

V.C.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

April 5, 2017

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves continued participation of O'Brien STEM Academy, East Hartford, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional year commencing July 1, 2017, and directs the school to report to the State Board of Education Accountability and Support Committee on its priorities and progress in the 2017-18 school year; and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

Approved by a vote of _____, this fifth day of April, Two Thousand Seventeen.

Signed:

Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: April 5, 2017

SUBJECT: Commissioner's Network Extension for O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford

Executive Summary

Introduction

Public Act 12-116, in part, established the Commissioner's Network to provide new resources, increased flexibilities, and greater accountability to improve student achievement in some of the state's lowest performing schools. The purpose of the Commissioner's Network is to turn around chronically low-performing schools and improve outcomes for students who attend these schools. Network Turnaround Plans must include intensive and transformative strategies that are necessary to turn around schools that, to date, have been unsuccessful in their improvement efforts. These plans must reach beyond surface reforms to achieve dramatic and transformative outcomes, address past turnaround efforts, and provide an explanation as to how the proposed interventions will succeed where previous efforts have failed.

Schools are accepted into the Network for a minimum of three years. Subsection (h) of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-223h establishes that the State Board of Education may allow schools to continue in the Commissioner's Network for an additional year, not to exceed two additional years, if necessary. For the reasons set forth below, I am recommending that the O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford remain in the Network for an additional year. Pending State Board of Education approval, O'Brien School will be in its fourth year of the Commissioner's Network.

The Commissioner's Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education to improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. There are 20 schools presently participating in the Network. Each school receives increased financial investments to assist in the implementation of its turnaround plan. For each year a school is in the Network, the funding level decreases in order to promote financial sustainability of its turnaround over time.

History/Background:

O'Brien STEM Academy currently serves 446 students in Grades kindergarten through five. Eighty-two percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Eleven percent of the students are identified as needing special education services, and twenty percent are English learners. Approximately 52 percent of the students are Hispanic, 37 percent are black, and 8 percent are white.

O'Brien STEM Academy entered the Commissioner's Network in the fall of 2014. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network, an Operations and Instructional Audit was conducted on February 12, 2014. The audit revealed a lack of a clear discipline policy, low level of instructional rigor, including higher-order thinking and questioning; lack of staff to support high needs students, and the need for school-based, ongoing and job-embedded professional development for teachers and non-certified staff. Upon entering the Network, O'Brien STEM Academy had declining test scores, with only 22 percent of 3rd graders reading at grade level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

For sustainability purposes, East Hartford Public Schools has absorbed the costs for the Literacy/Media/Technology Coach, the STEM Coach, and personnel benefits for the Family Community Outreach Coordinator and School Social Worker. The school's leadership team has worked to ensure that spending is maximized for student benefit by building teacher capacity through job-embedded coaching, and implementing sustainable efforts around family and community outreach and reducing chronic absenteeism. Students in Commissioner's Network Schools are expected to show academic growth from fall to winter and from winter to spring on benchmark assessments. The lack of expected growth in student outcomes may reflect a variability in instructional practice or curriculum use across grade levels.

Achievement Data Tables:

Grade Level Achievement Data

Smarter Balanced Assessment English Language Arts Percentage of students at level 3 or above		Smarter Balanced Assessment Math Percentage of students at level 3 or above	
Grade	2014-15	2014-15	2015-16
3	26.6%	12.9%	22.6%
4	11.8%	32.8%	*
5	29.4%	30.3%	10.3%
6	27.7%	28.3%	*

*Data suppressed to ensure student data privacy.

School-wide Achievement Data

Smarter Balanced Assessment English Language Arts Percentage of students at level 3 or above		Smarter Balanced Assessment Math Percentage of students at level 3 or above	
2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
23.4%	26.2%	11.2%	8.5%

Improvements:

-]) On average, across all grade levels, the percentage of O'Brien STEM Academy students scoring at/above level 3 in reading on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 23.4 percent in 2014-15 to 26.2 percent in 2015-16. However, the average, while improved, masks some serious declines in achievement in grade three.
-]) The percentage of students considered chronically absent decreased from 16.5 percent in 2014-15 to 7.7 percent in 2015-16.
-]) The suspension rate decreased from 6.8 percent in 2014-15 to 3.6 percent in 2015-16.
-]) At least once a month, family engagement events are held to provide engaging opportunities for families and their children, such as a multicultural night, and the STEM career fair which exposed students and families to various professions within science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Continued Areas of Concern:

-]) The percentage of O'Brien STEM Academy students, Grades 3-6 scoring at/above level 3 in math on the Smarter Balanced Assessment decreased from 11.2 percent in 2014-15 to 8.5 percent in 2015-16. This decrease fails to meet the expected gains for a Commissioner's Network school.
-]) The percentage of students in Grade 3 considered proficient in reading on the STAR benchmark assessment decreased from 43 percent in fall 2016 to 40.5 percent in winter 2017. This establishes a clear need to improve instruction of literacy in the primary grades, ensuring that curriculum is aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment.
-]) The percentage of students in Grade 3 considered proficient in math on the STAR benchmark assessment decreased from 53 percent in fall 2016 to 50.6 percent in winter 2017. This establishes a clear need to improve instruction of math in the primary grades, ensuring that curriculum is aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment.
-]) The percentage of students in Grade 5 considered proficient in math on the STAR benchmark assessment decreased from 56 percent in fall 2016 to 48.7 percent in winter

2017. This establishes a clear need to improve instruction of math in the intermediate grades, ensuring that curriculum is aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Next Steps:

From April 2017 forward, O'Brien STEM Academy must deeply reflect upon the strategies that have not shown adequate improvement over the past three years, and enhance those that have been successful. The CSDE Turnaround Office will provide more intensive monitoring and supports as O'Brien enters Year 4 of the Commissioner's Network. The Year 4 plan will prioritize the following:

- _) Increased focus and sense of urgency on improvement of literacy and math achievement, with explicit instruction in K-3 reading.
- _) Revised instructional leadership plan including a regular classroom walkthrough schedule, focused on literacy and math instruction, submitted monthly to the Turnaround Office Point of Contact.
- _) Engage in ReadConn professional learning modules for K-3 teachers to support the implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards in English Language Arts: foundational skills and comprehensive reading instruction.
- _) In an effort to improve instructional practice, with support from the Turnaround Office, O'Brien will be required to provide targeted literacy and math professional development informed by effective data analysis, and integrating differentiated Tier 1 instruction in both literacy and mathematics during the 2017-18 school year.
- _) With the support of the Turnaround Office, O'Brien School will continue to refine curricula aligned to Connecticut Core Standards with an emphasis on standards-based literacy and math instruction.
- _) In the fall of 2017, O'Brien School will meet with the Accountability and Support Committee of the State Board of Education to provide updates on the school's progress.

Prepared by: Kaylan Ricciardi, Education Consultant, Turnaround Office

Approved by: Desi D. Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Connecticut State Board of Education

April 5, 2017

Commissioner's Network

O'Brien STEM Academy

East Hartford Public Schools

Recommendation for a One-Year Extension

Desi D. Nesmith

O'Brien STEM Academy Demographics*

446 students, Grades K-5

82% Free/Reduced Lunch

11% Students with Disabilities

20% English Learners

37% Black

52% Hispanic

*Self-reported for 2016-17



Leading & Lagging Indicators

Chronic Absenteeism			Suspension Rate		
2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017 YTD*	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017 YTD*
16.5%	7.7%	13%	6.8%	3.6%	1.4%
Smarter Balanced Assessment English Language Arts- Percentage of Students at Level 3 or above			Smarter Balanced Assessment Mathematics- Percentage of Students at Level 3 or above		
2014-2015		2015-2016	2014-2015		2015-2016
23.4%		26.2%	11.2%		8.5%
Smarter Balanced Assessment English Language Arts- Growth Rate			Smarter Balanced Assessment Mathematics- Growth Rate		
Matched Cohort	Growth Rate	Avg. % of Target Achieved	Matched Cohort	Growth Rate	Avg. % of Target Achieved
179	40.2%	67.2%	181	14.9%	38.3%



*Self-reported data

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Reading Benchmark Assessment Results

Percentage and Number of Students at Proficiency in Reading

	Fall 2016-2017	Winter 2016-2017
Kindergarten	21% (11)	44% (22)
1 st Grade	22% (11)	28% (14)
2 nd Grade	49% (33)	60.6% (40)
3 rd Grade	43% (34)	40.5% (32)
4 th Grade	42% (32)	52% (41)
5 th Grade	45% (30)	48.6% (35)



Math Benchmark Assessment Results
Percentage of and Number of Students at Proficiency in Math

Grade Level	Fall 2016-2017	Winter 2016-2017
Kindergarten	N/A	N/A
1 st Grade	49% (24)	63.3% (31)
2 nd Grade	37% (25)	51.5% (34)
3 rd Grade	53% (42)	50.6% (40)
4 th Grade	40% (31)	48% (38)
5 th Grade	56% (37)	48.7% (35)





Next Generation Accountability Report: 2015-16

Choose a District

Choose a School

East Hartford School District

Robert J. O'Brien School_0431811

Choose a District, then Choose a School. To refresh the District list, clear the School name.

No.	Indicator	Index/ Rate	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State Avg Index/Rate
1a.	ELA Performance Index – All Students	56.1	75	37.4	50	74.8%	67.7
1b.	ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students	52.7	75	35.2	50	70.3%	56.7
1c.	Math Performance Index – All Students	45.0	75	30.0	50	60.0%	61.4
1d.	Math Performance Index – High Needs Students	42.9	75	28.6	50	57.2%	49.9
1e.	Science Performance Index – All Students	44.4	75	29.6	50	59.1%	57.5
1f.	Science Performance Index – High Needs Students	40.3	75	26.9	50	53.7%	47.0
2a.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	67.2%	100	67.2	100	67.2%	69.8%
2b.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	64.7%	100	64.7	100	64.7%	58.3%
2c.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	38.3%	100	38.3	100	38.3%	65.0%
2d.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	42.7%	100	42.7	100	42.7%	57.4%
4a.	Chronic Absenteeism – All Students	7.7%	<=5%	44.6	50	89.2%	9.6%
4b.	Chronic Absenteeism – High Needs Students	9.2%	<=5%	41.6	50	83.2%	15.6%
5	Preparation for CCR – % taking courses	N/A	75%				67.6%
6	Preparation for CCR – % passing exams	N/A	75%				40.7%
7	On-track to High School Graduation	N/A	94%				85.1%
8	4-year Graduation - All Students (2015 Cohort)	N/A	94%				87.2%
9	6-year Graduation - High Needs Students (2013 Cohort)	N/A	94%				78.6%
10	Postsecondary Entrance (Class of 2015)	N/A	75%				71.9%
11	Physical Fitness (estimated part rate) and (fitness rate)	94.0%	51.4%	75%	34.3	50	68.5% 89.2% 50.5%
12	Arts Access	N/A	60%				47.5%
Accountability Index				520.9	850	61.3%	

These statistics represent the results from the second year of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Model for districts and schools. These statistics represent the results from the second year of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Model for districts and schools. For detailed information and resources about every indicator including the rationale for its inclusion, the methodology used as well as links to resources, research, and evidence-based strategies, please consult the document titled [Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#) which is available on the [Next Generation Accountability Resources](#) page of the CSDE Performance Office.

This model is the direct result of an extensive consultation process over a two year period. The CSDE sought feedback from district and school leaders, Connecticut educators, state and national experts, CSDE staff, and many others. This model was originally outlined in Connecticut's flexibility application to the U.S. Department of Education and formally approved by the USED in August 2015 and is now included in Connecticut's state plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Gap Indicators	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Size of Gap	State Gap Mean + 1 StdDev**	Is Gap an Outlier?
Achievement Gap Size Outlier?					
ELA Performance Index Gap	64.9	52.7	12.2	16.6	N
Math Performance Index Gap	50.5	42.9	7.6	19.1	
Science Performance Index Gap	52.2	40.3	11.9	17.3	
Graduation Rate Gap (2013 Cohort)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*If the Non-High Needs Rate exceeds the ultimate target (7% for Performance Index and 90% for graduation rate), then the ultimate target is displayed and used for gap calculations. **If size of gap exceeds the state mean gap plus one standard deviation, then the gap is an outlier.

Participation Rate	Rate
ELA – All Students	100.0%
ELA – High Needs Students	100.0%
Math – All Students	100.0%
Math – High Needs Students	100.0%
Science – All Students	100.0%
Science – High Needs Students	100.0%

School Code: 0431811



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Benefits of Network participation for O'Brien STEM Academy

- Professional Development Opportunities-social emotional learning/Restorative Practices, instructional coaching, data-driven decision making, and inquiry-based instruction.
- The percentage of O'Brien STEM Academy students scoring at/above level 3 in reading across grades 3-5 on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 23.4 percent in 2014-15 to 26.2 percent in 2015-16.
- The percentage of students considered chronically absent decreased from 16.5 percent in 2014-15 to 7.7 percent in 2015-16.
- The suspension rate decreased from 6.8 percent in 2014-15 to 3.6 percent in 2015-16.



Under the close monitoring and supervision of the Turnaround Office, O'Brien STEM Academy's next steps for 2017-18 are:

- Increased focus and sense of urgency on improvement of literacy and math achievement, with explicit instruction in K-3 reading.
- Revised instructional leadership plan including a regular classroom walkthrough schedule, focused on literacy and math instruction, submitted monthly to the Turnaround Office Point of Contact.
- Engage in ReadConn professional learning modules for K-3 teachers to support the implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards in English Language Arts: foundational skills and comprehensive reading instruction.
- In an effort to improve instructional practice, with support from the Turnaround Office, O'Brien School will be required to provide targeted literacy and math professional development informed by effective data analysis, and integrating differentiated Tier 1 instruction in both literacy and mathematics during the 2017-18 school year.
- With the support of the Turnaround Office, O'Brien School will continue to refine curricula aligned to Connecticut Core Standards with an emphasis on standards-based literacy and math instruction.



The Turnaround Office's next steps for 2017-18:

- Provide intensive and regular technical assistance with a focus on effective literacy and math instruction to improve student outcomes.
- Regular school visits to conduct classroom walkthroughs specifically focused on reading and math in order to provide feedback and technical assistance.
- Connect O'Brien STEM Academy with schools that demonstrate a high level of math achievement.
- Assist with the analysis of Smarter Balanced Assessment growth results and new accountability index in order to improve instructional practice, with a specific focus on math instruction.
- In the fall of 2017, O'Brien School will meet with the Accountability and Support Committee of the State Board of Education to provide updates on the school's progress.





COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK FAST FACTS

O'BRIEN STEM ACADEMY GRADES K-6 COHORT III — ENTERED NETWORK FALL 2014 East Hartford Public Schools

SUCCESS

Since entering the Commissioner's Network, O'Brien Stem Academy has implemented a focused plan to improve reading performance in grades K-6. In addition, O'Brien has implemented an inquiry-based instructional model with a strong emphasis on instructional coaching to build teacher capacity and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programming. The work of the family and community outreach coordinator and social worker has allowed the school to open a family center that houses a food pantry and supports the work of CommPACT. With a stronger implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices, O'Brien has seen a significant decrease in out-of-school and in-school suspensions, as well as chronic absenteeism.



COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK FUNDING

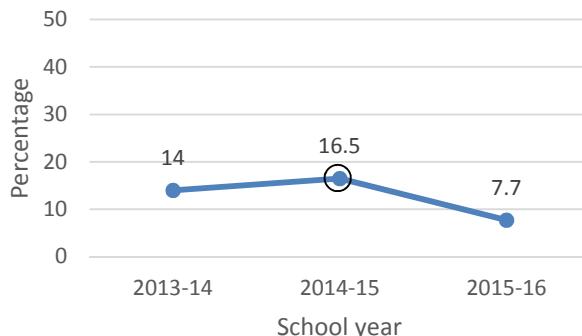
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
\$473,118	\$550,000	\$410,000

PRIORITIES

Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_) Instructional coaches develop and implement a consistent instructional coaching model to build teacher capacity._) School-based professional development focused on K-6 literacy and STEM.
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_) Continue to develop effective K-5 standards-based literacy and math instruction._) Deepen the implementation of schoolwide STEM programming.
Climate/Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_) Continue to develop family and community outreach programming and family center._) Implement a multitiered system of support to promote social-emotional development.
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_) Incorporate a unified block to support both push-in and pull-out intervention and acceleration._) Develop a sustainability plan in preparation for exiting the Commissioner's Network.

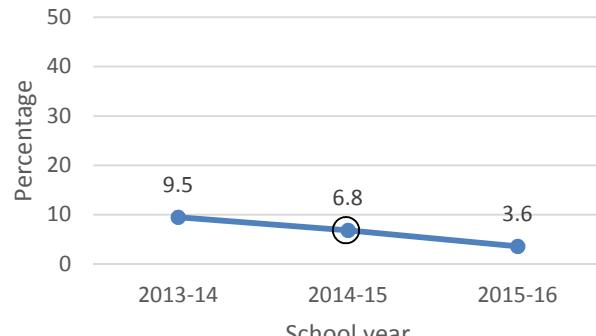
LEADING AND LAGGING INDICATORS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Chronic Absenteeism



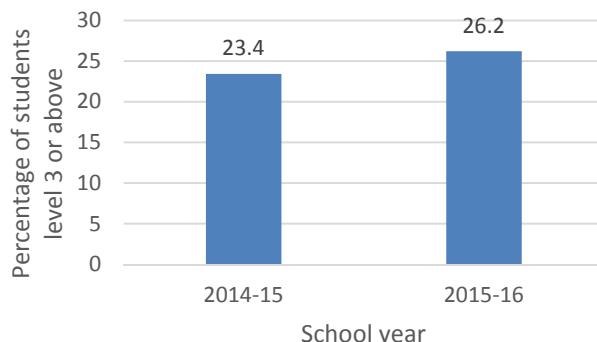
Chronic absenteeism decreased by 6.3 percentage points from the 2013-14 baseline year to 2015-16.

Suspension Rate



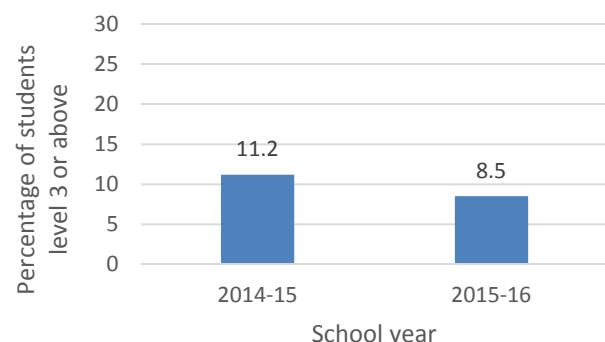
The suspension rate decreased by 5.9 percentage points from the 2013-14 baseline year to 2015-16.

Smarter Balanced Assessment ELA

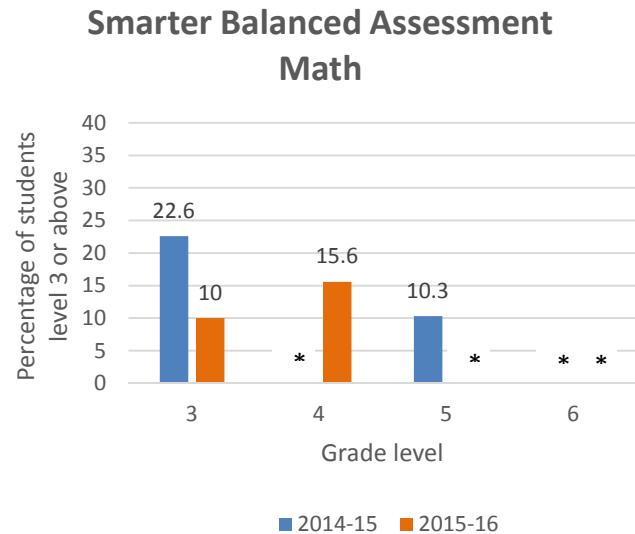
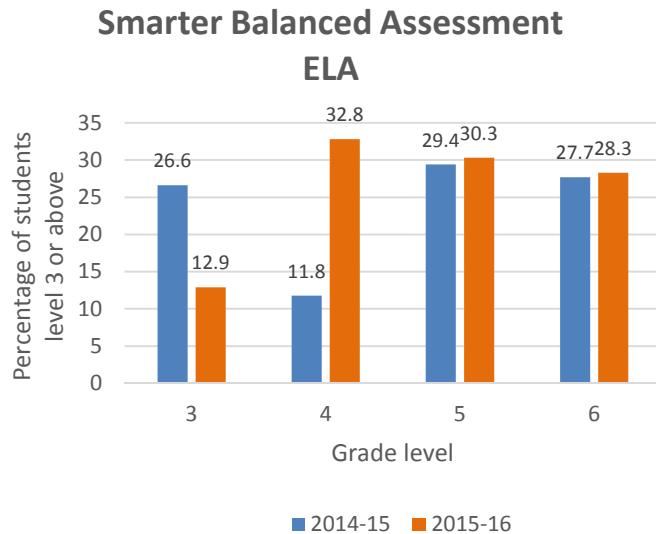


The percentage of students at level 3 or above in ELA increased by 2.8 percentage points.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Math



The percentage of students at level 3 or above in math decreased by 2.7 percentage points.



* Data suppressed to ensure student data privacy.

NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Continue to increase the effectiveness of the coaching model by examining data from classroom walkthroughs and observations to improve instruction and student outcomes.
- ✓ Continue to use and share the social-emotional support trainings to effectively work with students in all tiers, and to encourage positive student behavior, and decrease office referrals resulting in in-school and out-of-school suspensions.
- ✓ Continue to analyze data from multiple assessments to align specific targeted instruction to meet all student learning needs.