



EDUCATION REFORM UPDATE Alliance District Application Approvals

Public Act 12-116, An Act Concerning Educational Reform, created the Alliance District program with the goal of providing new resources to the districts in greatest need – provided they embrace key reforms to position their students for success. To achieve this, the law establishes a process for identifying 30 Alliance Districts – the districts with the lowest district performance index scores statewide – and allocates to these districts \$39.5 million in increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding in the upcoming fiscal year. Each district's receipt of its designated allocation is conditioned upon district submission, and Connecticut State Department of Education approval, of an Alliance District Plan for the expenditure of the new increment of conditional funds in the context of the district's overall strategy to improve academic achievement.

September 6, 2012

HARTFORD, CT – Connecticut Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor announced that the first cohort of Alliance District applications have been finalized, as school district plans from Ansonia, Naugatuck, and Windsor Locks were approved by the Department of Education. Each of the three districts is now eligible to receive additional Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding based on their locally-conceived, evidence-based reform plans that propose initiatives to dramatically increase student achievement.

Commissioner Pryor said, "I would like to thank and commend our Alliance Districts for the energy and resourcefulness with which they have successfully moved through the Year One application process. This work has entailed a significant commitment of time by school district staff, and exhibited a spirit of cooperation between the districts and the State Department of Education. The Department will continue to work with districts to ensure the implementation of robust plans that will deploy Alliance funds to improve student achievement."

- **Ansonia: \$539,715**
 - Ansonia has identified two major areas, K-3 literacy and high school instruction, and has dedicated the bulk of its Alliance Funding to initiatives in these categories.
 - For K-3 literacy, Ansonia will transition to a new instructional model and introduce a literacy anthology to improve classroom libraries. The district will also implement embedded professional development and expand the role of a pre-literacy coordinator. These initiatives will enable Ansonia to begin the transition to the Common Core, and particularly enable the district to increase its focus on writing instruction.
 - Ansonia will recruit and train three in-house master teachers who will serve as embedded supports for all Ansonia High School faculty. These master teachers will

develop and deliver in-depth training in effective teaching strategies. This training will be based on data gleaned from implementation of the state's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) evaluation program.

- Beginning this year, Ansonia will lengthen the school year by 10 days for freshmen students through a Freshman Academy, through which a small number of staff will team-teach all freshmen, enabling the cultivation of meaningful teacher-student relationships to help ease the transition to high school. Next year, Ansonia will add learning time, in addition to the Freshman Academy, for all freshman and sophomores in need of improvement.
- Ansonia will also focus on developing a teacher evaluation system by training and supporting administrators on the state's recommended evaluation protocol.
- **Naugatuck: \$635,149**
 - In order to create career opportunities for talented local individuals, and to develop the next generation of school leaders, Naugatuck will create an administrative internship program. Through this program, teachers will be granted a leave of absence to act in the role of an assistant principal for one year. Both administrators and teachers will gain from this experience. The internship allows the teacher to develop leadership skills and understand the role of a school principal, while the principal will benefit from the teacher's experience as a classroom leader.
 - Currently, principals in Naugatuck perform multiple duties that prevent the devotion of adequate time to their role as instructional leaders. Naugatuck plans to add four school counselor positions to enable principals to dedicate more time to instructional leadership.
- **Windsor Locks: \$252,306**
 - Windsor Locks has dedicated its entire Alliance funding allotment, as well as nearly double this amount of district resources, to one high-leverage initiative, extended time. This plan will extend the school schedule by 200 hours a year.
 - To facilitate this change, Windsor Locks will engage in a pilot year, and has solicited interested teachers to be reassigned as "extended day/year teachers." These teachers will coach their peers on extended time strategies, identify best practices, and lead the way as Windsor Locks transitions from the pilot in year one to full implementation in year two.

Application Process

- All 30 designated Alliance Districts submitted applications in August
- The iterative process involves rounds of dialogue between the Department and districts to ensure proposals fulfill program guidelines and goals
- Districts have been asked to revise, expand, focus, and/or clarify components of their proposed plans
- Districts were asked to consult local stakeholders, including the local bargaining unit, and submit plans to their boards of education

Approved Alliance District Plans

- First cohort (approved September 6, 2012): Ansonia, Naugatuck, and Windsor Locks

Alliance Districts Currently in Feedback/Revision Process

- 27 Alliance Districts are revising Alliance plans based on Department feedback: Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, East Windsor, Hamden, Hartford, Killingly, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Vernon, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, Windham, and Windsor

Alliance Districts, Year Two

- A short timeframe necessitated expedited reviews and approvals for the 2012-2013 school year; a more rigorous process is planned for Year 2
- The Department of Education has requested that districts commit to working on several priority areas as process shifts to Year 2, including:
 - School intervention and redesign
 - Evaluation-informed professional development
 - Transition to new accountability system described in Connecticut's approved NCLB waiver
 - Preparation for the Common Core
 - Strategic planning
 - Monitoring of Alliance plan implementation

Alliance Plan Summaries (see next pages)

Ansonia

Initiative	Alliance \$	Other \$	Total \$
Improved instruction and assessment K-3 Literacy (new): Implement embedded professional development and expand the role of a pre-literacy coordinator. Update classroom libraries to align with Common Core and purchase new benchmark assessments.	\$317,000	\$401,000	\$718,000
Talent strategy and extended learning time for grades 9-10 at Ansonia High School (new): Recruit “master teachers” who will co-teach and coach Ansonia High School teachers. Beginning in Year 2, extend time for grades 9-10 students.	\$190,000	\$93,000	\$283,000
Connected supporting initiatives: Create an after-school symposium for administrators and aspiring administrators. Implement embedded support for administrators, and incorporate more expert advice. Create a community-based early childhood center at the Ansonia YMCA.	\$28,000	\$75,000	\$103,000
Total	\$534,984	\$568,800	\$1,103,784

Naugatuck

Initiative	Alliance \$	Other \$	Total \$
Hire school counselors and support staff for K-4 students (new):	\$142,340	\$58,327	\$200,667
Implement Scholastic's Six Plus One Traits writing program for K-8 (new)	\$78,666	\$6,000	\$84,666
Participate in the ACES Regional Curriculum Consortium (expanding)	\$8,000		\$8,000
Create technology/computer literacy teacher positions in K-6 (new)	\$170,808	\$58,327	\$229,135
Teacher Evaluation and Development (TEVAL) (new)	\$8,000		\$8,000
Expand extended day opportunities for students in grades 1-8 (expanding): paying for busing and more instructional programs.	\$14,300	\$36,211	\$50,511
Continue collaboration with Naugatuck Discovery (expanding): Align private pre-school providers with the K-3 public schools. Offer joint professional development to preK-3 teachers.	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$50,000
Create an administrative internship program for aspiring school leaders (new): Offer an opportunity for certified district teachers to be given a leave of absence and act as an assistant principal to develop leadership skills.	\$86,965	\$19,442	\$106,407
Create a language arts summer school program for K-3 (new)	\$78,495		\$78,495
Improve K-4 reading assessments (expanding): Purchase mCLASS in order to improve reliability and validity of reading assessments.	\$27,575	\$2,300	\$29,875
Total	\$635,149	\$210,607	\$845,756

Windsor Locks

Initiative	Alliance \$	Other \$	Total \$
Extended day for K-8 (new): 3 teachers reassigned to extended day/year. Students identified for participation based on academic need.	\$252,306	\$493,374	\$754,680
Further develop Professional Learning Community (PLC) process (expanding): PLC is weekly data team meetings that lead to more tailored instruction	0	0	0
Implement new literacy and numeracy curricular aligned with Common Core (expanding): rollout in August 2012; includes training and support for staff	0	0	0
Develop governance teams (expanding)	0	0	0
Total	\$252,306	\$493,374	\$745,680