

V.C.

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO BE PROPOSED:

May 3, 2017

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves continued participation of Windham Middle School, Windham in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2017, 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 third day of May, 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: May 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Commissioner's Network Extension for Windham Middle School in Windham

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 Windham Middle School in Windham remain in the Network for an additional fifth and final year.

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:

Windham Middle School currently serves 560 students in Grades 6 through 8. Eighty-eight percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Twenty-one percent of the students are identified as needing special education services (resulting from a high percentage of transfer students with IEPs and a low outplacement rate), and 26 percent are English learners. Approximately 72 percent of the students are Hispanic and 7 percent are Black. Windham Middle School ranks in the top 6 percent, statewide, of reportable schools for having the highest English learner population on a percentage basis. Windham District ranks as the number one district on the same measure.

Windham Middle School entered the Commissioner’s Network in the fall of 2013. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network in 2013, an Operations and Instructional Audit as well as a Needs Assessment were conducted. The audit and assessment led to the development of a Year 1 plan which focused on the following key priorities: implementing a new curriculum, extending instructional time on task, improving school culture, and laying the foundation for full implementation of autonomous small learning communities (SLCs) in the fall of 2014.

The school’s leadership team and teachers have set a positive trajectory for the school in terms of its student academic performance, student engagement, and teacher effectiveness, as evidenced by the meaningful positive trend in student scores, continuous improvement in student attendance and discipline statistics, and teacher-reported satisfaction from a recent teacher survey and focus group. Additionally, the school has received a decreased level of Commissioner’s Network funding in each of the past three years, and has successfully restructured itself with an SLC instructional model (three houses, each comprised of Grades 6-8), demonstrating the ability to use district funds to sustain this model after Commissioner’s Network funding ends.

Achievement Data Table:

Grade	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	
	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
6	25.0%	34.7%	11.7%	13.2%
7	22.2%	28.5%	11.0%	16.4%
8	21.0%	23.2%	13.5%	12.0%

School-wide (all grades combined), Windham Middle School’s Smarter Balanced Assessment performance from 2014-15 to 2015-16 increased +6.2 percentage points, from 22.6% to 28.8% in ELA, and +1.6 percentage points, from 12.2% to 13.8% in Math.

Improvements:

- The percentage of Windham Middle School students meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in English language arts (ELA) on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased +6.2 points, from 22.6 percent in 2014-15 to 28.8 percent in 2015-16.
- The percentage of students meeting or exceeding the achievement standards in Mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased +1.6 points, from 12.2 percent in 2014-15 to 13.8 percent in 2015-16, however, this increase falls short of meeting gains expected from a Commissioner's Network school.
- The percentage of students considered chronically absent decreased from 19.9 percent in 2014-15 to 16.4 percent in 2015-16. This positive trend continues with a year-to-date chronic absenteeism rate of 14.1 percent through February 2017, but needs to target a goal of less than 5 percent to meet the state's target.
- The suspension rate has decreased from 32.1 percent in 2014-15 to 30.0 percent in 2015-16. Year-to-date trends through February 2017 show that this reduction trend continues into the current year.
- The restructure of Windham Middle School into SLCs has allowed for more individualized attention for students. This restructure also allowed time for horizontal data teams, the addition of an instructional consultant and math/ELA coaches, and additional language supports for the school's large English language learner population.

Continued Areas of Concern:

- While growth trends have been positive, improvement in overall mathematics proficiency needs to be an urgent Tier 1 instructional focus. Focus on instructional shifts required of the Connecticut Core and Standards of Mathematical Practice, intervention on missing early skills (ie., number sense, operations understanding, procedural fluency), professional workshops on content and pedagogy, rigorous and relevant lesson planning and implementation, and interim SBAC assessments reviewed by data teams are part of the improvement plan.
- Additional emphasis needs to be placed on tiered differentiated instruction, as observational evidence shows that the majority of students are receiving non-differentiated instruction. Daily ELA and Math blocks provide an opportunity for small group level differentiation.
- Students exhibit only moderate engagement as evidenced by relatively low levels of participation in higher order classroom discussion, side conversations and off-task behaviors. While students are generally behaving appropriately, active in-class participation by students needs to increase.
- The suspension rate declined in 2015-16 following a two-year increase, but remains high in comparison to expectations for a Commissioner's Network school. Further attention to reducing suspensions is necessary.

- The school has been able to show consistent multi-year improvements in reducing absenteeism and exclusionary discipline. Continued close focus by school and district attendance committees, as well as parent outreach, will hopefully further reduce these statistics.

Next Steps:

During the 2017-18 school year, Windham Middle School will continue strategies that have proven effective over the past four years, and identify new or additional evidence-based strategies to target areas, including mathematics, chronic absenteeism and student engagement that require further growth and development. The Year 5 plan will prioritize the following:

- Initiating the process to evolve from a three-house SLC model to one with two houses in order to cost-effectively sustain improvements that have been realized with the introduction of SLCs, for the long term. Included in this process, which will start with Grade 6, will be professional development in inquiry-based and interdisciplinary learning, adjustment to the Advisory program, and the continuation of the grade-level data team model.
- Targeting mathematics support and instructional improvement which will be informed by a new school data platform and internal student growth targets. Specific efforts for professional development, in collaboration with the Turnaround and Academic Offices, will include instructional shifts required by the Connecticut Core Standards in ELA and mathematics, fully integrating Standards of Mathematical Practice, differentiated instructional delivery, intervention groups, and student work involving more rigor such as higher-level questioning, close reading, and meaningful student discourse.
- A commitment to significant reduction in suspensions and school climate improvement by fully implementing Restorative Practices, facilitated by the Turnaround Office consultant, with the plan to be completely transitioned by the 2018-2019 school year.
- Focusing the Attendance Committee on educating students and families around the importance of regular school attendance, as well as supporting students and families facing difficulties in getting students to school, in order to reduce chronic absenteeism.
- Evaluating and optimizing intervention time scheduled each day for students, in collaboration with Windham Public Schools district work on optimal use of block scheduling.
- Reporting to the State Board of Education's Accountability and Support Committee to discuss progress and receive feedback for continued improvement.

Prepared by: Mike Kent, Education Consultant, Turnaround Office

Approved by: Desi D. Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Connecticut State Board of Education

May 3, 2017

Commissioner's Network

Windham Middle School, Windham

Recommendation for a One-Year Extension

Desi D. Nesmith

Windham MS Demographics

- 560 students, Grades 6-8
- 88% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 21% Students with Disabilities
- 26% English Learners (top 6% of schools statewide for EL% population)
- 72% Hispanic
- 7% Black



Leading & Lagging Indicators

Windham Middle School

Chronic Absenteeism			Suspension Rate		
2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017YTD*	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017YTD*
19.9%	16.4%	14.1%	32.1%	30.0%	16.1%
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
22.6%		28.8%	12.2%		13.8%
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
489	38.2%	58.4%	486	33.5%	49.6%

* Self-reported data through Feb 2017



Windham Middle School Reading Benchmark Assessment Results

Percentage and Number of Students at Proficiency in Reading

Grade Level	Fall 2016 -2017	Winter 2016-2017
6 th Grade	10.0% (17)	17.0% (28)
7 th Grade	2.0% (3)	5.0% (8)
8 th Grade	18.0% (28)	27.0% (39)



Windham Middle School Math Benchmark Assessment Results

Percentage and Number of Students at Proficiency in Mathematics

Grade Level	Fall 2016 -2017	Winter 2016-2017
6 th Grade	1.0% (2)	7.0% (12)
7 th Grade	0.0% (0)	1.0% (2)
8 th Grade	0.0% (0)	2.0% (2)





Next Generation Accountability Report: 2015-16

Choose a District

Choose a School

Windham School District	Windham Middle School_1635111
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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	55.0	75	36.7	50	73.3%	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	44.8	75	29.9	50	59.8%	61.4
1d.	Math Performance Index – High Needs Students	42.8	75	28.5	50	57.1%	49.9
1e.	Science Performance Index – All Students	41.8	75	27.8	50	55.7%	57.5
1f.	Science Performance Index – High Needs Students	40.1	75	26.7	50	53.5%	47.0
2a.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	58.4%	100	58.4	100	58.4%	63.8%
2b.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	56.3%	100	56.3	100	56.3%	58.3%
2c.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	49.6%	100	49.6	100	49.6%	65.0%
2d.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	48.4%	100	48.4	100	48.4%	57.4%
4a.	Chronic Absenteeism – All Students	16.4%	<=5%	27.1	50	54.3%	9.6%
4b.	Chronic Absenteeism – High Needs Students	17.7%	<=5%	24.5	50	49.1%	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	71.8%	94%	38.2	50	76.4%	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)	87.6% 30.4%	75%	10.1	50	20.3%	89.2% 50.5%
12	Arts Access	N/A	60%				47.5%
	Accountability Index			497.6	900	55.3%	

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	Is Gap an Outlier?
Achievement Gap Size Outlier?					Y
ELA Performance Index Gap	75.0	52.7	22.3	16.6	
Math Performance Index Gap	62.9	42.8	20.0	19.1	
Science Performance Index Gap	N/A	40.1	N/A	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 (75 for Performance Index and 94% 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	98.2%
ELA – High Needs Students	98.3%
Math – All Students	98.2%
Math – High Needs Students	98.3%
Science – All Students	98.5%
Science – High Needs Students	98.3%

Benefits of Network Participation for Windham MS

- The percentage of students considered chronically absent decreased significantly from **19.9%** in 2014-2015 to **16.4%** in 2015-2016, and is at **14.1%** as of YTD February 2017.
- The number of total OSS/ISS suspensions decreased **9%**, from 669 in 2014-15 to 607 in 2015-2016. As of February 2017 the YTD number is 189, a drop of **49%** vs. YTD February 2016.
- Student achievement gains, reflecting proficiency (Level 3+) on the Smarter Balanced Assessment have increased on both ELA and Math by +7.3 points and +1.6 points, respectively.
- Restructuring to SLCs and new scheduling have provided more individualized student attention, time for horizontal data teams, and support for math, ELA, and language instruction.



Windham Middle School's Next Steps for 2017-18:

- Begin to sustainably evolve from a three-house model to two houses starting by transitioning Grade 6, and including professional development in inquiry-based and interdisciplinary learning, adjustment to the Advisory program, and continuation of the grade-level data team model.
- Targeting mathematics support and instructional improvement, informed by a new school data platform and internal student growth targets. Professional development efforts to include instructional shifts required by the CT Core Standards, fully integrating Standards of Mathematical Practice, differentiated instructional delivery, intervention groups, and student work involving rigorous tasks, questioning, close reading, and student discourse.
- Significantly reducing suspensions and improving school climate by fully implementing adoption of Restorative Practices.
- Focusing the Attendance Committee on educating students and families around the importance of regular school attendance, as well as supporting students and families facing difficulties getting to school.
- Evaluating and optimizing intervention time scheduled each day for students.



Turnaround Office Next Steps for 2017-18:

- Monthly school visits to conduct classroom walkthroughs and provide feedback and to assist in the implementation of a positive school climate and restorative practices.
- NetStat professional development conference for Network Schools to share best practices.
- Provide guidance to WMS in addressing growth areas, especially in the areas of student math performance, differentiated instruction, student engagement, achievement gaps for High Needs students, and continued absenteeism reduction.
- Assistance with analysis of Smarter Balanced Assessment growth results and new accountability index in order to improve instructional practice.





COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK FAST FACTS

WINDHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 6-8

COHORT II — ENTERED NETWORK FALL 2013
Windham Public Schools

SUCCESS

With a focus on developing positive school climate over the past two years, Windham Middle School (WMS) has improved its school culture and student performance. WMS supports district priorities of student achievement, building staff capacity, community engagement, and operational efficiency by implementing its Small Learning Community model, which focuses on teaming and collaboration to increase schoolwide rigor, relevance, and relationships. This model lends itself to lower student-teacher ratios, allows for grade-level data and student-focused team meetings, collaborative planning, grade-level advisory curriculum, and enables students to make stronger connections with adults.



COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK FUNDING

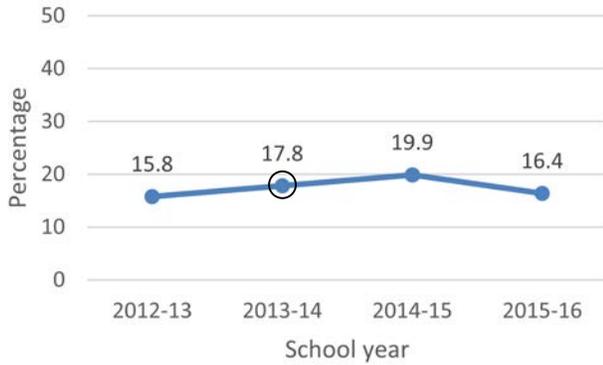
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
\$500,000	\$891,223	\$587,840	\$340,000

PRIORITIES

Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued implementation of facilitative coaching model, with coaching and learning plan templates. Reducing teacher turnover and hiring and retaining certified math teachers.
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards in English language arts (ELA) and math curricula for all grades; and the rollout of CCSS/NGSS aligned curriculum for social studies and science. Instructional focus on increasing student engagement through increased rigor and relevance.
Climate/Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, as well as expulsions, with the goal of increasing student class time. Continuing to shift culture to celebrating successes, shifting adult mindsets to relationship building, and fully utilizing family liaisons.
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended learning time impact with an additional period twice per week to provide remedial instruction, enrichment, and support time.

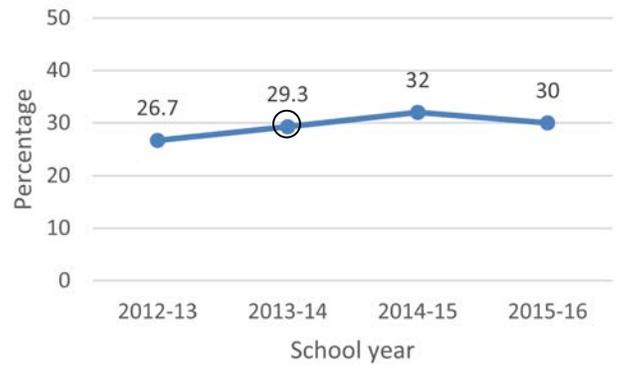
LEADING AND LAGGING INDICATORS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Chronic Absenteeism



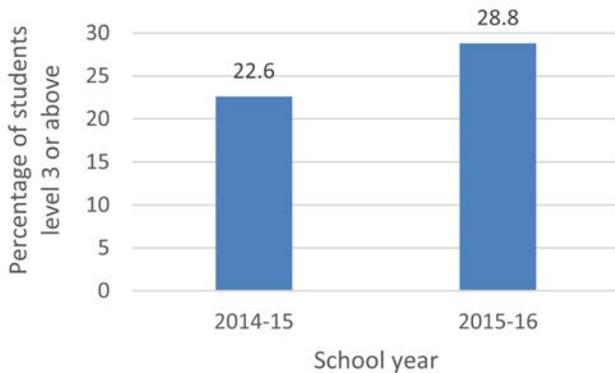
Chronic absenteeism increased by 0.6 percentage points from the 2012-13 baseline year to 2015-16.

Suspension Rate



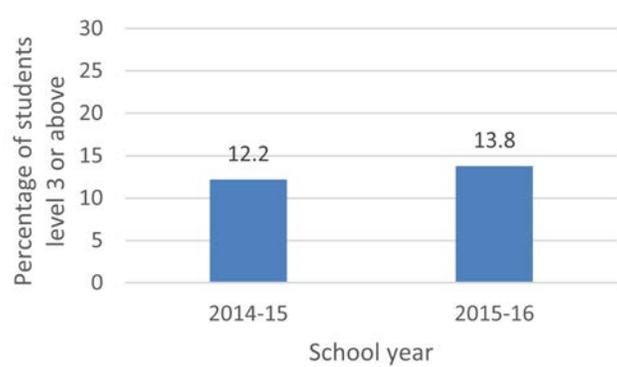
Suspension rate increased by 3.3 percentage points from the 2012-13 baseline year to 2015-16.

**Smarter Balanced Assessment
 ELA**



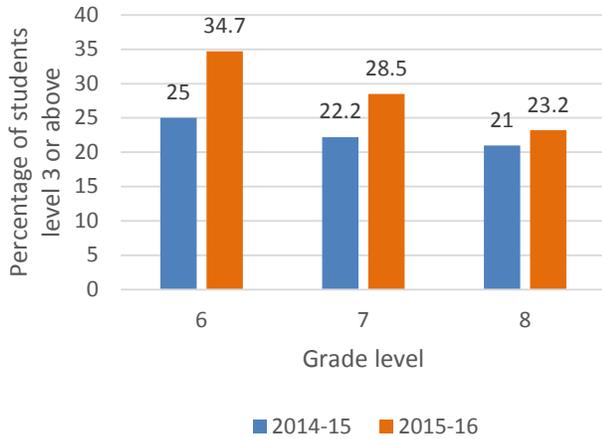
The percentage of students at level 3 or above in ELA increased by 6.2 percentage points.

**Smarter Balanced Assessment
 Math**

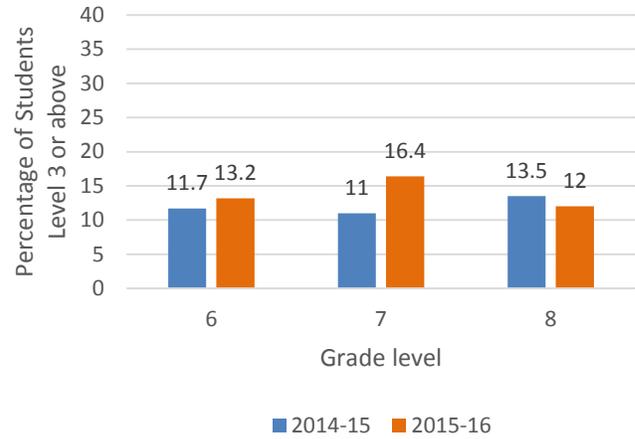


The percentage of students at level 3 or above in math increased by 1.6 percentage points.

Smarter Balanced Assessment
ELA



Smarter Balanced Assessment
Math



NEXT STEPS

- Working with teachers on advanced strategies, across disciplines, for improving Tier 1 instruction. Strategies include advanced training in Close Reading, schoolwide implementation of district writing initiative and rigor/relevance professional development.
- Implementation of Attendance and School Culture committees.
- Advancing tiered differentiated instruction by fully using pre- and post-unit assessment information to develop differentiated and rigorous lesson plans.