

# Connecticut State Department of Education



## *At a Glance*

**DIANNA R. WENTZELL, Commissioner**

**Ellen E. Cohn, Deputy Commissioner**

***Established - 1838***

***Statutory authority - Sec. 10-3 (1949), Revised (1969) Sec. 10-3a CGS and Sec. 10-4(a) CGS***

***Central office - 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford, CT 06106***

***Number of employees - 1,934***

***Recurring operating expenses - \$3,033,464,905***

***Organizational structure - See chart on page 28***

## **Mission**

***The Connecticut State Board of Education will provide leadership that promotes an educational system supporting all learners in reaching their full potential.***

## **Statutory Responsibility**

Under Sec. 10-3a of the Conn. Gen. Statutes, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is the administrative arm of the State Board of Education (SBE), which is responsible for implementing the educational interests of the state from preschool through Grade 12.

Under Sec. 10-4(a) of the Conn. Gen. Statutes, the State Board of Education provides leadership and promotes the improvement of education in the state. Connecticut's 13-member State Board of Education is responsible for "general supervision and control of the educational interests of the state, which interests shall include preschool, elementary and secondary education, special education, vocational education and adult education." Sec. 10-4(a) further defines the educational interests of the state as including ". . . the concern of the state that (1)

each child shall have for the period prescribed in the general statutes equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences. . .”

The Governor, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, appoints members of the State Board to four-year terms.

The State Board and Department of Education also protect the educational interests of the state by serving school districts and teacher preparation programs at Connecticut’s public and private higher education institutions. Among the Department’s many partners are parent and teacher groups; the six regional educational service centers; nonpublic schools; public and independent colleges and universities; and the Connecticut Departments of Children and Families, Developmental Services, and Corrections.

Specific functions carried out by the Department of Education include leadership and communication with the state’s school districts, charter schools and regional educational service centers; research, planning, evaluation, educational technology (including telecommunications); the publishing of guides to curriculum development and other technical assistance materials; the presentation of workshops and other professional development for educators and leaders; teacher and administrator certification; oversight of teacher preparation programs; data collection and analysis; and the administration of annual standardized assessments.

A report on [education-related legislation](#) enacted in the 2016 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly is available on the Department of Education’s website. This comprehensive summary of public acts applicable to school districts includes information on new legislation and was emailed to all superintendents in the state.

### **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

In December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act as the nation’s school accountability law.

ESSA is grounded in the concept of equity and the promise of an excellent, well-rounded education for every student regardless of race, color, national origin, family income, citizenship, or disability status. To achieve this, the law gives states the flexibility they need to innovate, while simultaneously holding them accountable for student outcomes.

Connecticut submitted its plan to meet the requirements of ESSA to the U.S. Department of Education in April 2017. A four-member USED panel reviewed it and sent it back with clarifying questions and helpful feedback. The CSDE addressed the reviewers’ comments, making clarifications and adjustments where necessary. The plan was resubmitted in July and USED approved it on August 15, 2017.

Connecticut based its ESSA plan on strong stakeholder input over a period of several years. The plan was developed following an extensive and comprehensive process consisting of focus groups, an online survey, a Commissioner’s Equity and Excellence Tour in the fall, and a final collection of public comment to the draft plan in February. Over 450 parents, teachers, students, and other education stakeholders participated in the focus groups and the survey

garnered nearly 7,000 responses.

It incorporates a holistic [Next Generation Accountability System](#) that uses a broad set of 12 indicators to help tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, careers, and life. The new system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates and instead provides a more holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance and incorporates student growth over time.

The plan also includes different levels of interventions and supports for district and school improvement based on the results of the accountability system. It includes elements designed to help recruit, prepare, induct, evaluate, support, and advance a strong and diverse educator workforce. It addresses the needs of English Learners, and outlines supports for students in high-need schools in preschool through grade 12 to succeed and decrease the risk of dropping out. It address opportunities for academic enrichment, extended learning time, project-based learning, art and music. It details supports for programs that promote safe and healthy schools, after school programming, youth development activities, and prevention programs.

Connecticut's ESSA plan is posted on the [CSDE's ESSA webpage](#), along with resources used in its development.

## **Public Service**

The Department of Education serves educators, students, and the public through the work of the following offices: the Academic Office, the Performance Office, the Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness, the Talent Office, the Finance and Internal Operations Office, the Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs, the Turnaround Office, the Office of Internal Audit, and the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS).

### **Academic Office**

The Connecticut State Department of Education's Academic Office provides guidance and leadership regarding legislated educational mandates to assist Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in preparing students to succeed in college, career, and civic life. The Academic Office supports LEAs and schools in effectively implementing rigorous standards, curriculum, and instruction. The Academic Office engages all stakeholders for the stewardship of human, fiscal, and intellectual resources towards the mission of ensuring equity and excellence for all students.

The Academic Office provides technical assistance, professional learning, and resources to support LEAs and schools with various initiatives such as:

- implementation and development of effective instruction aligned to Connecticut's rigorous academic standards and frameworks;
- building LEA internal capacity and structures pertaining to early literacy success for all students;
- Titles I, II, and III grant programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA);

- implementation of effective English learner (EL) programming and supports, including the Connecticut Bilingual Education Grant;
- supporting expansion of access to high-quality math and STEM programming for all students, including the Mathematics Science Partnership (MSP) grant program; and
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) grant programs.

### **Performance Office**

The Performance Office improves student outcomes through the use of data. Key services of the Performance Office include:

- collecting, aggregating, and delivering accurate data in a highly efficient, secure, timely, and transparent manner;
- Implementing high-quality assessments that are aligned to standards, efficient, reliable, and enable valid interpretations of achievement and growth;
- analyzing and reporting data trends and insights to support informed decision-making and action by schools, districts, the Department, and other stakeholders; and
- developing and implementing the Next Generation Accountability System that provides a holistic perspective of district/school performance and enables the CSDE to deliver a suite of differentiated supports and interventions for schools and districts.

The following structures within the Performance Office provide the requisite services:

- Data Collection
- Student Assessment
- Data Integration and Reporting (EdSight)
- Psychometrics and Research
- Accountability and Analysis

The Performance Office also provides a variety of reports and analyses with actionable data on Connecticut's districts and schools. [EdSight](#) is the one-stop portal for all data/reports published by the Office. These reports include the Condition of Education; the Profile and Performance Reports; the special education Annual Performance Reports; data and research bulletins; numerous interactive reports on various topics like chronic absenteeism, discipline, educator demographics, graduation rates, and test results. The Office also manages data submissions to the federal government and responds many custom data requests.

### **Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness**

The Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness improves the educational success of each and every learner by providing comprehensive supports to students and families and ensures high-quality programs and services.

Key services of the office include improving student outcomes for each and every learner through effective delivery and implementation of family and student support programs and services.

The following structures within the Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness provide additional services:

*Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services, and Adult Education*

- Promotes health, fitness, and wellness as well as supporting food and nutrition services and the provision of health services.
- Promotes positive school environments through physical, social-emotional, behavioral and mental health supports, and school climate development efforts.
- Supports school, family, and community engagement and youth development programs.
- Supports the delivery of quality adult education programming.

*Regional School Choice and Sheff*

- Promotes regional school choice programs and activities.
- Ensures equity and access by meeting the requirements of the court settlement in *Sheff v. O'Neill*.
- Provides educational choices designed to promote increased student achievement and reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation.
- Supports magnets, Open Choice, and Interdistrict Cooperative Grant Programs.

## **Talent Office**

The CSDE Talent Office collaborates with stakeholders and educational entities to develop and deploy talent management and human capital development strategies to districts and schools statewide so that the most effective educators are in every school and classroom, and all students are prepared for college, career, and life.

Key services of the CSDE Talent Office include developing effective teachers and leaders through high-quality, job-embedded professional learning and ongoing support of continuous improvement for all educators by: building the educator pipeline with a focus on increasing the diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce and addressing priority shortage areas; developing and implementing rigorous program and outcome standards which all Connecticut teacher- and leader-preparation programs must meet; certifying all Connecticut educators in alignment with the needs of Connecticut LEAs, Connecticut Certification Regulations and Connecticut state statutes, improving the effectiveness of Connecticut's early career through support and mentorship for all participants of the Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM); promoting the continuous improvement of and support for teachers and leaders through Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system and high quality professional learning; and recognizing excellent educators.

The following bureaus within the Talent Office operationalize and implement the strategies outlined above:

### *Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification*

- Issues new and continuing certificates to nearly 30,000 educators annually.
- Provides customer service to individuals (current and prospective Connecticut educators) and all 24 individual Connecticut educator preparation providers.
- Pursues certification reform to better meet contemporary workforce needs (e.g. new certification endorsements such as Computer Science, STEM).
- Explores and operationalizes changes to the current certification system to streamline internal processes to both enhance the customer experience and address reduced staffing capacity.
- Coordinates all aspects of Connecticut's pre-service assessment system (e.g., Praxis II, Foundations of Reading, Connecticut Administrator Test, ACTFL).

### *Bureau of Educator Effectiveness*

- Coordinates Connecticut's new and continuing program review and approval process for the 24 educator preparation programs including Alternate Routes to Certification (ARCs).
- Implements the recommendations made by the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC), a broadly representative stakeholder group composed of several organizations including the Board of Regents (BOR), Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents Inc. (CAPSS), American Federation of Teachers- Connecticut (AFT-CT), Connecticut Education Association (CEA), with the goal of transforming the way teachers and principals are prepared. This includes development and launch of a new public-facing Educator Preparation Data Dashboard to provide real-time data about Connecticut EPPs for the purposes of public transparency, program improvement, and accountability, pilot and eventual statewide implementation of a new teacher candidate performance assessment (edTPA) and a new process for the accreditation of CT EPPS through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).
- Convenes the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), composed of several stakeholder groups including BOR, CEA, AFT-CT, CABE, CAS, CAPSS, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators (CFSA), and the Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) Alliance to continue to develop and refine policy related to Connecticut's system for educator evaluation and support.
- Collaborates with stakeholders to coordinate and advance statewide implementation of Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system, standards for professional learning, and the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program through comprehensive training and technical assistance.
- Creates and implements policy and processes for monitoring educator evaluation and support in all districts.
- Coordinates the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards and the Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards.
- Coordinates the statewide implementation of the TEAM program.
- Creates and implements policy and processes for monitoring fidelity of implementation of the TEAM program in all districts.
- Supports districts in the development and implementation of standards-based, high-

- quality systems for professional learning.
- Elevates the teaching profession through recognition of Connecticut educators (Connecticut State Teacher of the Year, Milken Award, Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year, and Celebrating Excellence in Education).
  - Collaborates with various stakeholders, including the RESC Alliance Minority Teacher Recruitment initiative, deans of Connecticut educator preparation programs, and the NAACP to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce in Connecticut school districts.
  - Collaborates with the deputy commissioner regarding the CSDE MTR Policy Oversight Council.
  - Collaborates with stakeholders and key partners to develop a repository of promising practices that address certification shortage areas and aim to increase racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator pipeline.
  - Coordinates efforts on attracting high-quality candidates through a comprehensive communications campaign and developing innovative pathways into the profession, with a focus on shortage areas and increasing the diversity of the educator workforce/talent pool.
  - Coordinates Connecticut Paraprofessional Advisory Council to support the development of paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities.

### **Finance and Internal Operations Office**

The Finance and Internal Operations Office coordinates the effective delivery of financial, human resources, and technology services to support the Department's strategic direction and compliance needs.

Key services provided by the Finance and Internal Operations Office include managing and aligning financial resources to support CSDE's organizational structure in the successful implementation of key strategic priorities; managing the annual calculation and disbursement of nearly \$3 billion to support state and local education initiatives, including education reform initiatives, early childhood, adult education, general and special education, and choice programming; developing and delivering high-quality technology applications, infrastructure solutions, and data management systems to meet CSDE and LEA operational needs and reduce LEA administrative burden; and identifying and implementing policy, process, and organizational changes that align CSDE staffing and hiring with the implementation of CSDE's strategic priorities.

The following structures within the Finance and Internal Operations Office provide additional services:

#### *Bureau of Fiscal Services*

- Budget process and implementation
- Asset management
- Purchasing, contract, and travel administration
- Accounting
- Payroll, cash management

- Operational services

*Bureau of Grants Management*

- Federal and state grants
- Analysis of budget proposals and legislation for impact on CSDE grant related-functions
- Local expenditure data for calculation and reporting purposes
- Prepayment grant system

*Bureau of Information Technology*

- Application development
- Data systems management
- High-quality and timely support services
- Facility and remote infrastructure solutions
- Educational technology
- Hardware and software investments

*Bureau of Human Resources*

- Staff recruitment, hiring, and communication of employee benefits
- Coordination with the Department of Administrative Services and the Office of Policy and Management regarding personnel matters
- Performance evaluation processes
- Training and staff development

**Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs**

The Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs provides legal counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner, and Department offices, including the Connecticut Technical High Schools, on a wide range of issues pertaining to education and school operations. The division also provides guidance and assistance to local school districts, educational organizations, and other constituents regarding the interpretation of laws and regulations pertaining to education. In addition, the division manages certain statutory responsibilities of the Department, including but not limited to, teacher and administrator contract negotiations, monitoring of racial imbalance requirements, investigations and enforcement proceedings concerning revocation of educator certificates, school accommodations, Freedom of Information Act requests, and regional school district establishment and governance.

*Bureau of Investigations and Professional Practices*

In July 2016, the Department launched a new bureau within the Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs specifically to address all aspects of misconduct among certified/authorized/permitted educators. This includes investigating educator misconduct that may or may not result in a criminal conviction and reports of abuse/neglect substantiated by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). When warranted, the Bureau will initiate the process necessary to seek revocation or denial of an educator's certificate or permit, which ultimately requires an administrative hearing before a hearing officer. This new bureau also assists in the hiring process of local districts, magnet and charter schools in the state by providing, in accordance with law, background information of educators that the local districts



seek to hire. Additionally, the Bureau works with district administration and human resource staff to develop awareness regarding professional practices by discussing educator ethics and situations that place educators and teacher candidates in positions where action against their certificate may occur.

## **Turnaround Office**

The Turnaround Office works to improve student outcomes in Connecticut's lowest-performing schools and districts through support, technical assistance, direct intervention, and the creation of high-quality new schools.

Key services provided by the Turnaround Office include investing in and transforming Connecticut's lowest-performing schools and districts through various programs, including the Commissioner's Network, Alliance Districts, Priority School Districts, and Charter Schools; building capacity and infrastructure in our high-needs districts and fostering collaboration across districts; expanding educational options by opening high-quality new schools; piloting innovative strategies and scaling promising practices, serving as the catalyst for statewide reform.

Additional services provided by the Turnaround Office include:

### *School and District Support*

- Provide ongoing technical assistance and monitoring through differentiated and targeted fieldwork.
- Support district transformation through the Alliance District program.
- Support school turnaround through the Commissioner's Network.
- Support districts on school climate and Restorative Practices work.
- Bullying prevention.

### *Internal Operations and Accountability*

- Provide ongoing grants management.
- Manage the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program and ensure waiver compliance.
- Promote accountability and data-driven improvement.

### *Charter Schools*

- Create and implement systems and processes for charter monitoring and accountability.
- Serves high-need populations, specifically students who receive free or reduced-price meals.
- Promotes reduction of racial, ethnic, and economic isolation.
- Supports Priority School District or District with at least 75 percent racial or ethnic minority enrollment.
- Support new schools in underserved geographic location.

Through differentiated, tiered supports, and interventions, the Turnaround Office helps low-performing schools achieve sustained high-performance and increased autonomy. Intra-departmental efforts in support of turning around low performing schools are at the center of the Department of Education's work in this area. The Academic, Performance, Student Supports, Talent, and Finance and Internal Operations offices all work together to support the Turnaround Office's work.

Structural changes in the Turnaround Office will further benefit recipients of the office's services. The planned creation of cross-divisional teams will provide school and district capacity-building, offering targeted and differentiated support.

Connecticut has both state and local charter schools that represent innovative school models utilizing diverse, research-based educational methods. A local charter school is a new school or part of a public school that is converted into a charter school approved by the local board of education and the SBE. As independent local education agencies, charter schools are granted significant autonomy in exchange for strict accountability and high expectations for school performance. The CSDE's charter school performance framework holds charter schools accountable for impact and results in four key areas: school performance; stewardship, governance, and management; student population; and legal compliance. Currently, there are 24 charter schools statewide located in 11 host districts, serving approximately 9,200 students.

### **Office of Internal Audit**

The mission of the Office of Internal Audit (OIA) is to assist the State Board of Education and the CSDE management in identifying, avoiding and mitigating risks. In support of this mission, OIA reviews and analyzes all aspects of CSDE's and the Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) operations.

Key services provided by the Office of Internal Audit include:

- reviewing and evaluating the soundness, adequacy and application of accounting, financial and operating controls and procedures, and the cost effectiveness of such controls and procedures;
- determining the extent of compliance with established statutes, regulations, policies, plans and procedures;
- auditing accounts and financial transactions, including performing forensic analyses and;
- recommending improvement in the operations and the use of resources in the Department.

### **Connecticut Technical High School System**

The Connecticut Technical High School System provides a unique and rigorous high school learning environment that: (1) ensures both student academic success, and trade/technology mastery and instills a zest for lifelong learning; (2) prepares students for post-secondary education, including apprenticeships, and immediate productive employment; and (3) responds to employers' and industries' current and emerging and changing global workforce needs and expectations through business/school partnerships.

The Connecticut Technical High School System consists of 17 high schools, one technical education center and two post graduate schools for aviation maintenance technicians. The CTHSS is the state's largest high school system serving over 10,600 undergraduates and had over 2,100 adult-student registrations in postgraduate and apprenticeship programs throughout the 2016-17 school year.

[Public Act 17-237](#) will transition the CTHSS into an independent executive branch agency in two phases over a three-year period.

### **Five-Year Comprehensive Plan**

In July 2016, the Connecticut State Board of Education approved its five-year comprehensive plan, *Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students*, an action that paves the way for deeper, more targeted support of local public school districts toward the goal of providing an outstanding education for every child in the state.

The State Board of Education is charged with developing and releasing a comprehensive master plan for education in Connecticut every five years. This blueprint sets forth the state's vision for education and provides a direction for policy considerations and administrative actions for the next five years that are designed to ensure that every student succeeds within that culture of high expectations.

The process for developing the plan involved engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the public and 46 focus groups. The board received feedback and more than 15,000 comments from over 6,700 respondents who took an online survey that sought to gain insight and perspective about the aspirations, challenges, and concerns pertaining to education in Connecticut.

The feedback received during this process helped inform and provide direction in the development of this five-year comprehensive plan. A common theme emerged among respondents that all partners need to work together to find a way to serve all students. This became the focus of the board's comprehensive plan — ensuring equity and excellence for all students. Out of that focus came four promises to Connecticut students:

- Ensure their nonacademic needs are met so they are happy, healthy, and ready to learn.
- Supporting their school and district in staying on target with learning goals.
- Giving them access to great teachers and school leaders.
- Making sure they learn what they need to know to succeed in college career and life.

The State Board of Education is committed to ensuring that equitable access and opportunities are at the forefront of our collaborative inquiry and collective responsibility. We are challenging and holding ourselves accountable to secure an excellent education for the current and future generations of students in Connecticut through the intentional focus on the areas highlighted in this plan. To read the plan, visit the State Department of Education's website at [www.sde.ct.gov/](http://www.sde.ct.gov/).

## Improvements/Achievements 2016-17

### Academic Office

- Commissioner's Council on Mathematics: The final report of the Commissioner's Council on Mathematics was released in October 2016. Progress on the recommendations within the report include the in-person training of 55 teachers in family engagement, 125 teachers in the Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool, and 30 teachers in Intel, a content rich professional learning for teachers.
- Connecticut Arts Standards: On October 5, 2016, the Connecticut Arts Standards and position statement were adopted. To assist LEAs in the implementation of these new standards, the CSDE served over 750 educators through the provision of professional learning and technical assistance.
- Connecticut Statewide Career and Technical Education (CTE): CTE has promoted expansion of career pathways in high-wage, high-skill, and high-need areas. Connecticut has approximately 131,900 students enrolled in high school CTE programs. CTE students excel in academics with 90 percent scoring at proficient levels in Reading/ Language Arts and 88 percent in Mathematics. In addition, CTE Concentrators have a graduation rate of 91 percent.
- Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS): A variety of professional learning opportunities have been created and implemented to build the skills and knowledge of over 3000 Connecticut science teachers.
- Reading Foundational Skills: The interactive reading foundational skills professional learning series (ReadConn) was launched on September 20, 2016. Aligned to the teacher reading survey objectives, ReadConn supports the implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards in English Language Arts: Foundational Skills. In its first year, ReadConn served 126 administrators, 100 literacy leaders, and 329 kindergarten through third-grade teachers.
- Social Studies: To promote civic engagement, the CSDE worked with various partners and agencies throughout the 2016-17 year. The Red, White and Blue Schools program was instituted with the Secretary of the State's office and 11 schools were recognized as exemplary. The Veterans Commemoration Program was instituted in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

### *Bureau of Special Education*

- Assigned the top ranking of "Meets Requirements" for its 2017 annual determination based on the state's performance on the 17 indicators monitored through the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Implemented the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), Indicator 17 of the SPP/APR, including an in-district technical support system. (SSIP's) focus is early literacy instruction (K-3) and increasing the reading performance of all third grade students with disabilities statewide. Multi-Tiered Supports were provided to a cohort of districts based upon data obtained from the 2016 statewide assessments and the newly developed District Literacy Evaluation Tool.
- Special Education Dispute Resolution:

- developed a new contract with hearing officers to support the due process procedure; and
  - implemented a new contracted mediation/mediator system, which included contract development, training, and supervision of a new cohort of mediators in accordance with OSEP requirements.
- Enhanced webpage resources within the Connecticut State Department of Education website including Specific Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Published “Transition Bill of Rights” document for districts to annually disseminate to parents of students receiving special education in Grades 6-12 inclusive and development of a public, statewide Secondary Transition website: [www.cttransition.org](http://www.cttransition.org).
- Revised Approved Private Special Education Programs (APSEPs) policies and successfully completed State of Connecticut Auditor of Public Accounts APSEP audit.
- Developed three-year plan in collaboration with the Bureau of Student Assessment addressing students that require the Alternate Assessment (1 percent of the special education population). Published information documents include the Alternate Assessment Participation Decisions Flowchart and Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System.
- Developed and rolled out Maintenance of Effort standards within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act local education agency grant.
- Completed and closed out the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). The grant supports district- and state-level implementation of Connecticut’s Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) framework.
- Developed new professional learning opportunities including the School Psychologist Orientation program and 10 modules to address critical needs in the field, support of new administrators of special education, and increased professional collaboration between general and special education administrators.

## **Performance Office**

The mission of the Performance Office is to improve student outcomes through the use of data. To that end, the office has five goals. Accomplishments during 2016-17 under each goal are listed below:

- Goal: Collect accurate data in a highly efficient, secure, and timely manner.
  - Successfully collected accurate data about students, educators, districts/schools, and assessments in a timely manner as required by federal/state legislation and regulations.
  - Delivered professional development, streamlined data collection systems, eliminated/trimmed data collections where possible, and provided documentation/communication to support districts and reduce their burden.
  - Recognized local district “data stalwarts” to promote best practices.
- Goal: Implement high-quality assessments that are aligned to standards, inclusive, efficient, reliable, and enable valid interpretations of achievement and growth.

- Successfully implemented all state summative assessments in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and English language proficiency.
- Delivered all science assessments via computer; developed and piloted new assessment items aligned to the new Next Generation Science Standards.
- Expanded training and support to districts in the use of no-cost interim assessment blocks that are aligned to state standards in ELA and Mathematics.
- Achieved the fastest turnaround of ELA and Mathematics state summative assessment results in Connecticut's history so that educators can use the information for planning and professional development.
- Goal: Aggregate data and deliver accurate information in a secure, timely, and transparent manner.
  - Greatly expanded the number of interactive public reports available through EdSight (e.g., suspension rate, course enrollments by subject, graduation rates, educator demographics, primary disability, Smarter Balanced growth model).
  - Researched and tested an early indication tool that uses longitudinal data to identify students that need additional support in order to achieve educational milestones.
  - Established the technical infrastructure, security model, source data, and visual/interactive reports for secure-EdSight --- a secure portal that will allow local districts to access longitudinal information about their own students.
  - Automated procedures for secure data sharing with child welfare and juvenile justice agencies within the state to support the educational needs of students.
- Goal: Analyze and report data trends and insights to support informed decision-making and action by schools, districts, the agency, and other stakeholders.
  - Published numerous analyses and reports to support decision-making across the CSDE including the Condition of Education, Special Education performance reports, School Discipline, Restraints and Seclusions, Certification Endorsement Shortage Areas, Smarter Balanced Device Effects, and Smarter Balanced Growth Model Technical Report.
  - Created and deployed the Profile and Performance Report — a complete makeover of a legacy report — that synthesizes updated metrics into one comprehensive, user-friendly report for every district and school.
  - Partnered with other agencies through P20WIN to gather critical information about student outcomes after high school graduation.
- Goal: Develop performance models and metrics, establish targets, and publish reports that enable a suite of differentiated supports and interventions for schools and districts.
  - Implemented the second year of the next-generation multifactor district/school accountability model that provides a holistic picture of performance.
  - Developed and implemented the Smarter Balanced growth model and integrated growth into the accountability model for the first time in Connecticut's history.
  - Published bright spots by identifying schools of distinction for high achievement as well as high growth, and nominating Blue Ribbon schools.
  - Provided technical assistance, documentation, and support to facilitate the use of accountability results for program improvement.
  - Developed a growth model for English language proficiency assessment.

- Submitted information about accountability model as part of Connecticut's plan to the federal government.
- Successfully conducted the NAEP 2017 assessments and disseminated NAEP results from prior years.

### **Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness**

- The CSDE initiated the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education (Commissioner's Roundtable) in October 2016. The purpose of the Commissioner's Roundtable is to advise the Commissioner of Education regarding policy and programmatic priorities to improve outcomes for all students and advance the State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan, 2016-21- Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students.
- In April 2017, the CSDE released a new guidance document, [\*Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts\*](#). The Prevention and Intervention Guide was developed, in collaboration with the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap. Its purpose is to support the work in districts, schools, and communities to develop and implement effective strategies to reduce chronic absence. As a result of focused departmental efforts in collaboration with school districts and cross-sector partners, the number of chronically absent students dropped to 9.6 percent in 2015-16, down from 10.6 percent the year before and down from a high of 11.5 percent in 2012-13. The decline in Connecticut's chronic absence rate means that over 10,000 more students are attending school on a daily basis than four years ago. Connecticut's cross-agency and collaborative efforts to reduce chronic absence have received national recognition including:
  - The CSDE presented on two national webinars: [\*Ensuring an Equal Opportunity to Learn\*](#), on September 8, 2016, and the National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center's [\*National Virtual Convening on Chronic Absence\*](#) on April 3, 2017.
  - The CSDE also co-authored [\*Chronic Early Absence: What states can do\*](#), Kappan Magazine, October 2016.
- The Supports for Pregnant and Parenting Teens program (SPPT) helps pregnant and parenting students in districts with the highest teen pregnancy and school dropout rates. SPPT provides supportive services to high school students aged 14-21 in six school districts across the state (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Waterbury, and Windham). Outcomes for participating pregnant and parenting teens included: school attendance improved from 69 percent to 76 percent; 82 percent of seniors graduated; 98 percent of children were up-to-date on well-child visits; and 100 percent of children were meeting developmental milestones or receiving developmental support services.
- In school year 2016-17, 890 participating sites served 18,026,094 breakfast meals, which demonstrates an increase of 45,282 breakfast meals. According to the Food Research and Action Council's annual School Breakfast Scorecard, issued in February 2017, Connecticut was fourth in the percentage growth of free and reduced-price breakfast participation in the nation in school year 2015-16.
- The Summer Meals Programs continued to increase the provision of nutritious meals

to the children of Connecticut when school is out of session for summer. In the summer of 2016, the number of meal sponsoring organizations grew to 68, an increase of 10 percent over 2015. Program entities served 1,936,875 meals to 35,232 children at 708 sites statewide. This is a new benchmark in Connecticut Summer Meals accessibility, up from 646 sites in 2015, representing an expansion of 10 percent.

- The School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) is a multiagency collaboration that is directed toward reducing negative youth contact with police and school based arrests and increasing LEA capacity to address psychological, emotional, developmental, and behavioral needs among students in collaborating schools. Outcomes for school year 2016-17 in schools with the Leaders-in-Residence include an overall 33 percent decrease in court referrals and a 42 percent increase in referrals to Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services.
- Over the past six years, the total number of suspensions and expulsions has declined by 27.4 percent from approximately 127,000 in 2009-10 to approximately 92,000 2015-16. The individual sanction types have also evidenced reductions during the same period.
- The unduplicated count of students receiving at least one suspension or expulsion has also declined by 24.9 percent from about 51,000 in 2009-10 to about 38,000 in 2015-16.
- Direct Certification – United States Department of Agriculture Award. In fall 2016, the CSDE received the USDA’s Successful State Practice Award for its work on improving Connecticut’s direct certification rate. Direct certification is a process conducted by states and local educational agencies to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for the collection of a household application. In 2009-10, Connecticut’s direct certification rate for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) was at 56 percent, well below the national rate of 72 percent. To meet the national USDA established benchmarks for direct certification performance, the CSDE applied for and received both the USDA Planning and the USDA Implementation grants to assist the CSDE with reaching the minimum 95 percent direct certification benchmark.
- The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in high-poverty areas to offer free school breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost. CEP can provide numerous benefits to LEAs, including substantial administrative savings from the elimination of household applications for free and reduced price meals, streamlined meal service operations, higher student participation, and more opportunities for children to receive nutrition necessary to optimize academic achievement. Twenty-two districts participated during the SY 2016-17. Because of the CEP, 111,775 students had the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch daily without incurring any cost.

#### *Regional School Choice and Sheff Office*

- Public Act 15-133, An Act Concerning Alternative Education, required the CSDE to develop guidelines for the provision of alternative education. The statute required that such guidelines shall include:



- description of the purpose and expectations of alternative education;
  - criteria for who is eligible to receive alternative education; and
  - criteria for how and when a student may enter or exit alternative education.
- OSSOE staff, working with the Alternative Schools Committee, a broad coalition of stakeholders, developed the *Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings*. These guidelines are designed to support the operation of alternative education settings (schools or programs) offered by local and regional boards of education. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure improved program designs and greater outcomes for students in alternative education settings.
- The CSDE Sheff Office oversees the implementation of the stipulated agreements that have been negotiated between the State and the plaintiffs in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case. Compliance goals, relating to the percentage of Hartford students in desegregated schools, are set each year. The State surpassed the compliance goal of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case in 2016-17. The goal was to have 47.5 percent of Hartford students learning in desegregated schools. The actual percentage of Hartford students in desegregated school was actually 49.5 percent, surpassing the goal by 2 percentage points.

## **Talent Office**

- Continued our partnership with the Connecticut Center for School Change and their partners (CABE, CAS, CAPSS, UCONN) to implement various programs that comprise LEAD CT, a statewide leadership development program intended to increase the pipeline of school and district leaders who are interested in and well prepared to lead Connecticut's high-need schools and districts, with specific focus on principals interested in serving in Connecticut turnaround schools and districts. LEAD CT, launched in May 2013, provides an array of services designed to develop and support principals and superintendents including executive coaching for principals and superintendents, and the Turnaround Principal Program (TPP).
- Continued participation in the final year of the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP) sponsored by CCSSO. The network convened numerous states over multiple years to transform educator preparation systems to ensure every teacher and principal is ready to prepare students for college and careers from the day they enter the classroom. The NTEP partnership has resulted in changes to the approval process for all educator preparation programs to ensure they deliver high-quality, rigorous training to potential educators.
- Completed numerous actions aligned to the six high-level principles for the transformation of educator preparation programs for both teachers and school leaders recommended by the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) and approved by the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBE) including development of a public facing Educator Preparation data accountability reporting system, a new teacher/employer survey, the continued phase-in of edTPA, a new preservice performance assessment, and transition to a new process for continuing approval and accreditation of Connecticut's educator preparation programs through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation Programs (CAEP).
- Initiated the development of a new Business Education Alternate Route to

- Certification (ARC) through the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE).
- Completed a program evaluation of a NEW Alternate Route to Certification developed by Relay Graduate School of Education and approved by the SBE in November 2016. This program was developed as a pathway to certification for non-certified staff currently working in Connecticut schools (i.e., paraeducators). Relay focuses their recruitment efforts on candidates of color aligned to the CSDE/SBE goal to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of CT's educator workforce.
  - Implemented various actions to streamline certification processes and procedures designed to increase efficiency while maintaining high quality service to CT educators. This effort was intended to both improve service to CT educators and address decreased staffing capacity in the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification.
  - Issued 19,442 educator certificates, answered 8,085 calls to the call center.
  - Provided support and technical assistance for 4,387 teachers participating in the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program, an induction program designed to support beginning teachers through their first two years of teaching. Trained, in partnership with the RESC Alliance, 2,825 educators to serve as mentors to support beginning teachers; and 1,153 educators to review the reflection papers written and submitted by beginning teachers. 8,454 reflection papers were submitted and reviewed in the 2016-17 school year. Since TEAM was first implemented in 2010, 11,626 teachers have successfully completed TEAM requirements.
  - Continued to provide technical assistance to support implementation of Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system in all local and regional school districts and Connecticut Approved Private Special Education Facilities under which every Connecticut teacher and leader is evaluated by a standards-based system based on multiple measures of growth and development.
  - Coordinated training and technical assistance to support implementation of Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system to ensure that evaluators are proficient in observing teachers and leaders and in providing high-quality feedback to improve practice.
  - Coordinated the facilitation of in-district support for local and regional Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECs) in collaboratively defining a shared vision of professional learning, establishing collective responsibility, and developing a high-quality system of professional learning.
  - Developed and distributed one page At-A-Glance documents for each of the eight Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning to support in-district implementation of high quality professional learning.
  - Held the third annual Moving from Compliance to Coherence Conference, a fully practitioner-driven event attended by nearly 300 educators representing over 60 districts. All presenters were Connecticut educators who shared out on promising practices related to building coherence among district and state initiatives.
  - Engaged the services of the Center for Policy, Research and Leadership (CPRL) at Columbia School of Law to conduct a research and state policy scan regarding strategies and promising practices to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce. The CPRL fellows presented their findings, inclusive of ten recommendations, both "within close reach" and "bold and

- aspirational” to the CSDE MTR Policy Oversight Council.
- Engaged with partner institutions, Central and Southern Connecticut State Universities through the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center Grant. Achieved significant successes and reforms including: improving training of pre-service candidates in evidence-based practices in literacy as well as other competencies including culturally responsive pedagogy and behavior; publication of a Guide to Developing Quality Fieldwork Experiences for Teacher Candidates; national recognition in a State Policy and Practice Portrait Brief on training pre-service candidates to teach English learners, developing and implementing a webinar for all pre-service candidates on the Connecticut English Language Proficiency (CELP) Standards; piloting a course enhancement module focused on training pre-service candidates in Behavior Management; and planned a statewide and regional CEEDAR conference, Putting Research-To-Practice In Teacher Preparation: Learner Ready Day One to be held in September of 2017.
  - Partnered with the University of Connecticut (UConn) on the University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI), through a grant funded by the Wallace foundation, to transform principal preparation.

## **Division of Finance and Internal Operations**

### *Bureau of Human Resources*

- Managed employee/labor relations, payroll, staff recruitment, retirements, workers compensation, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), mandatory drug testing, professional development for SDE, including the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS).
- Managed position management/refill/recruitment process to fill key agency vacancies.
- Served on negotiating teams for State Vocational Federation of Teachers, 1199, A&R, NP-2, NP-3, P-2, P-3A.
- Served on Labor Management Committees for SVFT, AFSA, 1199, P-2 and P-3A.
- Facilitated the human resources activities (transfers, classification issues, notification, position actions) regarding the expansion of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), and administered all human resources functions for the OEC.
- Issued mandatory sexual harassment and diversity training, as well as online workplace violence training, active shooter training and tracked agency participation.
- Payroll activities included the timely processing of biweekly paychecks, employee health insurance benefits, retirements, payroll deductions, longevity, collective bargaining increases for SDE and OEC, including self-service time and labor for OEC.

### *Bureau of Fiscal Services*

- Continued to improve the stability and operation of all agency fiscal processes to

ensure all cost saving measures are implemented effectively and result in overall budgetary savings.

- Processed over 48,000 vouchers for payment.
- Processed over 7,000 purchase orders.
- Processed and managed over 250 Personal Service Contracts.
- Managed budgets for nearly \$3.5 billion of expenditures across over 100 State and Federal accounts
- Coordinated and successfully implemented the physical moves of all SDE and CTHSS Central Office staff. Subsequently closed out all activities at 165 Capitol Avenue and 25 Industrial Park Road.

#### *Bureau of Information Technology*

- Completed major enhancements to the Regional School Choice Office application and school lottery system.
- Completed overall requirements, design, and prototype of the new Education Financial System.
- Developed application for the School Nutrition Office to utilize Husky A/Medicaid data as part of the eligibility determination for students to receive school lunch benefits as part of the USDA Pilot Program.
- Continued buildout of server and network infrastructure to State Data Center in Springfield.
- Successfully moved and deployed the Department's and the Office of Early Childhood's technology to a new building.

#### *Bureau of Grants Management*

- Assisted in the development of the Department's FY2018 and FY2019 biennial budget request for education grant programs.
- Prepared various state and federal financial reports.
- Continued the development of the new Education Financial System to meet requirements of the Uniform Chart of Accounts and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Rollout is anticipated for summer 2018.
- Performed over 40 state and federal education grant calculations.
- Processed over 2,500 individual grant budgets for approximately 500 subrecipients.
- Processed over 25,000 payments totaling more than \$3.7 billion.

#### **Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs**

- Served as general counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, and the Department in general. This includes responding to all requests for advice and information about interpretation of statutes and regulations and advising about the duties and responsibilities of Department staff.
- Responded to inquiries from the public, including parents and school districts, about their rights and responsibilities under the law.

- Acted as liaison to the Office of the Attorney General with regard to pending litigation, including *Sheff v. O'Neill* (racial and economic isolation case) and *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding, Inc. v. Rell* (equitable education funding litigation). Advised the State Board of Education concerning litigation developments and coordinated all litigation efforts on behalf of the Department, including, but not limited to, all discovery and monitoring efforts.
- Collaborated on all matters related to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* litigation and activities managed by the Regional School Choice Office and Sheff Office within the State Department of Education. Served as the Department representative and advisor during Sheff negotiations and court proceedings.
- Served as the Attorney General Designee in employment matters, including actions before the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, in arbitration proceedings, and in federal and state court proceedings. Responsive pleadings and negotiate settlement agreements were also drafted.
- Administered statutorily required functions as well as contract review and internally required functions such as forms review.
- Served as support to legislative liaison to the General Assembly, including assisting the liaison with legislative proposals, tracking pending legislation, and ensuring that the interests of the Department and State Board of education are coordinated with the executive branch and properly communicated to the legislative branch. Provided technical assistance to the Education Committee and others regarding legislative proposals and assisted legislators and the liaison in responding to constituents on education issues.
- Investigated requests to revoke the certification and/or permits of Connecticut teachers, administrators, and coaches and managed the revocation/denial process through hearing and/or action by the State Board of Education.
- Represented the Department and Commissioner in administrative actions including declaratory rulings and actions under Section 10-4b of the Conn. Gen. Statutes.
- Developed guidance on critical civil rights issues affecting students in Connecticut, including in the areas of immigration, enrollment, and the rights of transgender students.

## **Turnaround Office**

The CSDE Turnaround Office oversees the work of Connecticut's 30 Alliance Districts as well as the Commissioner's Network Schools.

### *Alliance Districts*

The Alliance District program is a unique and targeted investment in Connecticut's 30 lowest-performing districts. Conn. Gen. Statue Section 10-262u establishes a process for identifying Alliance Districts and allocating increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to support district strategies to dramatically increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps by pursuing bold and innovative reforms. Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. 262u, each Alliance District's receipt of its designated ECS funding is conditioned upon district submission and the Commissioner of Education's approval of a plan, district progress and performance relative to that plan, and subsequent annual amendments, in the context of the district's overall strategy to

improve academic achievement. The CSDE reviews district plans annually and approves plans aligned to the goals of the program. Annual plan approval is predicated on district implementation and performance during the prior year.

The Alliance Districts consist of the following: Ansonia, Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, East Windsor, Hamden, Hartford, Killingly, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Vernon, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, Windham, Windsor, and Windsor Locks.

#### *Commissioner's Network*

The Commissioner's Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education to dramatically improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. As of 2016-17, 20 schools are in the network. The network offers resources and authorities to empower teachers and school leaders to implement research-based strategies in schools selected by the Commissioner of Education. Schools are selected and accepted into the Network for a minimum of three years. The Connecticut State Board of Education may allow schools to continue in the Network for an additional year, not to exceed two additional years. Network schools remain part of their local school districts, but the districts and the CSDE secure school-level flexibility and autonomy for the schools in exchange for heightened accountability.

#### Cohort I: joined the network in fall 2012

High School in the Community, New Haven  
James J. Curiale School, Bridgeport  
John B. Stanton School, Norwich  
Thirman L. Milner School, Hartford

#### Cohort II: joined the network in fall 2013

Norwalk Pathways Academy at Briggs High School, Norwalk  
Frank J. DiLoreto Magnet School, New Britain  
Paul L. Dunbar School, Bridgeport  
Crosby High School, Waterbury Walsh School, Waterbury  
Wilbur Cross High School, New Haven Windham Middle School, Windham

#### Cohort III: joined the network in fall 2014

(John C. Clark School, Hartford) - CLOSED  
Luiz Munoz Marin School, Bridgeport  
Lincoln-Bassett Community School, New Haven  
Uncas School, Norwich  
O'Brien STEM Academy, East Hartford

#### Cohort IV: joined the network in fall 2015

East Hartford Middle School, East Hartford

#### Cohort V: joined the network in fall 2016

Batcheller Early Education Center, Winchester  
Clinton Avenue School, New Haven

Columbus School, Bridgeport  
Pearson School, Winchester

A list of [frequently asked questions](#) about the Commissioner's Network is available on the CSDE website.

#### *Priority School Districts and Summer School*

Under Conn. Gen. Statutes 10-266q, the emphasis remains on improving the quality of education available and focuses on funding any of the following initiatives: (1) the creation or expansion of programs or activities related to dropout prevention; (2) alternative and transitional programs for students having difficulty succeeding in traditional educational programs; (3) academic enrichment, tutorial and recreation programs or activities in school buildings during nonschool hours and during the summer; (4) development or expansion of extended-day kindergarten programs; (5) development or expansion of early reading intervention programs, including summer and after-school programs; (6) enhancement of the use of technology to support instruction or improve parent and teacher communication; (7) initiatives to strengthen parent involvement in the education of children, and parent and other community involvement in school and school district programs, activities, and educational policies, which may be in accordance with the provisions of section 10-4g; or (8) for purposes of obtaining accreditation for elementary and middle schools from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Priority School Districts for the 2016-17 school year were Bridgeport, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Waterbury, and Windham. Putnam was officially dropped as a Priority School District in 2015-16 but will receive funding under its three-year phase-out.

Additional improvements and achievements of the Turnaround Office include the following:

- 23 Alliance Districts showed Smarter Balanced Assessment score growth in ELA and/or mathematics during 2016-17.
- Alliance Districts participated in professional learning sessions called symposiums, three times a year tailored to meet their needs. This year's sessions focused on Trauma Informed Practices, Culturally Relevant Education, and Assessing, Planning, and Monitoring the Sustainability of District Priority Reforms.
- Commissioner's Network Schools participated in professional learning sessions (NetStat) three times a year to share best practices. The theme for this year's NetStat was Data, Accountability and Social-Emotional Supports and featured topics such as effective data teams, understanding accountability results for school improvement, College and Career Readiness, and Restorative Practices.
- 24 Alliance Districts completed school climate and/or Restorative Practices training.
- Commissioner's Network schools began the process of coming forward to the State Board of Education Accountability and Support Committee to update board members on progress and renewal extension proposals.
- Provide formal monitoring sessions for Alliance Districts three times a year, in addition to ongoing support.

- Provide technical assistance to Commissioner's Network Schools on a biweekly basis.

### **Office of Internal Audit**

Key accomplishments include the following:

- Conducted a review of purchasing transactions made by CTHSS with a local vendor. The purpose of the review was to determine if payments were made in compliance with State of Connecticut and CSDE policies and procedures. OIA analyzed various documentation including purchasing contracts, letters of agreement, purchase orders, invoices, correspondence, and other supporting information. Additionally, OIA met with certain CTHSS staff and members of the Board of Directors to discuss various findings. OIA found several internal controls deficiencies related to contracting and purchasing as well as inadequate management oversight. Additionally, OIA noted potential ethical issues of certain CSDE employees.
- Conducted a compliance review of payroll, attendance, and leave time operations at the CTHSS Central Office to evaluate compliance with CSDE and CTHSS policies and procedures. OIA identified issues such as unauthorized leave time, lack of compliance with overtime and compensatory time policies and procedures and internal control issues such as the lack of segregation of duties and the lack of reconciliation between the Electronic Leave Request (ELR) system and the CORE-CT payroll system.
- Performed on-site implementation reviews at two technical high schools to ascertain the status of corrective actions related to findings contained in previously issued compliance reports. OIA evaluated the schools' corrective action plans designed to address the new and/or unresolved findings. Additionally, certain findings reported were determined to be systemic in nature. These findings, which include lack of adequate segregation of duties within the business office, non-compliance with CTHSS policies and procedures, and lack of reconciliation of accounts, are being communicated to CTHSS management for analysis and resolution.
- Ascertained the extent to which assets were accounted for and safeguarded from losses by monitoring reports of irregularities involving funds or equipment at various schools. OIA made referrals to appropriate state agencies, school administration, and CSDE management.
- Evaluated the quality and completeness with which management performed assigned responsibilities during audit activity.
- Coordinated work with external certified public accountant (CPA) firms and the Auditors of Public Accounts (APA) to provide assurance to the Board, departmental managers, and state and federal regulators that resources are being used efficiently, effectively and in compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, policies and procedures.
- Provided audit services for the OEC including preparation of the compliance supplement for OEC grants and monitoring of federal and state single audits of OEC's grantees.
- Advised grantees receiving federal awards of their responsibilities to have audits performed in accordance with Uniform Grant Guidance requirements, reviewed audit



reports for compliance with Uniform Grant Guidance provisions and required grantees to provide corrective action plans to ensure resolution of audit findings that may include questioned costs. OIA worked with appropriate program management to determine whether or not questioned costs were allowable and if necessary, notified the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS) of the need to recover funds.

- Worked with OPM on issues identified in audits performed by CPA firms of grantees receiving State financial assistance from the CSDE. This activity included addressing questioned costs and compliance or internal control findings. Also, OIA developed audit compliance supplements for the grants administered by CSDE to be included in the State Single Audit Compliance Supplement for use by CPA firms.
- Provided program management with financial analysis, audit services, and recommendations for the Charter School and Magnet School Programs. These services included participating at nine site visits for charter renewals and evaluating the financial and management controls related to fiscal operations and recommending improvements.
- Reviewed three contracts between charter schools and their charter management organizations. OIA provided the Turnaround Office's with comments and recommendations regarding internal controls, and financial matters including the need for more detail relative to management and ancillary fees and the charter management contract language.

### **Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS)**

The CTHSS has continued its mission of contributing to Connecticut's economic vitality and economic self-sufficiency by bolstering the size and quality of Connecticut's skilled workforce. In response to current and emerging employer and industry workforce needs, the CTHSS prepares students for both postsecondary education and licensed apprenticeships or immediate productive employment. For the 2016-17 school year, the CTHSS served a ninth through twelfth grade population that was 47 percent white and 53 percent minority, 41 percent female and 69 percent male. 167 out of the 169 Connecticut resident towns were represented within the CTHSS student body. The graduation rate for the Class of 2016 was over 97 percent.

Improvements toward the integration of academic and career technology education more fully prepare students for both career and college transition. Students participate in college career pathways programs, earning college credit while attending tech schools. Over 650 students participated in work based learning programs each of the last three school years. The district embraces blended learning and the use of technology with Google Classrooms and deployed over 3100 Chromebooks for class and home use.

CTHSS staff and students were among the best in the nation and state. In the 2017 U.S. News and World Report High School Rankings, Abbott, Platt, Kaynor, and Windham Tech all received bronze medal designations. Five students from the district won gold medals at the SkillsUSA Nationals competition: Evan Amara (Vinal Tech) for Technical Computer Applications; Kevin Vasquez (Norwich Tech) for Automotive Service Technology; Brett Hawrean and Kyle Shemanskis (Prince Tech team) for Audio-Radio Production; and Brian Cote, (Wolcott Tech) for Electrical Construction Wiring. Norwich Tech's Daria Stifel became the first female gold medalist in the national SkillsUSA Electrician Competition from last year's

competition after a scoring error was found and was also awarded a \$5,000 prize. Two students won silver medals and two more earned bronze medals this year at SkillsUSA. Norwich Technical High School students were recognized for seven straight years as one of the Top-Performing Schools for the 2016 Governor's Reading Challenge. Mrs. Alecia Walkuski, a Vinal Tech reading teacher, and her students were named to the Renaissance National Honor Roll for outstanding performance in advancing students' achievement in Reading. Wolcott Tech's Christina Thompson was a finalist for UConn's Connecticut Writing Project. Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty presented four Kaynor Tech students the first place award for her district's Congressional App Challenge. The Gene Haas Foundation awarded grants to support scholarships and NIMS credentialing for students at Ellis (\$15,000), O'Brien (\$15,000), and Vinal (\$10,000). Fund for Teachers awarded O'Brien Tech teachers a grant to attend the Mindfulness in Education Teacher Training conference. Six Norwich Tech students won for outstanding entries in the Connecticut History Day State Contest. Christian Haupt and Christian Ramos were Platt's first entrants as well as finalists and award recipients recognized at the Connecticut Science Fair held at Quinnipiac University. Platt Tech students participated in the Connecticut YMCA Youth and Government (CTYAG) State Conference at the State Capitol. Vinal's Nicole Zalewski was a semifinalist for the Governor's Scholar Award. Four Kaynor Tech students were chosen as 2017 interns at Sikorsky Aircraft and will be employees of and full union members for the duration of their summer internship.

CTHSS students excelled at more than just academics and trade technologies. The CTHSS takes pride in giving back to local communities. Schools held food, clothing, and blood drives and also promoted cancer awareness through special fundraising activities. Students also used the skills learned in their career technologies: hairdressing students gave free haircuts; and culinary students prepared meals for soup kitchens and veterans. Steven Torres, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Grasso, won first place in the National Silver Gloves Boxing Championships in Kansas. Ellis Tech became 1st tech school to win state title in wrestling.

### **Information Reported as Required by State Statute**

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. The Department of Education does not unlawfully discriminate in employment and licensing against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction.

The Affirmative Action Office, under the direction of the Commissioner, is responsible for ensuring the agency's compliance with a wide variety of federal and state laws and department policies that address equal employment and education. Activities related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act include investigating discrimination complaints, determining and documenting reasonable

accommodations, and visiting work sites. The office also investigates complaints in the areas of employment practices, sexual harassment, disability/handicap, and age/sex under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

During this reporting period, the Department hired 86 employees: 39 white males, 38 white females, three black males, four black females, one Hispanic male, one Hispanic female, zero other males, and zero other females. Of the 86 hires, the Department hired 39 goal candidates that consisted of one white male, 32 white females, one black male, four black females, zero Hispanic males, one Hispanic female, zero other males, and zero other females.

# ORGANIZATION CHART FOR THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

