

# IX.C.

## CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

### TO BE PROPOSED:

May 13, 2020

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves continued participation of New Britain High School, New Britain, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional year commencing July 1, 2020, 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 thirteenth day of May, Two Thousand Twenty.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Secretary  
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** May 13, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Approval of Commissioner’s Network Extension for New Britain High School,  
New Britain

*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 (SBE) 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, New Britain High School (NBHS) is recommended to remain in the Network for a fourth year in 2020-21.

The Commissioner’s Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. There are eight schools presently participating in the Network.

**Background:**

NBHS currently serves 2,213 students in grades nine through twelve. Seventy-seven percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Twenty-three percent of the students are identified as needing special education services, and 18 percent are English learners. Approximately 63 percent of the students are Hispanic, 14 percent are Black, and 18 percent are White.

NBHS entered the Commissioner's Network in the fall of 2017. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network, an Operations and Instructional Audit was conducted, leading to a turnaround plan that was developed by the school and district, recommended by CSDE, and accepted by the SBE. Most recently, on February 6, 2020, the annual midyear Commissioner's Network school audit was conducted by CSDE. The audit evidenced a school staff and administrative team that had general alignment in terms of improvement areas, in spite of having experienced substantial school leadership turnover over the preceding five years. However, it also revealed a high degree of variability across the building, both in the quality of instruction, teacher effectiveness and teacher's use of data, as well as relatively low levels of academic rigor and active student engagement in classrooms.

Supported by its Commissioner's Network budget, NBHS has engaged and integrated staffing and consulting resources to provide professional learning for staff and school leadership; curriculum development and instructional improvement; additional support for family engagement and climate improvement; and materials and equipment to support a high quality project-based learning and career pathways program.

**Improvements:**

- The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, for the most recent period of available data, improved from 77.6 percent in 2017 to 80.5 percent in 2018. The rate improved for Black students, increasing 2.3 points to 83.1 percent in 2018; and for Hispanic students, increasing 5.3 percent to 77.0 percent.
- The six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for high-needs students improved from 74.7 percent in 2015 to 77.6 percent in 2016. Both four- and six-year rates continue to exceed pre-established ESSA interim year milestone targets.
- Suspension rates declined 3.5 percentage points in 2018-19 to 23.3 percent, their lowest level in five years. The year-over-year improvements were driven by lower suspension rates for English Learners (down 7.5 points), students with disabilities (down 5.6 points), and Hispanic students (down 5.5 points).

**Continued Areas of Focus:**

- NBHS's overall School Accountability Index decreased in 2018-19 to 56.0, down from 57.7 in 2017-18, and mitigating the 1.4 point gain achieved that year over 2016-17. Most contributing indicators declined with the exception of percent of students taking CCR courses, 4- and 6-year graduation rates, physical fitness, and arts access.

- Chronic absenteeism (CA) has continued a three-year unfavorable trend, increasing to 39.6 percent in 2018-19, up 6.3 points from 33.3 percent in 2015-16. The CA rate is among the highest for comprehensive public high schools in the state. By grade level, CA for 12<sup>th</sup> grade was highest at 46.7 percent in 2019, up 4.5 points versus prior year.
- School Performance Indices declined in 2018-19 to 43.7 in ELA (down 1.6 points versus prior year), and to 40.3 in Math (down 1.6 points versus prior year). In both content areas, the SPI performance gaps have unfavorably widened versus ESSA interim milestone targets.
- While NBHS has strengthened its primary school improvement focus toward the development of a high quality comprehensive curriculum, and the effective delivery of Tier 1 research-based instructional strategies, including aligned assessments and research-based interventions, more intentional integration of special support staff along with monitoring and frequent feedback is recommended in order to prioritize and accelerate the desired change.

### **Next Steps:**

During the 2020-21 school year, NBHS will continue to emphasize strategies that address foundational Tier 1 curriculum and instruction, as well as climate and attendance improvement. The CSDE team will provide monitoring and supports as NBHS enters Year 4 of the Commissioner's Network. The Year 4 plan will prioritize the following:

- Job-embedded professional learning and coaching toward effective Tier 1 instructional practices and Tier 2 social-emotional and behavior interventions;
- Leadership team capacity and support to lead instructional reform efforts;
- Student academic gains in both ELA and Mathematics;
- Chronic absenteeism reduction;
- Development of a high-quality Grades 9-12 curriculum, taught with increased rigor;
- Authentic project-based learning and CTE, with embedded academics, for career tech classrooms;
- On-going coaching and guidance to teachers in data analysis and implications toward improving student performance and differentiated instruction.

### **Recommendation:**

The CSDE recommends that the SBE approve a fourth year commencing July 1, 2020.

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

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