



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.

December 5, 2012

HARTFORD, CT – Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor today announced that Putnam’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 want to congratulate the leadership team in Putnam – including Superintendent Hull and central office staff, as well as the teachers and other stakeholders who contributed to the formation of the ideas. 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. Putnam has put forward a number of high-impact initiatives that include instituting a district teacher leadership academy, implementation of a new core math program for

students in kindergarten through grade six, and creation of a preschool social worker position designed to increase enrollment in early learning programs and boost readiness for kindergarten.”

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	17	17	11	8	8	8	5

Putnam 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 Putnam’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.

Putnam: \$179,863

- Putnam will establish a district leadership academy made up of 10-15 teachers (nominated by their building principal) that will build a portfolio of effective teaching strategies, guide and lead school-based teaching initiatives including teacher evaluation protocols, and recommend classroom strategies based on student data trends to increase student achievement.
- Putnam will hire a preschool social worker/parent educator to increase enrollment in the district’s “Birth To Three” and other local early learning programs. The new preschool social worker will engage and educate families in the community on early childhood development and literacy, and its impact on kindergarten readiness.
- Putnam will implement a new core math program for students in kindergarten through grade six and provide additional training and embedded professional development on co-teaching and differentiated instruction strategies. The initiative extends the district’s commitment to alignment with Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which also includes development of curriculum based assessments.

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
- Cohort nine (approved December 5, 2012): Putnam

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

###