

ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

CONNECTICUT

Revised January 31, 2012

DRAFT

The Connecticut State Department of Education
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

WAIVERS

By submitting this flexibility request, the Connecticut State Department of Education requests flexibility through waivers of the ten ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested.

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, 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.

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.
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.

Optional Flexibility 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.

CONSULTATION

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

Connecticut understands that the flexibility measures sought in this application will have a direct effect on the conditions in which educators work and has therefore sought their input and guidance in both the process in which the waiver was developed as well as in the specific content areas.

1) College- and Career-ready Expectations for All Students (Principle 1) - Connecticut's educators were critical to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) adoption process. In May 2010, over 50 experts in Connecticut's ELA and mathematics standards conducted a standards comparison study. At the June 2010 Stakeholder Engagement Conference nearly two-thirds of attendees represented school LEAs. 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. Our submission for Principle 1 describes this content in greater detail.

2) State-developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Principle 2) – To be posted for public comment on Tuesday February 7, 2012.

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. Firstly, union representatives, teachers' advocates and administrators have large representation on the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), a statutorily mandated council charged with the development of the new guidelines. PEAC and CSDE sought input from LEAs on the evaluation systems very early on through a survey of LEAs to collect baseline assessment before we embarked on the guidelines development work. Since the guidelines development work began, teachers have had consistent representation at the table voicing their needs and concerns.

4) Waiver Process - On January 11, 2012, the CSDE scheduled meetings with the leadership of Connecticut Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, two unions representing Connecticut teachers, to discuss the process for our waiver request.

Our next step is to present to the unions a complete draft of the waiver request to solicit their feedback for our next revision. Our working relationship with the unions on this waiver has been extremely cooperative and responsive. We have and expect to continue to receive valuable input and helpful feedback from these key partners.

In addition to working with teacher unions, CSDE solicited feedback from teachers directly. In October 2011, our Commissioner began a statewide listening tour that has stopped at schools and school meetings within 11 districts. As part of the tour, he spoke about the new evaluation and support system and setting new goals for Connecticut, and engaged teachers in conversation, seeking their input. All comments received have been documented and taken into consideration as we develop our plans.

[To be completed following end of the public comment period.]

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2) How 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.

The high-level timeline for the CSDE stakeholder process is as follows:

Table 0.1: CSDE Stakeholder Process

| Milestones | Timeline |
|--|-----------------------|
| PEAC convened regarding teacher and administrator evaluation and support; CCSS implementation activities proceed (e.g., adoption, creation of frameworks, professional development); continued interventions in low performing districts (e.g., CALI, CommPACT, Windham) | January-December 2011 |
| Formal consultations begin with stakeholder groups regarding waiver content (e.g., transforming low performing schools and districts; teacher and administrator evaluation and support) | December 2011 |
| CSDE convenes internal working group for waiver | December 2011 |
| Preliminary draft of Principles 1 & 3 shared with stakeholders | February 1, 2012 |
| Preliminary draft of Principles 2 shared with stakeholders | February 7, 2012 |
| Submission of final application | February 21, 2012 |

1) College- and Career-ready Expectations for All Students (Principle 1) - We engaged stakeholder groups during the Common Core adoption process. In June 2010, CSDE held a CCSS Stakeholder Engagement Conference to share the results of the Comparison Study and to provide an opportunity for educators and other stakeholders from business and communities to provide their general impressions of the new CCSS and to recommend resources and support systems needed for effective implementation. Participants represented the P-20 Council, Connecticut Education Association, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Connecticut ASCD, Connecticut Reading Association, Connecticut Association of Schools, Connecticut Association of School Principals, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, State Education Agency, Connecticut Institutions of Higher Education, and Regional Educational Service Centers Alliance. Over 100 individuals attended the Stakeholder Engagement Conference. Nearly two-thirds of the attendees were educators, over one-quarter represented educational organizations, and slightly less than ten percent represented higher education institutions.

The CSDE Common Core implementation team includes two teams with specific mandate to ensure all constituent groups are reached. The Internal Team has a mandate to reach stakeholders in adult education, early childhood, and family engagement. The External Team includes members that represent IHEs, professional organizations, LEA level administrators, teachers’ organizations, parent organizations and advocacy groups. These stakeholders will recommend resources and support systems that will be needed for ongoing implementation of CCSS.

2) State-developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Principle 2) –

To be posted for public comment on Tuesday February 7, 2012.

3) Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership (Principle 3) - To be posted for public comment on Tuesday February 7, 2012.

4) Waiver Process - We have engaged various stakeholder groups in the waiver development process. To hear from the general public, our Commissioner has conducted a statewide listening tour and attended the Governor's Conference where he discussed the waiver request with community members. CSDE created an [ESEA Flexibility Waiver webpage](#) on the CSDE website and invited the general public to submit suggestions to title1waivers@ct.gov.

To solicit input from superintendents and principals, we worked with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) and Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), which on January 6 invited all members to submit comments through an online form posted on its website. We have several meetings scheduled with representatives from the groups to discuss the draft content of the waiver application. Before we submit our waiver application, we plan to speak with parents, students, community-based organizations, Indian Tribes, business organizations, civil rights groups, legislators, and advocates of English Language Learners and Student with Disabilities.

We plan to meet with Connecticut stakeholders to present an overview of the waiver application and to get their feedback. We are also planning a Waiver Informational Session. We will attach our ESEA Stakeholder Engagement Plan in the appendix.

[To be completed following end of the public comment period.]

OVERVIEW OF SEA'S REQUEST FOR THE ESEA FLEXIBILITY

NOTE: To be posted for public comment on Tuesday February 7, 2012.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1) Provide an overview of the SEA's request for the flexibility that 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 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.

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

1A ADOPT COLLEGE-AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

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

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| <p>Option A</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State’s standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 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.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State’s standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)</p> <p>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)</p> |
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1.B TRANSITION TO COLLEGE-AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1) 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.

Overview and Approach

On July 7, 2010, with a unanimous vote, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted new national academic standards, known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics 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 our global economy; and to be based on evidence and research.

By adopting and now implementing the CCSS, Connecticut affirms its belief that all students can and should learn and achieve at higher levels. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has worked diligently to provide guidance and support to all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) 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 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.

In order to efficiently and effectively serve the needs of LEAs 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 CCSS Leadership Team, Associate Commissioners, Bureau Chiefs, and content area staff are designing a self-assessment tool. A planning meeting is scheduled for February 2012, during which the CCSS Leadership Team will review and update the current implementation plan, and extend the plan beyond the 2013-2014 school year.

We believe 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.

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 that states: "Career readiness involves three major skill areas: core academic skills and the ability to apply those skills to concrete situations in order 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 adoption and implementation of CCSS reflects our commitment to prepare students to succeed in entry level, credit-bearing academic college courses and workforce training programs through IHE partnerships, and to ensure that students entering IHEs have mastered requisite skills. More consistent student preparation through CCSS will reduce the need for remediation.

The Connecticut P-20 Council was established through an executive order dated January 13, 2009. This committee was developed with the Governor’s support to prepare students for college and careers. A tool kit was designed to inform educators, workforce representatives, parents and other stakeholders on how to improve college and career readiness for all students. The P-20 Council has increased collaboration, information sharing and planning throughout the state by disseminating meaningful data and research to all educators and employers. As a result deeper conversations have occurred between LEAs, IHEs and businesses.

Foundation for Implementation: History and Timeline of the CCSS Adoption

The CSDE conducted a multi-step 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 recommendation to the SBE, the CSDE conducted a thorough Standards Comparison Study. In February 2010, the CSDE was invited to be the first state education agency to field-test a web-based program developed by Achieve. A team of CSDE curriculum consultants met with representatives of Achieve in April 2010, to learn 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, the strength of each match, and indicates where there are grade-level differences. 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 receiving training in 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 Common Core Standard. As a result, it was determined that approximately 80 percent of the Common Core Standards match the Connecticut ELA standards and 92 percent of the Common Core Standards match the Connecticut mathematics standards. | May 2010 |
| 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, Connecticut Education Association, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center for students with disabilities, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Connecticut ASCD, Connecticut Reading Association, Connecticut Association of Schools, | June 2010 |

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| Connecticut Association of School Principals, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, CSDE, Connecticut Institutions of Higher Education, Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL) and Regional Educational Service Centers Alliance and the Connecticut Parent Information and Resource Center. Over 100 individuals attended the Stakeholder Engagement Conference. Of these individuals, 64.4 percent represented LEAs, 26.7 percent were from educational organizations, and 8.9 percent represented higher education institutions. Additionally, presentations were made to the State Advisory Council on special education which is an advisory council to the CSDE and the state's legislative General Assembly, comprised primarily of parents along with legislators, state agency representatives and school district personnel. The special education parent advisory committee for the special education state performance plan was also briefed on the CCSS and Next Generation assessments. | |
| SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The Connecticut educational leadership (Governor, Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education Chair, Commissioner of Higher Education, Chancellor of the State University System and 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 RTTT grant to develop new systems of assessment. | June 2010 |
| Adoption of the CCSS – The State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in ELA and mathematics with a unanimous vote. | July 2010 |

The CSDE commissioned a study of the CCSS adoption process. See CCSS Adoption Evaluation (see Appendix A).

CCSS Implementation Timeline

Since the adoption of the CCSS, the CSDE has significantly increased communication, professional development activities, curriculum development/revision work with LEAs, 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 began review of Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS); state science leadership team convened comprised of CSDE state policy makers, RESCs, IHE faculty and STEM industry representatives to lead planning for NGSS adoption | March 2010 – current |
| SBE adopts the CCSS | July 2010 |
| CSDE launches CCSS webpage | August 2010 |
| ELA and mathematics content experts develop crosswalks | |
| CSDE joins SBAC as a governing state; five CSDE staff participate in SBAC workgroups, with two members serving as co-chairs; CSDE has hosted two state-wide summer institutes on Next Generation Assessments | August 2010 - current |
| CSDE begins state-wide transition to CCSS professional development | October 2010 |
| CAPELL quarterly meetings; bi-annual RESC ELL Consortia Meetings | 2011 – 2012 |

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|--|---------------------------|
| CSDE sponsors <i>Rigorous Curriculum Design</i> (RCD) | January 2011 – March 2011 |
| ELL framework aligned to CCSS ELA and CCSS mathematical practices | |
| CSDE joins State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) | |
| CSDE joins Implementing Common Core State Standards (ICCS SCASS) and names State Leadership Team | |
| CSDE begins realignment of Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) training modules to CCSS | March 2011 |
| CSDE sponsors IHEs symposium | April 2011 |
| CSDE continues professional development activities including RCD, crosswalk development; State Leadership Team develops multi-tiered implementation plan | May 2011 – August 2011 |
| CSDE attends ICCS SCASS | August 2011 |
| CSDE aligns Career and Technical Education (CTE) Standards with CCSS mathematics | September 2011 |
| CSDE provides overview of the CCSS and Next Generation assessments to administrators of special education in public and private schools | |
| CT and select states create State Collaborative on English Language Acquisition (SCELA) Standards Project | October 2011 |
| CSDE develops and provides a regional professional development program in collaboration with RESCs | December 2011 |
| CSDE attends ICCS SCASS | |
| CSDE develops Special Education Professional Development Series: <i>Designing Standards-Based IEPs to Support Progress in the General Education Curriculum</i> | January 2012 |
| CSDE collaborates with RESCs and SERC and continues to offer regional professional development | January 2012-2015 |
| CSDE aligns to CTE Standards with ELA CCSS | February 2012 |
| CSDE conducts Spring Language Arts Council Meeting Series | April 2012 |
| CSDE sponsors 2 nd Annual IHE symposium | |
| CSDE attends ICCS SCASS | |
| CSDE sponsors Data Showcase Conference with a focus on CCSS implementation | |
| State-wide professional development aligned to next generation assessments, grades 3-8 and high school | 2013-2015 |
| Pilot assessment items for SBAC | 2013-2015 |
| CSDE provides technical assistance for the CCSS-based curriculum | 2013-2015 |
| CSDE provides updates to stakeholders through web and e-alerts | 2013-2015 |

The Leadership Team will continue to revise and update Connecticut’s Implementing Common Core State Standards (ICCS) Implementation Plan (see **Appendix B**), which will serve as the action plan through 2015.

From 2010 to the beginning of this year, we have focused primarily on building state capacity to support training and technical assistance; aligning CCSS standards with ELL and CTE standards; supporting educators of ELL students and students with disabilities; creating instructional materials to support curriculum development in LEAs; and engaging stakeholders across the state. With this strong foundation in place, over the next three years we 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, LEAs, and other stakeholders.

Connecticut'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 our 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 our collaboration with 44 other states that are implementing the CCSS, helping us identify and introduce best practices. The CAO will work with the Chief Talent Officer to align our professional development activities with the CCSS.

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

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 multi-state collaboratives on assessment and student standards (SCASS) (**Appendix F**).

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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.

English Language Arts (ELA). Results from the comparison study indicated that approximately 80 percent of Common Core standards match the Connecticut ELA standards. The study identified 200 ELA standards that are not currently included in the Grade K-12 Connecticut standards. Between 64-90 percent of the CCSS ELA standards match to Connecticut standards for each grades K-8.

In order to increase LEAs' understanding the CCSS standards as they compare to Connecticut standards, during the summer of 2011, the CSDE provided a series of professional development sessions to LEA curriculum writing teams. Based on the data from the comparison study and the LEAs' current curriculum documents, LEAs 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 LEAs to place an emphasis on curriculum revisions at the middle school level. In addition, the CSDE has advised LEAs 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 is comprised of a 9-12 grade band. The results of the comparison study indicate that 92 percent of the Connecticut standards at grades 9-10 match the CCSS, and 93 percent of the Connecticut standards at grades 11-12 match the CCSS, indicating an even greater percent of matches at the high school level.

The greater percent of matches allows high school teachers to focus on infusing the ELA CCSS across other content areas so that students understand the connection of literacy beyond traditional English language arts 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 percent of the CCSS for mathematics matched the Connecticut standards. Eighty-six to 100 percent of CCSS matched Connecticut standards by grade at the K-8 levels. 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.

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, which differs from the four standards in the Connecticut standards. Content for the grades 9-12 Connecticut 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 CAPT, as well as those concepts and skills that **all** students should know and be able to do 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 results of the comparison study indicated that 89 percent of Connecticut standards for grades 9-12 matched the CCSS, with 48 percent of the matches characterized as weak, i.e., 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 work on the development of crosswalks and composition of recommendations for the CCSS implementation.

States were allowed to supplement the CCSS with an additional 15 percent 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 (November 2010) to review the Connecticut standards that did not match the CCSS. The groups spent a day reviewing all unmatched standards to determine if any should be considered for part of the additional 15 percent option. The decision was that Connecticut would not add state-specific standards for ELA and mathematics.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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). To support ELLs in the content areas, 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 LEA 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 ESL/Bilingual Education practitioners and K-12 CCSS for Mathematical Practice with mathematics practitioners. The experts linked Connecticut ELL Framework indicators to the CCSS standards. This work is in final review and will imminently be available to LEAs. Ultimately, there will be a complete document for each grade level or secondary grade spans in which the Connecticut ELL framework indicators are linked to the CCSS standards.

In addition to the state-level work, content area experts at the CSDE participate in an interstate collaborative focused on English language proficiency (ELP) and standards related to the CCSS. The goals of this collaborative are to develop common ELP expectations that align with the CCSS and to systematically examine current ELP/English Language Development (ELD) standards in participating states and subsequently identify commonalities and differences among them.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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. We believe that students with disabilities can and should access rigorous grade-level content, and therefore Connecticut does not have a separate set of standards for students with disabilities and has no plans to create such standards. Individual Education Programs (IEPs) are developed based on general education standards (i.e., for ELA and math, CCSS as of July 2010). This is also the case for the one percent to two percent of the student population with severe disabilities.

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

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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 Stakeholders conference in June 2010. The CSDE is cognizant of the need to provide clear, consistent messages and support to LEAs and its partner organizations. We are committed to working with all LEAs (which include charter and magnet schools), Approved Private Special Education Programs (APSEPs), Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), and institutes of higher education (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 understand that by implementing the CCSS, students will be better prepared to compete on the international stage.

Coordination Across CSDE Divisions. In order to efficiently and effectively serve the needs of LEAs and relevant stakeholders, the CSDE has developed a three-tiered approach to target four key areas of implementation, including stakeholder outreach: curriculum frameworks and materials, assessment, professional development, and communication. The three tiers are:

- **Tier I - Leadership** is comprised of 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 approximately 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 approximately 30 members, including members of the national state and leadership teams. The external team will meet quarterly and is comprised of members who represent IHEs, professional organizations, LEA administrators, teachers' 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:

- **Website.** In August 2010, the CSDE created a dedicated webpage to provide information about Connecticut's work in implementing the CCSS, providing school LEAs with access to curriculum development materials, PowerPoint documents, 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. The website can be found at the [CSDE CCSS website](#)
- **E-Alerts.** The CSDE sends quarterly statewide E-Alerts to stakeholders with regular updates on the CCSS and SBAC. Recipients for e-Alerts include educators in Curriculum and Instruction (2,524), Mathematics (1353), and Student Assessment (355).

Finally, we continue to seek input on the implementation process by providing surveys and other feedback mechanisms to educators during statewide and local trainings. We continue to address engagement with specific stakeholder groups – including educators and IHEs – throughout this waiver application.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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, LEAs, 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 providing technical assistance on CCSS-based curriculum.

As mentioned, the CSDE is organized to target four key areas of implementation: curriculum frameworks and materials, assessment, professional development, and communication. This approach will directly support educators in Priority School Districts (PSD) and Partner School Districts. In addition, we will also deliver ongoing professional development and technical assistance through statewide professional ELA and mathematics organizations, RESC Alliance meetings, Title III and special education focused technical assistance. The CSDE’s CCSS Leadership, Internal, and External Committee will coordinate and disseminate this extensive range of professional development (**see Appendix D**)

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

Mathematics-Specific Trainings. The CSDE has provided mathematics-specific trainings for: RESC Mathematics Council bi-monthly and quarterly meetings; RESC Curriculum Council meetings; Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators in Connecticut (AMTEC) conference; Connecticut Council of Leaders of Math; Math Leadership Academy Presentation; and the Associated Teachers of Mathematics in Connecticut (ATOMIC) conference. Of particular note:

- 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 the RESCs to update 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 HS curriculum unit design teams, facilitated and supported by the CSDE mathematics content expert. Team members reviewed the development process; answered questions about their work and discussed implications for LEAs; and shared implementation strategies and resources from their LEAs.
- In January and February 2012, the CSDE will train 30 K-8 classroom teachers and instructional coaches from Priority School LEAs 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 6 graduate credits in mathematics education. The CSDE plans to offer this professional learning support state-wide over the next three years to better equip K-8 teachers of mathematics to teach according to the new standards.

Supporting Partner Districts. In order to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation requiring states to identify low achieving schools and districts for intensive supervision, the CSDE developed the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). This initiative focuses on the use of data-driven decision-making and standards-based instruction to address the learning needs of each student in order 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 schools and districts that were identified by NCLB as underperforming. The legislation required the CSDE to identify low achieving schools and districts for intensified supervision and direction by the SBE. There are presently 18 Partner Districts monitored under this legislation. 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 in relation to their district plan for reporting progress to their local board of education and the SBE.

In order 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. CSDE, the RESCs, and 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, SERC and LEA 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 trainings.

The CALI initiative 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 the Partner Districts to work at the district level. As appropriate to the needs of the Partner District, consultants from other Bureaus provide assistance. External consultants, who are retired Superintendents, provide support at the Superintendent level. CSDE in collaboration with AFT and 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 2009-2010, the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement contracted with RMC Research to conduct an evaluation of CALI. 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 the quality 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 trainings, 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. 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 LEAs. In addition to regional and subject-specific training sessions, CALI training modules are available to all districts and schools across Connecticut. There is now a common dialogue, language and expectations for student achievement within the state.

Supporting Priority LEAs. Each year the CSDE provides professional development for the 15 priority LEAs in Connecticut. Traditionally, the professional development sessions were for literacy personnel. In the past two years it has become common practice to have other teams from each LEA attend the professional development sessions. 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 the use of multiple data sets to inform instruction and making the CCSS accessible to students.

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

English Language Learners. From October 2010 to January 2011, the past president of TODOS, a National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) affiliate conducted professional development for Teaching Mathematics to ELLs and focused on teaching mathematics to all students, especially those of Latino heritage. The two-day sessions included instruction on effective teaching strategies and on strategies for classroom implementation.

Recent training sessions for priority districts have also included the use of effective strategies for ELLs. Specific examples include sessions that support the ELA CCSS and Connecticut's ELL Framework. Resources and materials include *ELL Strategies Desk Cards* developed collaboratively by the CSDE and the RESCs, a book produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics: *What's Different About Teaching Reading to Students Learning English?*, and *Beyond Leveled Books* by Karen Szymusiak and Franki Sibberson.

Students with Disabilities. To successfully include a student in the general education curriculum, general and special educators and student support services professionals must collaborate in new ways to meet the demands of developing high-quality individualized education programs (IEPs) based on the CCSS. To that end, we have provided a series of job-embedded workshops on methods of assessment, alignment within an IEP, specially designed instruction and the use of assistive technology. Participants in these professional development activities were to: determine if 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; write standards based, specific, and measurable objectives. In 2010 and 2011, 22 participants attended from three LEAs. Beginning in January 2012, 30 registered participants from two additional LEAs will 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 US and CT Departments of Labor so transition planning is meaningful and reflected in IEPs.

During the 2011-2012 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 Special Education Private 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: nonfiction text reading emphasis of the language arts standards; developmental aspect of the math standards; and the on-line 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; aligning IEP vendors with the CCSS, providing written guidance on IEP development aligned to the CCSS and new assessments, Universal Design for Learning strategies, and utilization of assistive technology. The CSDE also solicited the assistance of IDEA Partnerships 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 capacity and reach more LEAs and educators, the CSDE plans to look at LEA personnel and newly retired teachers and administrators with expertise in content subjects/grade levels and those with expertise in ESL/Bilingual Education, and special education to help with training in the next year. This model was previously used by the CSDE in order to support the statewide Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST). Based on the success of the model, the CSDE will determine whether a similar model could be utilized to support the implementation of the CCSS in the LEAs. While the specifics of the program may need

modification, the basic design would reflect the BEST model. Funding is contingent upon flexibility received from the ESEA waiver.

A hallmark of this model is that newly retired teachers/administrators and high-quality teachers “on loan” from districts will work at the CSDE a percentage of their time. These individuals would work with CSDE content area experts to develop their knowledge of the CCSS, and in turn they would provide support in coordinating implementation of the CCSS in districts. Additionally, they would assist department staff in fielding questions and providing information from direct queries from the LEAs. They would also serve on the CSDE CCSS Internal Team in order 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 LEAs. These individuals would serve a critical role in providing two-way communication and enhancing the consistent and clear messaging from the CSDE to the LEAs.

The CSDE CCSS Leadership Team will develop a realistic timeline for the model’s inception for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years contingent upon flexibility received from the ESEA waiver. In addition, the Leadership Team will develop a monitoring structure to determine the effectiveness of the model and its related activities.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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 offer two annual Summer Leadership Academies (CCSS-SLA) for principals/assistant principals, directors of special education, and directors of ESL/Bilingual Education in partnership with the Connecticut Association of School (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 Academies 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 its 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. The CCSS District coordinators will track enrollment to ensure that leaders are participating at both the elementary and secondary levels as well as 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 LEA 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 SBAC. The Commissioner of Education along with the Chief Academic Officer for Teaching and Learning will provide the

welcome and introductory remarks highlighting the importance of this work in closing CT's achievement gap.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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 LEAs, RESCs, SERC, and IHEs, convened to develop this set of guiding documents, which consists of frameworks for units of study comprised of priority and related supporting standards and pacing calendars. The documents, for use by LEAs, 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 LEAs with tools for revising curriculum documents and for implementing the standards at the classroom level.

- **Crosswalks.** The ELA and mathematics crosswalk documents show the correlation between the CCSS and Connecticut standards, and the alignment of the CCSS to Fourth Generation CMT and Third Generation CAPT. LEAs 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 developers of curriculum. 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.

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, 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 LEAs or Regional LEAs. Educators can access ELA and mathematics pacing guides for grades 3-8 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 Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for students with disabilities.

Connecticut is not a textbook adoption state. Therefore, the CSDE does not endorse specific products or materials. Each LEA purchases their instructional materials through their local education budget. Currently, Achieve is working with identified states in the development of a rubric to evaluate the quality and alignment of textbooks and other instructional materials to the CCSS. In the future, we are interested in using rubrics to guide LEAs choices of instructional materials. Connecticut has also discussed embarking on the process of developing model curricula through discussions with New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC). CSDE staff representing ELLs and students with disabilities will also participate in the discussion to ensure that model curricula supports universal design.

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, CSDE will supplement the standards with other college- and career-ready standards.

- **Next Generation Science Education Standards (NGSS).** In keeping with its commitment to a well-rounded education for all students, and to embracing rigorous college- and career-ready standards in common with other states, Connecticut has been proactively preparing for 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 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 State Board will vote in favor of adopting the NGSS. The transition plan calls for extensive professional development and curriculum development support during 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. We are 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 PD specialists, higher education faculty, and STEM industry representatives – is being assembled to lead strategic planning for NGSS adoption, rollout and effective implementation in classrooms. On-going 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 Next Generation Science Education Standards (see **Appendix C**) when they are completed in late 2012.

- **Social Studies.** The Connecticut Social Studies framework is a comprehensive document that provides a roadmap 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 application of knowledge and the application of social studies in 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. We 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 Standards
- Business and Finance Technology Education, Personal Finance, grades 6-8 and 9-12
- Agricultural Science Education, grades 9-12
- Family and Consumer Sciences, grades 6-8 and 9-12

We are 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 (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 to 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:

- **Project Opening Doors (POD).** POD is an Advanced Placement (AP) course expansion project led by Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) in collaboration with the CSDE. This initiative is designed to increase the number of students taking AP courses in math, science and English courses, and passing the AP exam. CBIA's Project Opening Doors is

largely targeted at minority and underprivileged students. Funded by the National Math and Science Initiative, POD is helping to close the nation's largest achievement gap between white and non-white students here in Connecticut.

- **Bridges Program.** Through the Bridges Program, college professors work with high school teachers to promote 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 LEAs.
- **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 (UConn).
 - **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), to pursue an associate or baccalaureate degree in their chosen career area. The CSDE partnered with the Departments of Labor and Economic Development, 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 per year participated in the program. The partnership resulted in the publication *Connecticut Career Pathways, Seasons of Change and Transition* located on the state website at: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/Curriculum/CT_Career_Pathways.pdf.
- **UConn Early College Experience (ECE)** is a dual enrollment program that allows high school students to enroll in UConn courses at their high schools or on campus for both high school and college credit. Every course taken through UConn ECE is equivalent to the same course at the UConn. The UConn also participates in CCP by offering their 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 the state of CT that participate in this program. This course is required for UConn students that plan to enter teaching, nursing, or human development. It can also be used as a general elective at UConn.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Academic Foundation Competencies

CTE provides a context for the development of academic teaching and learning. The CSDE's commitment of 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 **Appendix G** for a full list of CTE areas of concentration.)

Based on research conducted by Georgetown University, the NASDCTEc and the National Research Center for Career Technical Education, *Career Clusters, Forecasting Demand for High School Through College Job, 2008-2018*, Connecticut has the largest need in career clusters in Business Management and Administration, Information Technology, Health Occupations and Travel and

Tourism. Programs of study offered in LEAs and IHEs are targeted 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 E**, CTE Professional Development Timeline 2010-11.) In addition, the CSDE held a conference featuring Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and Kim Green, Executive Director of the NASDCTE 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 *Student Success Plans* (SSP) for every student in grades 6-12. Each LEA is required to establish the SSP for all students July 2012, which will support students' academic and career goals. The major components of the SSP are located on the CCSDE Web site at <http://www.CSDE.ct.gov/CSDE/cwp/view.asp?a=2702&Q=322264>. A series of videos highlighting districts' "promising practices" for the SSP can be found at www.SERC.org.

The SSP is focused on student engagement and relies on a critical adult(s) to help students create, monitor and revise their plans, in order to guide them through their secondary and postsecondary career and 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 post secondary 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 state guidelines, districts are encouraged to utilize an electronic SSP management system to facilitate student, parent, and teacher planning for the support and evaluation of student progress throughout their educational careers.

The CSDE offered two large-scale professional development forums on the SSP in November and December 2011 with 600 district administrators and staff in attendance. Due to overwhelming response for professional development and technical assistance, the CSDE is working with the CAS and the RESCs to reach out to all stakeholders statewide. A SSP toolkit is under development to include district resources and best practices.

The CSDE is currently working with Dr. James Comer, author of *What I Learned in School* of the Yale University Child Development Center, to provide support for SSP development with Connecticut's PSDs. Dr. Comer's work directly aligns with the tenets of SSP development of the "whole child", and the importance of family and school relationships that influence student engagement, career aspirations and life success.

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 culminating project linked to one or more area of personal interest. Capstone engages students in a project/experience that focuses on an interest, career path or academic pursuit that synthesizes classroom study and real world perspectives. The Capstone Experience may include an in-depth project, reflective portfolio, community service and/or 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 9th grade; successful completion will earn the student one credit toward high school graduation.

Transition to College and Career for Students with Disabilities. Connecticut LEAs provide additional transition services to about 25 percent 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, business, community setting (e.g., library, administration building, apartment, house) or combination of settings. The CSDE catalogs these opportunities in the *Directory of Transition Services in College, University, and Community-Based Settings* (see: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Community_Based_Transition_Services.pdf) that currently contains more than 30 settings. Partnerships with IHEs comprise about one fourth of the settings. Beginning in March 2012 and continuing through 2013, the CSDE will provide training and technical assistance to support LEAs 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 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and 2004, LEAs have been required to provide IEP transition goals and objectives for all students between the ages of 16 - 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 path(s) that incorporates their interests, preferences, strengths and needs. Furthermore, the CSDE supports students with disabilities continued learning beyond high school whether in employment or 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 assists students in meeting their postsecondary goals. The CSDE and 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 convenes a stakeholder group of public and private agencies, parents, consumers, advocates, and LEA representatives to address secondary transition needs of students with disabilities. This Special Education Transition Task Force will meet in January 2012 to examine the CCSS and identify those standards most appropriate for transition planning for students with disabilities. The Transition Task Force is also developing a crosswalk between the CSDE’s Student Success Plan (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, 504 Plans, Individualized Healthcare Plans, and the Summary of Performance. This crosswalk will help LEAs integrate students with disabilities into the general education SSP process and ensure that all students benefit from and are provided access to college and career ready standards.

The CSDE participates in national meetings with IDEA Partnership to discuss CCSS implementation and the next generation of assessments and anticipate receiving technical assistance from IDEA Partnership executive director, Joann 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 of assistance to state special education departments on issues related to special education and ICCSS. For more detailed information regarding the CCSS and special education, see Connecticut CCSS PD Implementation (see Appendix D).

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (10) Does the SEA intend to work with the State’s IHEs and other teacher and principal preparation programs to better prepare incoming teachers to teach all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, to the new college- and career-ready standards; and incoming principals to provide strong, supportive instructional leadership on teaching to the new 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 IHEs are integral partners at all levels.

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

- CSDE content area experts presented on the CCSS and SBAC for pre-service teachers at the UCONN Mathematics Teacher Preparation Program (Fall 2010);
- CSDE content area experts presented on the CCSS and SBAC for pre-service teachers at the SCSU Mathematics Teacher Preparation Program (September 2011); and
- 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).

Since April 2011, the CSDE has been working to fully engage IHEs in the CCSS implementation in order to impact 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. IHE faculty are invited to attend statewide CALI trainings at no cost. Since the symposium, 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. Two higher education faculty have volunteered to collaborate with the CSDE and provide leadership in planning the CSDE’s April 2012 IHE Symposium.

The theme for the next Higher Education Symposium is “*Knowledge and Skills Candidates* (pre-service teachers and aspiring administrators) *Need to be Effective Educators and Leaders.*” Presentations and discussion topics will focus on the connections between the CSDE initiatives, including the CCSS, new certification regulations, and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

The CSDE is required to report on disaggregated college-going rates and credit accumulation as part of State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (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.

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 understanding the components of a balanced assessment system (interim assessments, formative assessment tools and practices, and summative assessments) in alignment with the SBAC.

The CSDE is currently developing documents that will delineate the core practices embedded in the redesigned CALI modules. These documents will serve as a resource for IHE faculty to integrate this material into their course syllabi and pre-service field experiences.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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:

- 1) 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?
- 2) 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?
- 3) Implementing another strategy to increase the rigor of current assessments?

Transition to Next-Generation Assessments

The CSDE has joined the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and intends to adopt SBAC assessments in the 2014-2015 school year. Until then, the CSDE will implement an assessment transition plan that begins in 2011-12 by piloting new assessment items designed to measure the CCSS.

During 2012, the assessment 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. We believe that this approach will encourage educators to focus more intensely on the CCSS.

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 forms of 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 LEAs and schools with information regarding the extent to which their educators have successfully implemented the CCSS in classroom-based instruction.

SBAC Participation. The CSDE’s leadership in the SBAC consortium has also informed the assessment transition plan. The CSDE has been a governing member in the SBAC consortium 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 USDOE public meetings.

Table 1.3: Connecticut SBAC Participation

| Milestones | Timeline |
|--|------------------------|
| Participation in two SBAC “All States” meetings in New Orleans and Minneapolis | April and August 2011 |
| Participation in the development of SBAC RFPs | July 2011 |
| USDOE public meeting on Accessibility and Accommodations | August 2011 |
| Participation in onsite and virtual meetings with SBAC contractors to inform the processes needed to develop an assessment system | September 2011 |
| Participation 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 |

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 this will be used to deliver more timely results, how the consortium will develop 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, thus allowing information to be delivered to key stakeholders as soon as decisions are made.

In addition to joining SBAC, the CSDE has joined the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), to develop a multi-state 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:

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

The CSDE's Bureau of Student Assessment content area experts participated in the CCSO SCASS group Assessing Special Education Students. 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 the ASES SCASS Summit Students' with Disabilities and Common Core College and Career Readiness held in December of 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 our stakeholders to make informed decisions and influence the development of the new assessment system for students with significant cognitive disabilities. See SBAC Implementation Timeline (**see Appendix E**).

SBAC and College and Career Readiness. Connecticut recognizes that the CCSS were developed largely on the basis of a new vision of college and career readiness, and in particular notes that the standards are not college *or* career ready. Therefore, it is not our intent to stratify students prematurely into college and non-college tracks, but rather to focus on aspects of the standards that have greater value to the global workforce, primarily the aspects of "readiness" defined by Darling-Hammond and Pecheone.

The CSDE also recognizes that there will continue to be a subset of careers that does not require a college degree, and the importance of such careers cannot be understated. As previously stated in this waiver, CSDE CTE and content area experts have begun the process of aligning with mathematics CCSS. The CSDE further acknowledges that the ability to evaluate, synthesize, and use knowledge in new contexts is not unique to college-going students, but also produces innovative thinkers in careers.

While the standards 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 as a way of understanding whether they are on track toward the overall goal of 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 ready 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. The 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 and Internal committees and the External committee. The monitoring system will incorporate all tiers in an intentional and coordinated manner. In addition, the Connecticut ICCSS Implementation Plan (see **Appendix B**) will be consulted to determine whether some monitoring is already planned and how this can be incorporated into a cohesive and comprehensive system for monitoring implementation activities at the CSDE, LEA 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. By Fall of 2012, an initial plan will be developed which 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 to identify and replicate effective techniques and best practices for the LEA 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 the RESCs/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 add a section to the assurance process whereby superintendents of schools must attest in writing that their LEA has developed a timeline and process for monitoring and sustaining the CCSS.

Students with Disabilities. On annual basis, (summer) approximately one percent (600) of all IEPs of students with disabilities aged 6-21 will be examined for alignment of goals to the CCSS. Additionally, as a component of special education focused monitoring (annually winter/spring) 5-10 districts will have IEPs reviewed for alignment to the CCSS as it pertains to the area of monitoring (e.g.; if Secondary Transition is 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 as related to IEP development, implementation and progress monitoring.

Reducing Duplication and Unnecessary Burden on LEAs

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

The implementation of the CCSS will inherently encourage LEAs and schools to collaborate regarding curricular development and revision. Collaboration is beneficial for schools and LEAs of

all demographics; for example, in small LEAs, collaboration will allow for professionals who have been singletons to now work as members of a group. In larger LEAs which, in many cases, have been able to convene curriculum development and revision teams, the financial burden will be offset by sharing costs. As a non-textbook adoption state with high levels of local control, the implementation of the CCSS encourages LEAs to work collaboratively and in a manner that is not proprietary. This will result in reduced duplication of efforts and a shared, and therefore reduced, financial burden across LEAs and schools. Specifically, flexibility to reallocate Title I funds presently under ESEA for Supplemental Education Services (SES), public school choice and professional development would allow LEAs 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 the classroom teacher and the in-district support personnel.

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

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. We 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 our work to provide Connecticut's schools with a strong foundation upon which to continue their implementation of a CCSS-based curriculum in order to ensure that all students can succeed with these standards.

PRINCIPLE 2: STATE-DEVELOPED DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

NOTE: The Connecticut State Department of Education will post a draft of Principle 2 for public comment on Tuesday February 7, 2012. The draft will reflect answers to the guidance questions listed below.

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

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (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) 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?

Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system create incentives and provide support to close achievement gaps for all subgroups of students?

Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system include interventions specifically focused on improving the performance of English Learners and students with disabilities?

Did the SEA provide a plan that ensures that the system will be implemented in LEAs and schools no later than the 201-2013 school year?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3) 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? 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?

2.B SET AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (4) 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 below?

Option A: Did the SEA set its AMOs so that they increase 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?

Option B: Did the SEA set its AMOs so that they increase in annual equal increments toward a goal of 100 percent proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year?

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 (5) Are these AMOs similarly ambitious to the AMOs that would result from using Option A or B above? Are these AMOs ambitious but achievable given the State’s existing proficiency rates and any other relevant circumstances in the State? Will these AMOs result in a significant number of children being on track to be college- and career-ready?

2.C REWARD SCHOOLS

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (6) Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying highest performing and high-progress schools as reward schools? Did the SEA’s request identify both highest-performing and high-progress schools as part of its first set of identified reward schools? Did the SEA describe how the SEA will publicly recognize and, if possible, reward highest-performing and high-progress schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (7) Has the SEA provided a reasonable explanation of why its proposed recognition and, where applicable, rewards are likely to be considered meaningful by schools? For example, has the SEA consulted with LEAs and schools in designing its recognition and, where applicable, rewards?

2.D PRIORITY SCHOOLS

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (8) 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?

Does the SEA’s request include a list of its priority schools? Did the SEA identify a number of priority schools equal to at least five percent of its Title I schools? 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?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (9) 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? 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 (10) Has the SEA identified practices to be implemented that meet the turnaround principles and are 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?

Has the SEA indicated that it will ensure that each of its priority schools implements the selected intervention for at least three years?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (11) Is the SEA’s proposed timeline for ensuring that 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 reasonable and likely to result in implementation of the interventions in these schools?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (12) 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?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (13) Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status? Do the SEA’s criteria ensure that schools that exit priority status have made significant progress in improving student achievement? Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit priority status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?

2.E FOCUS SCHOOLS

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (14) 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?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (15) Did the SEA include a list of its focus schools? (Table 2) Did the SEA identify a number of focus schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools? 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?

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?

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?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (16) Did the SEA describe the process and timeline it will use to ensure that each LEA identifies the needs of its focus schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions the SEA will require its focus schools to implement to improve the performance of students who are furthest behind?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (17) 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?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (18) 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)?

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (19) 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? Do the SEA’s criteria ensure that schools that exit focus status have made significant progress in

improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps? Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit focus status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?

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

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (20) 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? Are those incentives and supports likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students?

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

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (21) 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? 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 (22) 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 (23) Is the SEA’s process for ensuring sufficient support for implementation in priority schools of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles (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 (24) 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?

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.

| Option A | Option B | Option C |
|--|---|---|
| <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has not already developed any 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><input type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has already developed and adopted one or more, but not all, guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a copy of any 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); iii. the SEA’s plan to develop and adopt the remaining guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year; iv. a description of the process used to involve teachers and principals in the development of the adopted guidelines and the process to continue their involvement in developing any remaining guidelines; and v. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the remaining guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 14). | <p><input 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. |

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1) If the SEA has not already developed any 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?

Connecticut recognizes that Teacher and Principal 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 year, 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 the evaluation of teachers and administrators across the state. We have also begun taking important steps to plan for and ensure that the evaluation systems are implemented timely and effectively by local school districts. To date, we have made significant progress, specifically:

- We have in place a solid plan for the development of new guidelines and support systems that includes specific goals and timeline.
- The council has adopted a set of principles to guide the districts in the development of their evaluation systems.
- Members have also agreed on the design approach for how local school districts may choose to develop their evaluation systems: LEAs can design their own based on core requirements or adopt a state model if they are unwilling or unable to design their own.
- We plan to submit the new guidelines to the State Board of Education (SBE) for approval and put in place by July 2012.
- A pilot implementation is planned for the 2012-2013 school year, followed by a full rollout in the following year, 2013-2014.

Background on Evaluation System Development

Teachers and administrators in Connecticut are currently evaluated based on the Guidelines for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development, issued by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 1999. In July 2010, in an effort to kick start reform of a decade-old system with which many teachers and administrators have voiced dissatisfaction, Connecticut adopted Public Act No. 10-111. This important piece of legislation put in place a policy framework and a process for Connecticut to enact our vision of creating a new evaluation system and support mechanism that would enable us to provide the best professional development opportunities to our teachers and administrators. As we adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) of teaching and learning, it is critical that we align the objectives and modalities of our evaluation systems with student learning goals as identified under CCSS. It is equally important that we have 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. Our education reform legislation clearly states the following:

- The State Board of Education’s new guidelines must provide guidance on the use of multiple indicators of student academic growth in teacher evaluations, consideration of control factors tracked by the state-wide public school information system that may influence teacher performance ratings, and 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 State Board of Education.
- An evaluation of teacher and administrator 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 bill included the establishment of PEAC and charged it with assisting the SBE in the development of new teacher evaluation guidelines and a data collection and evaluation support system. It also specifies that PEAC members must meet at least once every three months and consist of the State commissioner of education and higher education or their designees, representatives from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, the Connecticut Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, and others selected by the Commissioner of Education, including teachers and performance evaluation experts.

In July 2011, Connecticut adopted additional measures in the amended bill SB1160 requiring that the evaluation model developed by PEAC include training for teachers and administrators in all school districts, guidelines for creating teacher improvement plans, and a dismissal proceeding for teachers who are found to not have met the standards. Under this bill, PEAC was also to expedite the process so that new guidelines are in place by July 1, 2012 – a year sooner than originally planned.

Connecticut moved to embark on this important reform initiative on the heels of our Race to The Top (RTTT) application not being approved for federal education reform funding in March 2010. At the time of the RTTT application, we had a strong commitment to pursue reform and we submitted a good plan with what we considered the most achievable goals at the time. Since then, we have taken major steps forward in revamping our system. PEAC consists of the most competent and experienced educators and policy makers in the state, strongly committed to fulfilling their statutory mandate to reform our teacher and administrator evaluation system. The council's rigorous working schedule, its leadership, course of action and concrete goals reflect not only the same level of commitment but also a clear strategy and strong capacity necessary to make this undertaking a great success. As we wrote this request, our policy advisors, education experts and stakeholders are well on their way to finalizing the guidelines and adopting a strategy for implementation.

Connecticut's Plan of Action

Over the past year, our advisory council has been executing on a plan it adopted last year to provide the state with a roadmap for the development of new evaluation systems for LEAs. The plan is guided by specific goals and extends beyond the development of the guidelines alone. To date, we are near completion of Goal 1 and have done a substantial amount of work under Goals 2 and 3.

Goal 1. Involve LEAs in Baseline Assessment of Evaluation Systems.

We started our guidelines development process in January 2011 with a stakeholder engagement effort involving the local education authorities. CSDE sent out a survey to all LEAs across the state, including approximately 200 LEAs, private schools, and charter schools, seeking their input on a number of issues related to teacher and administrator evaluation systems. CSDE called those LEAs and schools who did not respond and encouraged submission as soon as possible. CSDE tabulated and analyzed the feedback, and will prepare a report based on the analysis of the information

collected. We will publish the report online for the public and stakeholders to review in the spring of 2012.

Goal 2. Develop Guidelines Document for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation.

We are currently working on this goal. PEAC has made a number of important decisions concerning the guidelines, including the principles guiding our policies, lessons learned from state best practices and most importantly the Connecticut design approach, which is discussed in more detail later in this document. Three major activities we are implementing in the next three months are:

- 1) Review the Common Core of Leading, Common Core of Teaching, Connecticut School Leader Standards, and the 1999 Guidelines Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development in order to develop our guiding framework;
- 2) Review current research and readings on teacher and administrator evaluation issues;
- 3) Research and deliberate on key issues such as student achievement measures and the fairness, reliability and validity of these measures.

We expect to complete all the work under this goal by April 2012.

Goal 3. Develop Guiding Frameworks for Model Teacher Evaluation Program. We have done some of the work under this goal and anticipate that the first phase of work will be completed by March 2012. Our charge is two-fold:

- 1) To develop a “New Model for Evaluating Educators” that will include, but not be limited to, 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 are being considered, among other indicators: Connecticut Mastery Test Vertical Scales (Grades 3 to 8), the Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System, LEA 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).
- 2) To develop the guiding frameworks for:
 - a) A new statewide system of teacher evaluation and professional development as it relates to evaluation based on the Common Core of Teaching (2010);
 - b) Methods of measuring teacher effectiveness that can be monitored by the CSDE and reported quantitatively on an annual basis;
 - c) A statewide data reporting system to collect annual teacher evaluation data based on the methods and performance criteria established;
 - d) Professional development and training for administrators/principals targeted at both supporting the development of teachers and evaluating their effectiveness.

Goal 4. Develop Guiding Frameworks for Model Administrator Evaluation Program. Most of the activities under this goal will take place between March and June 2012. Our charge here is to develop guiding frameworks for:

- a) A new statewide system of administrator/principal evaluation and professional development as it relates to administrative evaluation based on the new Connecticut School Leader Standards and the Connecticut Common Core of Leading (2009);
- b) Methods of measuring the administrator/principal effectiveness based on the criteria above that can be monitored by the CSDE and reported quantitatively on an annual basis;
- c) A statewide data reporting system to collect annual administrator/principal evaluation data based on the methods and performance criteria established;

- d) Training for LEA superintendents and administrators targeted to supporting and evaluation school based administrators/principals.

Goal 5. Advisory Teacher Workgroup to Develop Performance Criteria and Rubrics. A teacher workgroup will be established to advise on the development and implementation of the teacher evaluation system. We anticipate that members will start meeting in March 2012 and perform their tasks through June 2012. The charge for the Teacher Workgroup is to assist in the development of performance criteria, rubrics and other tools based upon the CCT standards and aligned with PEAC measures of effectiveness with a range for guiding evaluation decisions about teacher effectiveness.

Goal 6. Advisory Administrator Workgroup to Develop Performance Criteria and Rubrics. The administrators working group will be established to advise on the development and implementation of the administrator evaluation system. We anticipate that members will start meeting in March 2012 and perform their tasks through June 2012. The charge for the Administrator Workgroup is 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/principal effectiveness, using student academic growth measure(s) as criteria.

Goal 7. Provide Input to the Development of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and Revise to Promote Engaged Learning of All Students. CSDE is reviewing all of its certification requirements, including requirements for CEU, to ensure that these regulations are aligned with practices that will improve teacher and administrator effectiveness.

Timeline

Below is our timeline and major milestones for development of guidelines and evaluation systems across the state:

Table 3.1: Development of Guidelines and Evaluation Systems

| Milestones | Timeline |
|--|----------------------|
| PEAC determined guidelines, design approach and core requirements for district evaluation systems | January 2012 |
| Working groups convene and begin developing State Model and implementation plans | February-March, 2012 |
| CSDE review of draft State Model, finalizes Guidelines, and plans for a pilot in 2012-2013 school year | April 2012 |
| CSDE seeks educators' feedback on State Model | April 2012 |
| CSDE submits State Model and Guidelines for State Board of Education to review and approve | July 2012 |
| State Board of Education approves and issues new Guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluations | July 2012 |
| CSDE, LEA staff trained for pilot implementation of new evaluation systems | July-August, 2012 |
| Connecticut launches pilot implementation of new evaluation systems | September 2012 |
| Connecticut rolls out new evaluation systems in all LEAs | September 2013 |
| All LEAs must have a new teacher and administrator evaluation system in place, meeting the standards and | By September 2014 |

| | |
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| requirements issued by the State | |
| Evaluators are trained and certified to use the new teacher and administrator evaluation systems statewide | By September 2014 |
| All LEAs must have in place a mechanism and process to report, review and use evaluation data to support teachers and administrator in professional development with a goal to improve the quality of instruction and ultimately student learning. | By September 2014 |

Progress to Date

To ensure that we adopt new guidelines by July 2012 and our LEAs are provided with the support they need to develop new evaluation systems in 2013, the council and CSDE have put together a roadmap with specific activities that must happen in the coming months. The activities include reaching an agreement on the principles and the design approach for evaluation systems; determining the core criteria and process requirements for state model and local evaluation systems; determining the implementation requirements; developing the state evaluation model and assisting districts that choose to develop their own; creating guidance for districts that use the state model; determining the review and stakeholder engagement process for the state model; and presenting to the SBE for review and adoption.

To date, our accomplishments in this area include the completion of a baseline assessment and state best practice research, the adoption of the key principles for Connecticut’s development of teacher and administrator evaluation systems, and the selection of a design approach for those systems. Below is a summary of what we have agreed on.

1. Principles for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Systems

Our advisory council 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 10 principles we have adopted:

1. Primary purpose of evaluation is to strengthen individual and collective practices in order 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, summative 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 Systems

To select the design approach, the council closely considered various approaches for how districts may develop their teacher and administrator evaluation system using the guidelines we provide. We looked at approaches commonly used by other states:

1. The *prescriptive approach* uses specific percentages for multiple measures of student growth, teacher observation, other components;
2. The *moderate approach* with minimum requirements provides approved components for evaluations and minimum percentages for some components;
3. The *state “default” approach with local development option* offers well-developed state model with opt-out approval process for district-designed systems that meet minimum requirements.

In December 2011, PEAC reached consensus that option #3 was the best approach for Connecticut. We will advise that the SBE adopt a set of core requirements for districts to meet as they develop their own teacher and principal evaluation systems. The board concurrently will provide a ‘state model’ for adoption by districts that do not choose to create their own or whose proposals do not meet the state’s core requirements.

3. Components of Evaluation Systems

The council is currently working on the next set of deliverables, centering on the core requirements for district evaluation systems: what components must the teacher and administrator evaluation models include and what ‘process’ and implementation timeline districts must follow. Discussions are taking place on the components of a teacher or administrator evaluation that will become part of the core requirements as well as the state model recommended for districts. PEAC members have looked at several types of components commonly used by other states in evaluation 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 as well as who conducts them and how to ensure evaluators have proper training. Council 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. So far, many of our advisors have shown support for recommending that, if observations are used, they be conducted at least twice a year and by more than just the principal of the school. Our next step is to look at research available that helps us understand the purpose of observations and what good instruction looks like. These materials will assist us in developing rubrics and training for our evaluators.

On peer feedback, the sentiment among our 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 they are collected regularly and systematically.

Student learning is considered one of the more important components of teacher evaluation, and the question remains what indicators to use. Our research of best practices shows that it is important to include multiple indicators of student learning as they capture a range of teaching behaviors and ensure effective evaluations for all teachers, not just those in select subjects and grades. We believe effective evaluation systems use indicators that are fair, valid, reliable and useful. Those will be the qualities we look for in selecting indicators.

On January 25, the council reached a consensus on our new Teacher Evaluation Model as follows:

- 1) Multiple indicators of student learning growth: 45%, half of which must be the state test for tested grades and subjects or an alternate standardized test
- 2) Teacher observation and professional practice: 40%
- 3) Feedback from peers and parents: 10%
- 4) School-wide student learning or student feedback: 5%

Our next steps are to determine the recommended components for administrator evaluation and weights. We will also consider other core requirements, including those concerning the process districts take to develop evaluation systems and their implementation plan, including issues such as observation rubrics, sources of student learning indicators, training for evaluators and implementation timeline. Once these decisions have been made, CSDE and the council intend to convene working groups and finalize the charge for each so they can start work on their specific areas.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2) Does the SEA's plan include sufficient involvement of teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines?

Stakeholder Engagement

Connecticut engages with our stakeholders on two levels: input and involvement. We designed our process for developing the guidelines to be very stakeholder-centric. We have sought, and will continue to seek, the involvement of our stakeholders – the teachers and administrators, as well as LEAs, for whom we develop the guidelines. The PEAC, our advisory council, is a group made up of both policy experts and educators and administrators. Through this council, educators and administrators or their representatives are at the table voicing their needs, concerns and opinions on all matters.

As discussed above, the council is currently executing on its ambitious action plan with a goal to complete the guidelines by July 2012. As the council works on various components of the guidelines, members spend a large amount of time reviewing research, listening to state and national experts on teacher evaluation and discussing the student achievement data currently collected at the state level. The current discussions focus on determining the appropriate make-up of components (e.g. student achievement, peer feedback, parent and student feedback, observations) that best measures the effectiveness of teachers (with and without state testing), administrators and pupil personnel staff. Once the decisions regarding components and indicators have been discussed with the members, CSDE intends to convene three separate subgroups representing teachers, administrators and pupil service staff to develop performance criteria, rubrics and other tools based upon the Common Core of Teaching, Connecticut's teacher standards, and Common Core of Leading, Connecticut's leader standards.

One of the most important achievements we have made today is to reach a consensus among all stakeholders represented on the components of our teacher and administrator evaluation model.

With regard to engagement with other key stakeholder groups, we have conducted consultation with and engaged the involvement of teachers unions at every stage of guidelines development thus far, through representation in the advisory council and individual meetings with representatives to seek feedback for incorporation into policy decisions.

In addition, we conducted a statewide survey of superintendents last year seeking their feedback on the current evaluation system. The survey results show that most teachers are not satisfied with the current system and find that local politics are a barrier to implementation. Superintendents are also represented in the advisory council. Connecticut will host forums around the state to get feedback from teachers and principals on the state model this summer.

Outside of PEAC, CSDE is engaging, through a second process, a broader network of stakeholder groups for input. Our stakeholder engagement plan includes a complete list of groups and activities we have done or will be doing to seek comments and feedback from our stakeholders. The stakeholder groups we are planning to consult with in the next six months are: parents, community based organizations, students, advocates for English language learners, advocates for students with disabilities, Indian Tribes, business organizations, the general public, Connecticut Committee of Practitioners, civil rights groups, and legislators.

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 (1) 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 (2) 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?

We expect that by July 2012, Connecticut State Department of Education and the Board of Education will have accomplished the following:

- 1) New guidelines for Teacher and Administrator Evaluations adopted and issued by the State Board of Education;
- 2) A State Model Evaluation System available to LEAs for the evaluation of teachers, principals and personnel in pupil's services; and the core requirements that govern the content, process and standards for all evaluation systems developed by LEAs;
- 3) Feedback from teachers and principals on the State Models, collected through a series of forums across the state.
- 4) An implementation plan for Connecticut's rollout of new evaluation systems in July 2013 that includes a timeline, a pilot, training plans, plans for how to reach out to educators for feedback, and a state review and approval process.

Implementation Plan

A Working Group has been convened and charged with finalizing the details of our implementation plan for the rollout of new evaluation systems. We anticipate the plan will consist of the following key components:

1. State Review and Approval Process:

This is a very important step for Connecticut because we are planning to allow LEAs to develop their own evaluation systems if they choose not to adopt the State Model. While we will provide very clear guidance, a set of core requirements and very specific instructions regarding the process, a review and approval process will ensure district evaluation systems meet the state standards and 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, the core requirements and the implementation guide. Aspects of the local systems we will be focusing on for the review include:

- 1) Whether the key components of the evaluation system comply with the core requirements 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.
- 4) Whether the systems are designed with a level of consistency that enables us to contrast evaluation results across jurisdictions.

We expect that the state review and approval process will not take more than 6 to 8 weeks and LEAs 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 CSDE or a panel of state and local experts.

Direct responsibility for implementing the new evaluation system will fall to the Bureau of Certification and Evaluation, a new bureau created through the CSDE reorganization process. The bureau will fall under the office of the Chief Talent Officer.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3) 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 (4) 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?

2. Timeline for LEAs to Develop and Adopt New Evaluation Systems:

Connecticut’s Public Act 10-111 (Sec. 4 Section 10-151b) mandates that all LEAs develop and implement teacher evaluation programs consistent with the guidelines established by the State Board of Education. It stopped short at imposing a deadline for the districts. To ensure that all LEAs have an appropriate evaluation system in place or piloted by the 2013-2014 academic year, CSDE plans to issue a timeline for LEAs with specific milestones and deadlines. We will anticipate and address issues typically causing delays – such as human resource constraints, unforeseen political obstacles and underestimation of workload – as well as identify the risks and dependencies in order to address them as they arise.

A timeline for the district process will likely include the following steps:

- 1) Development of effectiveness criteria;
- 2) Development of indicators for effectiveness criteria;
- 3) Development of populations and groupings to be evaluated with effectiveness criteria;
- 4) Development of a training and implementation plan;
- 5) Development of a communication plan;
- 6) Assembly and production of all data for effectiveness criteria;
- 7) Development of observation processes and data collection methods;
- 8) Implementation of the system; and
- 9) A milestone by which a % of total evaluated teachers and principals will receive a rating.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (5) 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?

3. Technical Assistance for LEAs:

a) A Strong and Effective Communication Strategy:

We anticipate much of the communication about the implementation of new evaluation systems will begin before the actual activities take place. Our plan is to create a plan and channels that allow us to address questions and concerns early on to ensure seamless coordination and execution of activities throughout the implementation process. Means of communication we believe most effective and not resource-intensive include:

- Online communication channels, including dedicated email address (e.g. evaluation.help@ct.gov) and online inquiries form.
- A website dedicated solely to the launch of the new guidelines and implementation, including features such as FAQs and Ask Your Peers forum to encourage horizontal experience sharing and cross learning.
- Regular updates sent out to local levels by email or website announcements.

Our goal is to make sure our communication tools meet the following requirements:

- Have enough channels to reach all target audience (such as email, online forms or help line telephone numbers).
- Have means for timely and effective delivery of information up, down and across levels (e.g. teachers must have a way to communicate directly with the SBOE or CSDE without having to go through their internal chain of communication).
- Have a means to alert responsible parties and track status of inquiries as well as collect and store information communicated for analysis and feedback.

We 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.

b) Training and Implementation Support for LEAs:

We will start training activities as soon as this summer with superintendents, administrators and principals on how to apply the new guidelines and frameworks to develop local evaluation systems for teachers and administrators. Connecticut has 166 school districts and nearly 1,200 schools, so the number of individuals who will need to go through this training program will be roughly 1,500 (3 persons for each district and all principals). We will explore partnering with a policy institute to provide this program to ensure we have a variety of locations and dates available. We will also seek support from the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) for this process.

The indicators we will collect data on to track our training efforts may include:

- (1) The % of teachers and administrators at the district level that are attending the training,
- (2) The % of high priority staff that are attending training, and
- (3) Survey data to gauge whether attendees know what they need to know to implement the new evaluation system after the training takes place

In addition to training, we will establish a team of implementation support personnel (outside consultants or LEA personnel involved in the pilots) to assist LEAs on an on-going basis. Often, the real learning takes place long after the training sessions ends, when participants begin applying the knowledge to the tasks back at their job. They will no doubt have questions and concerns and continue to require support. This “help-line” network is critical to ensure a successful rollout. Modalities of help-line support may include a regular Q&A session with CSDE personnel held by conference call or webinar that is open to all LEA and school personnel.

c) Materials to Accompany Training and for LEAs to Use:

Under the Connecticut approach, LEAs can choose to develop their own evaluation systems or use the State Model. Depending on which option the LEAs choose to take, we anticipate that they will need different kinds of support. For those who use the State Model, they will need help with conducting the evaluations and incorporating the task into their regular activities. Those who choose to develop their own, however, will need technical support with the development process.

We will provide written instructions to guide the LEAs through the process of developing and implementing a new teacher and administrator evaluation system. In addition, to ensure that LEAs proceed successfully, we will provide content and process-related materials in a ready-to-use format for LEA and school leaders. These will include:

- A State Model for teacher evaluation, principal evaluation and evaluation of pupil’s services, which include validated indicators.
- Implementation guide.
- PowerPoint presentations or FAQs that LEA 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 already done.
- Various forms and worksheets that may be helpful to the process of developing and implementing the new evaluation system.
- Guidance for how LEAs can pass the State review and approval process if they choose to develop their own evaluation system.

ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (6) 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?

d) Data Collection System for Evaluation Results:

Connecticut believes a robust data system is critical in helping leaders and managers at different levels of our school system to accomplish the following:

- Use data to provide actionable feedback for educators that drives professional development goals and informs wider efforts to improve student learning
- Use data to increase the use of effective support and professional development activities for educators
- Use data to inform personnel actions and certification decisions

Our legislation (Public Act 10-111) specifically mandated that by July 1, 2013, we 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.”

Connecticut currently manages all education-related data we collect on student performance through tests and from school districts in a new data warehouse, formally known as the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). In August 2010, we launched a website called Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR)

(See http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/CedarHome.aspx) to provide the public with access to the data. We keep 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. We use this file to make determinations about whether a teacher is highly qualified pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act, but we also upload the data from this file into the warehouse described above.

We are 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. Both of these tasks must be done by the end of January 2012, and we are on track to meet that deadline.

Once the students and teachers/administrators performance data are linked, the next step is to define how the system should serve performance management activities. We anticipate that the system will meet the following goals:

- Provide responsible personnel at state, LEA 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.
- Provide overall scores based on observation data that evaluators submit and data on student learning and other indicators.

Our plan is 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 principal evaluations can access all data.
- LEA directors can see all observation data in their district and statewide benchmarks.
- Principals can see the observation forms for all teachers in their school and district-wide benchmarks.
- Evaluators can see only the observations forms for which they are responsible.
- Teachers can see only their own observation data and district-wide benchmarks.

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 2012-2013:

We will conduct our pilot with two primary goals: 1) To test the State Model evaluation systems and core requirements; and 2) To identify LEAs' needs in terms of technical assistance and on-going support, regardless of whether they choose the State Model or design their own evaluation system.

We also use the pilot to gain insight into whether the implementation plan for the full rollout in 2013-2014 is appropriately designed.

Below are some features of our pilot implementation:

- **Pilot participation:** LEAs are invited and selected based on the level of interest and readiness that ensures success, but the final group will be representative of the constituencies as we are aware that the pilot districts will have a great deal of influence in the rollout process.
- **Communication:** Materials about the pilot will clearly state the goals, benefits and responsibilities of participating districts.
- **Data collection:** To achieve the goals mentioned above, data collection is critical. Processes and tools will be designed to let us monitor and document aspects of the implementation process for learning and improving in the rollout. More importantly, we will be working 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 us test our assumptions about how different teaching structures (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 CSDE personnel.
- **Non-consequential outcome:** If evaluation outcome identifies underperforming teachers or administrators, these individuals get re-evaluated using current system before actions are taken. We want to make sure everyone involved in the process, from evaluators to those being evaluated, understands the system first before we hold them accountable for the outcome.