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**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education  
**DATE:** May 2, 2018  
**SUBJECT:** Update on Implementation of Goal 4, State Board of Education Comprehensive Plan

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

The Connecticut State Board of Education's five-year comprehensive plan, *Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students*, adopted in July 2016, represents the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) commitment to Connecticut citizens, communities, and local school districts' efforts to provide every student in our state an exceptional education in an outstanding school. The aspirational goals of the board's comprehensive plan are:

1. Ensuring that students' non-academic needs are met so that they are healthy, happy, and ready to learn.
2. Making sure all students learn what they need to know to succeed in college, career, and life.
3. Giving all students access to great teachers and school leaders.
4. Supporting schools and districts in staying on target with learning goals.

Immediately following the adoption of the Board's comprehensive plan, the CSDE began extensive planning using a system of performance management focused on achieving defined results. By operationalizing the Board's aspirational goals into actionable steps, the CSDE will improve the quality of execution and systematically manage, monitor, and deliver on the Board's five year comprehensive plan. For each Board goal, the CSDE developed delivery plans that include:

- Up to three strategies that are specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, and time-limited;
- Specific activities affiliated with each strategy;
- "Delivery chains," including the specific people and/or organizations necessary to deliver the activities affiliated with the strategies;
- Appropriate metrics with which to evaluate progress toward the goal; and
- Roles and routines to keep the CSDE focused on achieving the goal
  - Roles include goal owner, strategy lead, delivery plan facilitator

- Routines include use of the assessment of progress tool, planning meetings, updates to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education

### **Background on Board Goal 4 and Strategy**

Goal #4 of the State Board Comprehensive Plan includes providing intensive interventions and supports in Connecticut's most struggling communities, providing assistance in the utilization of the Next Generation Accountability System to measure school progress and inform improvement practices and to hold the district and school accountable for student learning. The team identified the following powerful strategy focused on building internal capacity of the CSDE cross-divisional review and support teams to effectively support and monitor Opportunity Districts. The strategy also focuses on building external capacity of districts and schools to understand and use evidence-based interventions and the Next Generation Accountability System.

Description: CSDE cross-divisional teams will have understanding of evidence-based interventions and practices to effectively support schools and districts in order to make progress toward the goal of exiting schools from Category 4 or 5, Turnaround or Focus, status. Similarly, districts and schools will have understanding of evidence-based interventions and practices to improve student outcomes and to ensure progress towards the goal of increasing the percentage of district schools exiting from Categories 2 and 3 to Category 1.

The theory of action for the activities planned and implemented as a part of the Goal #4 strategy include:

- If CSDE cross-divisional support and review teams are trained in the Turnaround Framework, the Next Generation Accountability System, evidence-based interventions and team member protocols, then the cross-divisional team members will be able to effectively and efficiently collaborate with Opportunity District leadership teams to develop district and school improvement plans and monitor implementation. This will result in the improvement of the state's long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rate and English Learner proficiency and more schools exiting Category 4 and 5 status.
- If a directory of the CSDE personnel listing both job responsibilities and areas of expertise and skill was distributed to cross-divisional support and review teams, team members would more efficiently find personnel to provide strategic support to Opportunity and Alliance District leadership. This will result in development of district and school plans that more effectively drive the improvement of the state's long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rate and English Learner proficiency.
- If district and school leadership teams have access to an evidence-based guide which includes explanations of evidence-based interventions and available resources, then districts, schools, and the CSDE cross-divisional support and review teams will more efficiently and effectively select school improvement interventions that advance the improvement of the state's long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rate and English Learner proficiency. This will result in more schools exiting Category 4 and 5 status, and more schools entering Category 1 status.
- If school leadership teams have access to webinar-based professional development, which focus on how to develop district and school improvement plans using the consolidated online

application, how to conduct an effective needs analysis, how to select evidence-based interventions for school improvement, how to plan for effective implementation of evidence-based interventions, and how to analyze results from use of the interventions, then school leadership teams will be able to develop and implement school improvement plans that satisfy state and federal requirements for evidence-based interventions. This will result in development of school improvement plans that drive the improvement of the state's long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rate and English Learner proficiency, more schools exiting Category 4 and 5 status, and more schools entering Category 1 status.

- If districts and schools have access to an up-to-date, online calendar of professional learning opportunities offered by CSDE experts, then more district- and school-level personnel would participate in CSDE-sponsored professional learning, resulting in more effective district and school improvement planning.

Definition of Success: Category 4 and 5 schools will exit either Turnaround or Focus status, or make substantial annual improvements. Schools in Category 3 will be reclassified as Category 1 or 2, or make substantial improvement. Schools in Category 2 will be reclassified as Category 1, or make substantial annual improvement. Schools in Category 1 will remain classified as Category 1 schools.

Impact: Creation of an efficient and well-communicated system of support for the state's lowest performing schools will result in more schools meeting expected growth targets and no longer meeting the reasons for identification as a Category 4 or Category 5 school. Additionally, more schools will meet expected growth targets and no longer meet the reasons for identification as Category 2 or Category 3.

Metric:

- By 2021, the percentage of public schools identified as Category 1 will increase by 25 percent, from 163 schools in 2015-16 to 203 schools in 2020-21.
- By 2021, the percentage of public schools identified as Category 3 will decrease by 10 percent, from 296 schools in 2015-16 to 266 schools in 2020-21.
- By 2021, nine of the 21 Opportunity District schools currently identified as Category 4 or Category 5 will exit Category 4 or 5; and the Accountability Index for each of the 21 schools will improve annually.

2017-18 Sub-Target(s):

- By January 2019, the 10 Opportunity Districts will show improvement in District Accountability Indices, meeting targets established by the CSDE Performance Office as a part of the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan.
- By January 2019, the 21 Opportunity District schools receiving additional state and federal school improvement funding and currently identified as Category 4 or Category 5 will show an improvement in the schools' accountability indices, meeting targets established by the CSDE Performance Office as a part of the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan.

### **Goal Progress Update**

As the state enters the second half of the 2016-17 school year, many of the 2016-17 goal milestones have been achieved, including but not limited to:

- **Development of, training for, and implementation of protocols for CSDE cross-divisional team support of Opportunity Districts and school leadership.** Training for cross-divisional teams was held on October 20, 2017. Cross-divisional teams have met together with districts for the beginning-of-year and middle-of-the-year Opportunity District monitoring meetings and have begun providing technical support. In addition to district-specific technical assistance, the Turnaround Office, with assistance from the Academic Office, has begun sponsoring professional learning for Opportunity District teams. On March 26, 2018, Opportunity District mathematics teams participated in professional learning focused on “look-fors” for effective mathematics instruction, including what students should be thinking, saying, doing and practicing and how teachers should facilitate learning. At the end-of-year monitoring meetings, planning for technical support the cross-divisional teams will provide in 2018-19 will be finalized.
- **Development of CSDE Personnel Directory.** The Deputy Commissioner, Turnaround Office, Communications Office and Bureau of Information Technology teams have worked collaboratively to develop the directory for placement on the CSDE employee intranet. Directories have been completed for most of the CSDE offices. Protocols have been established for updating the directory when staffing changes take place.
- **Evidence-Based Guide.** The evidence-based guide will be published in spring 2018 and presented to Opportunity Districts for use in planning for 2018-19 school year for Alliance District applications, Commissioner’s Network school priorities and federally funded School Improvement Grant school priorities. The guide will be published on the eGrants Management System in 2018-19 as a resource for all non-Opportunity Districts. Protocols are in place to provide annual revisions as new evidence-based research studies are released.
- **School-Level Webinars.** A plan has been developed for implementation of webinars to be conducted during the 2017-18 school year. To date, webinars have been conducted to assist districts and schools with completion of federal school improvement grant applications, understanding the Next Generation Accountability System, and learning about how district targets have been set under the state’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act plan.
- **Online Professional Learning Calendar.** Through continued support from the Communications Office, the Information Technology Office, and the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, the online professional learning calendar was made available for use by districts beginning in February 2018. During the middle-of-the-year district monitoring meetings, district personnel were encouraged to subscribe to electronic calendar updates. Support personnel from each division of the CSDE will be responsible for updating professional learning opportunities.

Significant effort has been placed during 2017-18 to ensure efficient and effective protocols are in place to sustain the work begun in the Goal #4 activities. Two implementation challenges have emerged, including the limits to the amount of technical assistance cross-divisional teams can provide to districts and schools due to time constraints resulting from other job responsibilities. The second challenge is the ability of CSDE personnel to maintain protocols that ensure up-to-date resources are available to districts and schools.

**Next Steps**

The following actions are planned between now and our next Goal #4 update to the State Board of Education:

- Evaluate and modify cross-divisional review and support team protocols to maintain efficiency and to ensure technical assistance to Opportunity Districts and schools is effective;
- Invite feedback from Opportunity District superintendents to improve technical support;
- Repeat the mathematics professional learning originally provided to Opportunity District teams for Talent Office and Special Education personnel who work with Educator Preparation Programs to determine ways to ensure the mathematics instruction “look-fors” are built in to preparation programs;
- Schedule and conduct professional learning for CSDE Senior Leadership and CSDE Leadership Council about how cross-divisional teams use data to guide discussion and planning, using a fishbowl presentation of an authentic cross-divisional team meeting;
- Assignment of updates of the CSDE staff directory to the Communications Office who will create a searchable personnel database;
- Prepare presentations of the evidence-based guides to CSDE Senior Leadership in June 2018 and through the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Federal Education Group conferences; and
- Meet biweekly with strategy leads and CSDE staff to monitor the implementation process, progress toward the targets and sub-targets, making changes as necessary.

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