators will leverage community involvement to provide students with a wide range of supports and opportunities, including family engagement, parent leadership, and adult education; extended learning opportunities and youth development; physical, dental, and mental health programs and social services; and early childhood development. For a summary of school-parent compacts, welcoming schools, and school governance councils, see [Appendix 2.4](#).

Connecticut remains committed to creating welcoming schools to encourage parent involvement. Network Schools will also continue to incorporate the body of knowledge gleaned from school governance councils and school-parent compacts.

2.D.iv Provide the timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more priority schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014–2015 school year and provide a justification for the SEA’s choice of timeline.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.9) Does the SEA’s proposed timeline ensure that LEAs that have one or more priority schools will implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014–2015 school year?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.10) Does the SEA’s proposed timeline distribute priority schools’ implementation of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in a balanced way, such that there is not a concentration of these schools in the later years of the timeline?

Timeline for Interventions in Turnaround Schools (Subject to Change)

~~Identification of and interventions in Turnaround Schools will begin in summer 2012 and continue through the end of school year 2014–15.~~ The chart below summarizes the 2014-15 timeline as pertaining to Turnaround schools.

Table 2.15 Intervention Timeline for Turnaround Schools

<u>Commissioner’s Network – Cohort III Expansion</u>	
• <u>CSDE releases solicitation for expressions of interest</u>	<u>November 1, 2013</u>
• <u>Local board submits expression of interest</u>	<u>Fall 2013/Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Commissioner initially selects school for the Network</u>	<u>Fall 2013/Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Local board forms Turnaround Committee</u>	<u>Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Auditors conduct school audits</u>	<u>Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Turnaround Committee develops Turnaround Plan and budget proposal</u>	<u>Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Turnaround Committee reaches consensus or Commissioner imposes a plan</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>State Board of Education votes to approve Turnaround Plan</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>Local board and collective bargaining units for certified staff negotiate MOUs</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>School leader operationalizes Turnaround Plan in partnership with the CSDE</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>Certified staff identified and/or selected to work at the school ratify MOUs</u>	<u>Summer 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE allocated Network funds and bond monies to the school</u>	<u>Summer 2014</u>
<u>School Improvement Grant – Cohort III Expansion</u>	
• <u>CSDE hosts an informational session about school-level grant opportunities, including SIG</u>	<u>January 16, 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE releases the LEA SIG application</u>	<u>~January 2014 (pending USED approval)</u>
• <u>Districts submit expression of interest forms</u>	<u>~January 2014</u>

• <u>CSDE conducts school audits</u>	<u>~February 2014</u>
• <u>Districts submit SIG applications</u>	<u>~March 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE awards SIG</u>	<u>~April 2014</u>
• <u>Schools begin pre-implementation</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>Schools initiate full implementation</u>	<u>August 2014</u>
School Improvement Planning/Other School Grants	
• <u>LEAs receive the SIP template and competitive school grant applications; CSDE hosts an informational session about school-level grant opportunities</u>	<u>January 16, 2014</u>
• <u>LEAs submit SIPs and competitive grant applications on behalf of their schools</u>	<u>April 11, 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE awards school grants and review SIPs</u>	<u>~May 2014</u>
• <u>Schools begin implementation</u>	<u>June 2014</u>

Milestone	Date
The CSDE will establish Turnaround and Performance Offices.	Summer 2012
A. The CSDE will notify a subset of Category 4 and 5 schools (that includes all non-SIG Turnaround Schools) that they are eligible to join the Commissioner's Network. Districts with selected schools form turnaround committees.	Summer 2012 and ongoing
B. Operational and instructional audits conducted in selected schools.	
1. Turnaround plans developed and models and partners selected in consultation with stakeholders	
2. Steps regarding staffing taken (professional development; staffing changes and structures).	
• Network Schools will implement turnaround strategies.	September 2012
• The selection and planning cycle will occur again for the second and third group of Network Schools.	School years 2012-13 and 2013-14
• The Turnaround Team and districts will engage in continuous evaluation and improvement.	Ongoing
• The Turnaround Team will reevaluate the inclusion of the initial group of schools in the Commissioner's Network to determine which schools are eligible for exit.	June 2016

2.D.v Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status and a justification for the criteria selected.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.11) Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.12) Do the SEA's criteria ensure that schools that exit priority status have made significant progress in improving student achievement?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.D.13) Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit priority status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?

Exit Criteria for Turnaround Schools

Both SIG and Commissioner's Network Schools exit Turnaround status if they demonstrate sustained improvement, which will include consideration of factors including making their SPI, individual growth, and graduation rate targets for three consecutive years. Turnaround schools that administer the SB-FT in lieu of legacy assessments in 2013-14 will not be eligible to exit their status after 2013-14 because overall SPI and subgroup SPI data that are required to determine eligibility for exit based on the assessments administered in 2013-14 will not be available. These schools will continue to implement their intervention plans based on turnaround principles throughout the 2014-15 school year.

Schools that demonstrate the following annual progress for the most recent three consecutive years will exit Turnaround status:

- Increase the SPI by an increment such that the difference between the current SPI for each subgroup and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 or by 3 points per year, whichever is lower
- Increase cohort graduation rate by an increment such that the difference between current cohort graduation rate and a cohort graduation rate of 94% is cut in half by 2018
- Increase Holding Power Rate by an increment such that the difference between Holding Power Rate and a Holding Power Rate of 96% is cut in half by 2018
- Increase the SPI of the majority of subgroups by an increment such that the difference between the current SPI for each subgroup and an SPI of 88 is reduced by half by 2018 or by points, whichever is lower

The CSDE will evaluate SIG schools at the end of their three years based on the implementation of the reform model and the progress made in increasing student achievement. Schools that fail to make sufficient progress after the three years will undergo additional interventions and may be added to the Network.

Once a Turnaround Schools achieve exit status, it will be evaluated to determine whether it should exit the Commissioner's Network. Steps will then be taken to transition the school out of the Network; however, schools may elect to retain some of their Network characteristics even after their return to home district governance.

2.E FOCUS SCHOOLS

2.E.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools as “focus schools.” If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of focus schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.1) Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools as focus schools? If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of focus schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but is instead, e.g., based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), did the SEA also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools Meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.2) In identifying focus schools, was the SEA’s methodology based on the achievement and lack of progress over a number of years of one or more subgroups of students identified under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or, at the high school level, graduation rates for one or more subgroups?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.3) Is the SEA’s methodology for identifying focus schools educationally sound and likely to ensure that schools are accountable for the performance of subgroups of students?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.4) Did the SEA include a list of its focus schools? (Table 2)

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.5) Did the SEA identify a number of focus schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.6) Did the SEA’s methodology result in the identification of focus schools that have —

- (i) the largest within-school gaps between the highest-achieving subgroup or subgroups and the lowest-achieving subgroup or subgroups or, at the high school level, the largest within-school gaps in the graduation rate; or
- (ii) a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, a low graduation rate?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.7) Did the SEA identify as focus schools all Title I-participating high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years that are not identified as priority schools?

Identifying Focus Schools

Connecticut’s commitment to closing the state achievement gap is not limited to the very lowest-performing schools. Rather, the CSDE will remain within the spirit of the NCLB Act by continuing to identify and support interventions in all schools that are contributing to the state’s wide achievement gaps.

Title I school or Title I-eligible schools that are not identified as Turnaround Schools are considered for placement into the Focus School selection pool. To undertake the Focus School pool identification, the CSDE generated a “high needs” subgroup, which includes ELLs, students with disabilities, and students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The schools with the lowest 10% of SPI scores for the high-needs subgroup will be placed into the Focus Schools selection pool. Additionally, schools with either the African-American or Hispanic subgroup exhibiting an SPI below that of the highest high-needs subgroup pool member will also be added into the selection pool. The CSDE will then choose the schools from the selection pool with the lowest SPIs for these subgroups. The number of Focus Schools will equal at least 10% of the state’s Title I schools.

As indicated above, the CSDE selected 20 students as the minimum threshold for school-level subgroup size (*n* size) to be included in the accountability calculations.

2.E.ii Provide the SEA’s list of focus schools in Table 2.

2.E.iii Describe the process and timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more focus schools will identify the specific needs of the SEA’s focus schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions focus schools will be required to implement to improve the performance of students who are the furthest behind.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.8) Does the SEA’s process and timeline ensure that each LEA will identify the needs of its focus schools and their students and implement interventions in focus schools at the start of the 2012–2013 school year? Did the SEA provide examples of and justifications for the interventions the SEA will require its focus schools to implement? Are those interventions based on the needs of students and likely to improve the performance of low-performing students and reduce achievement gaps among subgroups, including English Learners and students with disabilities?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.9) Has the SEA demonstrated that the interventions it has identified are effective at increasing student achievement in schools with similar characteristics, needs, and challenges as the schools the SEA has identified as focus schools?

Intervention Methods for Focus Schools

Similar to Turnaround schools, Focus schools can pursue one of three main approaches to school turnaround:

1. Participation in the Commissioner's Network
2. Participation in the SIG Program
3. District-led school turnaround process

District-Led Intervention

As part of the proposed legislative package, the Governor and the CSDE have identified the state's lowest-performing thirty districts as Alliance Districts, which are eligible for increased funding. All of Connecticut's Focus Schools are located in these thirty districts. As a condition of receiving their additional funding, the CSDE will require that these districts take appropriate intervention measures to improve student performance in Focus Schools and in the larger category of Review Schools, which includes both Focus Schools and other low-performing schools. The recently passed legislation includes a condition that Alliance Districts must engage in tiering of schools according to need and must implement support and interventions as appropriate. Even if the legislation enabling conditional funding for Alliance Districts is not successful, the CSDE currently has the statutory authority to require districts to intervene in their low-achieving schools. See section 2.G for further detail about the CSDE's authority to require districts to intervene in and to support low-performing schools.

To provide support and to hold districts accountable, the CSDE is establishing State Turnaround and Performance Offices whose mandates include ensuring that districts have the information, capacity, and resources they need to intervene effectively in the Focus Schools within their jurisdictions.

The Turnaround Team will work closely with the Performance Team to provide schools and districts with school performance data that delineate schools' areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. This increased transparency will provide districts with the information they will need to target interventions and support to meet the particular needs of their Focus Schools.

All districts pursuing district-led turnaround processes must complete and submit SIPs to the CSDE on, at minimum, a biannual basis (i.e., every two years).

Connecticut's districts will work with their Focus Schools to increase student achievement by engaging in a process of strategic planning, including diagnosis, targeted intervention, and monitoring. While the precise interventions may vary by school and district, each Focus School's SIP must include the elements that follow. As described in Section 2.B, Excelling, Progressing, and Transition Schools with subgroups with SPIs that are more than 10 points lower than the "all students" group and fail to meet their subgroup performance target, will be assigned conditional status. Schools that are assigned conditional status will be required to engage in this same process of strategic planning and intervention described below.

1. Data Examination. Focus Schools will vary widely in their needs because they will have different low-performing subgroups: students with disabilities, ELLs, low-income students, or racial or ethnic subgroups. By analyzing data provided by the state's Performance Team, the school will work with its district and RESC to identify which subgroup or subgroups are the lowest performing and which areas of performance warrant the most immediate attention. Additionally, the Performance Team will help schools and districts make sense of the data by identifying the most critical areas for attention and by clearly stating the quantitative improvements (performance targets) necessary to address these problems.

2. Root Cause Analysis/Diagnosis. The CSDE has experience monitoring schools to determine the root causes of low performance. It has used different assessments in the past (including ones it and Cambridge Assessments have developed) to diagnose the underlying problems in SIG schools and in other low-performing schools in the Partner Districts (Connecticut's 18 lowest-performing districts).

The Turnaround Team will build on this experience, adopting an assessment tool that examines the following key elements of school success:

- Quality of Instruction (including teaching, professional development, and curriculum alignment to standards);
- Assessment and the use of data;
- School climate;
- Leadership and management; and

Partnerships with parents and the community.

This will be available as a resource to all schools and districts in the state, but they will be used differently based on the school's classification. See section 2.F for more detail about how each type of school will use this tool. In Focus Schools, the district will be responsible for conducting the assessment of the school and will use its RESCs for support as needed. Districts will be required to assess all their Review Schools, including Focus Schools, every three years to inform their planning process, assess their progress, and diagnose needs for the next cycle of planning.

3. Goal Setting. Another component of each SIP will be measurable goals for improvement. These goals will be aligned with the exit criteria for Focus Schools (defined below) and based on the specific low-performing subgroups that led to the school's classification as a Focus School.

For example, if the school currently has an SPI of 27 for its students with disabilities subgroup, the school would set the goal of increasing that SPI such that it meets its AMO target for the year, which would be to increase the SPI of its students with disabilities by two points. This school would likely also set other goals related to the performance of the students with disabilities subgroup. The school might also set goals for its students with disabilities around increasing attendance, meeting individual growth targets, and decreasing disciplinary incidents.

4. Intervention Selection. Each Focus School will work with its home district and RESC to select appropriate interventions that are designed to address the needs of the lowest-performing subgroups and to build capacity in the school's weakest areas that the school identified as the root causes of low achievement. The SIP will also delineate how the school will use its increased funding—from flexibility of Title I funds or increased state funding—to implement the selected interventions effectively. See section 2.G for more information about increased funding for schools and districts.

The Turnaround Team will provide a list of recommended interventions that have demonstrated success in raising achievement. Alternatively, if the school and district believe that another intervention will better drive student achievement, they are free to select a different intervention and to include it in their School Improvement Plans (SIPs). These alternate interventions are subject to review and approval by the local school board and the CSDE Turnaround Team. See the following sections for examples of specific interventions that may be appropriate for meeting the needs of particular age groups and student subgroups.

The Turnaround Team and RESCs will coordinate to ensure that the professional development offered by RESCs is aligned to the Turnaround Team’s recommended interventions. The CSDE’s goal is to provide schools and districts with the resources they need to select effective interventions that address their specific needs and to train their staff to effectively implement the interventions.

As an example, if a school has particularly low performance for ELLs, the Turnaround Team may recommend a particular instructional strategy for general education teachers to increase ELL access to grade-level material. Because this school chose an intervention recommended by the Turnaround Team, then the school can rely on its RESC to provide its teachers with the training they will need to incorporate the strategy into their instruction.

5. Planning for Implementation. After identifying its critical areas in need of improvement, diagnosing root causes of those problems, setting measurable goals, and selecting appropriate interventions, the school must develop a plan for implementation of the intervention. Each implementation plan will include a timeline for implementation, a list of the external partners that the school will use (including its home district and RESC), and a description of how staff members will be trained to effectively implement the intervention.

6. Monitoring. Finally, the SIP must describe the process by which the school and the district will monitor the school’s progress toward its goals and its fidelity to the implementation plan. Districts with schools identified as Focus Schools will be required to submit their SIPs to the Turnaround Team, which will review, provide feedback on, and approve the plans.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.10) Has the SEA identified interventions that are appropriate for different levels of schools (elementary, middle, high) and that address different types of school needs (e.g., all-students, targeted at the lowest-achieving students)?

Differentiated Interventions by Subgroups

To ensure that district interventions meet the needs of the low-performing subgroups in Focus Schools, the CSDE will ensure that districts use data disaggregated by subgroup to tailor interventions in these schools. Because Focus Schools will likely vary significantly in their aggregate performance, these differentiated interventions are crucial.

Districts will be required to tailor their proposed interventions to meet the needs of Focus Schools and to implement effective practices with proven track records in addressing the identified problems. These specific interventions, which are aimed at particular subgroups, will be included on the Turnaround Team’s recommended menu of interventions and supported by aligned professional development provided by RESCs.

Examples of targeted interventions may include requiring that schools support struggling subgroups by partnering with external organizations, implementing a differentiated literacy program with opportunities for remediation, working with executive coaches who have experience leading schools with similar subgroups, utilizing the services of data team facilitators who can work with school and grade-level teams to improve their use of student data in decision making, participating in focus monitoring by the CSDE, or receiving technical assistance from the Office of Special Education at the CSDE.

Additionally, the SIP may specify that the school staff receive professional development targeted to address a deficit in the school that contributes to the low performance of a particular subgroup. Currently, as part of the CALI, RESCs provide professional development modules targeted to address the needs of particular subgroups:

Workshop that targets ELLs:

Effective Tier I Instruction for ELLs: Two-day workshop designed for teams of general education teachers, ESL specialists, and school administrators that reviews how to use data to enhance ELL instruction and effective practices for instructing ELL students. Participants also learn how to train other teachers using the ELL CALI module.

Workshops that target students with disabilities:

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI): Two-day training module in which school and district teams understand the components of the SRBI framework, examine their practices, establish priorities, and set goals for the implementation of SRBI in their district or school.

Using Differentiated Instruction to Implement the Common Core State Standards: Two-day training module in which participants make connections between SRBI and a differentiated curriculum, analyze a definition of differentiated instruction, and understand that high-quality differentiation is a proactive, decision-making process.

Workshop that targets racial and ethnic subgroups:

Culturally Responsive Education: Participants reexamine both the content of what they teach and how they teach it and learn culturally responsive teaching strategies, better enabling them to work with diverse students.

Differentiated Interventions Appropriate for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Recognizing the need to differentiate interventions by grade level, the Turnaround Team will also ensure that district strategic plans include interventions that are age-appropriate and likely to succeed with the target population. To do this, the CSDE will build on its experience working with SIG schools. The CSDE has found that effective interventions at the high school level include smaller learning communities, school climate specialists, remedial reading interventions, extended learning time, dropout prevention and credit recovery, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training. Effective interventions at the elementary and middle school level include extended learning time, tiered intervention, and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).

Districts may choose to require Focus Schools to implement similar age-appropriate and effective interventions if their performance reports demonstrate particular needs in these areas. Rather than prescribing a particular one-size-fits-all intervention, the Turnaround Team will instead work to ensure districts are planning for and measuring the success of interventions that are rooted in the particular needs of the school.

State Support and Funding for Focus Schools

Districts will be required to use up to 20% of Title I funds to intervene in and support the Focus Schools; the amount set aside will depend on the number of Focus Schools in their district and the level of intervention required. Federal SIG, Part A funds will also be used to support these schools if necessary. Additionally, all Focus Schools are located in one of the state's 30 lowest-performing districts. Each of these districts will receive additional resources, which they will be able to invest in low-performing schools, including Focus Schools.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.11) Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits focus status?

Timeline for Interventions (Subject to Change)

The chart below summarizes the 2014-15 timeline as pertaining to Focus schools. Interventions in Focus Schools will begin in fall 2013 and continue through the end of school year 2014-15.

Table 2.16 Intervention Timeline for Focus Schools

Milestone	Date
The CSDE publishes a list of Focus Schools.	June 2012
The CSDE establishes the Turnaround and Performance Offices.	August 2012
The Turnaround Team develops criteria for district strategic plans and SIPs.	August 2012
The Performance Team provides all schools with report cards and performance reports.	August 2012

Districts conduct needs assessments/root cause analyses in all Review Schools, including Focus Schools.	September 2012
Focus Schools and districts develop SIPs for all Review Schools, including Focus Schools, and receive local school board approval.	October 2012
The Turnaround Team reviews district strategic plans and SIPs.	November 2012
Districts begin to implement interventions in Focus Schools.	December 2012— September 2013
The Turnaround Team monitors districts to ensure fidelity to plans.	Ongoing

Commissioner's Network – Cohort III Expansion	
• <u>CSDE releases solicitation for expressions of interest</u>	<u>November 1, 2013</u>
• <u>Local board submits expression of interest</u>	<u>Fall 2013/Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Commissioner initially selects school for the Network</u>	<u>Fall 2013/Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Local board forms Turnaround Committee</u>	<u>Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Auditors conduct school audits</u>	<u>Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Turnaround Committee develops Turnaround Plan and budget proposal</u>	<u>Winter 2014</u>
• <u>Turnaround Committee reaches consensus or Commissioner imposes a plan</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>State Board of Education votes to approve Turnaround Plan</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>Local board and collective bargaining units for certified staff negotiate MOUs</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>School leader operationalizes Turnaround Plan in partnership with the CSDE</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>Certified staff identified and/or selected to work at the school ratify MOUs</u>	<u>Summer 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE allocated Network funds and bond monies to the school</u>	<u>Summer 2014</u>
School Improvement Grant – Cohort III Expansion	
• <u>CSDE hosts an informational session about school-level grant opportunities, including SIG</u>	<u>January 16, 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE releases the LEA SIG application</u>	<u>~January 2014 (pending USED approval)</u>
• <u>Districts submit expression of interest forms</u>	<u>~January 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE conducts school audits</u>	<u>~February 2014</u>
• <u>Districts submit SIG applications</u>	<u>~March 2014</u>
• <u>CSDE awards SIG</u>	<u>~April 2014</u>
• <u>Schools begin pre-implementation</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
• <u>Schools initiate full implementation</u>	<u>August 2014</u>
School Improvement Planning/Other School Grants	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEAs receive the SIP template and competitive school grant applications; CSDE hosts an informational session about school-level grant opportunities 	January 16, 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEAs submit SIPs and competitive grant applications on behalf of their schools 	April 11, 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSDE awards school grants and review SIPs 	~May 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools begin implementation 	June 2014

2.E.iv Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits focus status and a justification for the criteria selected.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.12) Do the SEA’s criteria ensure that schools that exit focus status have made significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.E.13) Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit focus status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?

Exit Criteria for Focus Schools

Schools will exit Focus status when they have met their subgroup performance targets for the most recent two consecutive years for the particular low-performing subgroup or subgroups that were the reason for their identification.

- Elementary schools must meet their change in SPI target for the particular subgroup(s).
- High schools must meet their change in SPI target for the particular subgroup(s) or meet their targets for increasing the 4-year cohort graduation rate and the Holding Power Rate if the school was identified as Focus due to low graduation rates.

Elementary and middle schools that administer the SB-FT in lieu of legacy assessments in 2013-14 will not be eligible to exit Focus status at the end of the 2013-14 school year because subgroup SPI data required to determine eligibility for exit will not be available. These schools will continue to implement their intervention plans throughout the 2014-15 school year.

Regardless of the LEA assessment selection in 2013-14, any high schools identified as a Focus school due to low graduation rates may be eligible to exit Focus status after the 2013-14 year based on the reported 2012-13 four-year cohort graduation rate and the 2012-13 Holding Power Rate.

TABLE 2: REWARD, PRIORITY, AND FOCUS SCHOOLS

Provide the SEA’s list of reward, priority, and focus schools using the Table 2 template. Use the key to indicate the criteria used to identify a school as a reward, priority, or focus school.

TABLE 2: REWARD, PRIORITY, AND FOCUS SCHOOLS

	LEA Name	School Name	Type	ID #	Reward	Priority	Focus
1	<i>Removed</i>	<i>Removed</i>	CMT			E	
2			CMT			E	
3			CMT			E	
4			CMT			E	
5			CMT			E	
6			CMT			E	
7			CMT			E	
8			CMT			E	
9			CMT			E	
10			CMT			E	
11			CMT			E	
12			CAPT			E	
13			CAPT			E	
14			CAPT			E	
15			CAPT			E	
16			CAPT			E	
17			CAPT			E	
18			CAPT			E	
19			CAPT			E	
20			CMT			C	
21			CMT			C	
22			CMT			C	

23			CMT			C	
24			CMT			C	
25			CMT			C	
26			CMT			C	
27			CMT			C	
1			CAPT				H
2			CAPT				H
3			CAPT				H
4			CAPT				H
5			HN-CMT				G
6			HN-CMT				G
7			HN-CMT				G
8			HN-CMT				G
9			HN-CMT				G
10			HN-CMT				G
11			HN-CMT				G
12			HN-CMT				G
13			HN-CMT				G
14			HN-CMT				G
15			HN-CMT				G
16			HN-CMT				G
17			HN-CMT				G
18			HN-CMT				G
19			HN-CMT				G
20			HN-CMT				G
21			HN-CMT				G
22			HN-CMT				G
23			HN-CMT				G

24			HN-CMT				G
25			HN-CMT				G
26			HN-CMT				G
27			HN-CMT				G
28			HN-CMT				G
29			HN-CMT				G
30			HN-CMT				G
31			HN-CMT				G
32			HN-CMT				G
33			HN-CMT				G
34			HN-CMT				G
35			HN-CMT				G
36			BI-CMT				G
37			BI-CMT				G
38			BI-CMT				G
39			BI-CMT				G
40			BI-CMT				G
41			BI-CMT				G
42			BI-CMT				G
43			BI-CMT				G
44			BI-CMT				G
45			BI-CMT				G
46			BI-CMT				G
47			His-CMT				G
48			His-CMT				G
49			His-CMT				G
50			His-CMT				G
51			His-CMT				G

52			HN-CAPT				G
53			HN-CAPT				G
1					B		
2					B		
3					B		
4					B		
5					B		
6					B		
7					B		
8					B		
9					B		
10					B		
11					A		
12					A		
13					A		
14					A		
15					A		
16					A		
17					A		
18					A		
19					A		
20					A		
TOTAL # of Schools:					20	27	53

Total # of Title I schools in the State: 530

Total # of Title I-participating high schools in the State with graduation rates less than 60%: 9

Key	
<p><u>Reward School Criteria:</u></p> <p>C.A. Highest-performing school</p> <p>D.B. High-progress school</p> <p><u>Priority School Criteria:</u></p> <p>E.C. Among the lowest five percent of Title I schools in the State based on the proficiency and lack of progress of the “all students” group</p> <p>D-1. Title I-participating high school with graduation rate less than 60% over a number of years</p> <p>D-2. Title I-eligible high school with graduation rate less than 60% over a number of years</p> <p>E. Tier I or Tier II SIG school implementing a school intervention model</p>	<p><u>Focus School Criteria:</u></p> <p>F. Has the largest within-school gaps between the highest-achieving subgroup(s) and the lowest-achieving subgroup(s) or, at the high school level, has the largest within-school gaps in the graduation rate</p> <p>G. Has a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, a low graduation rate</p> <p>H. A Title I-participating high school with graduation rate less than 60% over a number of years that is not identified as a priority school</p>

2.F PROVIDE INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS FOR OTHER TITLE I SCHOOLS

- 2.F Describe how the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system will provide incentives and supports to ensure continuous improvement in other Title I schools that, based on the SEA’s new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, and an explanation of how these incentives and supports are likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.F.1) Does the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system provide incentives and supports for other Title I schools that, based on the SEA’s new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.F.2) Are those incentives and supports likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for all students, including English Learners and students with disabilities?

Differentiated Accountability and Support

The CSDE will classify each Connecticut school—regardless of Title I status—into one of five categories: Excelling, Progressing, Transition, Review, or Turnaround. The CSDE will report on school performance annually, but schools will be classified only once every three years. This three-year time frame will increase the reliability of the data by reducing the noise created by annual fluctuations and will encourage schools to implement interventions with sustained positive results. Connecticut’s proposed system differentiates support and interventions based on these classifications.

The five categories of schools are defined so that schools that fail to meet their performance targets over a three-year period are reclassified into a lower category that receives a greater level of support and intervention. Specifically, schools with an SPI greater than 88 drop from Excelling to Progressing if they fail to meet their performance targets over a three-year period. Schools with SPIs between 64 and 88 will drop from Progressing to Transition if they fail to meet their performance targets over a three-year period.

The state Performance and Turnaround Teams will encourage higher levels of achievement in Excelling and Progressing Schools by providing them with the information they need to engage in the process of self-improvement, by building district capacity to support and intervene in Transition and Review Schools, and by intervening directly and aggressively in Turnaround Schools.

The CSDE believes that all schools benefit from the cycle of strategic planning that includes data examination, root cause analysis, goal setting, intervention selection, planning for implementation, and monitoring progress. See Section 2.F for a more detailed description of this cycle. The CSDE further believes that all schools would benefit from engaging in set of best

practices in the areas instruction, assessment and the use of data, school climate, leadership and management, and partnerships with parents and the community. However, the CSDE acknowledges that schools need varying levels of support to effectively engage in the process of strategic planning and in assessing their current set of practices and selecting new practices that will drive achievement.

The CSDE will therefore provide schools with the quantitative data and qualitative assessment tool needed to engage in the process of continuous improvement, but will differentiate the level of support for and monitoring of schools based on their performance.

Specifically, Table 2.19 summarizes the varying levels of intervention for the five categories of schools:

Table 2.17 Degrees of CSDE Intervention by School Category

Category		Degree of Intervention
★★★★★	Excelling	Self-assessment tool and information available as resources to enable schools to drive own improvement (unless significant gap and lack of progress for subgroup – see below)
★★★★	Progressing	Self-assessment required; no SIP necessary (unless significant gap and lack of progress for subgroup – see below)
★★★	Transition	Self-assessment required; used to create SIP, which must be approved by district
★★	Review (including Focus Schools)	The district must conduct a school needs assessment; district, RESC and school collaborate to develop SIP; must be approved by local school board and state Turnaround Team
★	Turnaround	Districts and Turnaround Team implement aggressive turnaround interventions

Excelling Schools. With high performance for all students and the majority of subgroups, these schools are poised to drive their own continuous improvement. The Performance Team will ensure that it facilitates increased performance for all schools—including these highest-performing schools—through transparent reporting that compares schools serving similar populations against each other. Many of these schools, though they perform well when compared to the state as a whole, have much to learn from other Excelling Schools that likely outperform them in particular areas or with particular subgroups.

The students who attend these schools are performing at sufficiently high levels on state standardized tests such that the CSDE believes they would benefit most if the schools set goals outside the state’s current accountability system. For example, these schools may choose to focus on increasing students’ access to civics, arts, and fitness or on innovating by aligning their curriculum to international standards or by introducing personalized learning programs. See the description of these pilots in Principle 1 for more detail.

Progressing Schools. Schools with high performance or substantially increasing performance rarely need intensive intervention. However, the CSDE believes that even these relatively high-performing and high-progress schools have room for significant improvement. The CSDE will require these schools to evaluate themselves using a state-developed comprehensive assessment tool designed to diagnose their strength and weakness in the following core areas: student achievement; quality of instruction (including teaching, professional development, and curriculum alignment to standards); the assessment and use of data; school climate; leadership and management; and partnerships with parents and the community. See section 2.E for more detail.

Transition Schools. Though they are not among the state’s lowest-performing schools, these schools still fall far short of preparing all students for college and career. Districts will be responsible for driving improvement in these schools by requiring that they conduct their own self-assessment and requiring that the schools submit a strategic SIP based on the assessment and the data provided in their performance report. These plans will often require schools to implement narrow, surgical interventions meant to address specific problems in particular programs or the low performance of particular groups of students. Districts will monitor these SIPs and work with RESCs to support schools through the planning process. The list of recommended interventions provided by the Turnaround Team will also be a resource for these schools.

Excelling, Progressing, or Transition Schools with Persistently Low Performing Subgroups. Some Excelling, Progressing, and Transition Schools may achieve high performance for the “all students” group and for the majority of subgroups, but may fail to show progress for one or more subgroups. Examining historical data shows that several of the state’s highest performing schools have one or more subgroups (most often the students with disabilities subgroup) that perform at significantly lower levels than the “all students” group and that fail to increase performance over time.

In the case that an Excelling, Progressing, or Transition School has a gap greater than 10 SPI points and does not meet its subgroup performance target, the school will be assigned “Conditional Status” and be required to create a School Improvement Plan focused on the particular subgroup or subgroups in question, using the cycle of planning and intervention that is required of Focus Schools and is described in greater detail in Section 2.E. Districts will monitor these SIPs and work with RESCs and SERC to support schools through the planning and intervention process. Specialized staff at the CSDE will also be available to provide targeted technical assistance to districts and schools as needed, especially when the low performing subgroups are students with disabilities or English language learners.

Review Schools. These schools—all of which are located in the state’s Alliance Districts—are among Connecticut’s lowest performing. This category also includes Focus Schools, which are identified because of their extremely low performance for particular subgroups. Through the proposed conditional funding mechanism for Alliance Districts or through the CSDE’s current statutory authority (described in further detail in section 2.G), the CSDE will hold districts

responsible for directing interventions in these schools. Instead of allowing these schools to conduct self-assessments, the districts will assess these schools to diagnose them and identify the root causes of their low performance. Districts with Review Schools will be required to work with these schools to develop SIPs, which must be approved by the local board and the state Turnaround Team. (See description of interventions in Focus Schools in section 2.E for more detail—Focus and Review Schools are treated identically because Focus Schools are a subset of Review Schools).

Turnaround Schools. The state’s chronically lowest-performing schools are in need of immediate and dramatic improvement. Through the Commissioner’s Network, the state plans to transform up to 25 schools over the next two years. A subset of the Turnaround schools will join the Commissioner’s Network in the fall of 2012–13, as the CSDE’s Turnaround Team builds its capacity to intervene in more schools in later years. [A third cohort of schools will join the Commissioner’s Network spring 2014.](#)

While the Turnaround Office will act as a resource for all districts in Connecticut, it will provide the closest monitoring and greatest-touch support for the state’s Alliance Districts—the 30 lowest-performing districts. [All of The vast majority of](#) Connecticut’s Turnaround ~~and~~, Focus Schools, ~~and the majority of its and~~ Review Schools, are located in these 30 districts. Under new legislation proposed by the Governor, each of these districts would be required to submit strategic plans to the state that delineate a tiered and differentiated system of support for their schools. If an Alliance District governs one or more Focus or Review School, then its strategic plan will also include these schools’ SIPs.

2.G BUILD SEA, LEA, AND SCHOOL CAPACITY TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

- 2.G Describe the SEA’s process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, including through:
- i. timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools;
 - ii. ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority schools, focus schools, and other Title I schools identified under the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources); and
 - iii. holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their priority schools.

Explain how this process is likely to succeed in improving SEA, LEA, and school capacity.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.G.1) Is the SEA’s process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, likely to succeed in improving such capacity?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.G.2) Is the SEA’s process for ensuring timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools likely to result in successful implementation of these interventions and in progress on leading indicators and student outcomes in these schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.G.3) Did the SEA describe a process for the rigorous review and approval of any external providers used by the SEA and its LEAs to support the implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools that is likely to result in the identification of high-quality partners with experience and expertise applicable to the needs of the school, including specific subgroup needs?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.G.4) Is the SEA’s process for ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority schools, focus schools, and other Title I schools under the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources) likely to result in successful implementation of such interventions and improved student achievement?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2.G.5) Is the SEA’s process for holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their priority schools, likely to improve LEA capacity to support school improvement?

Reorganization of the CSDE: Building State Capacity

The CSDE is currently in the midst of significant organizational change designed to pivot the department into a more proactive stance. The reorganization, which has been approved by the SBE, will shift the organization’s focus from monitoring for compliance and accountability to driving performance and continuous improvement.

The reorganized CSDE will include the following teams: Academic, Talent, Performance, and Turnaround. The Chief Operating Officer will be charged with improving the effectiveness, responsiveness, and efficiency of the CSDE’s programs and services, including the removal of unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy that can impede student learning.

The Academic Team will align efforts around preparing students for college and career by working with school leaders to fully align the instruction, ongoing assessment, curriculum, and the CCSS.

The Talent Team will develop and attract a first-rate, diverse corps of educators to Connecticut’s classrooms, principals’ offices, and district offices by improving the entire professional experience and human resource system for teachers and leaders. This would include working collaboratively around the state to develop and expand robust and meaningful professional development to prepare teachers for Common Core standards and the 21st century classroom. This team will also engage the state’s education stakeholders to produce a fair system of educator evaluation.

The Performance Team will ensure that, across multiple indicators, Connecticut’s school districts receive actionable and timely information on student performance. This team will create a robust data infrastructure to help identify trends, problems, and opportunities in Connecticut’s schools; it will develop metrics for status, progress, and goals for every school, district, and student group in the state.

The Turnaround Team will lead the design and administration of intervention and support strategies in low-performing schools and districts. This office will seek out effective practices from the state and the country and work to promote high-quality school models.

This reorganization will lay the essential groundwork for realizing reform. Establishing the four interrelated, strategically oriented teams—Academic, Talent, Performance, and Turnaround—will significantly increase the CSDE’s capacity to drive school improvement throughout the state.

Building Regional Capacity: RESCs

The CSDE recognizes that many Connecticut districts do not currently have the capacity to support and intervene in schools effectively, but the CSDE believes that Connecticut is well positioned to build on existing structures to increase district capacity. Connecticut has a SERC

and a network of RESCs with a long history of providing information, professional development, and technical assistance to schools and districts.

RESCs promote cooperation and collaboration with local school districts to improve the quality of public education. Connecticut is host to six RESCs, representing 169 school districts throughout the state. RESCs were established under Connecticut General Statute 10-66 a-n, which permits local boards of education to establish a RESC as a “public educational authority” for the purpose of “cooperative action to furnish programs and services.” RESCs act as intermediary units, in that they are smaller than state departments of education, yet larger than local school districts, and are used to deliver services in approximately 40 states.

While these organizations have been critical for supporting districts, the CSDE has not taken full advantage of their capacity. One function of the Turnaround Team will be to leverage the state’s RESCs and SERC to drive school and district improvement. The Turnaround Team will ensure that SERC and RESCs’ work with districts is aligned to the CSDE’s key initiatives. These regional organizations will serve as the implementation arm of the state—operationalizing state policy by ensuring that districts have the technical assistance and information they need. Rather than all RESCs providing identical or overlapping services we will incent and fund each RESC with different resources and goals to tackle targeted aspects of our intervention and overall reform strategies.

Building District Capacity

While districts will drive the interventions in Focus and Review Schools, ultimately it is the CSDE’s responsibility to ensure that these schools receive the support they need. Most of these high-need schools (all the Turnaround and Focus Schools and most of its Review Schools) are concentrated in the 30 lowest-performing Alliance Districts.

The Governor and the CSDE’s recently passed legislation increases state funding to these 30 Alliance Districts by \$39.5 million, conditioned on clear plans for reform and efficiency gains developed with key stakeholders. This alliance of districts will partner with the state to undertake reforms, including strengthening their foundational reading programs to ensure reading mastery in kindergarten through grade 3; providing extended learning opportunities; developing recruitment, career ladder, and compensation strategies for teachers and school leaders; and coordinating community health, social, and wraparound services.

Another of the key reforms required for Alliance Districts is the development of a tiered approach to intervening in and supporting schools based on their performance. These districts’ strategic plans will describe their approach to supporting each category of schools in their district and must be approved by the Turnaround Team. Districts can use a portion of the new funding they receive through the Alliance District initiative to support their interventions in low-performing schools.

Additionally, the Governor and the CSDE have proposed that the state establish a \$4.5 million competitive fund to be awarded to districts with the most innovative and promising plans to make dramatic improvements to student outcomes. If this legislation is passed, the CSDE will give preference to Alliance Districts, but any district may apply for these funds.

Upon approval of the waiver request, many districts will also be able to reallocate the 20% of their Title I funds that are currently set aside for transportation related to NCLB school choice and Supplemental Educational Services (SES). Under the current system, students must meet the low-income requirement to be eligible for SES. Districts are required to provide SES to the extent that the funds allow. In 2011–12, the range in per-pupil allocations for these services is between \$450 and \$2,900. Districts are required to contract with CSDE-approved external providers for these tutorial services, which are provided outside the school day. It is the responsibility of the parent, working with the provider, to schedule these services.

Under flexibility from the ESEA waiver, the CSDE will continue to require that Alliance Districts and other districts with Review Schools set aside up to 20% of their Title I funds, but these funds can be used to directly support the school reform efforts as outlined in the strategic plans developed by the school and district and approved by the Turnaround Team. The interventions identified by the school and district will no longer be limited to off-site tutoring. The district or school may alternatively elect to use those funds for a variety of interventions, including those meant to address the needs of particular underperforming subgroups, extended-day activities, increased in-class tutoring, after-school or Saturday academies, core reading programs, or evidence-based school designs. The objective of this provision is to differentiate the interventions based upon an assessment of specific school needs. Incorporating these interventions into the district and school strategic plans and requiring the approval of the Turnaround Team will make the intervention stronger, will hold the district and school more accountable, and will ensure the intervention is directly aligned to the strategic plan.

State Monitoring of Districts

~~Almost all All-Turnaround, Focus, and Review Schools and almost all Focus Schools~~ are located in Alliance Districts. These districts will receive substantial funding increases that they can use to initiate significant reforms selected from among a menu of options provided by the CSDE or by designing and implementing a different approved initiative. The CSDE ~~anticipates that many Alliance districts will elect to use their additional funding to differentiate school interventions in accordance with the five category system outlined in this waiver request~~ tasks all Alliance Districts to outline investments in each of their lowest-performing schools. In any case, these districts will be required to provide plans for intervening in their Focus, Review, and Turnaround Schools as a part of the Alliance District process, whether the district seeks Alliance District funding for this purpose or not. The CSDE further has the authority under Bill 458 to withdraw funding mid-year from any Alliance District that fails to follow through on the commitments made in their plans. The districts that selected the differentiated intervention option will therefore lose their additional funding if they neglect to implement their stated interventions.

For the districts that elect to use their conditional funding for other reform efforts, the CSDE's Turnaround Team will require them to submit plans that describe the interventions they will make in their Focus Schools and in any Turnaround Schools that have not yet been included in the Network. These districts will be required to submit a mid-year progress report to the Turnaround Team, summarizing the actions taken in each Review and Turnaround School.

Members of the Turnaround Office will partner with districts to review, provide feedback on, approve, and monitor the implementation of district plans. CSDE staff members, relying in part on the support of RESCs, will also provide technical assistance and support to districts as they develop the internal capacity to support and intervene in their low-performing schools. These districts will have the flexibility to require their schools to use up to 20% of their Title I money (previously used for choice, SES and PD) to select and implement interventions in the areas of self-identified need including serving their ELLs and SWD, among other groups of students.

Continuing Support for Districts: Professional Development

Connecticut currently delivers statewide professional development through the CALI. The CALI focuses on sustainable district-level reform to foster accountability for student learning and ultimately accelerate the closing of Connecticut's achievement gap. Through the CALI, the CSDE provides district support and technical assistance in key areas to create a results-based district accountability system. The work focuses on training in the areas of instructional and school data teams, differentiated instruction, assessment, and climate. As facilitators and co-developers for CALI modules, RESCs have also provided a continuum of services that support the CALI training areas from the knowledge level to school and district capacity building. The consistency of CALI language, processes, and interconnectedness are then embedded through other professional development opportunities provided by the RESC staff.

The CSDE has created CALI training modules specifically with struggling schools and districts in mind, but all districts and schools across Connecticut can and should access CALI modules. The CSDE offers CALI training modules free of charge to educators in the state's 18 Partner Districts, which have been identified as supporting the lowest-performing schools and are in various stages of developing, implementing, and monitoring district improvement plans. Training modules are also free of charge to any Title I school identified as "in need of improvement." Districts that do not qualify for this fee waiver are eligible to attend these trainings for a nominal fee.

CALI modules provide a common dialogue, language, and expectations for student achievement within the state. The CSDE has met frequently over the last three years with the leaders of teachers' unions from each of the Partner Districts to develop SIPs collaboratively. In addition, the CSDE and the CAS facilitate an ongoing Principals Leadership Series that focuses on strategies for turnaround leaders. For a summary of an evaluation report confirming CALI's

designation as an appropriate and well-designed system of statewide supports, see [Appendix 2.5](#).

Removing Barriers and Duplication for Districts

The CSDE believes the state’s school districts should focus on raising student achievement and preparing students for success in college and career, and the state should be a partner in that effort. But where state mandates, regulations, circular letters, and other requirements create unnecessary and overly burdensome barriers to districts’ work, the state will examine its practices—and find ways to get out of the way. In a recent survey of the state’s superintendents, two-thirds reported that the CSDE issues too many regulations. Over half of the superintendents identified state policies as a barrier to effectively recognize and promote staff.

Under the recently passed legislation, the CSDE aims to enhance processes related to certification and professional development, as well as to empower districts to make these processes more meaningful. Specifically, the CSDE will:

- Establish a new distinguished educator designation for the state’s most accomplished teachers
- Replace seat-time based “continuing education unit” requirements with job-embedded professional development
- Enhance the quality of post-baccalaureate education by requiring a Master’s degree for the attainment of a Professional Certificate, rather than the existing requirement of merely 30 graduate credits

While many of the CSDE data requests have origins in state or federal law, the CSDE has implemented some requests in ways that create unnecessary burden and expense for district central offices and schools. From now on, the CSDE will:

- [Consolidate the Alliance and Priority School District grant applications;](#)
- [Provide school and district applications earlier in the school and fiscal years;](#)
- [Coordinate school and district improvement planning processes and timelines;](#)
- Consolidate the forms it issues to request data from districts;
- Inform districts of these interim streamlined data collection procedures by March 31, 2012; and;
- Begin to convene periodic meetings with a focus group of superintendents and district business administrators to foster ongoing dialogue about streamlining data practices.

Connecticut will also convene a Red Tape Review Taskforce to examine additional and comprehensive solutions to unnecessarily burdensome state regulations and mandates. The CSDE will convene the taskforce as a component of this education reform proposal. The taskforce will meet over the next year to solicit input from superintendents, members of local boards of education, district and school business officials, subject area experts, and others on ways to streamline state regulations. Additionally, it will engage the General Assembly’s

members and staff to discuss ways to provide the legislature with more accurate estimates of the costs borne by school districts from proposed statutes and regulations.

Because the state’s Turnaround Schools are chronically the lowest performing in the state, the CSDE believes they need dramatic and immediate intervention. As described in more detail in section 2.D, the Turnaround Team will invest significant time and resources to turn around these schools. The Governor’s proposed legislative package includes \$24.8 million to be used for start-up costs during the initial year of the turnaround and for increased compensation for teachers and leaders within these schools. Only districts that are able to demonstrate a sufficient level of capacity will receive increased funds for interventions and additional school staff compensation.

Screening External School Operators

The CSDE’s Turnaround Team will conduct the required rigorous review process to select external providers including universities, RESCs, nonprofits, charter management organizations (CMOs), CommPACT, or other providers with proven track records. As a result of this review, the CSDE will establish a list of approved external providers that will be available to districts and schools to assist with specific areas of concern or to partner in turnaround efforts via contract or other mechanism with the state Turnaround Team, districts, and schools. This approved list, which will be updated, reviewed, and expanded over time, will provide a resource to districts for school turnaround. For current evaluation template of external providers, see [Appendix 2.6](#).

State-Recommended Interventions

As described previously, the Turnaround Team, relying on data generated by the Performance Team, will also develop a menu of research-based interventions with strong track records of success in meeting particular school needs inside and outside of Connecticut. This menu of options will provide guidance to districts as they support schools through the processes of diagnosis and the selection of appropriate school interventions. Specifically, the menu will include interventions that have been successful with specific subgroups of students including ELLs and students with disabilities. Districts and schools will retain the freedom to select or design their own interventions if they believe they will better address their particular weaknesses. The CSDE will also ensure that professional development and support—in part delivered by SERC and the RESCs—is aligned with these recommended interventions.

District Accountability

Through the Turnaround and Performance Teams, the CSDE will partner with RESCs and districts to improve low-performing schools collaboratively. If necessary, however, the state is prepared to use its authority to ensure that districts implement the needed reforms to drive student achievement.

1. State Conditional Funding. As described in more detail above, Connecticut’s 30 lowest-performing Alliance Districts will receive an additional \$39.5 million in annual funding, if and only if they agree to enact a series of meaningful reforms. To receive its allotted increase, each Alliance District must submit a strategic plan that includes a description of how the district will implement a system of tiered interventions for schools based on school-level student performance. These Alliance Districts will be responsible for diagnosing, supporting, and—if necessary—intervening in the Focus and Review Schools within their jurisdictions.

2. Title I Funding. Some districts contain Focus and Review Schools but are not among the lowest 30 districts in the state. These districts will be able to use up to 20% of their Title I funding to intervene in these schools. If districts do not support and intervene in their Focus and Review schools, then they will no longer be eligible to receive their Title I funds.

3. Statutory Authority. If a district that is not an Alliance District and that does not receive Title I funds contains a Review School, the state can exercise its statutory power to ensure that the district complies with the state policy requiring it to diagnose the needs of the school, assist the school in developing an improvement plan, submit that plan to the state for approval, and monitor the implementation of interventions.

Under Section 10-223e of the Connecticut General Statutes, the state may intervene to provide intensified supervision and direction in low-achieving school districts and school districts that contain low-achieving schools. This category of low-achieving schools includes the schools referred to in this request as Review and Turnaround Schools. The state has extensive statutory authority to direct such school districts to take specific actions to improve student achievement at the school district or school level, as appropriate. Among other statutorily authorized actions, the state may direct that a study be undertaken to identify obstacles to improved student achievement and that a plan to eliminate any such obstacles be developed and implemented. Section 10-223e authorizes the state to drive improvements in student achievement by granting the state the authority to direct numerous actions at the local level, including but limited to the authority to “require the local or regional board of education for such . . . district to use state and federal funds for critical needs, as directed by the State Board of Education . . . require additional training and technical assistance for . . . teachers, principals, and central office staff members hired by the district; . . . develop and implement a plan addressing deficits in achievement and in the learning environment as recommended in the instructional audit; . . . establish instructional and learning environment benchmarks for the school or district to meet as it progresses toward removal from the list of low-achieving schools or districts . . . or any combination of the actions described in this subdivision or similar, closely related actions.”

With these three mechanisms for accountability, the CSDE has much of the authority necessary to ensure that districts take key steps to improve their own low-performing Review schools. The reforms in the recently passed Bill 458 will provide additional authority and financial support to enable the CSDE to fulfill the vision outlined in this flexibility application.

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

3.A DEVELOP AND ADOPT GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding description and evidence, as appropriate, for the option selected.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has not already developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the SEA’s plan to develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year; ii. a description of the process the SEA will use to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines; and iii. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 14). 	<p>Option B</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a copy of the guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students; ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines (Attachment 11); and iii. a description of the process the SEA used to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines.
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ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.A.1) Option A – If the SEA has not already developed and adopted guidelines consistent with Principle 3, is the SEA’s plan for developing and adopting guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems likely to result in successful adoption of those guidelines by the end of the 2011–2012 school year?

Overview

Connecticut recognizes that teacher and principal evaluation and support systems are a critical part of its comprehensive plan to build an environment that ensures equal opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students. Over the past year and a half, the CSDE has engaged the leadership and expertise of a legislatively enacted council of educators, policymakers, and advocates, the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), in the undertaking of a major reform effort to consult with the CSDE in the development of new Guidelines for the evaluation of teachers and administrators across the state.

In January 2012, after two years of discussions, PEAC took a major step toward creating a meaningful evaluation system when they unanimously recommended to the State Board of Education (SBE) a new framework that places a strong emphasis on student achievement. The new evaluation system for teachers includes the following components:

- 1) Multiple student learning indicators: 45%, half of which are based on the state test for those teaching tested grades and subjects or another standardized assessment for those grades and subjects for which there is no state test;
- 2) Teacher observation and professional practice: 40%;
- 3) Feedback from peers and parents including surveys: 10%; and
- 4) School-wide student learning indicators or student feedback: 5%.

The agreement was a historic achievement. As Connecticut Governor Malloy noted in his [press release](#), “Connecticut has taken a major step toward a meaningful teacher evaluation system. Today’s consensus proposal has real potential to increase teacher effectiveness—and as a result, to elevate student achievement. This is a milestone in what I expect will continue to be a momentous year for education reform in Connecticut.”

On February 6, 2012, PEAC agreed on the following design for the state model for administrator evaluation:

- 1) Multiple student learning measures: 45%, half of which are based on the state test and the other half to be locally determined, with parameters set by the state;
- 2) Observations of principal performance and practice: 40%, based on the six performance expectations in the Connecticut Leadership Standards; it includes a focus on all practices involving teacher quality and teacher evaluation;
- 3) Staff, community, and/or student feedback including surveys: 10%, based on all or some of the six performance expectations in the Connecticut Leadership Standards; and
- 4) Teacher performance growth and effectiveness outcomes: 5%, based on teacher effectiveness measures such as a) increasing the percentage of teachers making adequate growth in student achievement or b) differing strategies for teachers at differing levels of effectiveness.

On February 10, 2012, the SBE approved the framework for the new evaluation and support system. Allan Taylor, chairman of the SBE, said that PEAC’s unanimous agreement was “quite an impressive testament on their ability to come together on an important and controversial question.”

See the *Hartford Courant* for coverage of the [PEAC agreement](#) and the [SBE approval](#).

Since this achievement, the CSDE has begun taking important steps to plan for and ensure that new evaluation and support systems are implemented in a timely manner and effectively by local school districts. The CSDE’s overarching goal is to ensure Connecticut’s new evaluation and support system serves as an effective tool for educators and administrators to measure their performance, identify where members need support, and provide appropriate professional development strategies. Evaluation is a tool for continuous improvement, which is

only possible through identifying meaningful areas of strength and need. This is the work that the state’s proposed system aims to accomplish. In the event that struggling educators do not respond to targeted support and development, the CSDE’s new evaluation system will provide the basis for fair and timely separation from service.

The state sees its role as providing the technical expertise, guidance, and resources and setting the standards for the systems. But the CSDE also strongly encourages districts to innovate and take ownership of their systems—within clear and rigorous state Guidelines—incorporating what is working well and taking existing evaluation and support systems to the next level.

To date, significant milestones in the CSDE and PEAC process include:

- Adoption of a set of principles to guide the districts in the development of their evaluation systems ([Appendix 3.1](#)).
- Agreement on the design approach for how local school districts may choose to develop their evaluation systems: districts can design and propose for state approval their own evaluation and support systems based on the Guidelines issued by the state or adopt the state model if they are unwilling or are unable to design their own within the timeline established by the state.
- Agreement on the required evaluation framework of the state model for the evaluation of teachers and administrators.
- Agreement on the required evaluation framework for the district-developed models.
- Approval of the PEAC-recommended state and local model core framework by the SBE on February 10, 2012.
- Consensus recommendation for the Guidelines presented to the SBE
- Unanimous approval of the PEAC-recommended state and local model Guidelines by the SBE on June 27, 2012

The CSDE submitted the additional Guidelines and specific requirements, including the state model, to the SBE for approval on June 27, 2012 and began to implement them in July 2012, as required by state statute.

In addition, the CSDE has a timeline for the implementation of the new evaluation and support systems, which includes a pilot for the 2012–13 school year, followed by a full rollout in the following year, 2013–14. The CSDE will also explore technology platforms that can efficiently and effectively integrate the complex data and modeling features of this evaluation framework. This will ease the burden on individual principals and superintendents, who would otherwise need to repetitively and inefficiently build or procure these tools on their own.

[Flexibility on the Use of State Test Data in Connecticut’s Educator Evaluation and Support System for 2013-14 and 2014-15](#)

[On July 15, 2013, the Connecticut State Board of Education \(SBE\), in consultation with the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council \(PEAC\), authorized the Connecticut State Department](#)

of Education (CSDE) to submit a flexibility request to the United States Department of Education (USED) that would enable districts, through a local process, to determine whether to use Common Core-aligned assessments produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), the legacy state tests (CMT/CAPT) or both in the 2013-14 school year. On January 30, 2014, Connecticut's request for flexibility was approved, and the CSDE has established procedures to guide local decision making, including stakeholder and local board chair input into the choice regarding state test administration.

As a result of Connecticut's education reform legislation (Public Act 12-116), passed in 2012, Connecticut Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are expected to incorporate state assessment data in Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system. As outlined in the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012), 45% of a teacher's annual summative evaluation is based on student outcomes as measured by standardized and non-standardized indicators. For teachers in tested grades and subjects, half of the 45% incorporates state assessment data. Connecticut's administrator evaluation and support system requires 45% of the annual summative evaluation be based on multiple student learning indicators. Half of this component (22.5%) is determined using a district or school's progress from year-to-year and progress on subgroups through the District or School Performance Index (DPI or SPI), which is calculated using state assessment data.

In 2013-14, all Connecticut LEAs, including the Connecticut Technical High School System, were expected to implement Connecticut's new educator evaluation and support system with at least a third of their certified staff, inclusive of administrators. While LEAs were provided this flexibility on the number of participating staff, of 181 LEAs, more than 100 have committed to full implementation with all certified educators in 2013-14. In 2014-15, all LEAs will be required to implement Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system with 100% of their certified educators. An exception to the above pertains to the following educational entities:

- Adult Education
- Unified School District #1 (Department of Corrections)
- Unified School District #2 (Department of Children and Families)
- Approved Private Special Education Facilities
- Pre-K
- Central Office and Charter School administrators

Given their unique structures and implementation considerations, the SBE, in consultation with PEAC, approved and adopted an exemption from implementation of the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (2012) through the 2014-2015 school year for educators in the aforementioned educational entities. However, those systems that are ready to proceed would be enabled and encouraged to conduct permissive pilots. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) will work with those districts to gather data about the pilot experience throughout the 2014-2015 school year.

As noted above, the CSDE has received a federal waiver which affords districts the option to administer the legacy state tests (CMT/CAPT) and/or the Common Core-aligned assessments

produced by the SBAC during the 2013-14 academic year. In 2014-15, all districts will administer the Smarter Balanced assessments.

Given the latitude districts have regarding test choice in 2013-14, the CSDE also plans to allow districts to decide whether or not they will incorporate state assessment data in measuring student growth and development as required by the Guidelines. In addition, given the expected timeline for receiving the Smarter Balanced field test results (anticipated in winter 2015) and other factors, the SBE approved and adopted PEAC proposed flexibilities, which included providing LEAs with flexibility regarding the non-use of state test data as part of an educator’s final summative rating in 2014-15 academic year. The Connecticut State Board of Education, in consultation with PEAC, approved a motion to advance this request to the USED on February 6, 2014. Should a district choose not to use state test results as part of its educator evaluation and support system in the 2013-14 and/or the 2014-15 academic year(s), educators would be required to measure student growth and development using other available and appropriate standardized and non-standardized measures.

During the 2013-14 and 2014-15 transition years, the Guidelines provide for other assessments to be used in the absence of state assessment data. For instance, if a district doesn’t require the use of state assessment data, then the 45% would be composed of 22.5% locally-available assessments (standardized assessments for those grades and subjects where available and appropriate) and the other 22.5% based on a minimum of one non-standardized indicator and a maximum of one additional standardized indicator (in accordance with the Guidelines). If there are no standardized assessments available and/or appropriate, then the educator’s 45% would be based fully on non-standardized indicators.

The Guidelines provide for similar flexibility with respect to the administrator evaluation and support model. If a district or school opts not to incorporate overall SPI or DPI for 2013-14 and/or 2014-15, the Guidelines state that, “...the entire 45% of an administrator’s rating on student learning indicators shall be based on the locally-determined indicators [as] described in subsection [3.3(1)(b)].” This administrator rating on the 45% student learning component, in turn, would comprise the 5% Whole-School Student Learning Indicator rating for teachers, unless they have chosen to incorporate Student Feedback for the teacher’s 5% component.

Technical assistance from the CSDE will be provided to districts to support the transition beyond this period of flexibility regarding the use of state assessment data.

Background on Evaluation System Development

Teachers and administrators in Connecticut are currently evaluated based on the Connecticut Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development, which the SBE issued in 1999. In July 2010, in an effort to kick-start the reform of a decade-old system that many teachers and administrators have critiqued, the Connecticut legislature enacted [Public Act 10-111](#). This important piece of legislation put in place a policy framework and a process to enact

Connecticut’s vision of creating a new evaluation system and support system that would enable the CSDE to provide the best professional development opportunities to teachers and administrators. As the CSDE adopts the Common Core State Standards of Teaching and Learning, it is critical that it also aligns the objectives and modalities of evaluation systems with student learning goals as identified under the Common Core of Teaching. It is equally important that the CSDE has well-trained evaluators, regular data reporting and analyses, and a clear process for teachers and administrators to receive feedback and be given the opportunities they deserve to continue to grow. Connecticut’s education reform statute clearly states the following:

- The SBE’s new Guidelines must provide guidance on the use of multiple indicators of student academic growth in teacher evaluations, consider control factors tracked by the statewide public school information system that may influence teacher performance ratings, and establish minimum requirements for teacher evaluation instruments and procedures.
- Local and regional boards of education must develop and implement teacher evaluation programs consistent with Guidelines established by the SBE.
- An evaluation of teachers and administrators should include, but need not be limited to, strengths, areas needing improvement, strategies for improvement, and multiple indicators of student academic growth.

To ensure effective execution of the reform mandate, the statutes included the establishment of PEAC and charged it with assisting the SBE in the development of new evaluation Guidelines and a data collection and evaluation support system. The statute also specifies that PEAC members must meet at least once every three months and must consist of the state Commissioners of Education and Higher Education or their designees, representatives from the CABE, the CAPSS, the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, the CEA, the AFTCT, and others selected by the Commissioner of Education, including representatives from higher education and performance evaluation experts. Showing their commitment to education reform, in July 2011, Connecticut’s legislature enacted [Public Act 11-135](#) requiring that the SBE, in consultation with PEAC, expedite the process so that new Guidelines become effective by July 1, 2012—a year sooner than originally planned. For a list of PEAC members and PEAC meeting schedule, see [Appendices 3.2 and 3.3](#).

Connecticut moved to embark on this important reform initiative on the heels of the CSDE’s unsuccessful Race to the Top (RTTT) application in March 2010. At the time of the RTTT application, the CSDE had a strong commitment to pursue reform, and it submitted a good plan with what it considered the most achievable goals at the time. Since then, the CSDE has taken major steps forward in revamping its system. PEAC consists of leading educators and policymakers in the state, strongly committed to fulfilling their statutory mandate to reform the teacher and administrator evaluation system. PEAC’s rigorous working schedule, experienced leadership, strategic course of action, and concrete goals reflect not only the same level of commitment but also the clear strategy and strong capacity necessary to make this undertaking a great success. Policy advisors, education experts, and stakeholders have finalized the

Guidelines, evaluation frameworks and implementation plans. Information about PEAC's working schedule, presentations and other related materials can be found on the [CSDE website](#).

As outlined in Governor Malloy's recent education reform plans and as adopted by the SBE, districts will be allowed to develop local evaluation and support systems consistent with state Guidelines or adopt state-developed models. If a district does not develop a local evaluation and support system or fails to win approval by the state for its proposed models, the district will be required to use the state model. Under the evaluation framework adopted by the SBE, multiple indicators of student learning account for a substantial portion of an educator's evaluation, giving student achievement the priority it deserves. This approach will ensure that across the state, districts have common and high expectations, and educators are evaluated in a fair and consistent way.

Districts will also be required to provide effective and job-embedded professional development. This professional development must focus on strengths and needs identified through the CSDE's evaluation system. Under the new system, districts will have greater flexibility to design and deliver customized professional development based upon evaluation data and focused on each teacher's needs. Educators will benefit from a system of continuous feedback and professional improvement delivered by coaches, mentors, and peers in teams and small groups. In exchange for that flexibility, districts will be held accountable for providing effective professional development, especially to the teachers who have the greatest need for support.

Prompted by the Governor's school reform proposals, newly adopted legislation reforms the state's tenure laws in a way that reflects the importance of student performance-centered evaluation. Going forward, tenure will be earned on the basis of effective practice, as informed by evaluations conducted through the new evaluation and support system. The law defines ineffectiveness, not merely incompetence, as a cause for termination. When dismissals must occur, the law streamlines the time and reduces the cost required to conduct due process proceedings and uphold the CSDE's commitment to fair treatment.

With the new requirements, the CSDE is aware of potentially overburdening districts, especially smaller ones with limited resources. The state has therefore included in this plan a measure of mandate relief by providing ready-to-use state models for those districts that want to adopt them while letting other districts develop and submit their own models for state review and approval. This process enables districts that have already reformed their evaluation systems to continue using them, provided they meet state standards.

Using Evaluation Results to Inform Personnel Decisions

Under Connecticut's previous education statute, evaluations were ongoing but no time period was specified and implementation varied by district. Public Act 12-116 requires annual performance evaluations of principals, administrators, and teachers, based upon the framework recommended by the PEAC, adopted by the SBE, and pursuant to Guidelines issued by the SBE on June 27, 2012. It further requires that the evaluation system be piloted in the

2012-2013 school year. The pilot group will be a diverse group of 10 districts or consortia of districts. Public Act 12-116 also requires that the results of the evaluations inform personnel decisions including professional development, tenure, and dismissal.

Professional Development. Under the previous statute, professional development was based largely on seat time: teachers were required to acquire a specific number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Public Act 12-116 overhauls this system of professional development, instead requiring that professional development activities be differentiated based on the results of evaluation, job-embedded, and delivered primarily in small-groups. Public Act 12-116 also requires that teacher and administrator support and remediation plans be developed on the basis of evaluation results for those teachers identified as “developing” or “below standard.” Practitioner working groups, convened as part of the PEAC process, advised on the development of the Guidelines for the state model and reviewed how other school districts and states developed effective evaluation and remediation programs, including those in place in New Haven and elsewhere, where teachers and principals develop individualized improvement plans and each teacher’s targeted plan is informed by the results of his previous year’s evaluation.

The CSDE is currently seeking proposals for partner organizations to develop a systematic process for linking teacher and administrator evaluations to professional learning. The system will use data from evaluations to help districts determine patterns in professional learning needs to provide support to groups of teachers and administrators. Connecticut’s Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) will also provide technical assistance workshops for teachers and administrators to embed the system and process for evaluating data to professional learning into their local plans.

Tenure and Dismissal. Public Act 12-116 includes significant provisions to reform the state’s tenure law. Previously, tenure was attained on the basis of years of service: a teacher offered a fifth year of employment is automatically granted tenure. Prior state law was silent on the performance expectations of teachers who achieved tenure. Public Act 12-116 revises this definition, requiring that offers of a fifth year of employment and the granting of tenure be made on the basis of effective practice as informed by the evaluation system. See **Attachment 4.3.**

Past Connecticut law set “incompetence” as a cause for dismissal. This is too low of a bar. Public Act 12-116 also establishes “ineffectiveness,” informed by the evaluation and support system, as a cause for dismissal.

Public Act 12-116 also streamlines termination proceedings. When the reason for termination is ineffectiveness, the termination hearing must be focused on whether the evaluation ratings are in accordance with the new evaluation program and are reasonable in light of the evidence. Public Act 12-116 also limits the number of hours of evidence and testimony at the termination hearings to six hours for each party. These changes will allow for termination hearings to remain fair to all parties while taking less time in a more manageable process.

Connecticut’s Plan of Action

Over the past year and a half, the CSDE has executed a plan to develop the new evaluation systems. The plan is guided by a set of seven goals and extends beyond the development of the Guidelines alone. To date, the CSDE has met or made substantial progress towards all of these goals.

Goal 1. Involve Districts in Baseline Assessment of Evaluation Systems. The CSDE began the Guidelines development process in January 2011 with a stakeholder engagement effort involving the local education authorities. The CSDE sent out a survey to all districts across the state, including approximately 200 districts, private schools, and charter schools, seeking their input on a number of issues related to teacher and administrator evaluation systems. The CSDE called those districts and schools that did not respond and encouraged submission as soon as possible. The CSDE tabulated and analyzed the feedback and posted a [summary of the survey](#) on the state website to share with the public and stakeholders.

Goal 2. Develop Guidelines Document for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation. In February 2012, PEAC and the SBE took significant action toward the completion of this goal with the adoption of the required evaluation framework. PEAC has made a number of important decisions concerning the Guidelines, including the principles guiding CSDE policies, lessons learned from state best practices, and most importantly, the Connecticut design approach, which is discussed in more detail later in this document. The CSDE has implemented the following three major activities:

- 1) Reviewed the Common Core of Leading, Common Core of Teaching, Connecticut Standards for School Leaders, and the 1999 Guidelines for Teacher and School Leader Evaluation and Professional Development to develop the guiding framework;
- 2) Reviewed current research and literature on teacher and administrator evaluation issues; and
- 3) Researched and deliberated on key issues, such as student achievement measures and the fairness, reliability, and validity of these measures.

The SBE unanimously approved the Guidelines on June 27, 2012.

Goal 3. Build Out Guiding Frameworks for Model Teacher Evaluation Program. In February 2012, PEAC and the SBE took significant action toward the completion of this goal with the adoption of the required evaluation framework. This framework specifies:

- 1) A new model for evaluating educators that includes, multiple indicators of student academic growth using summative, formative, interim, and benchmark assessment results that would establish a body of evidence. To consider indicators of student learning, the following assessment tools, among others, may be used: CMT Vertical Scales (grades 3 to 8), the Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System, district student growth measures, grades K–2 interim assessments (math, science, and reading), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early

Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Other examples of student learning indicators include curriculum-based assessments, portfolios of student work, performances rated against a rubric, and Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). SLOs are used to determine student progress based on outcomes and objectives determined by the teacher in conjunction with the principal or other school administrator. These SLOs are based on current student functioning to determine appropriate, but ambitious goals for individual students, including for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. The CSDE also considered indicators for both individually attributed growth to evaluate a teacher's contribution to their assigned students' academic progress and collectively attributed growth to evaluate the contribution a group of educators makes to its students' academic progress. PEAC's working group provided guidance on the development of the above, and the SBE built out its approved and required framework with these elements explained and included.

A Closer Look at Assessments & Assessment Literacy

The Connecticut State Department of Education is currently collaborating with colleagues at the national, state and local levels to determine the best approach to address assessment issues related to supporting effective instruction and leadership. The pilot evaluation system has resulted in a heightened focus on current assessment practices at both the district and state levels. CSDE Talent Office staff - responsible for the state model (SEED) pilot and eventual statewide implementation - have collaborated with assessment staff and have begun cross-divisional meetings with the Academic Office, Performance and Accountability Office and Turnaround Office to ensure that the assessment strategy that results is the one that meets the needs of each office, yet is aligned and coherent. The overall goal is to develop a strategy for enhancing existing assessment infrastructure, increasing assessment literacy and assisting districts with the development of comprehensive assessment systems.

The CSDE is collaborating with other states and national partners regarding larger assessment strategy and best practice, as well as more targeted assessment issues such as establishing cut scores in the four levels of performance in an educator evaluation system.

Though the CSDE has implemented an approach to measuring student growth, the CSDE has convened a workgroup to address the issue of assessment of student growth and development in non-tested grades and subjects. The Student and Educator Support Specialists' workgroup is comprised of practitioners from districts across the state who represent various disciplines, including library media specialists, school psychologists, school counselors, speech language pathologists, etc. The individuals representing their respective discipline have convened a group of stakeholders in similar roles to continue to develop guidance regarding issues related to SLOs and Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGDs), observation, performance, and practice. The goal is to develop statewide guidance to districts regarding assessment practice in non-tested grades and subjects and observation of teacher

practice and performance to ensure fairness and validity.

Collaboration at the National Level:

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO): CSDE staff has contacted staff at the CCSSO in order to learn which states might be of assistance in developing the most appropriate assessment strategy and plan to address the specific assessment needs related to educator evaluation and support.

EducationCounsel: CSDE staff has contacted senior staff at the EducationCounsel in Washington, DC with specific assessment related questions as we continue to address specific assessment questions that have arisen during the SEED pilot.

Race to the Top States: The CSDE has contacted several states that were the recipients of Race to the Top (RTTT) grant awards in order to explore the assessment strategy and practices they have implemented in the past few years using RTTT funds. CSDE staff traveled to Rhode Island to meet with leaders at the Rhode Island State Department of Education to discuss their guide, *Comprehensive Assessment System: Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance*, which the CSDE is currently reviewing to determine the suitability of amending the guide for use in Connecticut. CSDE staff are specifically interested in the Rhode Island strategy which focuses less on the publication of lists of tests and more on the development of broader assessment literacy among all educators. Rhode Island has chosen to focus on defining a process for how assessments are used to make educational decisions which they believe is critical to ensure that there is consistency of rigor and expectations across all buildings and levels within a local school district (LEA). The purpose of the guide is to outline the elements and features of a comprehensive assessment system, primarily as they apply to the roles and responsibilities of district leadership.

In addition to Rhode Island, CSDE has also contacted the Illinois and Colorado State Departments of Education. Colorado has developed an Assessment Review Tool designed to help Colorado educators rate an assessment's potential for measuring student academic growth aligned to the state standards. A series of webinars and continued conversation is planned to explore the feasibility of Colorado's approach and tools for use in Connecticut. The CSDE is also questioning whether to release to the field a list of assessments for use by schools and districts as they seek the best assessment methods to determine student growth; the CSDE plans to acquire Colorado's fully vetted list of assessments for internal review and to determine the level of use of this list in Connecticut.

Collaboration at the State Level:

As stated previously, the goal of the CSDE is to develop a strategy for enhancing existing assessment infrastructure, increasing assessment literacy and assisting districts with the development of comprehensive assessment systems across the state. The CSDE has and will continue to collaborate with partners and stakeholders statewide. The CSDE will develop guidance and a system by which LEAs can take inventory of

existing assessments to determine the appropriateness of each assessment to its intended purpose, as well as to assess gaps and/or duplication and redundancies. This will be achieved through various mechanisms as outlined below.

Student and Educator Support Specialists’ Workgroup: This workgroup was originally convened as part of PEAC and has continued to meet in order to achieve the following goals: 1) identify appropriate assessments to measure student growth and development in non-tested grades/subjects and other disciplines (i.e. school counselor, library media specialist) as required by SEED and 2) identify appropriate protocols for the observation of practice and performance that align to both the standards and practice of each of these respective disciplines.

Critical Friends’ Group: CSDE staff has invited practitioners with expertise in assessment from the field to join CSDE staff in a Critical Friends’ group to continue to explore issues related to assessment and the desire to develop greater assessment literacy among all educators. The Critical Friends’ group will be comprised of representatives from various districts across the state to ensure broad representation and the inclusion of all assessment-related issues.

CAPSS Assessment and Accountability Committee: The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) convenes committees to address various issues relevant to Superintendents. This subcommittee has been meeting for several years with the focus area changing based on the current context and education agenda in the state. Currently, the focus is on issues related to Smarter Balanced Assessments and more recently, to issues pertaining to assessment within the educator evaluation and support system.

Feedback from 2012-13 Districts Piloting SEED: The CSDE has facilitated the collection of sample SLOs and IAGDs from the ten pilot districts/consortia. The Department is interested in assessing current assessment practices being used to measure student growth and development. The Center for Education Policy and Analysis at the Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, is conducting an implementation study throughout the pilot (2012-13) year.

Innovation Zones: The CSDE has allowed for a degree of flexibility and variation in the implementation of CT’s educator evaluation and support system in order to support local districts in their desire to implement innovative practices that support educator effectiveness and student achievement. To that end, the CSDE will work with these districts throughout the course of the pilot year and Year 1 of statewide implementation, in order to determine which practices being piloted may hold promise for expansion to other districts yet also meet the established core requirements as set forth in the SEED Guidelines.

Connecticut’s Approach to Measuring Student Growth

In Connecticut, Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) achievement levels (Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Goal and Advanced), as well as CMT grade-level scale scores have been used to report student performance on the CMT Mathematics, Reading and Writing tests since 2000. In 2008, vertical scales were developed in Mathematics and Reading for grades 3-8; they are designed to track growth within the same subject across grades, despite test differences in length, content and difficulty. ~~However, in 2008, vertical scales were developed in Mathematics and Reading for grades 3-8 and are designed to track growth within the same subject across grades, despite test differences in length, content and difficulty.~~

Each vertical scale (Mathematics or Reading) ranges from 200-700 score points. By subtracting a student’s current CMT score (e.g., a grade 5 score of 486 in Mathematics) from the student’s previous score in the same subject (e.g., a grade 4 score of 451 in Mathematics), a teacher or administrator can assess the individual student’s growth in Mathematics performance over a one year period (a growth of 35 points in this example). ~~Vertical scores may be used to assess growth over multiple years. They may also be used to assess the average achievement growth of groups of students. Accordingly, the average achievement growth of a classroom, school or district may be calculated by finding the average of the change in vertical scale scores.~~

Teachers and administrators can use CMT achievement growth information with other academic information about students to plan for student instruction. ~~A growth model was designed that helps teachers identify reasonable and desirable achievement growth targets for their students. The model is based on the expectation that each student should perform at the Goal level in each of the tested subjects.~~

In order to set desired and achievable growth targets for students, the CSDE linked created a growth model based on the expectation that each student should perform at the Goal level in each of the tested subjects. ~~The~~ vertical scale scores were linked to the CMT achievement levels (i.e. Below Basic, Basic, etc.) for Mathematics and Reading. In addition, each achievement level, from Basic to Goal, was divided into thirds – low, middle and high. End-of-year achievement target scores were set for students in grades 4-8, based on scores and achievement levels from the previous year. Growth targets were set such that each student who performs below Goal level must grow one-third of the difference between adjacent performance levels (e.g., low to mid-basic, mid to high basic, high basic to proficient). The scores in Mathematics and Reading provide valuable information in which performance targets for the end of the school year could be set for each student.

~~This year~~For the fall 2012 pilot of the SEED state model, the CSDE provided ~~previous-year~~ CMT 2012 scores and annual growth targets ~~by classrooms to the districts participating in the pilot this year~~for each student in grades 4 through 8, grouped by class, to the districts participating in the pilot. Teachers and their evaluators used

~~these lists~~ this information as a guide when setting ~~SLOs~~ Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the 2012-2013 school year (e.g., I will ensure that 75% of my students meet or exceed their state-prescribed growth targets on the CMT this school year). ~~Next year, the CSDE intends to provide previous year CMT scores and targets to districts via an online portal and also connect current year scores to the new teacher evaluation system.~~ In May 2013, based on the CMT 2013 scores, the CSDE provided the results of target attainment for the individual students in those same classes within the pilot districts, along with a classroom level “success rate” (i.e., percent of students meeting/exceeding their growth targets).

In addition to calculating annual growth target attainment, vertical scores may also be used to assess student growth over multiple years. They may also be used to assess the average achievement growth of groups of students. Accordingly, the average achievement growth of a classroom or grade cohort may be calculated by comparing the average change in vertical scale scores.

Measuring Growth for Students with Disabilities

Connecticut has long advocated that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities should participate in both the general education curriculum and the standard administration of the CMT. In addition to the standard CMT assessment, Connecticut does have two alternate assessments available for students with disabilities: an assessment based on *modified* academic achievement standards known as the Modified Assessment System (MAS) and an assessment based on *alternate* academic achievement standards known as the Skills Checklist. Each assessment has its own eligibility requirements. A comprehensive assessment guidelines document that provides guidance for Connecticut school district personnel who must make decisions about testing special student populations is available at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/student_assessment/special_education/assessmentguidelines2012-13.pdf

A majority of students with disabilities participate in the standard CMT assessment. In 2012-13, 61.8% of the over 36,000 students with disabilities in the tested grades were administered the standard Mathematics assessment; 27.5% were tested using the MAS while 10.6% were tested using the Skills Checklist. The corresponding numbers for Reading were 56.8% (standard), 32.5% (MAS) and 10.7% (Skills Checklist).

For all students with disabilities who are tested using the standard CMT assessment, growth across grades/years can be measured using Connecticut’s growth model outlined above. There is no growth model for the MAS (modified) or the Skills Checklist (alternate) assessments. Therefore, for SWD who take those assessments in lieu of the standard CMT, results from those assessments need to be incorporated into an IAGD using an approach similar to one used for non-tested grades/subjects.

Measuring Growth for English Language Learners

All English language learners who are not identified as a student with a disability are expected to take the standard CMT assessment; therefore, growth across grades/years can be measured using Connecticut’s growth model outlined above. English language learners who are enrolled for the first time in a U.S. school for 10 calendar months or less may be excused from ELA Reading and Writing assessments; however, they do take Mathematics in Year 1, which can form the basis for growth in Year 2 using Connecticut’s growth model. It should be noted that the CSDE recommends the provision of testing accommodations for English language learners to increase their access to the standard CMT assessment and thus utilize the Connecticut growth model (see http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/student_assessment/special_education/ct_ell_assessment_guidelines_2011-2012.pdf).

Plans during Assessment Transition

Connecticut has proposed to request two flexibilities from the USED:

1. Based on Secretary Duncan’s letter of June 18, 2013 to Chief State School Officers, the first request enables the CSDE to provide districts a choice to administer a Common Core-aligned SBAC field test rather than, or in addition to, Connecticut’s legacy assessments (CMT and CAPT). This request for flexibility was approved by the USED on January 30, 2014.
2. The second request, in the form of this amendment to the ESEA waiver, Principle 3, would allow districts the choice regarding whether to use state assessment data in the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

In 2013-14, Connecticut and several other states in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) will begin implementing the SBAC field test, which is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Districts choosing to administer the legacy CMT assessments in 2013-14 will have the option to receive classroom level “success rates” based on vertical scale targets for informational purposes following the 2013-14 school year.

Districts choosing the Smarter Balanced field test in 2013-14 (90% of CT districts) will be unable to receive any individual student growth information. Moreover, in light of this assessment transition, Connecticut is deferring full incorporation of individual student growth into its current school accountability model until after implementation of the Smarter Balanced operational assessments in 2014-15. In the meantime, the CSDE is working with practitioners and experts to explore different growth model approaches that can be used after the Smarter Balanced operational assessments have been fully implemented.

All districts will continue to administer the legacy state assessments for science in grades 5, 8 and 10.

- 2) To develop the guiding frameworks, the CSDE reviewed:
 - a) How the new statewide system of teacher evaluation and professional development relates to evaluation based on the Common Core of Teaching (2010), which defines effective teaching practice throughout the career continuum of educators in six domains: content and essential skill; classroom environment, student engagement and commitment to learning; planning for active learning; instruction for active learning; assessment for learning; and professional responsibilities and teacher leadership;
 - b) Methods of measuring teacher effectiveness that the CSDE can monitor and report on quantitatively on an annual basis;
 - c) Job-embedded professional development and training for administrators and principals targeted at both supporting the development of teachers and evaluating their effectiveness.
 - d) Research from other districts and states on student growth in non-tested areas, combined with our use of pilot districts as testing grounds for determining student growth in non-tested grades to incorporate into future iterations of the teacher and administrator evaluation system.
 - e) Lessons learned from pilot districts through forums where districts have an opportunity to discuss best practices.

A Closer Look at Linking Professional Learning to Evaluations

The CSDE began the process of redefining professional development and learning in Connecticut through the passage of Public Act 12-116 (effective July 1, 2012), which eliminated Connecticut’s longstanding system for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) which awarded credits based on seat time. Educators holding a professional certificate were required to earn 90 hours of Continuing Education Units (9 CEUs) within a five year period. The recent legislative changes require that all districts develop a plan to provide 18 hours of on-going, job-embedded professional learning to every certified educator, including those holding an initial or provisional certificate. Statute language states,

“Such program of professional development shall (1) be a comprehensive sustained and intensive approach to improving teacher and administrator effectiveness in increasing student knowledge achievement, (2) focus on refining and improving various effective teaching methods that are shared between and among educators, (3) foster collective responsibility for improved student performance, and (4) be comprised of professional learning that (A) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards, (B) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, distinguished educators, (C) occurs frequently on an individual basis or among groups of teachers in a job-embedded

process of continuous improvement, and (D) includes a repository of best practices for teaching methods developed by educators within each school that is continuously available to such educators for commenting and updating.”

SEED is designed to establish a clear connection between the results of educator evaluation and the professional learning that supports growth and development in areas identified in need of improvement at the individual, team, school and district levels. The professional learning opportunities identified for each teacher should be based on the individual needs identified through the evaluation process.

A CSDE team has begun to develop revised Guidelines to reflect legislative changes in order to provide guidance to all CT districts reflecting these legislative changes.

Differentiation for Educators across the Career Continuum

Improvement and Remediation Plans: If a teacher’s performance is rated as “developing” or “below standard,” it signals the need for an administrator to create an individual teacher improvement and remediation plan. The plan should be developed in consultation with the teacher and his/her exclusive bargaining representative. Improvement and remediation plans must:

- Identify resources, support and other strategies to address documented deficiencies;
- Indicate a timeline for implementing such resources, support and other strategies in the course of the same school year as the plan is issued; and
- Include indicators of success, including a summative rating of “proficient” or higher at the conclusion of the improvement and remediation plan.

Career Development and Growth: Rewarding exemplary performance identified through the evaluation process with opportunities for career development and professional growth is a critical step in both building confidence in the evaluation system itself and building the capacity of all teachers.

Examples of such opportunities include, but are not limited to observation of peers, mentoring early career teachers, participating in the development of teacher improvement and remediation plans for peers whose performance is developing or below standard, leading professional learning communities, and focused professional development based on goals for continuous growth and development.

Goal 4. Build Out Guiding Frameworks for Model Administrator Evaluation Program. Most of the activities under this goal took place between March and June 2012 and were based on the evaluation framework adopted by the SBE in February 2012. PEAC developed Guidelines for the following:

- 1) A new statewide system of administrator and principal evaluation and professional development as it relates to administrative evaluation based on the new Connecticut Standards for School Leaders and the Connecticut Common Core of Leading (2009);

- 2) Methods of measuring administrator and principal effectiveness based on the criteria above that the CSDE can monitor and report on quantitatively on an annual basis; and
- 3) Training for district superintendents and administrators targeted to supporting and evaluating school-based and central office administrators.

Goal 5. Advisory Teacher Evaluation Work Group to Develop Performance Criteria and Rubrics. A teacher evaluation work group was established to advise on the development and implementation of the teacher evaluation system. Members began meeting in March 2012 and performed their tasks through June 2012. The charge for the teacher work group was to assist in the development of performance criteria, rubrics, and other tools based upon the Common Core of Teaching standards and aligned with PEAC measures of effectiveness with a range for guiding evaluation decisions about teacher effectiveness. Frameworks for evaluations of teachers for ELLs and students with disabilities were part of the teacher work group’s agenda. PEAC reached a consensus agreement on the Guidelines for teacher evaluations, and these were approved by the SBE on June 27, 2012.

Goal 6. Advisory Administrator Evaluation Work Group to Develop Performance Criteria and Rubrics. The administrators’ working group was established to advise the CSDE on the development and implementation of the administrator evaluation system. The members met and performed their tasks from March through June 2012. The charge for the administrator work group was to develop performance criteria, rubrics, and other tools based upon administrator standards and aligned with PEAC measures of effectiveness with a range for guiding evaluation decisions about administrator and principal effectiveness, using student academic growth measure(s) as criteria. The Guidelines were approved by the SBE on June 27, 2012.

Goal 7. Advisory Pupil Services and Implementation Work Groups. The advisory pupil services work group developed recommendations for the Guidelines of the evaluation and support system for support staff. The CSDE also convened an implementation work group to assist the SBE in the development of rollout procedures and timelines. Members met from March 2012 and performed their tasks through June 2012. The Guidelines were approved by the SBE on June 27, 2012.

Development Plan and Timeline

The table below provides a high-level summary of the Connecticut plan for the development of evaluation and support systems across the state:

Table 3.1: Development of Guidelines and Implementation of New Evaluation and Support Systems

Activities	Accountable Party	Completed By
PEAC determines Guidelines, design approach, and framework for state and local evaluation systems.	PEAC members	January 2012
The SBE adopts framework for district evaluation systems.	CSDE and SBE	February 2012
Work groups convene and determine the Educator Evaluation Guidelines for the state model and implementation plans.	PEAC members	March–June 2012
PILOT DISTRICTS TIMELINE (please refer to pages 176-177 for detailed timeline)		
Districts apply for voluntary pilot program.	CSDE District	April 2012
The CSDE reviews draft of the Guidelines of the state model, finalizes Guidelines, and plans for a pilot in 2012–13 school year.	CSDE leadership and staff	June 2012
The CSDE seeks educators' feedback on the Guidelines of the state model.	CSDE staff	June 2012
The CSDE submits the state model and Guidelines for the SBE to review and approve.	CSDE leadership	June 27, 2012
The SBE adopts and issues new Guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluations.	SBE members	June 27, 2012
CSDE and district staff trained for pilot district implementation of new evaluation systems.	CSDE District	July–August 2012
Connecticut launches voluntary pilot district implementation of new evaluation systems.	CSDE District	September 2012
NON-PILOT DISTRICTS TIMELINE (please refer to pages 176-177 for detailed timeline)		
All districts not participating in the pilot develop a new teacher and administrator evaluation system that meets state standards and requirements.	District leadership	Fall 2012–April 15, 2013
Training takes place for evaluators on how to use the new teacher and administrator evaluation systems.	CSDE District	Summer 2013
All districts must have in place an evaluation system that includes processes to report, review, and use evaluation data to support teachers and administrators in professional development with a goal to improve the quality of instruction and ultimately student learning.	CSDE District	Fall 2013
DETAILED ASSESSMENT TIMELINE		

Activities	Accountable Party	Completed By
CSDE will: use Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance document to inform the development of a similar guide for Connecticut; obtain the List of Assessments developed and vetted by the Colorado State Department of Education; review Colorado’s Assessment Review Tool for potential use; and engage the New England Comprehensive Center to provide additional guidance and support with SLOs and IAGDs.	CSDE	January 2013-April 2013
Educator and Students Support Specialists’ Workgroup provides CSDE with “deliverables,” including appropriate assessments and differentiated protocols for observation of practice and performance (40% practice rating).	CSDE	April 2013
CSDE provides guidance on the use of complementary evaluators as an additional source of human capital for contributing evidence in the observation of teacher performance and practice (40%).	CSDE	April 2013
DETAILED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TIMELINE		
CSDE internal team convenes to explore the changes to current Professional Development Guidelines prompted by Public Act 12-116.	CSDE	December 2012
CSDE convenes a group of external stakeholders representing various educator roles from across districts, union representation from CEA and AFT, and a representative from the RESC Alliance to develop new DRAFT Guidelines for Professional Learning in Connecticut.	CSDE	January 2013
Professional Learning Critical Friends’ Workgroup convenes to develop new DRAFT Guidelines for Professional Learning in Connecticut.	CSDE	January/February 2013
Finalize DRAFT Guidelines presented to the SBE for review and approval.	CSDE	March 2013
Convene an internal CSDE focus group to include CAS/CAPSS, CEA/AFT representatives and a statewide focus group consisting of teachers to review and offer feedback on DRAFT Guidelines. Make revisions as appropriate.	CSDE	April 2013

Activities	Accountable Party	Completed By
Present finalized Guidelines in public forums	CSDE	Late April 2013
Present finalized Guidelines for Professional Learning to the State Board of Education.	CSDE	May 2013
Upon approval by the SBE, CSDE disseminates the new Guidelines statewide and working with the RESC Alliance, provides training and technical assistance to districts to assist in developing revised district plans aligned to the new Guidelines.	CSDE	May 2013-July 2013
Provide coaching and focused support to educators in the pilot districts whose mid-year progress review using Connecticut’s new evaluation system indicates they may be on course to receive a summative rating of “below standard” or “developing” with additional focused supports in identified areas of need as determined by observations of practice and other measures.	CSDE	January 2013-June 2013

PEAC Achievements

Prior to the historic agreement on evaluation Guidelines, PEAC completed the following tasks:

1. Principles for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Systems. PEAC took the important step of adopting the principles that will guide the development of the evaluation systems at local district levels and inform policy decisions. Below are the ten principles PEAC adopted:

- 1) The primary purpose of evaluation is to strengthen individual and collective practices to improve student learning.
- 2) Evaluation systems should include multiple indicators of student academic growth and development while taking into account measurable student characteristics.
- 3) Evaluation systems should be standards-based using the Common Core of Teaching, state-adopted leadership standards, etc.
- 4) When weaknesses are identified, the educator should seek resources and support, including peer assistance and resource opportunities and support provided by the district.
- 5) Local district evaluation plans should be developed collaboratively by educators and administrators.
- 6) Professional learning plans should reflect the needs of individuals and groups of educators identified through the evaluation process.
- 7) Evaluation systems should include opportunities for formative assessments, summative assessments, and self-evaluation.

- 8) Districts should provide regular and ongoing professional learning opportunities and allocate time for educators and evaluators to collaborate to promote effective implementation of the evaluation plan.
- 9) Evaluation plans should include a process for resolving disputes in cases in which the educator and evaluator disagree on goal setting, formative or summative evaluation, and/or the improvement plan.
- 10) Districts should review and revise their evaluation plans at least every five years, using current research and best practice.

2. Design Approach for Evaluation and Support Systems. To select the design approach, PEAC closely considered various approaches for how districts may develop their teacher and administrator evaluation system using the Guidelines the CSDE provides. The CSDE looked at approaches that other states commonly use, such as the following:

- 1) A *prescriptive approach* uses specific percentages for multiple measures of student growth, teacher observation, and other components;
- 2) A *moderate approach* with minimum requirements provides approved components for evaluation and minimum percentages for some components;
- 3) A *state “default” approach with local development option*, which offers well-developed state model with an opt-out approval process for district-designed systems that meet the Guidelines.

In December 2011, PEAC reached consensus that the third option was the best approach for Connecticut. In February 2012, the SBE adopted a required evaluation framework to guide the development of the state and local evaluation and support systems. The CSDE will return to the board with a recommendation on fully specified state model for use by districts that do not choose to create their own evaluation system or whose proposals do not meet the state’s Guidelines.

3. State Model Evaluation Systems for Teachers and Administrators. While deliberating on the teacher evaluation components that will be required of all local evaluation models and the state model, PEAC members looked at the components commonly used by state and local education authorities across the country in evaluating teachers: 1) observations of teacher practice, 2) indicators of professional responsibility, 3) peer feedback, 4) student feedback, 5) parent feedback, and 6) multiple indicators of student learning.

With the understanding that observations are a near-universal component of teacher evaluation systems, much of the discussion on observations focused on the frequency and length of observation, on who conducts them, and on how to ensure evaluators have proper training. PEAC members recognized that teachers are likely to improve their performance with appropriate and quality feedback and that observations can be a good way to provide that feedback. Most of the CSDE’s advisors agreed that observations should be conducted multiple times each year and by more than just the school principal. The CSDE’s next step is to look at available research to understand the purpose of observations and to determine what good

instruction looks like. These materials will go into observation rubrics and training materials for evaluators.

On peer feedback, the sentiment among the CSDE’s advisors was that teachers particularly appreciate hearing from their colleagues, and many do a great deal of learning among their peers. Student and parent feedback was also seen as an important element of learning for teachers and administrators, provided it is collected regularly and systematically.

Student learning is considered one of the more important components of teacher evaluation. The CSDE’s research on effective practices shows that it is important to include multiple indicators of student learning as they capture a range of teaching behaviors and ensure more effective evaluations for a broader range of teachers, not just those in select subjects and grades. The CSDE believes effective evaluation systems use indicators that are fair, valid, reliable, and useful. All student learning indicators used for evaluations must have these qualities.

In January and February 2012, PEAC reached an agreement on the components and weighting for teacher and principal evaluation systems, as described in prior sections.

PEAC came to a consensus on the details of the Guidelines of the observation rubrics, that teachers have at least three observations per year, at least three observations taking place in class for first- and second- year teachers and teachers that have been rated “below standard” or “developing,” and at least one observation taking place in class for other teachers. The Guidelines also identify survey tools that districts and schools may use to collect data on student, parent, and peer feedback. One of the issues PEAC members addressed is how to measure student achievement for non-tested grades and subjects. The Guidelines provide examples of other standardized assessments teachers can use if the CMT or CAPT are not available for their grade or subject.

4. Guidelines for District-Developed Evaluation and Support Systems. PEAC has also done considerable work on the Guidelines that districts must meet when developing their own evaluation and support systems. The requirements include issues such as what process districts take to develop evaluation systems and their implementation plan, what constitutes high-quality observations, what are the appropriate sources of student learning indicators, what is appropriate training for evaluators, and what are appropriate professional development strategies. Below is a summary of the Guidelines adopted by the SBE:

- 1) Four-level rating system: Teachers and administrators are rated at four levels: Exemplary, Proficient, Developing, and Below Standard.
- 2) High-quality observations of performance and practice:
 - a) District Guidelines require that i) observations are rated against a standards-based rubric, ii) observations result in useful feedback, and iii) evaluators receive training in observation and scoring and how to provide high-quality feedback.

- b) The state model provides i) the number and duration of formal vs. informal observations, ii) pre- and post-conference specifics, and iii) detailed observation rubrics tied to the Connecticut teaching and leadership standards.
 - c) Annual reviews are required, with at least three observations in class for first- and second-year teachers and “below standard” and “developing” teachers, and at least three observations with at least one in-class observation for all other teachers.
 - d) At least three observations of practice, one of which is an in-class observation for all other teachers.
- 3) Multiple student learning indicators:
- a) District Guidelines require i) multiple indicators that are fair, valid, reliable, and useful; ii) a minimum number of indicators for all educators; iii) safeguards for student characteristics, attendance, and mobility; and iv) an explanation of how these indicators will be selected and assessed throughout the school year.
 - b) District Guidelines provide examples of acceptable student learning indicators while the state model will provide specific multiple student learning indicators that can be used for teachers of different grades and subjects.
- 4) Other evaluation components:
- a) District Guidelines require that student, parent, peer, community, or staff surveys used are fair, valid, reliable, and useful.
 - b) The state model, SEED, will provide specific surveys that districts can adopt if they so choose.
 - c) Training for evaluators: Training was provided for all evaluators in the pilot districts in summer 2012; the CSDE has trained district staff, and built the capacity of local partners, especially RESCs, to provide training.
- 5) Evaluation-based professional development:
- a) District Guidelines require that high-quality professional development accompany the evaluation system so educators receive useful feedback and improvement opportunities.
 - b) State model provides specific examples of effective evaluation-based professional development for educators.
- 6) State review of evaluation and support systems developed by districts.

Update: Upon completion of the Neag School of Education Pilot Implementation Study on January 1, 2014, PEAC convened to review the study results and recommendations. On Wednesday, January 29, 2014, PEAC reached consensus on the provision of flexibility regarding several components of the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (2012) based on the Neag study and other stakeholder feedback. Subsequently, on February 6, 2014, the SBE approved and adopted PEAC’s proposed flexibilities with some minor edits. Local and regional school districts, in mutual agreement with their Professional Development and Evaluation Committees, may choose to adopt one or more of the following flexibility components. These flexibility components represent new and alternative minimum requirements within the Guidelines. Districts may opt to pursue variations upon these specific flexibilities so long as they satisfy the minimum requirements. The adopted flexibilities are outlined below.

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Adopted Flexibilities to the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (as of February 6, 2014)

1. The first area of flexibility relates to the number of goals/objectives educators are required to set. While the existing Guidelines allow for at least one (1) but no more than four (4) goals/objectives for student growth, the amendment clarifies and emphasizes that the minimum number of goals/objectives required for each educator can be **one (1)**. For each goal/objective, each teacher, through mutual agreement with his/her evaluator must select multiple Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGD).
2. The second area of flexibility pertains to the use of state standardized test data in compiling educators' summative ratings. As noted above, for each goal/objective, each teacher, through mutual agreement with his/her evaluator, will select Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGD). One half (22.5%) of the IAGDs shall be based on available standardized state test data (CMT, CAPT or SBAC). However, pending federal approval, districts now have the option of decoupling state standardized test indicators from educator evaluation in 2013-2014 and in 2014-2015 school years.
3. The third and final area of flexibility addresses the specific requirements for the number of observations based on teachers' experience and performance ratings. PEAC recommended providing districts with the flexibility to reduce the number of required formal observations for teachers. Specifically, teachers who are not first- or second-year teachers and who receive and maintain an exemplary or proficient annual summative rating (or the equivalent annual summative rating in a pre-existing district evaluation plan) may receive a minimum of one (1) formal in-class observation at least every three years and three (3) informal in-class observations in all other years. In all years, at least one (1) review of practice is required. For non-classroom teachers, the above frequency of observations shall apply in the same ways, except that the observations need not be in-classroom (they shall instead be conducted in appropriate settings). Teachers with proficient or exemplary designations may receive a formal in-class observation if an informal observation or review of practice in a given year results in a concern about the teacher's practice.

In addition, the SBE approved language that addresses the use of data management systems as a part of the educator evaluation and support process in order to address system efficiencies and ensure confidentiality and security. While not a requirement, many districts have procured a data management system to assist with the management of evaluation data. On or before September 15, 2014, Professional Development and Evaluation Committees are responsible for reviewing feedback and reporting to their boards of education on the user experience and efficiency of the district's data management systems/platforms being used by teachers and administrators to manage evaluation plans. The data management systems/platforms shall be selected by boards of education with consideration given to the functional requirements/needs and efficiencies identified by professional development and evaluation committees.

For implementation of local evaluation and support plans for the 2014-2015 school year, and each year thereafter, educator evaluation and support plans shall contain guidance on the entry of data into a district's data management system/platform being used to manage/administer the evaluation and support plan and on ways to reduce paperwork and documentation while maintaining plan integrity.

Additional language has been added that addresses the security of identifiable student data, access of teacher or administrator data and the sharing or transference of individual teacher data as a part of the evaluation and support system.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.A.2) Does the SEA's plan include sufficient involvement of teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines?

Stakeholder Engagement

The Connecticut State Department of Education considers the input from teachers, administrators and superintendents, as well as other stakeholders, to have been instrumental in the development of the state model, Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). Four working groups - consisting of teachers, principals, and superintendents, as well as representatives from the American Federation of Teachers, the Connecticut Education Association, the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the Connecticut Federation of School Administration, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Board of Regents, and Connecticut's higher education institutions – centered around the following four areas:

- 1) Teachers
- 2) Administrators
- 3) Student & Educator Support Specialists
- 4) Implementation

Through consensus, these working groups provided significant input on 1) developing the process for setting SLOs and 2) selecting observation standards and shaping corresponding rubrics. This input was leveraged by PEAC in its development of the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation. PEAC developed and advanced the evaluation Guidelines by consensus and forwarded its recommendation for adoption to the SBE. Throughout the development process, all PEAC meetings were open to and attended by the public, including community members. With significant input from teachers, principals, superintendents, and representatives from other stakeholder groups, the SBE adopted the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation on June 27, 2012.

As discussed above, PEAC executed on its action plan and introduced the Guidelines on June 27, 2012. As PEAC worked on various components of the Guidelines, members spent a large amount of time reviewing research, listening to state and national experts on teacher evaluation, and discussing the issues and challenges they currently face at the local level. Once the decisions regarding components and indicators were discussed with the members, the CSDE convened separate workgroups representing teachers, administrators, and student and educator support specialists to develop performance criteria, rubrics, and other tools based upon the Common Core of Teaching, Connecticut’s teacher standards, and the Common Core of Leading, Connecticut’s leader standards.

Connecticut has sought, and will continue to seek, the involvement of teachers, administrators, and district personnel. In addition to conducting a superintendent survey last fall, which was issued to better understand the agency’s strengths and weaknesses, teachers, principals, superintendents, and representatives from the stakeholder groups listed above will continue to be involved in the pilot implementation of the evaluation system. The CSDE has partnered with the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut to evaluate the pilot system throughout 2012-2013 to study, research and evaluate the implementation of the evaluation and support system in pilot districts. The results of this study will inform future iterations of the Guidelines of Educator Evaluation. This evaluation requires frequent and ongoing feedback from superintendents, principals and teachers solicited immediately after key milestones throughout the implementation process. These key milestones include, but are not limited to: 1) the goal-setting process, which includes an orientation on process, a goal-setting conference, and evidence collection and review; 2) the mid-year check-ins; and 3) the end-of-year summative review, which includes a teacher self-assessment and an end-of-year conference. In addition, the CSDE facilitates regularly scheduled calls (approximately every two weeks) with superintendents to discuss the pilot implementation. Moreover, every pilot district has a designated point person from their respective RESC; these designated point people meet regularly with stakeholders within districts and host separate regional meetings for superintendents and teachers to solicit feedback that is relayed directly to the CSDE. In addition, a CSDE consultant is assigned and available to work with and serve as a resource to each of the pilot districts.

In addition, the CSDE has consulted with and engaged the involvement of teachers’ unions to seek feedback for incorporation into policy decisions at every stage of guideline development thus far, through representation on PEAC and individual meetings with representatives.

Outside of PEAC, the CSDE is engaging a broader network of stakeholder groups for input. The Consultation section includes a complete list of groups and activities the CSDE has done or will be doing to seek comments and feedback from its stakeholders. The stakeholder groups the CSDE is continuing to consult with in the next six months are parents, community-based organizations, students, advocates for ELLs, advocates for students with disabilities, business organizations, the general public, the Connecticut Committee of Practitioners, civil rights groups, and legislators.

At the public comment sessions held in early February 2012 at the CSDE’s regional facility in Middletown, the CSDE presented PEAC’s plan and latest progress to an audience consisting of teachers, superintendents, parents, and representatives of the community and of research organizations. The feedback the CSDE received mainly concerned three issues: 1) how to evaluate non-classroom teachers, 2) how student learning is measured, and 3) how to ensure that the process is not burdensome to teachers. PEAC convened three evaluation workgroups to develop separate models for administrators, teachers, and support staff. The evaluation for non-classroom teachers was addressed by the teacher group. As for measuring student learning growth, the state requirements, which have been approved by the SBE, also specify that of the 45% that these account for in a teacher’s performance, half (or 22.5%) must be based on the state test or a standardized test in grades and subjects for which no state test exists while the other half must include other reliable and valid qualitative measures. Finally, to address the concern that the system will be burdensome for teachers, the CSDE clarified that it plans to provide additional resources to support the implementation of the new evaluation system and associated professional development. Specifically, the legislative package includes \$2.5 million for technical assistance for districts as they develop their own evaluation systems and additional funding for professional development support before the implementation of the evaluation system.

3.B ENSURE LEAs IMPLEMENT TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- 3.B Provide the SEA’s process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA’s adopted guidelines.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.1) Is the SEA’s process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA’s adopted guidelines likely to lead to high-quality local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.2) Does the SEA have a process for reviewing and approving an LEA’s teacher and principal evaluation and support systems to ensure that they are consistent with the SEA’s guidelines and will result in the successful implementation of such systems?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.3) Does the SEA have a process for ensuring that an LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems with the involvement of teachers and principals?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.4) Did the SEA describe the process it will use to ensure that all measures used in an LEA’s evaluation and support systems are valid, meaning measures that are clearly related to increasing student academic achievement and school performance, and are implemented in a consistent and high-quality manner across schools within an LEA (i.e., process for ensuring inter-rater reliability)?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.5) Does the SEA have a process for ensuring that teachers working with special populations of students, such as students with disabilities and English Learners, are included in the LEA’s teacher and principal evaluation and support systems?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.6) Is the SEA’s plan likely to be successful in ensuring that LEAs meet the timeline requirements by either (1) piloting evaluation and support systems no later than the 2013–2014 school year and implementing evaluation and support systems consistent with the requirements described above no later than the 2014–2015 school year; or (2) implementing these systems no later than the 2013–2014 school year?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.7) Do timelines reflect a clear understanding of what steps will be necessary and reflect a logical sequencing and spacing of the key steps necessary to implement evaluation and support systems consistent with the required timelines?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.8) Is the SEA plan for providing adequate guidance and other technical assistance to LEAs in developing and implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems likely to lead to successful implementation?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3.B.9) Is the pilot broad enough to gain sufficient feedback from a

variety of types of educators, schools, and classrooms to inform full implementation of the LEA's evaluation and support systems?

The shared vision and collective effort of Connecticut's educators, administrators, and policymakers, coupled with the support of the CSDE's stakeholders, including teachers, principals, and superintendents, are driving this reform forward. However, the CSDE must acknowledge the importance of execution and the need for a thoughtful process in place to ensure the implementation achieves the same level of rigor and success. As the CSDE considers its plans for successful implementation, its approach is to support districts with tools, information, training, and support while holding local leaders accountable with clear timelines, processes, and requirements. The CSDE believes local ownership is critical to statewide success; to encourage that ownership, Connecticut has to offer the right balance between support and accountability.

PEAC established a working group specifically charged with advising the state on the implementation of the pilot and rollout of the new evaluation systems. PEAC has also finished its main charge concerning the development of the state model and the Guidelines for the new system. Since the June 27, 2012 adoption and issuance of new Guidelines for Educator and Administrator Evaluations, the CSDE has:

- 1) Made Guidelines for the development of state model evaluation systems available to districts for the evaluation of teachers, principals, and other support personnel, and for districts that choose not to adopt the state model, made available the Guidelines that govern the content, process, and standards for all evaluation systems developed by districts;
- 2) Collected feedback from teachers and principals on the state model and Guidelines; and
- 3) Developed and begun to execute on an implementation plan for Connecticut's rollout of new evaluation systems that includes a timeline, a pilot, training plans, a procedure for capturing educators' feedback, and a state review and approval process.

The CSDE will continue to work with teachers, administrators, and their representatives as it develops evaluation Guidelines and state models and works with districts to pilot and implement evaluation systems.

Developing the Guidelines and State Model:

At the time of the PEAC consensus recommendation, PEAC also advised that practitioner working groups should be established to specify the details of the evaluation and support system. Teacher, administrator, and student and educator support specialists evaluation working groups were established as well as a working group in the area of implementation. These groups met every two weeks beginning March 2012, with more working group subcommittee meetings also taking place. Teachers and administrators were represented on each of the working groups:

- 1) Teacher Working Group – members include teachers, superintendents, union leaders, representatives of state organizations, RESC leaders, and university faculty; 3 active

subcommittees focused on observations, surveys, and multiple student learning indicators

- 2) Principal Working Group – members include principals, representatives of teachers, superintendents, representatives of state organizations, RESC leaders, and school board members; 2 active subcommittees focused on rubrics and evaluation process
- 3) Student & Educator Support Specialists Group – members include teachers, administrators, local board members, representatives of state organizations, and RESC leaders
- 4) Implementation Working Group – member include teachers, union leaders, superintendents, representatives of state organizations, university faculty, and RESC leaders; focused on pilot program, training, and peer review.

The consensus agreement made by PEAC provided these working groups with the necessary framework to guide their work and make progress. PEAC members are active participants in the working groups, and they are joined by educators, practitioners, and evaluation specialists from across the state and nation. This broad cross-section of educators has ensured that voices of teachers, administrators, support staff, and policy experts informed the design of the Guidelines of the state model for evaluation and support and that will apply to districts that opt to develop their own evaluation model. Based on the participation of working group members, PEAC was able to make a recommendation on the Guidelines of the state model of evaluation, SEED, to the State Board of Education on June 27, 2012, which was within the timeframe established in state statute.

LEA development of systems consistent with the Guidelines:

CSDE and CAPSS, a PEAC member, have begun to host information sessions with superintendents about the new evaluation system.

The state Guidelines, developed and informed by the work of PEAC working groups, provide guidance on how the evaluation components will be combined and then converted into an "Exemplary," "Proficient," "Developing," and "Below Standard" rating so that there is consistency across districts. PEAC studied the summative rating matrices in use in New Haven, CT, Rhode Island, and other states. The pattern of summative ratings will be utilized by each district to define effectiveness and ineffectiveness.

The CSDE will encourage teacher and administrator participation at the local level for districts that choose to develop their own models in accordance with state Guidelines rather than use the state-developed model. The CSDE will also ensure that the LEA-designed models meet the PEAC Guidelines. Given the detailed nature of this work, it is likely that CSDE will provide follow-up support and guidance to school districts as they work to develop, refine, and implement evaluation and support systems consistent with the Guidelines.

Piloting evaluation systems:

PEAC’s implementation working group developed the supports necessary for successful implementation of the pilot and statewide rollout. This included a robust training process, which the RESCs assisted in providing. RESCs have been trained to train the pilot districts beginning July 3, 2012 and continue throughout the 2012-13 school year. The train-the-trainer model has allowed for sustainable supports for districts and included variety in geography, size, and design (state and LEA-designed). The pilot allows the CSDE to learn and, if necessary, recalibrate to ensure the best evaluation and support systems for the state.

Monitoring Implementation of Evaluation Systems:

~~The CSDE works with the RESCs to train districts and monitor to ensure fidelity of implementation and will include feedback from the pilot districts. The CSDE also supports enhanced reporting requirements on the implementation of the evaluation and support system and aggregate ratings. LEA-designed models were vetted by the CSDE to ensure the PEAC Guidelines are met. The Neag School of Education is conducting a study of the implementation of the evaluation and support system in pilot districts.~~

Implementation Plan

The finalization of the rollout plan will be enabled through the assistance of a PEAC working group. Direct responsibility for rolling out the new evaluation systems falls to the Bureau of Certification and Evaluation—also known as the Talent Office—a new unit created through the CSDE reorganization process and headed by the Chief Talent Officer. The CSDE anticipates that the plan will consist of the following key components:

1. State Review and Approval Process. The CSDE review of district evaluation and support systems is critical to ensuring that Connecticut’s evaluation systems allow for local development but are fair and consistent across the state. While the CSDE provides Guidelines and specific instructions regarding the process, a review and approval process ensures that the district evaluation systems meet the state standards and that the systems were developed with the involvement of teachers and principals as well as input from other stakeholders. Criteria for approval and guidance for reviewers to assess the local models will be based on the Guidelines and the implementation guide.

The CSDE will focus its review of the local systems on the following aspects:

- 1) Whether the key components of the evaluation system comply with the Guidelines and state standards (e.g., percentage accounted for by student learning growth vs. percentage accounted for by observations);
- 2) Whether indicators of teacher and principal performance, including multiple indicators of student learning, are valid, fair, reliable, and useful;
- 3) Whether the district involves teachers, principals, and other stakeholders in the development process; and
- 4) Whether the systems are designed with a level of consistency that enables the CSDE to compare evaluation results across jurisdictions.

The CSDE expects that the state review and approval process will not take more than six to eight weeks, and districts will have an opportunity to submit a revised system based on the feedback if their first submission is not approved. Reviews will be done by either the CSDE Talent Office or a panel of state and local experts that are approved by the CSDE.

2. Timeline for Districts to Develop and Adopt New Evaluation Systems. Connecticut’s Public Act 10-111 (Sec. 4 Section 10-151b) mandates that all districts develop and implement teacher evaluation programs consistent with the Guidelines established by the SBE. It stopped short of imposing a deadline for districts.

The 2012-2013 pilot and 2013-2014 full rollout of the evaluation is dictated by Public Act 12-116. However, this does not preclude non-pilot districts from implementing the pilot evaluation system in 2012-2013. To ensure that all districts have an appropriate evaluation system in place or piloted by the 2013–14 school year, the CSDE Talent Office has developed a separate timeline for districts with specific milestones and deadlines. The CSDE will anticipate and address issues typically causing delays—such as human resource constraints, unforeseen political obstacles, and underestimation of the workload—as well as identify the risks and dependencies to address them as they arise.

At the state level, the CSDE is working with the following implementation timeline:

Pilot Districts:

- May 2012: Planning completed for implementation of pilot and rollout
- May 2012: Districts submitted application for pilot participation
- June 4, 2012: 10 consortia of districts (comprised of 14 districts total) selected for pilot program. These districts are:
 - Bethany
 - Branford
 - Bridgeport
 - Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)
 - Columbia, Eastford, Franklin, and Sterling
 - Litchfield and Region 6
 - Norwalk
 - Waterford
 - Windham
 - Windsor
- June 27, 2012: SBE adopted new Guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluations
- July–August 2012: Training took place for pilot districts and first group of evaluators
- September 2012: Pilot implementation started in 10 districts and consortia of districts
- September 2012-August 2013: CSDE/CAS/RESC training and technical assistance to pilot districts to support planning and implementation

- December 2012: First Neag School of Education Implementation Study Executive Summary Report due to the CSDE. This report will summarize findings from Phase One (Planning and Goal Setting)
- March 2013: Second Neag School of Education Implementation Study Executive Summary Report due to the CSDE. This report will summarize findings from Phase Two (Mid-Year Check-In)
- June 2013: Neag School of Education administers a survey to all pilot district schools.
- July 2013: Third Neag School of Education Executive Summary Report due to the CSDE. This report will summarize findings from Phase Three (End of Year Review).

Non-Pilot Districts:

- September 2012-January 2013: CSDE/CAS/RESC technical assistance to non-pilot districts to assist with decision-making about adopting the state model (SEED), a modified version, or a district alternative evaluation and support plan
- January 15, 2013: Deadline for all Connecticut districts, charter schools, USD#1, USD#2 to submit election sheet to the CSDE to indicate intent to adopt the state model, a modified version, or a district alternative
- April 15, 2013: Deadline to submit final selection of a district's evaluation support plan to CSDE for review and approval
- April 2013-August 2013: Proficiency/Calibration Training provided to all prospective evaluators in all districts (including complementary evaluators) and other schools that select to participate in SEED
- April 15, 2013-August 15, 2013: The CSDE convenes teams to review district evaluation support plans. For all hybrid components and district alternatives, each component of the plan must meet on a rubric aligned to the models or proposals as approved by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC)
- June 30, 2013: The CSDE notifies districts about approval of their district plans or need for revisions
- July–September 2013: Training for remaining evaluators and district personnel; districts provide orientation and other required training to all staff as required by statute
- September 2013: Statewide rollout of new evaluation systems across; districts adopt state model or develop their own
- September 2014: All districts have in place a high-quality evaluation and support system that meets state Guidelines and proves to be effective for teachers and administrators.

3. Technical Assistance for Districts.

1) A Strong and Effective Communication Strategy. The CSDE anticipates much of the communication about the implementation of new evaluation systems will begin before the actual activities take place. This is necessary to facilitate successful implementation and effective change management. A communication plan will be developed to articulate the reform vision to local leadership and stakeholders, keep them abreast of the implementation plan and timeline, and set goals and targets for achievements. It will outline the process for the

pilot implementation, training plans, and the process for developing a district evaluation system. Another important aspect of the communication plan is to create a knowledge transfer process whereby district leadership and stakeholders have access to the information and lessons that members of PEAC and the CSDE learned throughout the development and implementation planning process. Finally, the CSDE intends the introduction of the new evaluation systems to be not simply a change on paper, but a transformative change that affects how teachers and administrators work and how they align their work to students' learning goals. This is an important message the CSDE wants to get across to teachers, principals, and support personnel who will be managed under the new evaluation frameworks.

On a more practical level, the communication plan will also allow the CSDE to address questions and concerns early in the process to ensure seamless coordination and execution of activities throughout implementation. Communication is already underway in the following ways:

- The CSDE has published a weekly pilot district newsletter in order to continuously inform pilot districts and stakeholders throughout the pilot year about additional resources and management strategies that may generate from CSDE as well as promising practices generating from teachers and leaders within the pilot districts. The newsletter is disseminated to superintendents and other key staff in pilot districts, as well as to key stakeholders and partners including members of the Development Team, leadership from the two Connecticut unions (CEA and AFT), and leaders at the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE).
- A statewide newsletter has been developed and the first edition sent out that is intended to communicate information in a consistent manner to all districts across the state relative to district evaluation plan development, budget guidance and opportunities for training and technical assistance.
- The CSDE, RESC Alliance and CAS offer personal visits to districts and professional organizations across the state, upon request, to conduct information sessions, review existing evaluation plans and assist in aligning the evaluation plans to the core requirements as stated in the Guidelines.
- The CSDE has launched a user-friendly website to assist in the dissemination of information and updates and provide opportunities for districts to pose questions to superintendents in all RESCs to provide information about the evaluation system and engage in discussions about district implementation. Ongoing discussions with superintendents are planned.

The CSDE's goal is to make sure its communication tools meet the following requirements:

- Have enough channels to reach target audiences (such as e-mail, online forms, or helpline telephone numbers).

- Have a means for timely, effective delivery of information up, down, and across levels (e.g., teachers must have a way to communicate directly with the SBE and the CSDE without having to go through their internal chain of communication).
- Have a means to alert responsible parties, track status of inquiries, and collect and store information communicated for analysis and feedback.

The CSDE will look at publishing communication materials both in print and online as well as in different formats such as PowerPoint presentations, FAQs, instructional videos, and toolkits.

2) Training and Implementation Support for Districts. The CSDE’s training program will leverage both direct training of evaluators and district personnel by the state (in conjunction with external partners) and a train-the-trainer component to generate district-based training capacity for future support needs. The CSDE started a training program in July of 2012 for the pilot districts with evaluators, using the Guidelines of the state model and state recommended observation rubrics. Training was also provided during the summer of 2012 to superintendents, administrators, and principals of districts participating in the pilot on how to apply the new Guidelines and frameworks to develop local evaluation systems. The remainder of the training will take place in the summer of 2013 and will be informed by the lessons learned from the training in pilot districts. The Educator Evaluation and Support Development Team has been formed to identify the lessons learned, and is comprised of representatives from the six regional education centers from across the state, known hereafter as the RESC Alliance, representatives from the CT Association of Schools (CAS) and staff from the CSDE’s Talent Office. This team meets regularly in order to discuss all matters related to the implementation of the evaluation and support system in the pilot districts. To ensure consistency across the RESCs and CAS individuals responsible for local implementation and technical assistance, the CSDE held a “Training of Trainers” session for a cadre of 45 individuals. This group of 45 individuals includes six Connecticut State Department of Education employees that serve as the core team for implementing the pilot and 39 trainers based in the RESCs that have a direct link to every pilot district and can provide in-time response and personalized support. Once trained, CSDE consultants provided support to pilot districts and the RESCs and CAS in turn provided training and follow-up technical assistance in the various components of CT’s evaluation and support system, including student growth and development (45%), observation of teacher practice and performance (40%), parent or peer feedback (10%) and student feedback and/or whole school indicator (5%).

The CSDE has provided fiscal support to the six RESCs and CAS non-pilot districts for training and technical support. Since September 2012, the RESC/CAS trainers have held regional meetings within their respective RESC regions in order to assist these districts in planning for implementation in their districts during the 2013-14 school year.

In addition to providing support to the RESC Alliance and CAS for planning and implementation, CSDE leadership and staff have offered support to any non-pilot district who requests assistance with planning for implementation in 2013-14. To date, these requests have primarily been for assistance in presenting an overview of the new evaluation and support system to the

local Board of Education or to meet with the Central Office administrative team and/or the evaluation planning committee.

The CSDE is currently developing the plan for training and technical assistance to support all CT districts with implementation beyond the pilot year. The state is exploring various options to provide training in developing and assessing administrator/evaluation proficiency and calibration aligned with the Common Core of Teaching.

The indicators that the CSDE will track to measure the success of its training efforts may include survey data to gauge whether attendees know what they need to know to implement the new evaluation system after the training takes place.

3) *Materials to Accompany Training and for Districts to Use.* Under the Connecticut approach, districts can choose to develop their own evaluation system or use the state model. Depending on which option the districts choose, the CSDE anticipates that they will need different kinds of support. For those that use the state model, they will need help conducting the evaluations and incorporating the task into regular activities. Those who choose to develop their own, however, will need technical support with both the development and implementation processes.

The CSDE will provide written instructions to guide the districts through the process of developing and implementing a new teacher and administrator evaluation system. In addition, to ensure that districts proceed successfully, the CSDE will provide content and process-related materials in a ready-to-use format for district and school leaders. These will include:

- A state model for teacher evaluation, principal evaluation, and evaluation of support personnel that include validated indicators;
- An implementation guide, including examples of acceptable performance indicators and effective evaluation-based professional development;
- PowerPoint presentations or FAQs that district and school leaders use for training and communication purposes. The availability of these materials will help to ensure the key information and messages are delivered accurately to teachers, educators, and administrators at local levels. They also save local leaders time from recreating what the state has done;
- Various forms and worksheets that may be helpful to the process of developing and implementing the new evaluation system; and
- Guidance for how districts can pass the state review and approval process if they choose to develop their own evaluation system, including a rubric has been developed to guide districts in developing their own plans.

The CSDE will also provide districts with specific guidance on options for evaluating teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, including teachers of students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

Practitioners, including professionals who serve all populations of children including special populations of students, will be included in the educator evaluation system and are engaged in

the development process. Each of the four PEAC workgroups – teachers, administrators, student and educator support specialists and implementation – had overlapping representation at their individual meetings to ensure the evaluation systems are aligned while also allowing for differentiation. Within the teacher work group, teachers of SWD and of ELL are represented on the committee. The student and educator support specialists group includes a representative from the following disciplines that serve special populations: school psychology, speech and language pathology, social work, occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing, transition coordination for students with disabilities, and school counseling. The administrator group also includes program administrators and service providers for special education students and English Language Learners.

PEAC working groups also worked to refine the framework for teachers who do not teach a CMT-assessed grade or subject. PEAC decided to have teachers in non-tested grades and subjects use other standardized indicators that are broadly administered and are aligned to a set of academic or performance standards.

4) **Technical Assistance and Support for Non-tested Grades and Subjects**

As previously noted, the PEAC formed four working groups to make recommendations regarding specific components of Connecticut’s system for educator evaluation and support. The Student and Educator Support Specialist (SESS) group was convened and consisted of membership from the Connecticut State Department of Education, the Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) Alliance, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the Connecticut Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists, the Connecticut Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the Connecticut School Counselor Association, the Connecticut Association of School Social Workers, the Connecticut Association of School Librarians, the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education, the Connecticut Physical Therapy Association, the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association, the Connecticut Council of Career Development and Transition, and the State Vocational Federation of Teachers. In addition, mathematics and literacy coaches and special education teachers were represented.

The original SESS workgroup convened in spring 2012 to consider how the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) state model could be applied in a fair and meaningful way to their respective disciplines. On June 18, 2012, a white paper was released to outline specific considerations when applying SEED to Student and Educator Support Specialists.

Recognizing that within some of these positions, the specific job roles and/or functions may vary, several recommendations emerged from the SESS workgroup, including:

- 1) Every individual being evaluated needs to have a clear job description and clear delineation of their role in the school to guide the setting of student learning objectives, observation of practice and stakeholder feedback.

- 2) The SESS educator and the evaluator need to discuss the unique characteristics of the educator’s role, including the characteristics of the population served, to determine the appropriate application of standardized and non-standardized measures of student growth to this individual.
- 3) The SESS educator and evaluator need to determine the appropriate venue for observation and the rubric by which the observation will be conducted.
- 4) In partnership with the regional educational service centers (RESCs), the CSDE should establish formal regional networks of professionals within these positions who can assist with individual or group support and evaluation.

As a result of these discussions and recommendations, the CSDE has released a series of documents to guide the evaluation of SESS in the following roles:

- English language learner educators;
- social workers;
- school psychologists;
- library media specialists;
- school counselors;
- speech/language pathologists;
- mathematics and English language arts coaches;
- transition coordinators; and
- special education teachers.

All documents are designed to supplement Connecticut’s SEED state model. These guidance documents include a description of the varying roles that these educators serve within a district, as well as sample Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) that are rigorous and comparable across learning environments.

Each guidance document is written in a similar format to facilitate clarity and ease of use for both educator and evaluator and includes the following features:

- Description of the varying roles the SESS educator may serve within the school and/or district community
- Sample Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)
description of student population served
baseline student data
rationale for the SLO
sample Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGDs)
assessments connected to measureable targets
Common Core State Standards and/or discipline specific standards addressed

SESS educators fall under the broader umbrella of educators within non-tested grades and subjects. Measuring student growth in non-tested grades and subjects requires the

identification and/or development of alternative measures of student learning and performance that are rigorous and comparable across learning environments. SLOs can be based on appropriate standardized assessments, but they also may be based on district-, team- or teacher-developed classroom assessments.

The CSDE has worked to ensure that the SLO process, as it applies to all educators, is clearly defined and allows for the measurement of student progress over two or more points in time, using assessments that measure meaningful changes in student achievement in the discipline/subject area, either in comparative terms or growth toward a standard. An SLO Development Guide has been created for use by all educators, including non-tested grades and subjects, to provide guidance in the development of rigorous and attainable SLOs and IAGDs. SLOs and IAGDs are developed collaboratively between an educator and his/her evaluator during the goal-setting phase of the evaluation and support process.

Moving forward into the 2013-14 academic year, both the SESS workgroup and other non-tested grades and content area workgroups will continue to define principles to guide an approach to selecting and designing assessments for use by these educators. As Connecticut continues its work with the SESS workgroup, the CSDE has also facilitated stakeholder groups representing art, music, physical education and health educators to develop guidance documents similar to those developed by the SESS workgroup.

To support observation of educator practice and performance, which comprises 40% of an educator's summative rating, the SESS workgroup developed an alternative rubric called the *Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Student and Educator Support Specialists*. This rubric is tightly-aligned to the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* that is used for observation of educator practice and performance in the 2013 SEED state model. It was determined that the *CCT Rubric for Student and Educator and Support Specialists* was most applicable to school psychologists, social workers, school counselors and speech and language pathologists. All other groups agreed that the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* would provide for fair and accurate observation of their practice and performance.

Both CCT rubrics are structured to collect evidence within five domains; 1) Environment, Student Engagement and Commitment to Learning; 2) Planning; 3) Service Delivery/Instruction; 4) Assessment; and 5) Professional Responsibilities and Leadership. In the SESS-adapted rubric, language across the four-point continuum of performance was customized so as to be applicable to those professionals who primarily work within a service delivery model.

Training in the use of the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* occurred throughout summer 2013 and will continue into the 2013-14 academic year. Technical support will be provided by the RESCs to develop a deeper understanding of the *CCT Rubric for Student and Educator Support Specialists*. Additionally, the CSDE, in partnership with the RESCs, is developing training for Complementary Observers. Developing the role of Complementary Observer is especially valuable as a key strategy for observation of professional practice and performance. The training will represent a blended learning design that includes face-to-face presentation and

collaboration, as well as web-based support, information and supplemental tools. There are opportunities for individual and team learning to include both print and web-based resources for skill development as well as simulations to model skills and procedures to guide practice. These are key aspects of professional learning design guided by the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward 2011).

The CSDE recognizes the potential of unintended consequences of the new educator evaluation and support system, including the possible exclusion of certain subgroups; specifically students with disabilities and English language learners. The CSDE and respective workgroups will continue to explore the topic of non-tested grades and subjects with various stakeholders in order to expand and improve upon guidance documents, the SEED state model, and the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012), as appropriate.

5) Ensuring Meaningful Measures and a Strong Data System. By establishing the state review and approval process and providing districts with technical support and materials to use in the development of local systems, the CSDE builds into its process mechanisms to ensure the performance measures are valid and meaningful in improving teachers' and administrators' quality as well as student learning.

While the CSDE has a student growth model currently being used, the CSDE is currently investigating the possibility of adopting a value-added model and a decision will be forthcoming. The CSDE will continue to use standardized and non-standardized indicators to determine student growth throughout implementation. The CSDE commits to working with pilot districts and consultants to further define the acceptable non-standardized indicators and measures that meet the criteria set forth in the Guidelines; indicators should be fair, reliable, valid and useful to the greatest extent possible. These terms are defined as follows:

- 1) Fair to students – The indicator of academic growth and development is used in such a way as to provide students an opportunity to show that they have met or are making progress in meeting the learning objective. The use of the indicator of academic growth and development is as free as possible from bias and stereotype;
- 2) Fair to teachers – The use of an indicator of academic growth and development is fair when a teacher has the professional resources and opportunity to show that his/her students have made growth and when the indicator is appropriate for the teacher's content, assignment and class composition;
- 3) Reliable – Use of the indicator is consistent among those using it and over time;
- 4) Valid – The indicator measures what it is intended to measure;
- 5) Useful – the indicator may be used to provide the teacher with meaningful feedback about student knowledge, skills, perspective and classroom experience that may be used to enhance student learning and provide opportunities for teacher professional growth and development.

For English Language Learners and students with disabilities, the CSDE has specific internal consultants working with the implementation teams to advise the pilot districts as to how to identify appropriate student learning objectives and use appropriate indicators to measure students' academic growth.

For career and technical education, existing nationally-normed state assessments for the 20 courses offered will be used to determine teacher effectiveness.

The insight on how effective the system is and whether these performance measures provide meaningful feedback also depends on how data are collected, processed, and used by the school and district leaders and managers. The CSDE believes this important and often-overlooked step in the reform process requires thinking and careful execution.

Currently, the CSDE manages all education-related data it collects on student performance through tests and from school districts in a new data warehouse, formally known as the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). Connecticut legislation (Public Act 10-111) specifically mandated that by July 1, 2013, the CSDE must expand the current statewide public school information systems to “track and report data relating to student, teacher and school and district performance growth and make such information available to local and regional boards of education for use in evaluating educational performance and growth of teachers and students.”

In August 2010, the CSDE launched a website called Connecticut Education Data and Research ([CEDaR](#)) to provide the public with access to the data. The CSDE keeps the SLDS database current by enabling direct feeds of student-related data from various sources. Teachers' data, which are reported at the individual level and include data regarding years of experience, degree earned, and assignment, are maintained in a different source called the Certified Staff File. The CSDE uses this file to make determinations about whether a teacher is highly qualified pursuant to the NCLB Act, but it also uploads the data from this file into the warehouse described above. It is also used to determine levels of certification and compliance.

The CSDE is currently updating the data warehouse to link teachers' information with the students they teach and to make available student transcript data, including courses taken and grades earned. Access to performance data will be disparate depending on the role of users. The CSDE plans to make the same data tools available to all users, but data accessibility should be customized for different user types as follows:

- CSDE personnel responsible for teacher and administrator evaluations can access all data;
- District directors can see all observation data in their district and statewide benchmarks;
- Administrators can see the observation forms for all teachers in their schoolwide and districtwide benchmarks;
- Evaluators can see only the observations forms for which they are responsible; and
- Teachers can see only their own observation data and districtwide benchmarks.

Once the students and teachers' and administrators' performance data are linked, the next step is to define how the system should serve performance management activities. The CSDE's goals are to:

- Provide responsible personnel at state, district, and school levels with reports to use in monitoring completion status and results associated with evaluations;
- Enable school principals to access teacher evaluation data by individual teacher or by group for professional development purposes;
- Enable teachers to view their own evaluation data, including observation forms, scores, and effectiveness rating; and
- Provide overall scores based on observation data that evaluators submit and data on student learning and other indicators.

6) *Change Management and Performance Management Support.* As Connecticut rolls out a new evaluation system, the CSDE anticipates the need for change management and performance management support at the district level. Even with the stakeholder engagement the CSDE has conducted, the introduction of new evaluation frameworks is likely to require a shift in thinking and practice at various levels. For some districts, the change represents modifications to mission and strategy. For some, the new evaluation models require operational changes, such as new technology, new processes, or new skills. And for others, the new systems may signify a shift in values and philosophies. Across the board, they will affect how teachers, administrators, and support staff work with each other, how they manage their own work, and how they define their success or failure in helping students improve learning.

The change management will be done partly through communication, for which a strategy is outlined in the beginning of this section. In addition, the CSDE Talent Office will explore during the pilot year using a combination of tools, techniques, and support to local leaders in data-driven performance management, that is, how to incorporate the use of data into their work and in showing benefits to productivity and student achievement. Though teacher evaluations are not new to Connecticut educators, the use of student learning and feedback data may pose a challenge to some in understanding what narratives and analyses they can draw from the data, how they can use the data for understanding individual educator effectiveness, and how they can begin to incorporate additional measures to drive their school-based implementation. The CSDE believes that educators may need some time to learn and understand what the growth and observation data is telling them about their students and their teachers and leaders. The CSDE needs a process and time for learning to take place as well as feedback and adjustment to occur.

The CSDE Talent Office may design a training program to accommodate this learning in the later stage of system implementation. The CSDE also anticipates the need to develop knowledge and skills at the state and district level that can lead a statewide effort in building a data-driven performance culture. The CSDE is engaging the expertise of organizations that are leaders in this field to further develop approaches in this area.

4. Assessing Implementation of Evaluation Systems:

The CSDE worked with the RESCs, CAS and other partners to train districts to ensure fidelity of implementation and incorporated feedback from the pilot districts throughout 2012-13. The CSDE also supports enhanced reporting requirements on the implementation of the evaluation and support system and aggregate ratings. LEA-designed models were vetted by the CSDE to ensure the PEAC Guidelines are met on an annual basis. The Neag School of Education conducted a study of the implementation of the evaluation and support system in pilot districts, which has informed, and will continue to inform, continuous improvement of the system.

In 2013-14, the CSDE is planning to assess the implementation of Connecticut's new system for educator evaluation and support to ensure that each LEA develops, adopts, and implements high-quality educator evaluation and support systems consistent with the CSDE's adopted Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012). The 2013-14 school year is the first year of statewide implementation following a full year pilot in ten districts/consortia during the 2012-13 school year. In accordance with Public Act 13-245, LEAs should include the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee, which must include representatives selected by the collective bargaining unit, in the development of the district's educator evaluation and support plan. The Professional Development and Evaluation Committee should be consulted when revisions/amendments are being considered.

The CSDE will develop a comprehensive system comprised of differentiated levels and types of assessing fidelity. The levels will be designed as follows with the expectation that they will be implemented beginning in 2014-15:

Level I: All Connecticut districts and charter schools will be required to complete a comprehensive progress report aligned to the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation for both the teacher and administrator models in order to assess implementation progress and fidelity. Each district will be required to complete and submit the progress report to the CSDE. While still in development, the review protocol will address the major components of the system, as well as specific questions related to students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs) and non-tested grades and subjects.

In addition to the areas as stated above, the CSDE is also striving to more tightly connect the state's new system for educator evaluation and support with the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program, the existing induction program for teachers entering the profession. To that end, as part of the process to assess statewide implementation in 2013-14 and beyond, the CSDE will include the elements of TEAM Program monitoring, as it aligns to the teacher evaluation and support system. See below for information about Connecticut TEAM Program and specific requirements for program monitoring.

Legislation that established the TEAM Program requires that the CSDE monitor district implementation of the program to ensure fidelity to its plan and goals. In order to meet this requirement, the Department has developed a five-year plan to visit randomly-selected school

districts, charter schools, technical high schools, and approved private special education facilities from each of the six RESC regions around the state.

Following a TEAM Program site visit, the CSDE and/or appropriate partners will provide the district with a report to highlight commendations and provide suggestions about the district's implementation of the TEAM Program. The CSDE will also outline an action plan for additional assistance and support, if needed, from TEAM Program consultants at the CSDE and the RESCs.

While primarily designed to assess statewide implementation of the educator evaluation and support system, this report will also serve as a mechanism by which districts can provide feedback about implementation during the first five months of the school year. In addition, this feedback will further inform continuous improvements to the system for educator evaluation and support prior to the annual re-submission of district plans for educator evaluation and support. This process will augment the findings of the Implementation Study conducted by the Neag School of Education, Center for Education Policy Analysis at UCONN. The final report was submitted by Neag on January 1, 2014.

Level II: Upon submission of the progress report to the CSDE and/or appropriate partners, approximately 30 districts, including charter schools, will be randomly selected for more in-depth assessment via a desk monitoring process similar to the USED process for monitoring states' ESEA Flexibility Waivers. This represents approximately twenty percent of Connecticut LEAs. The random selection process will be designed to ensure approximately equal representation from each of the six RESC regions. Additional districts and charter schools may be assessed if the CSDE has questions or concerns regarding the district's responses during the Level I review process.

The desk monitoring process will be conducted via telephone with district teams representing both school level and district representatives. The protocol for use in the desk monitoring process is currently under development. The desk monitoring process will be conducted by CSDE staff. While still under consideration, it is likely that the desk monitoring team may also include representatives from the six RESCs, the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), and both state teachers' unions (CEA and AFT).

Following the desk monitoring process, the CSDE and/or appropriate partners will provide the district with a report to highlight commendations and areas in need of improvement. The report may also include suggestions about the district's implementation of Connecticut's system for educator evaluation and support.

Level III: In addition to the districts selected for more in-depth desk monitoring, between five and ten districts and/or charter schools will be selected for a full site visit. The protocols, as well as the site visit process are still under development. However, the process will include paper review, as well as on site visits to include classroom visits, 1:1 semi-structured and focus group interviews. The site review teams will be comprised of various stakeholders, including but not limited to representatives from various offices of the CSDE, including Talent, Academic,

Turnaround and the Office of Student Supports, as well as representatives from the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the RESC Alliance and the state teacher and administrator unions.

Following the site visit, the CSDE will provide the district with a report to highlight commendations and areas in need of improvement. The report may also include suggestions about the district’s implementation of Connecticut’s system for educator evaluation and support.

This tiered system outlined will serve as the formal assessment of statewide implementation. In addition to the formal process, the CSDE has begun to develop several systems that are scheduled to begin immediately. During the 2013-14 school year, the Talent Office will sponsor a Teacher-Leader-in Residence (TL-R). The current TL-R served as the 2007 state Teacher-of-the-Year. This individual will spend 50% of his time throughout the 2013-14 school year in the CSDE Talent Office and 50% in his local school district. During his time at the CSDE, the TL-R’s main focus will be to elevate *teacher voice* to inform both policy and practice. One initiative will be the development of several focus groups, developed and implemented in collaboration with the RESC Alliance and the CAS. The focus groups are primarily intended to tap the expertise of practitioners in the field in informing the on-going developments of Connecticut’s educator evaluation and support system, as well as other initiatives related to educator effectiveness. While some of the focus groups will be heterogeneously grouped, others, including educators of students with disabilities, English Language Learners and educators in non-tested grades and subjects, will be homogeneously grouped in role-alike groups. The results of these focus groups will be compiled and comprise part of a district’s overall assessment process.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (7) Is the pilot broad enough to gain sufficient feedback from a variety of types of educators, schools, and classrooms to inform full implementation of the LEA’s evaluation and support systems?

Pilot Implementation in Academic Year 2012–13

The CSDE is conducting a pilot in 10 districts or consortia of districts (14 districts total) with two primary goals: 1) to test the components and requirements of the new evaluation systems (both the state model and local development of new systems); and 2) to identify districts’ needs for technical assistance and ongoing support, regardless of whether they choose the state model or design their own systems. The CSDE will also use the pilot to gain insight into whether the implementation plan for the full rollout in 2013–14 is appropriately designed.

Districts were invited to apply for participation in the pilot in May 2012. Ten districts or consortia of districts were selected. Selected districts underwent training in the summer of 2012, with a goal to start developing a new evaluation system in September 2012. The CSDE

partnered with industry-leading organizations that have successfully assisted other states to research best practices, design processes, and plan for the pilot.

Below are some features of the pilot implementation:

- **Pilot participation:** Districts were invited and selected based on the level of interest and readiness to ensure success. The CSDE considered size, geography, performance, and capacity to accommodate as broad a group as possible.
- **Communication:** Materials about the pilot clearly state the goals, benefits, and responsibilities of participating districts. Throughout the process the CSDE creates reporting and communication channels to keep track of progress, address questions and concerns, and share lessons learned across piloting districts.
- **Data collection:** To achieve the goals mentioned above, data collection is critical. The Talent Office will set up processes and tools to monitor and document aspects of the implementation process for learning and improving in the rollout. More importantly, the CSDE will work with pilot schools to collect the assessment data for the production of growth measures and the piloting of the student roster validation process. This will let the CSDE test assumptions about how different teaching structures (e.g., co-teaching, group teaching, looping) will or will not be allowed in the new evaluation system as well as for which subjects and grades will be counted and how.
- **Support:** Piloting sites will get regular on-site visits and check-ins by Talent Office personnel.
- **Non-consequential outcome:** If the evaluation identifies underperforming teachers or administrators, these individuals will be reevaluated using the current system before any actions are taken. The CSDE wants to make sure everyone involved in the process, from evaluators to those being evaluated, understands the system first before it holds anyone accountable for the outcome.

The CSDE has engaged the services of the Center for Education Policy and Analysis at the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut (UConn) to conduct a formal implementation study during the pilot year. A team of eight researchers from UConn has begun data collection in the ten pilot districts/consortia. Data collection has been done primarily through focus group interviews with staff in each of the pilot districts, which have provided the opportunity for both teachers and administrators to provide feedback about the implementation in their schools/districts and will guide revisions to the evaluation system.

Revisions of the model are expected to be made throughout the implementation of the pilot based on results of the pilot study that will be conducted by the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. Should pilot districts identify promising practices within the Guidelines to implement during the pilot that vary from the established Guidelines, those practices must be approved by the State Department of Education in Consultation with PEAC and may be incorporated into the Guidelines going forward. The study conducted by the Neag School of Education will also inform future iterations of the Guidelines. Upon completion of the study, but no later than January 1, 2014, the Neag School of Education is required to submit to the State Board of Education the results of the study and any recommendations concerning the

validation of the teacher evaluation and support program Guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.

The results of the study will help also determine changes needed to improve the evaluation system in the immediate. For example, after goal-setting is complete, the Neag School of Education study will determine the degree to which teachers are setting ambitious, quantifiable goals for student achievement and will inform any revisions that should take place in the immediate to adjust goals in order to meet the Guidelines.

Additionally, the CSDE or a third-party designated by the CSDE will audit evaluations ratings of exemplary and below standard to validate such exemplary or below standard ratings by selecting annually ten districts at random and reviewing evaluation evidence files for a minimum of two educators rated exemplary and two educators rated below standard in those districts selected, including at least one classroom teacher rated exemplary, at least one teacher rated below standard, at least one administrator rated exemplary and at least one administrator rated below standard per district selected.

In addition to the form study being conducted by the Neag School, CSDE leadership as convened stakeholder groups in order to seek input regarding implementation issues, challenges, concerns and ideas. Information gathered from these meetings, as well as the information gathered from individual district visits will further inform changes to the system beyond the pilot.

The CSDE's commitment to providing ongoing support during implementation is only made possible with the RESCs and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS). The CSDE intends to utilize RESCs to spearhead local evaluation implementation and ensure lessons learned from the pilot are incorporated in districts' evaluation system plans. Along with the CSDE, RESCs will be responsible for reviewing the Guidelines with districts and providing technical assistance through the use of a rubric that reflects the Guidelines to assess the quality of local plans.

Conclusion

It is well documented that the best predictor of student learning, achievement, and success is the quality of the teachers in the classroom, and that principals are uniquely pivotal players in ensuring schools' success. Without strong educators, Connecticut cannot reach its goals of preparing students for success in college and careers and achieving better results for all students, including ambitious levels of growth for the CSDE's lowest performers. The CSDE's adoption of evaluation Guidelines and robust road map for implementation, as well as its commitment to continuously improving it with the input of educators, leaves Connecticut well positioned to provide educators with the meaningful evaluation and support system they deserve.