



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.

November 27, 2012

HARTFORD, CT – Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor today announced that Bridgeport’s Alliance District application has been finalized and approved by the State Department of Education. The school district is now eligible to receive additional Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds to support the reform plan proposed by the district to increase student achievement. The size of each district’s Alliance allotment is determined by the ECS formula.

“For too long, the formula for turning around struggling schools followed one guiding principle - increased funding,” said Governor Malloy. “While there are many schools throughout the state that would benefit with increased resources, we can’t simply continue to throw good money after bad. Thanks to the creation of Alliance Districts, increases in funding must now come with a plan for turning around schools and increasing student performance. Our state may have the nation’s largest achievement gap, but thanks to our reform effort, we now have the tools we need to make sure that all of our children can succeed.”

Commissioner Pryor said, “I applaud Superintendent Vallas, Chief Administrative Officer Kase, and their team on the approval of Bridgeport’s Alliance District plan. The Bridgeport plan includes interventions and supports for individual schools, a restructuring of the district’s secondary schools, and other innovations. At a time when other states are cutting support for public schools, Governor Malloy and the General Assembly have increased Connecticut’s commitment to the school districts in greatest need of support – provided they embrace and implement reforms that will improve student achievement. We look forward to working with and supporting Bridgeport and the other Alliance Districts as we transition to the second year of the program.”

Summary Information: Approved Alliance District Applications

The Alliance Districts developed a variety of multi-faceted initiatives for their applications, drawn in many instances from the list of reform strategies set forth (on a permissive basis) in statute. The chart below categorizes the key initiatives that will be undertaken by Alliance Districts.

Initiative Type	Talent Development	K-3 Literacy	Extended Time	Common Core	Accountability / Data Systems	Parent and Community	Pre-K / Full-Day Kindergarten
Districts	16	17	11	7	7	7	5

Bridgeport has also allocated funds toward interventions that will begin this year in Focus Schools, as identified through Connecticut’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver. Districts have begun planning processes for future interventions in Turnaround Schools and Review Schools – also designations emanating from the state’s waiver – for future school years.

Below is a summary of Bridgeport’s approved plan. For a full description of the district’s proposal, please examine the district’s application (posted on the Department’s website, click on “Alliance Districts”) or contact district staff.

Bridgeport: \$4,404,227

- Bridgeport will align its curriculum and professional development to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by purchasing new instructional materials and instituting web-based, district-wide curriculum mapping software. In support of this alignment, the district will implement a daily literacy block (90 minutes for grades kindergarten to six; 60 minutes for grades seven to twelve) and a daily math block (60 minutes) for all students.
- To increase its graduation rate, Bridgeport will restructure high school programming into theme-based college and career choices that will offer apprenticeships, dual enrollment with college partners, and college coursework opportunities. The district will also design “Re-Start” high schools on campuses across the district to retrieve and redirect students who have, or are in danger of, dropping out of school.
- Bridgeport will implement a foundational program (the “Cradle to Classroom” initiative) for students in kindergarten through grade three to improve early learning success, which will deploy elementary level guidance counselors to further support students identified as having a socio-emotional problem that inhibits learning.

Background on Alliance Districts

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

- Cohort one (approved September 6, 2012): Ansonia, Naugatuck, and Windsor Locks
- Cohort two (approved September 24, 2012): Bristol, Vernon, and Windsor
- Cohort three (approved October 22, 2012): Bloomfield, Danbury, East Haven, East Windsor, Hamden, Manchester, Meriden, New London, Norwalk, Stamford, Winchester, Windham, and West Haven
- Cohort four (approved October 24, 2012): Waterbury
- Cohort five (approved October 25, 2012): Hartford, Derby, Killingly, and New Britain
- Cohort six (approved November 8, 2012): East Hartford and New Haven
- Cohort seven (approved November 20, 2012): Middletown and Norwich
- Cohort eight (approved November 27, 2012): Bridgeport

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 two
- The Department of Education has requested that districts commit to working on several priority areas as process shifts to year two, 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

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