

Connecticut State Department of Education

At-a-Glance

Charlene Russell-Tucker, 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: 1,940 (1,646 full-time, 294 part-time)

Recurring operating expenses: \$3,031,913,560.33

Organizational structure: [SDE Organizational Chart](#)

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; the Connecticut Departments of Children and Families, Public Health, Developmental Services, Labor, and Corrections; and the State Education Resource Center.

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; the administration of federal nutrition programs; and the administration of annual standardized assessments.

As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the State Department of Education has implemented an [accountability system](#) that uses a set of 12 indicators to show how well schools are preparing students for success in college, careers, and life. The system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates and instead provides a holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance, and incorporates student growth over time.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic

In response to the [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act, 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund \(ESSER\)](#), the State Department of Education submitted its plan for \$1.1 billion in school funding.

Additionally, the Department compiled dozens of resources for school districts and the public. The following links and others throughout this document contain the more highly accessed COVID-related memos, guidance documents, webinars, and resources the Department created or jointly developed in collaboration with the Department of Public Health.

- [Superintendent's Digest](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Families and Educators](#)

Public Service

Academic Office

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) 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 toward the mission of ensuring equity and excellence for all students.

During the 2020-21 school year the Academic Office developed guiding documents to ensure the continuity of learning through reimagined classrooms.

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

- 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 and numeracy success for all students;
- supporting expansion of access to humanities and STEM programming for all students; and
- distributing, monitoring, managing, providing resources for, and ensuring effective implementation of federal programs under the state’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Plan, including the following federal grant programs:
 - 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; and
 - Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) grant programs.

This year the Academic Office provided schools and districts with specialized COVID-19 coaching, support, and resources to assist in educating students from a distance, including:

- Deploying CT Learning Hub, a web-based on demand portal of instructional resources available anytime, anywhere for teachers, students, and families.
- Procuring online digital curricula resources with professional learning and support for implementation at no cost to districts.
- Providing prioritized essential learning outcomes to support continuity of learning and access to priority content.
- Publishing four volumes of resources to support educators with distance learning.
- Hosting and facilitating a webinar series of best practices.

- Pivoting in-person professional learning and coaching to online.

Bureau of Special Education

- Provides leadership to ensure that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education that prepares them for college or training, employment, independent living, and community participation.
- Ensures compliance with special education laws and regulations.
- Implements the Surrogate Parent Program which is a federally mandated program that provides educational advocacy services for children and youth under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Families.

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System

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

CTECS consists of 17 high schools, one technical education center, and two post graduate schools for aviation maintenance technicians. CTECS is the state's largest high school system serving over 11,000 undergraduates and had over 2,500 adult-student registrations in postgraduate and apprenticeship programs throughout the 2020-21 school year. For the 2020-21 school year, the CTECS served a ninth- through 12th-grade population that was 41% white and 59% minority, 39% female and 61% male. Out of the 169 Connecticut resident towns, 166 were represented within the CTECS student body. The CTECS Student Workforce offers a wide range of services, including construction, to the public at a fraction of the market price while providing students experience with real projects for real customers.

CTECS students excelled at more than just academics and trade technologies. CTECS takes pride in giving back to local communities. During the pandemic closures, teachers in manufacturing programs created face shields for frontline workers using 3D printing services and health technology students worked in long-term health care facilities with some of the state's most vulnerable populations. E.C. Goodwin junior Maria Caceres was named president of the Connecticut Association of National Honor Societies and created a Peer Tutoring Program with the aid of her fellow National Honor Society members to mitigate pandemic-related learning loss.

Students also used the skills learned in their career technologies: Eli Whitney Technical High School electrical students helped to install West Haven's first charging kiosk for electric cars and 46 criminal justice and protective services students were honored by state and federal agencies, including the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for critical support to federal responders during two deployments which led to the activation of the school's emergency operations center. Students provided deployed

responders with a daily, briefing package that supplied emergency workers with information, such as virus statistics and facts, the availability of PPE and other necessities, and the locations and contact information of local emergency facilities.

Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs

The Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs provides legal counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and Department offices and bureaus, including supporting the legal director for the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, on a wide range of issues pertaining to education and school operations. The division also provides guidance and assistance to local school districts and educational organizations 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 certification action against educator certificates, school accommodations appeals from decisions of local and regional boards of education, Freedom of Information Act requests, and regional school district establishment and governance. The division also assists the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in its representation of the State Board of Education and the Department of Education in litigation matters. Members of the division also take telephone calls from members of the public and provide practical suggestions on matters presented during these calls. Members of the division also participated in the Regional School Choice Office Family Fun event at Dunkin Donuts Park.

Bureau of Investigations and Professional Practices (Bureau within the Division)

The Bureau of Investigations and Professional Practices investigates educator misconduct, where such misconduct has the potential to result in certification action. In 2018, the Legislature expanded the statutory language that expanded the Department's available certification actions to include revocation, suspension, probation, and denial. When warranted, the bureau will initiate the process necessary to seek an appropriate certification action against an educator's certificate, authorization, or permit, which ultimately requires an administrative hearing before a hearing officer. Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-221d, this bureau collaborates closely with the Department of Children and Families, criminal justice authorities, and local school districts to ensure the safety of schoolchildren. Additionally, the bureau works with district administration, human resources staff, and educator preparation programs to develop awareness regarding professional practices by discussing educator ethics and situations that could lead to disciplinary action including dismissal or certification action against an educator or teacher candidate.

Bureau of Human Resources

- As of August 28, 2020, the Bureau of Human Resources was relocated to the Department of Administrative Services as part of the statewide HR centralization process.

Finance and Internal Operations

The Finance and Internal Operations Office coordinates the effective delivery of financial 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 and managing the annual calculation and disbursement of over \$3 billion to support state and local education initiatives, including the State Board of Education's Comprehensive Five-Year Plan for Education, adult education, general and special education, and choice programming. The Finance and Internal Operations Office also managed budgets of federal COVID-19 related programs.

Below are additional responsibilities of the Finance and Internal Operations Office:

- Budget process and implementation
- Asset management
- Purchasing, contract, and travel administration
- Accounts receivable/payable
- Cash management
- Operational services
- Federal and state grants
- Analysis of budget proposals and legislation for impact on CSDE grant-related functions
- Collection of local expenditure data for calculation and reporting purposes
- eGrants management system
- Payroll services

Office of Internal Audit

The mission of the Office of Internal Audit (OIA) is to assist the State Board of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education 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.

Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships

The mission of the CSDE Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships is to oversee numerous educational programs and projects within the agency, including Open Choice and Interdistrict Magnet School programs and other school choice opportunities across Connecticut as they relate to legislative requirements, operations, operating budgets, and grants. The Office is responsible for leading agency efforts to meet the state's obligation pursuant to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* litigation and related stipulations, as well as expanding and establishing programs for high school students aimed at providing College and Career Readiness opportunities through educational and business partnerships. Office staff conduct in-depth data analyses and research for a variety of important CSDE projects. As the policy and long-term planning branch of the agency, this office collaborates cross-divisionally, across agencies, and with outside parties to develop clear and consistent policies, procedures and resources for agency, school, and district leadership.

Key services the Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships provides include:

- leads agency initiatives involving college and career readiness to ensure that Connecticut high school students are provided opportunities for post-graduate education and workforce prospects through partnerships and program development with both institutions of higher education and state businesses;
- represents agency interests on the Governor's Workforce Council and education subgroups;
- oversees Open Choice programs statewide, which allow urban students to attend public schools in nearby suburban towns as identified in state statute;
- oversees the Interdistrict Cooperative Grant program pursuant to C.G.S. 10-74d to reduce racial and economic isolation statewide and as a part of the for the *Sheff v. O'Neill* stipulation;
- manages the community education, and application and placement process for choice schools and programs in the Greater Hartford Region through the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO);
- oversees all interdistrict magnet school programs throughout Connecticut to ensure that state-funded magnet schools are operating in a manner consistent with state statute and Department of Education policy;
- manages the per-pupil grants for Open Choice and Interdistrict Magnet School Programs to maximize learning opportunities for students from different backgrounds centered on excellence and achievement;
- responds to inquiries from various parties including state agencies, legislators, and superintendents, and answers media inquiries through the CSDE Communications Office;
- collaborates cross-divisionally, across agencies, and with outside parties to develop clear and consistence policies, procedures, and resources for agency, school, and district leadership; and
- conducts in-depth data analyses and research for a variety of important CSDE and legislatively mandated projects.

Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness

The Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness (OSSOE) 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 OSSOE 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 and nursing 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.

Performance Office

Overview

The Performance Office improves student outcomes through the use of data. Key goals/initiatives of the office are:

- [Data Collection](#): Collect accurate data in a highly efficient, secure, and timely manner.
- [Student Assessments](#): Implement high-quality assessments that are aligned to state academic standards, inclusive, efficient, reliable, and enable valid interpretations of achievement and growth.
- [Information Technology](#): Utilize the latest technologies to implement robust data systems and reliable infrastructure that reduce districts' burdens and increase agency efficiencies.
- [EdSight](#): Data Integration/Reporting: Aggregate data and deliver accurate information in a secure, timely, and transparent manner.
- [Research and Analyses](#): Analyze and report data trends and insights to support informed decision-making and action by schools, districts, the CSDE, and other stakeholders.
- [Accountability](#): Develop performance models and metrics, establish targets, and publish reports that enable a suite of differentiated supports and interventions for schools and districts.

The Performance Office 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 Connecticut Report Cards; Next Generation Accountability reports; the special education Annual Performance Reports; data and research bulletins; and numerous interactive reports on topics like chronic absenteeism, discipline, educator demographics, graduation rates, and test results. In addition to the public portal, the EdSight Secure portal offers authorized users

in districts and schools with secure access to actionable, student-level data. Reports include the Early Indication Tool, FAFSA Completion, Student Summary, Smarter Balanced Growth, and LAS Links. The office also manages data submissions to the federal government, responds to numerous custom data requests, and engages in research partnerships.

Talent Office

The mission of the CSDE Talent Office is to develop and deploy talent management strategies to schools and districts statewide in order to ensure that each and every student in the state has access to great teachers and leaders to prepare for success in college, careers, and life. This is done in close collaboration with numerous education organizations including the state teachers' and administrators' unions, the Regional Educational Service Center (RES-C) Alliance, State Education Resource Center (SERC), the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), and Connecticut's 19 educator preparation programs (EPP).

The Talent Office develops strategies intended to attract and recruit individuals to the teaching profession, ensure strong preparation at Connecticut educator preparation programs, support early career induction through the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program, continuously improve practice through high-quality professional learning and effective evaluation and support systems and creating supportive school and district culture to reduce attrition and increase retention. Additionally, through the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development and Reform (CEEDER) and University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI) grant opportunities, the Talent Office continues to build stronger partnerships between EPPs and school districts.

Since 2016, with the development of the State Board of Education's five-year comprehensive plan, the Talent Office has amplified efforts to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce and address persistent shortage areas (e.g., math, science, comprehensive special education, bilingual, etc.).

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

Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification

- Issue new and continuing certificates to nearly 30,000 educators annually.
- Provide customer service to individuals (current and prospective Connecticut educators) and all 19 of Connecticut's educator preparation providers, as well as representatives of all public school districts.
- Pursue avenues to modernize certification to better meet contemporary workforce needs given outdated regulations (1998).

- In alignment with these goals, the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification continues to make significant progress to streamline certification processes, to the extent possible, given existing regulations (*Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permits and Authorizations*).
- Explore and operationalize changes to the current certification system to streamline internal processes to both enhance the customer experience and address reduced staffing capacity.
- Coordinate all aspects of Connecticut’s pre-service licensure assessment system (e.g., Praxis II, Foundations of Reading, Connecticut Administrator Test, ACTFL, edTPA).
- Collaborate with higher education and professional organizations to explore increasing pathways to certification in order to address the persistent shortage areas.

Bureau of Educator Effectiveness

- Coordinate Connecticut’s new and continuing program review and approval process for the 19 educator preparation programs, including Alternate Routes to Certification (ARCs).
- Implement 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), CABE, CAS, CAPSS, American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut (AFT-CT), Connecticut Education Association (CEA), with the goal of transforming the way teachers and principals are prepared.
- Develop, validate, and, in 2021, launch a new public-facing Educator Preparation Data Dashboard to provide real-time data about Connecticut educator preparation programs for the purposes of public transparency, program improvement, and accountability.
- Partner with the University of Connecticut (UConn), a recipient of a Wallace Foundation University Principal Preparation Program Initiative (UPPI) grant to support UConn’s program improvement process, and share information and resources to support all Connecticut administrator preparation programs with a focus on equity-driven leadership.
- Facilitate and coordinate all aspects of the phased implementation of edTPA, a teacher candidate performance assessment that will be required of all pre-service teacher candidates during student teaching. Effective during the 2018-19 academic year, all candidates were required to complete the assessment; in 2019-20 the State Board of Education adopted the multistate cut scores for edTPA. The Talent Office helped facilitate a legislatively required edTPA Working Group during the Fall 2019 and responded quickly during the on-going pandemic to support EPPs, pre-service teacher candidates and student teachers.
- Provide oversight of the 12-member CSDE Review Committee, which considers the continuing approval status of all Connecticut EPPs, based on each provider’s participation in the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) review process.
- Coordinate and advance the statewide implementation of Connecticut’s educator evaluation and support system, and standards for professional learning including

launching the Educator Evaluation and Support 2022 Council, which brings together key stakeholders to re-imagine educator evaluation in Connecticut.

- Oversee all aspects of statewide implementation of the TEAM program (training, allocation of funding, mentor training, etc.).
- Support districts in developing and implementing standards-based, high-quality systems for professional learning.
- Participate on the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards and the Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards.
- Participate on the Connecticut Paraprofessional Advisory Council to support the development of paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities. The council advises the Commissioner on a quarterly basis regarding the needs for the training of paraprofessionals and the effectiveness of the content and the delivery of existing training.
- Coordinate statewide recognition events as part of an effort to both recognize excellent educators and to elevate the image of the teaching profession as a recruitment strategy: Connecticut State Teacher of the Year process, Milken Educator Award, Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year.
- Coordinate quarterly Teacher of the Year Advisory Council meetings with various CSDE departments. The council consists of semifinalists for Connecticut Teacher of the Year and provides input and feedback to the CSDE and the Commissioner on a variety of Department initiatives.
- Develop and deploy strategies, to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce to more closely mirror the increasing diversity of Connecticut's student population.
- Develop and deploy strategies to address longstanding shortages in specific shortage areas (e.g., math, science, comprehensive special education, bilingual, world language, etc.).
- Assist with planning for and facilitating the CSDE Minority Policy Oversight Council.
- Develop and maintain a repository of promising practices (EdKnowledge) designed to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator pipeline.
- Coordinate and launch several strategies aimed at enhancing the public perception of the profession and encouraging Connecticut students (PK-12 and institutes of higher education [IHE]) to pursue a career in teaching through the launch of Educators Rising and our growing partnerships with EPPs around the NEXTGen Educators program.
- In collaboration with Teach.org and TV Access Now, with funding support from the Buck Foundation, developed and launched TeachCT, a comprehensive recruitment campaign consisting of a website, social media, television, and radio advertisements, designed to elevate the image of the teaching profession more generally and specifically to encourage a teaching career in Connecticut. Connecticut was the first state to both partner and launch with Teach.org at the statewide level.
- Continue to coordinate statewide efforts to provide pathways to teaching for veterans through a \$1.1 million grant awarded to the CSDE by the Department of Defense.

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 and Opportunity Districts, Priority School Districts, charter schools, and building capacity and infrastructure in the state’s highest-needs districts; fostering collaboration across districts; expanding educational options by opening high-quality new schools; piloting innovative strategies, scaling promising practices, and serving as the catalyst for local continuous improvement and statewide reform.

Additional services provided by the Turnaround Office include:

School and District Support

- Support district transformation through the state’s Alliance District, Opportunity District and Priority School District programs.
- Support school turnaround through the Commissioner's Network and Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG).
- Provide ongoing support, technical assistance, and monitoring through differentiated and targeted fieldwork.

Internal Operations and Accountability

- Support effective implementation of the Connecticut State Board of Education’s Five-year Comprehensive Plan, specifically Goal 4: Great Schools.
- Distribution, monitoring, and ongoing management of state grants and bonds, as well as federal Title I School Improvement Grant programs.
- Development and maintenance of the state’s electronic consolidated eGrants Management System Applications (eGMS), including district applications for Alliance District; Priority School District; and Title I Part A School Improvement Grants.
- Promote accountability and data-driven support and improvement.
- Support and review district improvement plans to incorporate new plans under ESSER, ESSER II, and ARP-ESSER federal funding aligned to statewide priorities.

Charter Schools

- Provide public school choice options to students and families.
- Create and implement systems and processes for charter monitoring and accountability.
- Promote reduction of racial, ethnic, and economic isolation, and serve high-need student population groups.
- Support new schools in underserved geographic locations.

Accomplishments

Academic Office

- Partnered with SERC to develop and implement the Black/African American and Latino/Puerto Rican Studies course as outlined in PA 19-12.
- Supported districts with ARP ESSER and ESSER II funding.
- Provided access for all students and teachers to SketchUp Pro 3-D modeling computer software to support architectural, interior design, landscape architecture, civil and mechanical engineering, film, and video design classes.
- Piloted a STEM Externship with the Connecticut Science Center and ReadyCT providing educators and school counselors with business and industry externship and partnership opportunities.
- Implemented and lead Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz's Computing Challenge.
- Established and co-lead the Computer Science Steering Committee.
- Partnered with state arts organizations to provide joint professional learning opportunities for teachers regarding virtual arts instruction.
- Expanded partnership with TeachRock to work with 10 districts.
- Joined with the state Office of the Arts and Fox 61/CW20 in Connecticut Creative Futures to highlight state artists and art careers.
- Awarded grants to support high schools with the recruitment and retention of special populations in career and technical education.
- Built LEA internal capacity and structures pertaining to effective instruction aligned to Connecticut's rigorous academic standards and frameworks.
- Co-sponsored the Red, White, and Blue schools program (Secretary of the State), and the Veterans Recognition Program (Veterans Affairs).
- Provided assistance and professional learning to support Connecticut Opportunity Districts with virtual literacy instruction
- Funds under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund established to address the impact COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation were distributed to Connecticut school districts through the American Rescue Plan, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act to prevent, prepare for and respond to the Coronavirus.

Bureau of Special Education

COVID-19

- The BSE continued to develop [guidance documents and technical assistance resources](#) for parents and school districts to support the challenges that surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Adapted all in-person training/professional learning and coaching support to a virtual/remote format.
- Upgraded the LRP Special Education Connections resource to include caselaw access and national COVID-19 resources for school districts at no cost.
- Extended partnership with New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) at Oak Hill to provide expanded support to school districts in their effort to increase students' access to instruction.
- Piloted programs for three critical areas: (1) Special Education COVID-19 Stipend, which provided \$20,000 to school districts to assist in their effort to provide special education recovery; (2) RESC Alliance Evaluation Teams, which provided school districts with special education evaluation support (at no cost); (3) DDS In-Home Support, which provided students with in-home support to increase their access and engagement with remote learning.
- Conducted weekly meetings with ConnCASE, State Advisory Council Executive Meeting, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC), bi-weekly meetings with parent advocacy groups, Spanish parent forums hosted by CPAC, special populations monthly meetings.

General Monitoring and Supervision

- Assigned the top ranking of “Meets Requirements” for its 2020 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 federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Participated and presented in national Results Based Accountability Collaborative to improve our current Differentiated Monitoring System moving from special education compliance to compliance and results (improved outcomes for students with disabilities).
- Developed a comprehensive Individual Education Program (IEP) Quality Training initiative, which includes synchronous and asynchronous modules to support the new IEP and Special Education Data System, which will result in compliant and high-quality IEPs for all students.
- Worked with Public Consulting Group to build the Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS), which will support the new IEP document as well as all federally required special education data collections.
 - Note: IEP Quality Training and CT-SEDS will be piloted by 22 school districts during the 2021-22 school year for statewide implementation on July 1, 2022.
- Differentiated Monitoring Team conducted a statewide Special Education Data Application and Collection review process to ensure all students IEPs were compliant (annual reviews, three year reevaluations, free appropriate public education (FAPE) at 3, secondary transition (through age 21), primary disability category of developmental delay at age 6,) during the previous year of the pandemic.

- Designed the Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan (LMIIP) to assist school districts in documenting their efforts to implement IEPs either remotely or a combination of remote and in-person instruction based upon their learning model(s).
- Conducted an LMIIP audit to review school district's use of the LMIIP and to identify themes, which would inform future technical assistance.
- Implemented the fiscal risk rubric to monitor subgrantee school district risk for the use of IDEA Part B Section 611/619 Grant funds.
- Partnered with the State Education Resource Center (SERC), CPAC, and RESCs to provide resources, support, and technical assistance to school districts to assist with their special education efforts.

Special Education Dispute Resolution

- Trained and supervised hearing officers and mediators to support the remote implementation of the dispute resolution system (hearings and mediations).
- Redesigned our forms/communications regarding the dispute resolution system to ensure greater understanding of the process.
- Investigated 79 special education complaints.
- Adapted the *8-Day Training Series on Planning and Placement Team Practices for Improved Student Outcomes*. This training focused on five key principles: special education laws and procedures, improving student outcomes, improving quality of individualized education programs (IEPs), strengthening school and family partnerships, and decreasing the number of state complaints.
- The Surrogate Parent Program supported over 1,200 students ages 2 through 21.

Communications and Resources

- Supported the State Advisory Council for Special Education, which is a group of 37 individuals (50% parents) who are charged with advising the State Department of Education and legislators on the unmet needs of students with disabilities.
- Updated policies, procedures, and standards for approval of approved private special education programs and associated application which was approved by the State Board of Education in February 2021.
- Updated/revised the following documents/resources: School Psychology Guidelines, Transition Bill of Rights, Building a Bridge, Parent Notice (Restraint/Seclusion).
- In partnership with UCONN established an Aspiring Special Education Leaders initiative to support the development and preparation of special education directors.
- Successfully implemented and supported the following special education communities of practice (CoPs): speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school psychologist, board certified behavior analysis, social worker, teacher of the deaf, assistive technology.
- Collaborated with state agencies and key stakeholders to host the 6th Annual Secondary Transition Symposium.

- Supported the expansion of the Transition Youth Advisory Board (YAB) (students ages 18-22) and the Special Education Youth Advisory Council (SEYAC) (students in grades 6-12); including student forums, student leadership training, and advisory structures as part Student Voice Initiative.
- Provided free Structured Literacy Program Training Series sessions to school districts, featuring several structured literacy approaches.
- Provided free SLD/Dyslexia online modules to the public.
- Developed Charter School Special Education Training Program.
- Continued to expand and adapt the Planning and Placement Team Leadership Initiative (PPTLI) to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

CTECS 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, CTECS prepares students for both postsecondary education and licensed apprenticeships or immediate productive employment.

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.

Seven CTECS schools (Bullard-Havens, Prince, Abbott, O’Brien Norwich, Ellis and Cheney) have been certified as Level One under the High Reliability Schools model. Level One distinction means that schools have a safe, supportive, and collaborative culture. These are the first schools in Connecticut to receive this certification.

The first career academy opened its doors at H.C. Wilcox Technical High School in Meriden, offering Meriden Public Schools 10th- and 11th-graders three in-demand CTE offerings: culinary arts, facilities carpentry, and manufacturing technology. Twenty-three students participated in the program. Students earn up to 2.5 credits per school year and industry-recognized credentials. Vinal Tech and Grasso Tech will open a career academy in January 2022.

The College Board named Howell Cheney Technical High School's a recipient of the Female Diversity Award resulting from the school’s commitment to expanding young women's access to AP computer science principles.

CTECS Technology Services Team distributed over 7,000 additional devices to staff and students to improve virtual access to instruction positioning the district for successful distance and on-premise teaching and learning.

Work-based Learning (WBL) and job shadowing numbers have increased despite the pandemic-related challenges: 661 students were placed in WBL as of June 2021; 6,786 industry-recognized credentials were earned throughout the year.

Vinal Technical High School was the first CTECS location to introduce a veterinary science program for high school students. The program is designed to prepare students to enter directly into the workforce in the veterinary medicine field, or to further their education in a post-secondary school.

Four Connecticut technical high school students brought home medals in the 2021 Skills USA national competition:

- third place in electrical construction wiring, Toby Leonard, Norwich Tech
- third place in electronics technology, Lucas Chaponis, Oliver Wolcott Tech
- first place in masonry, Alex Davis, Ellis Tech
- second place in technical computer applications, Dakota Kosiorek, Platt Tech

Adult education evening apprentice programs developed new curriculum, and for the first time offered courses in an online format, increasing accessibility to related-instruction courses. Approximately 50% of enrolled adult students took courses online.

Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs

- Served as general counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner and deputy commissioners, 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.
- Provided legal advice related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the substantial disruption to the traditional approach to education, including but not limited to legal input on updates to the Department's *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together* document, and numerous other support and guidance documents. Worked closely with the Office of the Governor, Department of Public Health and other State Agencies to coordinate emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the education context, including but not limited to providing input on necessary executive orders due to the public health and civic preparedness emergencies.
- 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 *AR v. Connecticut State Board of Education* (concerning the age to which students are entitled to special education services).
- Supported the Attorney General's office in successfully defending the litigation brought in two companion cases regarding Connecticut's mask requirement for public schools – *Connecticut Freedom Alliance*.
- Responded to inquiries from the public, including parents and school districts, about their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- 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.

- Administered statutorily required functions, including but not limited to, responses to requests under the Freedom of Information Act; management of contract negotiations under the Teacher Negotiations Act, including the recruitment of impartial arbitrators; contract review, including the preparation of contract templates; private school approvals; racial imbalance; and other 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.
- Advised bureaus within the Department on the promulgation of regulations and implements the regulation-making process under the Connecticut Uniform Administrative Procedures Act.
- Investigated requests to revoke, suspend, or place on probation 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.
- Consulted with school districts concerning the statutory process of forming or modifying a regional school district.
- Worked with Department staff and school districts to implement State Board of Education Standards for Educational Opportunities for Expelled Students.
- Represented the State of Connecticut on the Interstate Compact for Educational Opportunities for Military Children and manage the State's activities pursuant to the Compact, codified at Section 10-15f of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- Advised the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) regarding admissions, employment-related policies and other education related matters.
- Provided legal advice and participated in Departmental committees with respect to the receipt and distribution of federal funds under the American Rescue Plan and other legislation to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and students.
- Reviewed contracts for whole school management services between charter management organizations and charter schools for legal compliance and advised the State Board of Education on approval of these contracts.
- Participated in the review of charter contracts for charter schools required by Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-66aa(6) and coordinated with the Office of the Attorney General.

- Advised on and assisted in the development in the Comprehensive School Choice Plan, to establish a long-term plan for the stability, sustainability, and predictable and efficient operation of the integration process relating to *Sheff v. O'Neill*.
- Collaborated with the Office of the Attorney General to advise the Regional School Choice Office regarding a lottery selection process that selects students based on multiple socioeconomic factors rather than based on race.
- Worked with Goodwin University Educational Services (GUES) and the United States Department of Education to assist in securing a change in legal status of GUES, which operates magnet schools that serve the goals of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* litigation.
- Responded to daily emails from districts, parents, and other constituents regarding unmasking our school students, hybrid learning, remote learning, changing scenarios during COVID, and other assorted issues related to the pandemic as it affected students and educators in the state.
- Collaborated closely with the Department of Public Health and Department of Social Services to develop a weekly student COVID screening program for all unvaccinated public school students statewide in grades K-6 plus in the largest eight towns (over 70,000 population), all students in grades 7-12 and students in grades K-6 attending a private school located within the physical boundaries of the largest eight towns.

Bureau of Investigations and Professional Practices

1. Denial of pending applications

Department of Children and Families (DCF):

- Of the 215 DCF finalized investigations of a school employees that were received by our office, one application was denied because the applicant was listed on the registry and three files were referred for possible revocation due to a central registry placement.

Educators with a criminal history record:

- Of the 86 applications reviewed, no denial of applications occurred, however, 22 applications are currently pending investigation (for 2020-21 school year). The remaining were investigated and returned for processing in the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification.

Educators who have been dismissed for cause:

- Of the 26 applications reviewed, nine applications are currently being investigated; the remaining were returned for processing post-investigation or withdrawn.

Educators whose professional license or certificate was revoked, denied, or suspended in Connecticut or other states:

- Of the 10 applications reviewed, one application was denied for cause.

Educators with a record of unsuccessful service/employment for a school district and/or nonpublic schools:

- Of the 16 applications reviewed, no denials were made; 14 applications were cleared and returned to the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification; and two are currently being investigated.

2. Revocation, suspension, or probation action against an active certificate holder

During the 2020-2021 year (which experienced court closing and district personnel working from home, making access to formal records more difficult), the following 10 cases reached completion and resulted in the following actions:

- one State Board of Education revocation action;
- one automatic revocation based upon Connecticut General Statutes;
- four revocations by surrender by educators; and
- four stipulated agreements, including suspension of their certificate for three certificate holders and probation for one certificate holder.

Certificate holders pending investigations:

- five cases pending DCF appeal process;
- four cases in which certification action is requested by a school district/interested party; and
- eight cases in which the Department of Education initiates action based upon criminal history, dismissal from employment, etc.

Finance and Internal Operations

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 55,000 vouchers for payment, including nearly 19,000 grant payments in excess of \$3.5 billion.
- Processed over 6,500 purchase orders.
- Processed and managed over 320 contracts, including personal service agreements, MOUs, MOAs, and RESC Alliance agreements.
- Managed budgets for nearly \$3.8 billion of expenditures across over 130 state and federal accounts.
- Assisted in the development of the Department's budget request for education grant programs.
- Prepared various state and federal financial reports.
- Performed over 40 state and federal education grant calculations.
- Processed over 2,700 individual grant budgets for approximately 500 subrecipients.

- Completed the rollout of the eGrants system.
- Implemented and managed budgets for over \$1.6 billion of federal COVID-19 relief programs pursuant to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act; and the American Rescue Plan Act.

Office of Internal Audit

- Conducted several compliance reviews of various business office functions performed at Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) high schools including general fund revenues, student trustee account operations, automotive production, payroll and attendance to evaluate compliance with CSDE and CTECS policies and procedures. OIA identified instances of noncompliance with established policies and procedures associated with business office operations associated with General Fund cash receipts and deposits, automotive production, payroll operations, Student Trustee Account operations and certain other matters that warrant attention. Additionally, we provided recommendations to the schools and central office related to the internal control structure and staffing of the schools' business offices.
- Ascertained the extent to which assets were accounted for and safeguarded from losses by monitoring reports of irregularities involving funds or equipment at various Connecticut Technical Education and Career System high schools. OIA made referrals to appropriate state agencies, school administration, and CSDE management.
- 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. This included engaging an external CPA firm to perform a performance audit of the CSDE Bureau of Fiscal Services Grants Unit for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. The audit services are focusing on the grant calculations and the authorizing statutory language and could include financial, compliance, operational, investigative, or other performance audits.
- Provided audit services for the Office of Early Childhood, 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 within CSDE and OEC to determine whether or not questioned costs were allowable and if necessary. When applicable, notified the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS) of the need to recover funds.
- Worked with the Office of Policy and Management (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. In addition, 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 site visits for charter school renewals and evaluating the financial and management controls related to fiscal operations and recommended improvements for each charter school. Due to COVID restrictions, OIA did not participate in charter school renewals for the 2020-21 school year.
- Conducted a review of whistleblower complaints concerning various fiscal related issues regarding a state charter school. OIA's review of fiscal related issues included but was not limited to the billing of special education costs and data security concerns related to the disposal of IT equipment. The purpose of this review was to determine whether the allegations involving the billing of special education costs and data security concerns related to the disposal of IT equipment could be substantiated. OIA found that the school could not provide documentation to support their special education billing rates for districts sending students to the charter school. Also, OIA was unable to determine the school's special education allocation methodology or whether rates are based on the actual costs of special education staff and services provided as detailed in the students' individualized education programs. In addition, OIA was unable to confirm the exact number of computers that were not cleaned of sensitive information and/or had the school administrator access removed. OIA and CSDE Management made recommendations for immediate action by the school's management and requested a corrective action plan.
- Conducted a review of the special education billing practices at two state charter schools. The purpose of this review was to obtain information about how the school bills sending districts for special education services and to evaluate compliance with applicable laws and related CSDE guidance. At each school, we found while the schools billing rates are calculated based on allowable special education costs, the calculation does not offset the total cost by the amounts received for the State Charter School Grant and other per pupil grants in accordance with C.G.S. Section 10-66ee(d)(2) and at one of the school's services required by 504 plans are being charged to districts. OIA made recommendations for CSDE management to follow up with charter school management to ensure that district billing rates are determined in accordance with C.G.S. Section 10-66ee(d)(2) and that they immediately discontinue the practice of billing districts for the costs of 504 plan services.

Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships

- Developed a series of policies and communications for school leaders and program operators so that education statues and departmental polices are provided in a clear, concise manner.
- Represented the agency and commissioner on Governor's Workforce Council and education subgroups, participating in meetings, assisting in the development of education

related strategies consistent with goals of the GWC in terms of workforce development initiatives.

- Advanced college and career readiness efforts by working with districts, other state agencies and outside partners toward the goal of creating programs that maximize student opportunities to gain early college credits, career related internships, and credentials so that students are prepared for post-secondary plans.
- Successfully worked with the Office of the Governor and the Office of Policy and Management to create legislation to expand the Open Choice program to the cities of Norwalk and Danbury, which was passed by both chambers of the Connecticut General Assembly and signed into law.
- Released communications that involve other offices within the CSDE as well as other state agencies and key stakeholders.
- Participated, alongside the state's attorney general, in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* stipulation agreement that changed the measurement of diversity to a family's social and economic status (SES).
- Implemented the key terms of the Phase IV Stipulation and Order in *Sheff v. O'Neill*.
- Launched a new user-friendly application and placement platform in the Sheff region to facilitate informed decision-making by prospective families regarding school choice opportunities.
- Managed the Open Choice programs statewide, which serves 2,964 students at 252 schools in 47 school districts at a cost of \$16,429,000 in enrollment tuition to those schools. Twenty-two districts in the Sheff region served 253 students in prekindergarten at a cost of \$1,518,000 in enrollment tuition to those districts. The transportation cost for those students was \$17,155,795, which includes transportation for summer programs.
- Managed the Interdistrict Magnet Schools statewide, which served 38,679 students at 88 schools in 17 districts/RESCs at a cost of \$264,362,538.
- Provided grant opportunities to six Open Choice districts in the Sheff region with funds equaling \$2,816,418 as part of the CARES Act.
- Distributed \$1,549,900 to the RESCs in administrative costs to operate the Open Choice program statewide.
- Distributed \$2,082,500 in funding to magnet operators and open choice schools in order to increase acceptance rates in furtherance of the *Sheff* Stipulated Agreement.
- Distributed \$1,351,889 to 19 schools in the Sheff region as part of the recent stipulated agreement.
- Managed the Interdistrict Cooperative Grant program, which had 4,906 students participate in 12 programs statewide and issued \$1,561,390 in grants funds to assist reducing racial and economic isolation.
- Distributed \$2,909,600 to 26 districts and one RESC in the Sheff region to promote academic and social success of participating Open Choice students.
- Distributed \$3,568,872 to RESC operators for PK tuition costs.

- Distributed \$3,701,619 to magnet schools to support academic and social support grants to provide increased opportunities for enrichment and social emotional supports in response to the pandemic.
- Conducted several data analysis projects to support the Regional School Choice Office and operators.
- Responded to various data requests from *Sheff* plaintiffs and legislators.
- Collaborated with UCONN professor to supply data and answer various questions in regard to his research study entitled School Lottery Family Decision Analysis: Patterns Among Decliners.

Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness

- The CSDE Adult Education Unit has worked with the Department of Labor and the Department of Aging and Disability Services to rewrite the Unified State Plan as mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The CSDE has enhanced and supported programs and services that are more comprehensive, cost-effective, and responsive to community needs by supplementing Connecticut's commitment of state and local adult education dollars with WIOA Title II dollars. Sixty organizations, including school districts, volunteer programs, community-based organizations, and other agencies provided adult education services in Connecticut by recruiting and retaining educationally and economically disadvantaged adults. The CSDE launched a new longitudinal data system used for analyzing educational and workforce outcomes. By focusing on the needs of learners, families, communities and employers, adult education programs succeeded in: improving the skills of Connecticut's learners; enabling thousands of residents to attain a secondary school diploma; helping to close the skills gap in the workplace; assisting non-English speakers to learn English; easing the transition to postsecondary education; preparing residents to attain U.S. citizenship; and helping families to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) authorized nationwide waivers that the CSDE opted in to, which gave participating school districts the option to serve nutritious meals at no cost to all children 18 years old and younger and persons older than 19 years old with a disability. The nationwide waivers also allowed schools to serve meals using grab and go, bus stop routes, or household delivery models (versus congregate meal service); allowed parents and/or guardians to pick-up meals on behalf of the children in their household from schools or community sites; gave flexibility to schools to distribute multiple days' worth of meals at once and serve meals on the weekends and school holidays and breaks; and allowed meals to be served in bulk sizes as opposed to individual, unitize meals. From March 2020 through June 2021, participating schools and community-based organizations served 61,188,553 meals at no cost to families.
- Connecticut's Child and Adult Care Food Program's At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program (Supper program) provides nutritious evening meals to children through structured after-school programs that are located at sites where at least half of the children in the school attendance area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Meals are provided in conjunction with educational or enrichment activities after the regular school day ends,

on weekends and holidays, and during other times of the year when school is in session. Due to the public health emergency, USDA issued nationwide waivers that allowed the CSDE to authorize Supper program providers to serve grab and go meals (vs. congregate meal service), multiple meals at one time, parent and/or guardian pick-up, household delivery, meals to be served in bulk sizes, and flexible distribution times. Enrichment activities also continued to be provided to participants. During school year 2020-21, Connecticut schools provided 391,784 Supper meals and 354,942 snacks at 169 sites.

- During summer 2020, the CSDE Summer Meals Programs served 6,737,256 meals, up from 1,777,703 from the summer of 2019. This represents a greater than 300% increase in meals served to children at no cost to families.
- In partnership with DSS, the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) benefits have brought more than \$248.7 million to 330,000 children statewide without households having to complete an application. This program provided debit cards that could be used to purchase food at retail establishments to support food security in families when in-person school was interrupted due to COVID-19.
- The CSDE was awarded almost \$14 million in federal funds through the (Section 722 of PL 116-260, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Title VII, Chapter 3) Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program to distribute additional funds to provide to local operators of the School Breakfast Program (SBP), NSLP, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) with additional reimbursements for emergency operating costs they incurred during the public health emergency.
- The School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) is a multiagency collaboration directed toward reducing exclusionary school discipline and school-based arrests and increasing local educational agency (LEA) capacity to address emotional, developmental, and behavioral needs among students in collaborating schools. To date, SBDI has served 60 schools across 22 districts. During the 2020-21 school year, 12 schools in five districts participated in SBDI, where school staff received professional development, restorative practice training, discipline policy consultation and community coalition building to engage families, law enforcement, and providers. Outcomes for the 2020-2021 school year include a decrease in mobile crisis calls by 21 percent. Court referrals are projected to be down 100 percent, while a 64 percent reduction is projected for out-of-school suspensions.
- Under ESSA Title IV, Part A, a federal grant opportunity was made available to states and LEAs beginning in 2017-18. The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants are available to all LEAs that receive Title I funding. They are intended to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of states, LEAs and local communities to provide all students with a well-rounded education; improve school conditions for student learning; and improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. In 2020-21 Connecticut received approximately \$9.76 million through this grant, with 95 percent being paid out to LEAs as entitlement grants.
- CSDE hosted a virtual statewide town hall for parent and families on supporting children in remote learning during COVID-19. Over 900 people registered for the event. A series

of six follow-up events took place in spring 2021 covering topics that families requested, including early learning and developmental skills during quarantine, supporting students with special needs in remote learning, and self-care and social emotional learning for caregivers and children. Over 1,100 people registered for the series. Two of the sessions were presented entirely in Spanish and all six sessions were recorded and captioned in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic.

- CSDE convenes a peer-to-peer learning network for professionals involved in family engagement called Friday CAFÉ (Community and Family Engagement). Friday CAFÉ usually meets once a month for eight months in the school year. During 2020-21, Friday CAFÉ added three additional sessions for professionals and created a series of three evening sessions for families. Enrollment across the daytime and evening sessions exceeded 1,400.
- In partnership with Connecticut Children’s, the CSDE offered “Virtual House Calls” for families. Physicians specializing in infectious disease, developmental psychology and school health offered guidance to families on successful social, emotional, and physical wellness for returning students to school in the fall. Approximately 3,000 participants registered for the 2021 event.
- CSDE conducted dozens of professional learning webinars and virtual town halls addressing issues brought about by the pandemic including: social-emotional learning supports for families and educators; family engagement; supporting students who are homeless; school nursing supports for students and families; chronic absenteeism; and Child Nutrition Programs.
- CSDE launched the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) with the Alliance in 15 school districts identified to need additional resources to support families. LEAP is a contracted partnership between CSDE and the Regional Education Service Center (RESC) Alliance to support districts in the reengagement of students and families. Funding is provided by the Governor’s Emergency Education Fund (GEER) - \$10 million. Local districts are building on home visiting that is already happening in the district and expanding to support data-informed populations of students, e.g., homeless, students with disabilities, grade level. As of late August, more than 2,000 home visits have been conducted.

Performance Office

Data Collection

- Successfully collected accurate data about students, educators, districts/schools, and assessments in a timely manner as required by federal/state legislation and regulations. This includes the collection of millions of records via approximately 10 collections managed by four SDE staff.
- Followed data freeze protocols to facilitate timely reporting.
- Delivered professional development, streamlined data collection systems, added new data validations, eliminated/trimmed data collections where possible, and provided documentation/communication to support districts and reduce their burden.

- Procured and started customization of cloud-hosted statewide special education data system (CT-SEDS), which includes an IEP component at the student level and will allow for improved communication and information sharing between schools and districts. Furthermore, the system will eliminate multiple existing summary data collections in the state related to students with disabilities.
- Managed COVID-19 related projects including:
 - a. Collected student addresses and partnered with DSS for the provision of Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) cards to approximately 285,000 students statewide.
 - b. Collected attendance data monthly from districts, separately for in-person and remote learning days.
 - c. Collected learning model data weekly from districts to inform decision making and support.

Information Technology

- Supported ongoing maintenance and implementation of several data collection applications to support agency priorities (e.g., PSIS, Directory Manager, Education Finance System, special education, teacher-course-student, discipline).
- Rapidly designed and built an extension to the existing PSIS system to support collecting address and monthly attendance from school districts, separately for remote and in-person days.
- Continued implementation of the Direct Certification (including SNAP, TANF/TFA, Medicaid, Foster Care) application.
- Successfully automated student rostering for statewide summative assessments (e.g., Smarter Balanced, LAS Links) with multiple online vendors and now implementing with DESSA (social-emotional learning assessment).
- Worked with a cloud-hosted vendor to complete a rebuild of the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) school choice lottery system.
- Developed and implemented a new application (Contacts Manager) to collect contact information from education providers.
- Supported early integration efforts of CSDE data with newly procured special education cloud vendor system.
- Migrated on-premises adult education system to new cloud vendor system.
- Upgraded legacy PSIS application to support modern browsers.
- Partnered with DAS/BEST and Microsoft to explore the feasibility of cloud migration for legacy data collection environment.
- Procured and set up new environments for the CSDE data warehouse for secure reporting and data management.
- Enhanced teacher certification to new IVR system using AVAYA to include DAS/BEST's faxback service.
- Supported continued implementation and expansion of O365 system.
- Teamed with Microsoft to train end-users on O365 tools.

- Provided ongoing continued support for remote or hybrid work due to the pandemic.
- Procured, migrated, and streamlined the CSDE NAS at the Groton and Springfield data centers.
- Migrated CTECS data to a separate network.
- Nearing completion of retiring the WANG system to a web-based cloud connectivity and integrate with CORE accounts.

Student Assessments

- Successfully implemented and delivered the state English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment with both an in-person and remote testing option. Validated and reported results on the ELP assessment via the EdSight Reporting system.
- Successfully implemented and delivered the state summative English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science state summative assessments. This was also offered with an in-person and remote testing option.
- Continued to expand training and support to districts in the use of interim assessment blocks that are aligned to state academic standards and designed to inform classroom instruction.
- Conducted standard settings, alignment studies, and new item development for science assessments.
- Entered into an agreement with the Consortium for the Alternate Assessment of English language proficiency (CAAELP) to develop and administer an alternate assessment for eligible students who are English learners with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Conducted monitoring/review of Alternate Assessment Eligibility forms to evaluate the appropriateness of the evidentiary basis for the assignment of alternate assessments to eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities, including those who are also identified as English learners in grades K-12.
- Coordinated with practitioners to set conditions for a safe and valid administration of the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment.
- Provided materials, training, and policy guidance in relation to the use of assessments as school reopened in fall 2020-21.
- Developed the Sensible Assessments Practices guidance to help districts in fall 2020-21.
- Coordinated fall 2020 SAT administration for grade 12 students who missed the opportunity to take the SAT in grade 11 and administered the SAT in spring 2021 for students in grade 11.
- Oversaw member managed item writing for ELA section of Smarter Balanced including training teachers, meeting with teachers to create items, creating and revising items, entering items into Smarter Balanced item system.

EdSight - Data Integration/Reporting

- Upgraded existing secure visual analytics data processing and reporting portal. The new installation and software provide improved data analysis capabilities to LEA and CSDE staff.

- Developed/updated and deployed several public reports including district/school expenditures, discipline district tiers, Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Quality Measures, Contacts Manager, National Student Clearinghouse, nonpublic school enrollment and staff counts, monthly attendance, district learning model, and Connecticut Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion.
- Developed/updated and deployed several secure reports including student-level CT SAT School Day Report, EPP Quality Measures, Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, English Learner Roster, Early Indication Tool for Teachers, Resource Allocation Review, Students Receiving Rigorous Coursework Potential Letters, Effect of SASID Changes on Secure Growth Reports, and Graduation Rates.
- Updated data in numerous interactive public reports (e.g., Connecticut Report Card [CRC], suspension rate, course enrollments by subject, enrollment, attendance, graduation rates, educator demographics, and primary disability).
- Updated report on Trends in Enrollment, Credit Attainment, and Remediation at Connecticut Public Universities and Community Colleges using data obtained through P20WIN and created data sets in support of several P20WIN requests.
- Used the data warehouse to respond to several data requests from researchers, districts, and CSDE personnel, providing suppressed data according to CSDE suppression guidelines.
- Published the annual Profile and Performance Reports (PPR) in accordance with federal requirements and Connecticut General Statutes 10-220 (c) to include key metrics on students, educators, instruction, and performance for all districts and schools.
- Refined automation procedures to ensure data accuracy, reproducibility of results, and data processing efficiency.
- Implemented complex algorithms to resolve duplicate student records to preserve longitudinal student data and launched a secure report allowing authorized users to view the effect of these SASID changes on secure growth reports.
- Continued sharing historical, longitudinal student-data securely with the Department of Children and Families and with the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch on a monthly/nightly basis and participated in discussion surrounding use of the data warehouse to support the Interrupted Scholars Act: Juvenile Justice data exchange.
- Started a project with the Connecticut State College and University system (CSCU) to automate sharing of student-level data. Data will allow CSCU staff to provide informed support to students and place them in proper courses.
- Provided US Department of Education with all required data on a timely basis through the EdFacts system.

Research and Analyses

- Published numerous analyses and reports to support decision-making across the CSDE including the Condition of Education, special education performance reports, school discipline report, and restraints and seclusions.

- Partnered with other agencies through P20WIN to gather critical information about employment and postsecondary outcomes of Connecticut high school graduates (e.g., remediation and credit attainment, employment outcomes of students with disabilities, validity of alternate assessment achievement levels).
- Developed models that utilized longitudinal data to estimate student achievement in grades 3-7 in 2019-20 to support teachers at the start of the 2020-21 school year, and estimate growth through the pandemic.
- Investigated the relationship between taking Interim Assessment Blocks and target performance on the summative test.
- Developed a new model to predict student readiness for rigorous coursework that utilized middle school Smarter Balanced assessments in lieu of the PSAT; prepared and sent over 37,000 letters to students (and their parents) in grades 10 and 11 with potential for advanced course work.
- Analyzed enrollment data trends to gain a deeper understanding of the lower student enrollment in 2020-21 (e.g., PK and K declines, increase in homeschooling exits).
- Analyzed learning model data on a weekly basis to target support that would help districts return to in-person instruction.
- Analyzed attendance data on a monthly basis separately for in-person and remote days; these data supported the provision of Pandemic-EBT benefits in partnership with the Department of Social Services. Attendance data also supported the agency and districts to monitor and support greater student engagement during the 2020-21 school year. Connecticut was recognized nationally for this ongoing tracking. CSDE partnered with Attendance Works on a research publication [Attendance-Works-Chronic-Absence-in-CT_FINAL-7.pdf \(attendanceworks.org\)](#).
- Interviewed several district and school practitioners about how they reimagined possibilities during the pandemic and published the findings.

Accountability

- Sought and successfully received federal approval to waive school and district accountability for both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conducted studies to finalize the inclusion of dual enrollment course passage toward Indicator 6 (college-and-career readiness) of the Next Generation Accountability System.
- Partnered with the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State University System to receive dual credit course level data for inclusion; prepared the data for loading to EdSight for inclusion in the accountability calculations.
- Identified schools for the National Blue Ribbon School award and processed their submissions with the U.S. Department of Education and the school/district leaders.
- Coordinated the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) activities including administration of the School and Teacher Questionnaires as well as the Monthly School Survey data collection.

Talent Office

- The Talent Office continues its commitment to increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator workforce and diminishing vacancies in persistent shortage areas. Since 2015-16, the percentage of educators of color in the Connecticut workforce has increased from 8.3% to 10%. The percentage of administrators of color has also increased, over that same period, from 12.24% to 14.23%. The growth in the number of educators of color in the workforce is encouraging with LEAs hiring more than [1,900](#) new educators of color since 2016. Efforts to engage broad stakeholder groups to achieve collective impact are ongoing.
- Issued 25,083 educator certificates, responded to tens of thousands of emails corresponding with districts and applicants between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. Additionally, the bureau was able to pivot during the pandemic, bringing back public phone hours through remote technology and issuing over 1,400 temporary authorizations and permits to keep schools running with appropriately authorized educators in front of students.
- Continued to implement various actions to streamline certification processes and procedures designed to increase efficiency while maintaining high-quality service to Connecticut educators even during the pandemic and while working remotely. The Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification continues to exceed the processing timelines of surrounding states including maintaining steady processing during the pandemic and with decreased staffing capacity in the bureau.
- The Talent Office continued to provide ongoing support to districts and LEAs in [Creating a District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of Your Educator Workforce: A Guidebook for Hiring and Selection](#). This new resource is available on the CSDE website and has been promoted and piloted during 2019-20 and once again piloted during the 2020-21 year with several CT school districts. The guidebook was developed as a result of a four-part workshop series created in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL), the Northeast Comprehensive Center (NCC), and several CT Opportunity Districts in 2018. The guidebook, and companion resources, is intended to support districts in the development and implementation of a plan to attract, recruit, hire, and select educators of color per the requirements outlined in P.A. 18-34.
- In partnership with the CSDE Talent Office and REL-NEI Pilot Project to Develop Workforce Diversity Plans, the CSDE Talent Office and 11 district partners have been engaged in a seven-part series to develop workforce diversity plans. Each of the districts convened a small team of educators, school, and district leaders to utilize the resources available in the Hiring and Selection Guidebook distributed by the CSDE this past fall and described above. Districts were asked to examine data using a provided demographic diversity profile and engage in a self-assessment during a guided consultancy. Work will continue with these 11 districts with the possibility of engaging a third cohort in fall 2021.
- The CSDE and the RESC Alliance hosted a virtual career fair on April 7, 2021, aimed at increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce.

Invitations were sent to certified teachers of color that were not appearing in our employment data system, recent graduates of CT educator preparation programs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions on the east coast. The fair attracted 63 districts to create virtual booths and 99 job-seeking candidates. Over the course of the one-day event more than 580 conversations took place via chat, audio, or video calls. Preliminary feedback was positive with suggestions to inform future events.

- The RESC MTR Alliance Grant, the CSDE Talent Office worked to support Regional Consortia at each of the six regional education service centers convened a diverse group of local educators to problem solve around attract, recruit, hiring, support, and retention strategies to develop workforce diversity plans. Each group met several times this past year with the opportunity to apply for a mini-grant to design and implement a project to meet an identified goal.
- Additionally, as part of the RESC MTR Alliance Grant, funding was provided to project proposals, which 34 districts submitted as a result of the regional consortia meetings. Examples of project proposals include: a District Equity Team and Leadership Program for Students of Color, Strengthening Partnerships with Educator Preparation Programs, Re-design District External Diversity Recruitment to a Digital Marketing Approach, Increase Involvement with the Educators Rising and Future Educators Pathway Program, “Grow Your Own” efforts for non-certified staff, create MTR stipend positions, Develop an Educator Aspirant Program, Scholarships, Sponsorship for Educators of Color to participate in the CREC Teacher Residency Program, ARCTEL Cross-Endorsement Program, and Relay among others; and Professional Learning centered around Emotionally Responsive Practice, Implicit Bias, and Equity/Cultural Competence Training for district leadership, teachers, and paraeducators.
- The CSDE and RESC Alliance included a new initiative in the contract to support minority teacher recruitment. Funds were set aside to provide direct financial relief to aspirant teachers to offset the cost of completing a Connecticut State Board of Education-approved educator preparation program. RESC representatives met to develop a mechanism for candidates of color to apply for tuition assistance grants and/or licensure assessment fee reimbursement. This was a non-competitive scholarship and fee reimbursement opportunity. Of the 73 aspirant teachers who applied for funding, 51 received scholarships, fee reimbursement or both. Ten aspirant teachers who applied for funding received \$2,000 scholarship awards, while 26 received \$200 certification/assessment awards. Fifteen aspirant teachers received both awards at \$2,200.
- In the past two academic years, TEACH Connecticut supported about 400 EPP applicants total, 45% of whom are people of color and 48% are endeavoring to teach in a subject shortage area. Of those supported applicants already certified and employed, 42% are educators of color and 53% work in a high-needs location. This critical moment for digital recruitment has led to testing out new strategies and tactics to support future teachers of color that have yielded strong results to date. In the current academic year, TEACH Connecticut has supported about 40,000 website visitors and 6,000 subscribers exploring the teaching profession and is on track to yield close to 300 new EPP

applicants. TEACH Connecticut launched in October 2018 and is made possible through a partnership between the CSDE Talent Office, TEACH (a national nonprofit organization), and CT schools, districts, and EPPs. Funding is currently provided by the PCLB Foundation. The CSDE is continuing to seek extended funding opportunities.

- In 2020-21, the CSDE Talent Office in partnership with several EPPs launched and expanded Next-Gen, a Teacher Fellowship Program is designed to create enhanced learning environments for both the CCSU Teacher Candidates, as well as K-12 students. Providing opportunities for our Teacher Candidates to work within school districts will enhance their own professional growth, as well as positively impact student learning and achievement of all students. The Teacher Fellowship Program is currently open to undergraduate teacher candidates within the School of Education and Professional studies; however, priority will be given to teacher candidates from underrepresented groups and students enrolled in shortage areas. This initiative address today's most pressing needs, it can serve as an innovative teacher pipeline for well-qualified educators — now and into the future.
- In 2020-21, the CSDE Talent Office launched a statewide Educators Rising initiative. Educators Rising is a network that cultivates highly skilled educators by guiding young people on a path to becoming accomplished teachers, beginning in high school and extending through college and into the profession. Since purposeful teacher recruitment and high-quality teacher preparation are urgent needs in virtually every community, Educators Rising supports, amplifies, and extends the impact of grow-your-own-teacher pipeline programs. Educators Rising has been awarded a grant from the Buck Foundation to implement the program in new school districts for the 2020-2021 school year in CT: Danbury, Hamden, Hartford, Groton, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, and Windsor. The grant also allows there to be a liaison of this statewide initiative who will be located at the CSDE to assist with implementation. The Talent Office held its first annual statewide Educators Rising Conference on March 31, 2021. In partnership with CCSU, the conference afforded the opportunity for students currently enrolled in Educators Rising courses and clubs to compete in Educators Rising curriculum topics such as: Children's Literature Pre-K & K-3, Ethical Dilemma, Job Interview, Researching Learning Challenges, and Educator's Rising Moment. Ten students will participate virtually at the Educator's Rising National Conference on June 24-27, 2021.
- Through the New England Secondary School Consortium/Great Schools Partnership Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, the CSDE and district partners (Windsor, Hartford, Bristol) collaborated with diverse educators from each of the New England states in a series of in-person and virtual convenings to discuss the need and value of increasing workforce diversity in each of the New England states. The group provided its final round of feedback on a guidance document: Increasing the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of the Educator Workforce: A Call to Action for Leaders. This work is heavily influenced by the work of the CSDE Talent Office. [The final document is now available.](#)

- With support from the Wallace Foundation University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI) grant, the CSDE provided multiple supports to contribute to the development and support of equity-driven, antiracist school leaders. Using an “it takes a village” approach, in 2021, the CSDE provided professional learning opportunities, resources, and trainings to administrator preparation programs, including coaches, supervisors, and mentor principals of candidates’ clinical internship experiences, candidates currently enrolled in administrator preparation programs, and new principals (fall 2021). This approach supports the continuous improvement of the preparation programs, at the same time as building the capacity of current administrators to support new and aspiring administrators. With the Wallace Foundation UPPI grant ending, we appreciate continued support from the MTR Policy Oversight Council in sustaining the focus on developing and supporting equity-driven, antiracist school leaders in CT.
- The Connecticut Troops to Teachers (CTTT) Program goals are to (1) reduce veteran unemployment, (2) address teacher shortage areas, and (3) increase the number of male teachers of color in Connecticut classrooms. In the third and final year of the grant, CTTT supported over 150 new service members or veterans interested in learning more about the teaching profession. Five Communities of Practice (CoPs) were hosted by our partner districts (Bristol, Groton, New Britain, Region 11) throughout the 2020-21 academic year to provide an overview of the requirements to become a teacher and opportunities to network with CT teachers, district leaders, and hiring officials. A total of 125 service member and veteran registered to attend at least one CoP this past year.
- The Talent Office continued the work of the 2018-20 CCSSO Teacher Table initiative to make ongoing recommendations for statutory changes to educator certification regulations. As such, the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification proposed two legislative recommendations, which were adopted by both the State Board of Education and the Connecticut General Assembly. The first legislative recommendation creates opportunities to expand candidate and educator preparation program provider access to the use of Connecticut’s current Resident Educator Certificate (10-145m). The second legislative recommendation expands pathways for educators to obtain bilingual certification in Connecticut, reducing barriers of entry for the endorsement and creating more flexible options for both educators and districts to meet the needs of Connecticut students.
- The CSDE Talent Office implemented a third round of funding by the Office of Special Education Programs and partnered with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development and Reform Center (CEEDAR) to continue efforts around reforming Connecticut EPPs. This continued efforts supported the work of the faculty at four EPPs: Central and Western Connecticut State Universities; Fairfield University; and Sacred Heart University and five local school districts in aligning the training and support of Connecticut educators from pre-service to in-service, specifically focusing on using edTPA, Connecticut’s pre-service performance assessment, as a bridge between student teaching and TEAM (Teacher Education and Mentoring Program).
- The CSDE Talent Office collaborated with the RESC Alliance leadership, district TEAM facilitators and TEAM stakeholder groups to support individual educators and local

district staff adjust to the shift in TEAM allocations including ensuring that all districts had equitable access to mandated trainings. Developed and implemented a mechanism to successfully distribute \$1,449,087 of TEAM allocations to RESCs and LEAs to support the implementation of TEAM at the local level, including shifting trainings to a virtual environment and providing flexibility for continued success. Successful induction and support are proven to lead to higher retention of early career educators. [Connecticut's efforts around induction and support were validated in a study.](#)

- The CSDE Talent Office not only worked to develop flexibilities to support educator evaluation during the ongoing pandemic ([2020-21 Flexibilities](#) and [2021-22 Flexibilities](#)) but has reconvened PEAC as the [Educator Evaluation and Support \(EES\) 2022 Council](#) to reimagine educator evaluation in Connecticut. This work brings together relevant stakeholders to examine, analysis and redefine education evaluation in Connecticut.

Turnaround Office

The CSDE Turnaround Office oversees the work of Connecticut's 33 Alliance Districts, Commissioner's Network Program, Priority School Districts and Summer School, Title I Part A School Improvement Grants, and the Charter School Program.

Alliance Districts

The Alliance District program is a unique and targeted investment in Connecticut's 33 lowest-performing districts. C.G.S. 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 C.G.S. Section 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, Groton, Hamden, Hartford, Killingly, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Thompson, Torrington, Vernon, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, Windham, Windsor, and Windsor Locks.

Opportunity Districts

Under Connecticut's ESSA Consolidated State Plan, the 10 highest-need Alliance Districts were first designated in 2017 as Opportunity Districts that would receive a significantly greater system of supports. Under the Opportunity District program, each district defines its three highest strategic focus areas. A district-specific, cross-divisional team composed of appropriate members from the Turnaround, Academic, Office of Student Supports, Special Education, Talent, and

Early Childhood offices has been assigned to collaborate and work closely with each district to provide an even higher level of resources, targeted and differentiated evidence-based support, district capacity building, and oversight to advance those priorities. Monitoring meetings (virtual or in-person), including district leadership and the cross-divisional team, are also conducted three times per year.

Opportunity Districts include Bridgeport, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, and Waterbury.

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. In 2020-21, 15 schools were included 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. The Commissioner's Network included the following schools in 2020-21 school year:

Cohort V: joined the network in fall 2016

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

Cohort VI: joined the network in fall 2017

- New Britain High School, New Britain
- Cohort VII; joined the network in fall 2018
- Wexler-Grant Community School, New Haven
- Windham High School, Windham

Cohort VIII; joined the network in fall 2019

- Roosevelt School, Bridgeport

Cohort IX; joined the network in fall 2020

- Derby Middle School, Derby
- Hartford Public High School, Hartford
- Pulaski Middle School, New Britain
- Slade Middle School, New Britain
- Chamberlain Elementary School, New Britain
- Michael F. Wallace Middle School, Waterbury

- North End Middle School, Waterbury
- West Side Middle School, Waterbury

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

Priority School Districts and Summer School

Under C.G.S. Section 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 non-school hours and during the summer; (4) development or expansion of extended-day kindergarten programs; (5) development or expansion of scientifically-based reading research and instruction; (6) numeracy instruction; (7) support to chronically absent students; (8) enhancement of the use of technology to support instruction or improve parent and teacher communication; (9) 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 (10) for purposes of obtaining accreditation for elementary and middle schools from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Specific funding for Summer School is also a specific component of Priority School District funding.

The Priority School Districts for the 2020-21 school year were Ansonia, Bridgeport, Danbury, East Hartford, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, Waterbury, and Windham.

Charter Schools

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. The 2020-21 charter school network included 21 schools statewide, located in 10 host districts, serving 10,910 students.

State charter schools in 2020-21 included:

- Bridgeport: Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, The Bridge Academy, Capital Preparatory Harbor School, Great Oaks, New Beginnings Family Academy, Park City Prep Charter School
- Hartford: Achievement First Hartford Academy, Jumoke Academy Charter School

- Manchester: Odyssey Community School
- New Haven: Amistad Academy, Booker T. Washington, Common Ground High School, Elm City College Preparatory School, Elm City Montessori (local charter), Highville Charter School
- New London: Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)
- Norwalk: Side by Side Charter School
- Norwich: Integrated Day Charter School
- Stamford: Stamford Charter School for Excellence
- Waterbury: Brass City Charter School
- Winsted: Explorations Charter School

Title I Part A School Improvement Grants

The Turnaround Office manages and distributes the state’s allocation of Title I Part A School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds, providing technical support to seven SIG schools, which have received allocations for comprehensive support under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2020-21, these schools included:

- Bridgeport: Roosevelt School
- Brookfield: Brookfield High School
- New Haven: James Hillhouse High School and Truman School
- Charter schools: Explorations Charter School, Great Oaks Charter School

In 2020-21, the Turnaround Office also managed and monitored ESSA-SIG awards to 42 schools for targeted support under ESSA.

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

- Alliance Districts participated in two symposiums. The first provided an overview of leading with persistence in our present and future normal. Session pathways included Academics and Equity: Reimagining What is Possible; Compassionate Classrooms – Trauma Informed and Trauma Sensitive; and Responsive Leadership: Creating a Responsive Ecosystem in the Present and Future Normal. The second symposium supported the topic of Pandemic Perseverance with session pathways on Academics and Equity to Accelerate Learning; Compassionate Classrooms to Accelerate Learning; and Building a Sense of Renewal through Agile Practices.
- Leadership teams from Commissioner’s Network, SIG, and charter schools participated in professional learning sessions (NetStat) three times a year to share best practices, network, and problem solve with colleagues from other schools. Sessions focused on “How Might We Lead with Persistence in Our New Normal?” with breakout session dedicated to areas of school improvement, including, academics and equity, attendance and engagement, and supporting special populations.
- Leadership teams from Commissioner’s Network schools participated in the Commissioner’s Network Leadership Institute, which provides planned professional learning for leaders embarking on the school improvement efforts approved by the State

Board of Education. Professional learning is also provided through the Principal Cohort Series, which consisted of four sessions centered on building knowledge around organizational design and change management. Sessions focused on changing culture and habits across teams, leveraging learning habits, increasing psychological safety with meeting habits, and building agility across projects. Roundtables were also held quarterly to provide topic-focused discussions for leaders to come together to share and gather ideas to meet the challenges of today's schools.

- Provide formal monitoring sessions for Alliance Districts three times during the year, in addition to ongoing support.
- Provide technical assistance to Commissioner's Network Schools on a biweekly basis.
- Provide professional learning for Commissioner's Network, SIG, and charter schools through Pop Up PDs and PD Playlists. These resources and professional learning opportunities were designed to meet the needs of the schools on topics including building community, effective instructional strategies, formative assessment practices for remote learning, boosting teacher morale, and self-care.
- Developed the CSDE Cycle for Continuous Improvement to highlight the cyclical nature of improvement. This research-based cycle is used to support the work within monitoring meetings, professional learning, and development of district improvement plans.
- Published webinar to support the usage of the evidence-based practice guides as a resource to support implementation of the state's ESSA Consolidated Plan.
- Distributed \$5.5 million in state bond funding for remote learning school technology improvements, largely related to the shift in student learning models.
- In conjunction with SERC, CSDE is providing professional learning and on-site technical assistance to identified CSI (comprehensive school improvement) and TSI (targeted school improvement) schools through the end of 2021.
- Published a Root Cause Analysis and Needs Assessment Toolkit to guide districts and schools in aligning strategic plans and interventions to the needs of their students and communities. Each step includes information, tools, and a video for more guidance on implementation of the toolkit.
- Published Focus Look Fors in a Virtual Environment Tool with related guidance and webinar. The tool was developed to assist leaders and educators in gaining a snapshot of the teaching and learning occurring in a virtual learning environment, and ensure learning experiences are learner connected, learner led, learner focused, and learner demonstrated in order to advance equity.
- Developed a charter school enrollment request process. The procedure allows charter schools to submit enrollment increase requests to the CSDE by April 1 for consideration in the succeeding year. In determining whether to grant such requests the SDE considers the financial feasibility of the proposal and an evaluation of the school performance, stewardship, governance and management, student population and legal compliance. Additionally, the school must have an established capacity for meeting student enrollment over time and have a comprehensive plan for accommodating and meeting the needs of the increase in total student enrollment. All enrollment increases are subject to fiscal review by Office of Policy and Management and legislative approval.

- Partnered with the Bureau of Special Education and SERC to provide professional development opportunities for charter school staff focused on serving the needs of students with special needs. Trainings provided have included Universal Design for Learning: Strategies to Support All Students, Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities: Strengthening Family Engagement and PPT Facilitation, and Supporting the Use of Executive Skills in the Classroom to Meet Core Standards for All Students.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of affirmative action/equal opportunity employment for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of age, ancestry, color, criminal record (in state employment and licensing), gender identity or expression, genetic information, intellectual disability, learning disability, marital status, mental disability (past or present), national origin, physical disability (including blindness), race, religious creed, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, sex (pregnancy or sexual harassment), sexual orientation, veteran status or workplace hazards to reproductive systems, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes.

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 relative to affirmative action and equal opportunity employment. This includes investigating discrimination complaints, as well as determining and documenting reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

During this reporting period, the Department hired 97 employees: 43 white males, 33 white females, zero black males, four black females, four Hispanic males, 12 Hispanic females, zero AAIANHNPI (Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian Native, or Pacific Islander) males, and one AAIANHNPI females. Of the 97 hires, 27 individuals were goal candidates: three white males, 21 white females, zero black males, two black females, zero Hispanic males, two Hispanic females, zero AAIANHNPI males, and one AAIANHNPI female.