

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell
Commissioner of Education

DATE: February 1, 2017

SUBJECT: Presentation of the Preliminary Draft of Connecticut’s ESSA State Plan

Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this summary is to provide the State Board of Education with a review of the preliminary draft of Connecticut’s ESSA State Plan. On November 29, 2016, the USED released the final regulations for Accountability and Consolidated State Plans. The department has been working on our draft plan from December 2016 - present, we have reviewed stakeholder input from ESSA focus groups, and the ESSA survey posted on our website. On Friday, January 20, 2017, the White House issued an executive order delaying for up to 60 days the implementation of any regulations from the previous administration that have not yet taken effect. In the absence of further guidance, the department recommends continuing with our action plan to complete, review, and present the plan to the board and post it for public comment as soon as possible.

History/Background

In December 2015, President Obama signed into law the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The title of the reauthorized legislation, which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The 2016-17 school year is a transition period and currently the implementation of state plans under ESSA is still slated for the start of the 2017-18 school year.

ESSA Consolidated State Plan

The following is a summary of the draft plan. Components summarized below are in the order they appear in the required state plan template required by the USED and are labeled I – VI.

I. Long Term Goals

A. Improved Academic Achievement (English language arts, mathematics, and science)

In response to strong stakeholder input favoring academic student growth over status achievement for accountability, *the CSDE will utilize the results from its Smarter Balanced matched student cohort growth model as the measure for this long term goal.* New students enter the public education system in all grades every year. Therefore, it is most appropriate for an academic goal of an education system to expect that all students, regardless of their starting

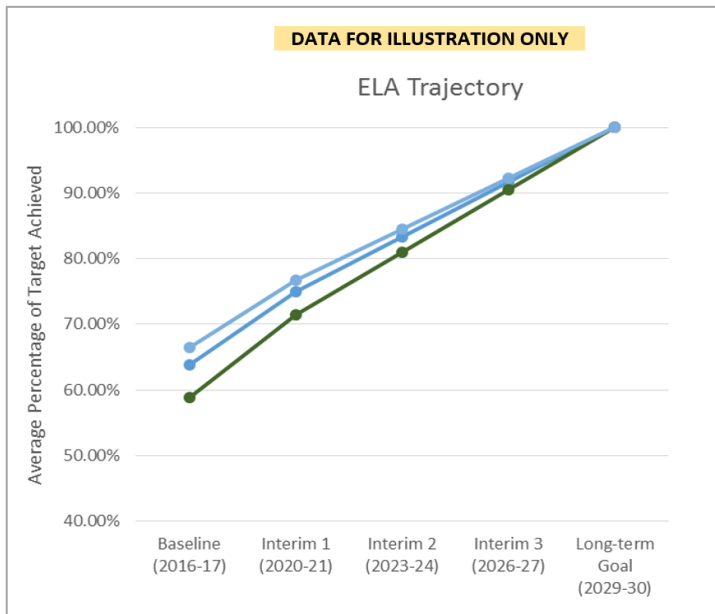
point, will make adequate academic growth during the school year. Prominently focusing on growth ensures that we do not overemphasize proficiency as happened during the NCLB-era.

Connecticut’s model establishes individual student growth targets for students in grades 4 through 8. While individualized by student group, it is important to remember that this model:

- establishes the same ultimate target for all student groups;
- establishes the same long term timeframe for all student groups; and
- requires steeper improvements from groups with lower growth rates.

The metric that will be used is the ***average percentage of growth target that is achieved by all students in grades 4 through 8 combined***. This plan establishes a 13 year timeframe because that span aligns with the time required for one full cohort of students to progress through the public education system from kindergarten in 2017-18 through grade twelve in 2029-30.

The ultimate target for this indicator for all students and all subgroups is an average percentage of target achieved of 100. Linear interim targets will be established for every third year after the first year. The baseline year will be the growth results achieved in the 2016-17 school year.



B. Increased Graduation Rates

Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

As with academic growth, the *four-year graduation rate goal*:

- establishes the same ultimate target for all student groups;
- establishes the same long term timeframe (13 years) for all student groups; and
- requires steeper improvements from groups with lower graduation rates.

The ultimate target for this indicator for all students and all subgroups is 94%. Linear interim targets will be

established for every third year after the first year. The baseline year will be the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for the 2015-16 school year. Since results will not be available until April 2017, the table above uses the 2014-15 results for illustrative purposes. The final baseline and interim targets will be calculated after May 2017.

Six-Year Cohort “High Needs” Graduation Rates

The CSDE has calculated and reported six-year graduation rates for the cohorts of 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. They are reported for all students and all ESSA subgroups. The ultimate target for all student groups is 94%. Interim targets will only be established for the High Needs group. The six year rate of the 2013-14 cohort will serve as the baseline when that is available later in 2017. In the meantime, as a point of reference, the six-year graduation rate for the 2012-13 cohort is 78.6%.

C. Progress Toward English Language Proficiency for English Learners (ELs)

The CSDE is in the process of creating a growth model for the annual English language proficiency assessment. It will use an approach that is similar to one that was used successfully to create a growth model for the Smarter Balanced ELA and Mathematics assessments.

The model establishes criterion referenced growth targets for students at different points on the achievement spectrum within each grade. In addition to conditioning the ELP assessment growth targets on starting achievement level within each grade, other considerations will be applied. These include empirical data (i.e., the actual amount of growth achieved by the same students from one year to the next), the combined average standard error of measurement for tests from both years, and the number of years it takes with the established targets to achieve English language mastery.

As with the other indicators, this plan establishes a 13-year timeframe. The baseline year will be the growth results achieved in the 2016-17 school year.

II. Consultation and Performance Management

A. Consultation

The State Board of Education's Five-Year Comprehensive Plan was developed following a lengthy and wide-ranging stakeholder engagement process which heavily informed methods for consultation for the ESSA Consolidated State Plan.

- The CSDE communicated broadly about the consolidated plan process via its Facebook and Twitter social media channels, e-mail listservs, news releases, and announcements at professional group meetings and a variety of other events where stakeholders were present.
- Beginning in June 2016, the CSDE provided relevant ESSA information through a webinar series for district and school leaders, and other interested stakeholders. The links to the webinars are posted on the ESSA webpage on the CSDE website.
- Stakeholder input was collected from September 2016 - December 2016 through two primary mechanisms: (1) focus groups, in which small gatherings of 15 or fewer participants discussed their responses to the inquiry questions under the guidance of a facilitator; and (2) a publicly accessible survey open to all Connecticut residents.

An in-depth analysis of feedback was conducted from the 52 focus groups that were held (and drawn from over eighty different constituent groups), as well as the feedback from 6,900+ survey respondents, of which 20% identified themselves as "other than white." The CSDE has identified a range of priorities, ideas, and concerns, many of which reflect similar feedback obtained during the stakeholder engagement effort during the development of the Board's Five-Year Comprehensive Plan. Common themes that emerged across the range of stakeholders include:

- desire for social-emotional learning guidance and supports;
- accountability that considers both the education and support of the "whole child";
- measurement of student growth, not just proficiency levels; and
- need for increased/improved supports for English learners, including cultural responsiveness/sensitivity training for diverse settings.

These themes have appeared as priorities in three areas of work within the CSDE: the Connecticut State Board of Education Five-Year Comprehensive Plan, Connecticut's Next Generation

Accountability System, and the Connecticut Consolidated ESSA Plan. Additionally, the engagement feedback supports foundational ideas embedded within the CSDE's vision and goals, including the importance of college/career readiness and student growth on state assessments as key accountability measures, an emphasis on personalized learning, a desire for improved school climate and family engagement, and a need for innovative ways to ensure equitable access to excellent educators.

B. Performance Management

Performance Management refers to the use of a specific and actionable plan for the SEA to:

- Review and approval of LEA plans
- Monitor LEA plans
- Support continuous improvement of both the LEA and SEA plans
- Provide differentiated technical assistance to LEAs

Connecticut's ESSA State Plan is informed by comprehensive stakeholder input and the lessons learned from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era. Our plan is built on research that demonstrates that a *tiered system of increasing support, guidance, and oversight* better meets the diverse needs of students, as well as organizations such as schools. This approach is intended to maximize the effective use of both federal and state school improvement funds and to concentrate SEA resources, expertise, and effort where they are needed most — in districts with the greatest number of students from poverty and in districts with the lowest performance levels, both whole school and subgroup performance. For the purpose of LEA improvement plans, progress monitoring/continuous improvement, and differentiated technical assistance, we have briefly described the three-tiered system of support below. This will provide context for the presentation of our System of Performance Management.

- **Tier I - Basic Level Support for Connecticut Districts:** Title I districts that are performing adequately will receive a general level of support and guidance from the CSDE that is consistent with our current approach under the ESEA Renewal Request, namely grant administration, training, technical assistance, as well as grant monitoring and oversight. These districts will have the greatest autonomy allowed by federal and state statutes and regulations but will be accountable for continuous improvement toward our ESSA-required long-term goals.
- **Tier II - Moderate Level Support for 20 of Connecticut's Alliance Districts:** Connecticut's 30 lowest performing school districts are supported through a state system called the Alliance District (AD) Program. C.G.S. § 262u, passed in 2012, allocated additional Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grants to Alliance Districts, conditional upon a number of requirements that are consistent with the ESSA – an improvement plan, expected district progress relative to the plan, subsequent annual amendments made in the context of the district's needs and strategies to improve student outcomes. Under ESSA, 20 districts in Connecticut will receive this moderate level of support and will be accountable for continuous improvement toward our ESSA-required long-term goals.
- **Tier III - Intensive Level Support for Connecticut's 10 Education Reform Districts:** Educational reform districts (ERDs) are a subset of Connecticut's Alliance Districts (ADs). ERDs are the 10 lowest performing districts in the state. Approximately 70 percent of Title I schools are found in these 10 districts. Under ESSA, 10 districts will receive this intensive level of support and will be accountable for continuous improvement toward our ESSA-required long-term goals.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR LEA PLANS			
Time Frame	Strategy	SEA activities that align to 1) Needs of LEA 2) SEA State Plan	Indicators of SEA Progress
Fall 2016	Create a cross-divisional team for Tier III support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and co-locate cross-divisional team and leaders to implement Tier III Intensive Supports for ten Education Reform Districts Train staff /leaders from Academic, Assessment, Performance, Turnaround, ESEA Units who are members of the cross-divisional team 	January 2017 - Cross divisional teams established
2016-2017	Establish Tier I and Tier II supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on existing resources and programs, establish protocols for Tier II Moderate Supports for Alliance Districts and Tier I Basic Supports for all other districts Create State Plan FAQ introducing Differentiated Supports for Tiers I-III 	July 2017 -Written protocols developed -FAQ complete
2016-2017	Design and train LEAs in use of electronic platform for Consolidated Title Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline process (stakeholder input priority) Reduce paperwork (stakeholder input priority) Improve turnaround time, availability of funds, communication, (stakeholder input priority) Training in multiple formats available to LEAs Phone, platform, and vendor technical assistance ongoing 	June 2017 -Beta test platform October 2017 -Vendor delivers multiple statewide trainings
Spring 2017	Draft guidance based on evidenced-based interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the current CSDE CT Accountability System guidance document, <i>Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement</i> (March 2016, access the guide), and with the assistance of stakeholder expertise (LEA, university, professional organizations, and research partners), and incorporating the evidence levels outlined non-regulatory guidance, CSDE will create <i>Evidenced-based Practices Lists</i> in Year 1 for the following areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Early Learning</i> (staffing, programming, instruction, social emotional supports, etc.) <i>School Climate</i> (staffing, teaming, social-emotional supports, restorative/non-exclusionary discipline, etc.) <i>Student/Family/Community Engagement</i> (staffing, absenteeism strategies, supports for engaging racially, ethnically, linguistically diverse families, etc.) <i>Academics</i> English language arts, mathematics, reading, and math intervention, science (staffing, scheduling, curriculum, instruction, extended day, week, school year programs, tiered intervention, etc.) <i>English Language Proficiency</i> (staffing, programs, instruction, SIOP, family engagement, etc.) <i>On Track/Graduation Resources</i> (staffing; using data/matching data to supports; transition grade strategies; over-age/under-credit programs, etc.) Collect feedback on documents and revise as needed Create rubric for SEA to evaluate optional LEA proposed spending for evidenced-based practices not on Year 1 State List 	March 2017 -Workgroups formed August 2017 -Collect stakeholder and expert feedback on drafts September 2017 -Publish draft documents October 2017 -Publish Evidenced- Based Practices Evaluation Rubric
2016 – 2017	Develop SEA and LEA capacity in ESSA Program Planning and Evaluation Supports; Evidenced-based Practices; & LEA Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSDE, with support from partners listed above, will develop “Program Planning and Evaluation Supports” for all Title I LEAs with identified key elements including logic model, needs assessment, historical data analysis, SMART Goals, measures/indicators of success, timelines, responsible parties Plan review and approval rubric developed Implementation and monitoring templates developed Working in multiple formats (workshop, webinar, documents), create and contract for training modules in (1) Program Planning, LEA Plans, Monitoring and Evaluation Supports; (2) Evidence-based Practices 	July 2017 - LEA planning and evaluation materials to LEAs - Key SEA staff trained August 2017 -Training planned and materials created June 2018 -Training complete
Fall 2017	Pilot Title I-III consolidated application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal: All applications in Year 1 are processed for 169 LEAs in 8 weeks In future years, add more grant applications (e.g., Title IV, School Improvement Competitive Grants) 	December 1, 2017 - Consolidated Title Grants processed

**MONITORING, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT,
AND DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT PLAN FOR LEAs**

Districts by Tiered Supports	Years 1 and 2 (2016-17) & (2017-18) Planning/ Implementation Strategies	Interim Progress Check #1 (2020-21) If Target(s) Not Met, SEA Improvement Strategies	Interim Progress Check #2 (2023-24) If Target(s) Not Met SEA Improvement Strategies	Interim Progress Check #3 (2026-27) Target(s) Not Met SEA Improvement Strategies
Districts Receiving Tier III Intensive Supports (10 Education Reform Districts)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SEA Point of Contact & Cross-divisional Team support 2. Electronic grant system 3. Mandatory initial training held at Alliance District (AD) Symposiums (3x per year) 4. LeadCT Leadership Academy for Turnaround Principals 5. Combining state and federal improvement strategies to provide greater supports to Education Reform Districts 6. Three annual site visits using data from School/ District Profile & Performance Reports and district formative data required under AD program 7. Provide <i>entitlement</i> Comprehensive School Improvement Grants (CSIG) up to \$500,000 annually 8. Provide RFP for <i>competitive</i> Targeted Assistance School Improvement Grants (TASIG) of no less than \$50,000 annually 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mandatory training modules in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 2. Mandatory training module in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and culturally responsive pedagogy 3. Repeat needs assessment with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 4. SEA recommends evidenced-based interventions funded by Title and SIG grants 5. LEA Plan revision with SEA input 6. Maintain monitoring format and frequency 7. Continue CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 8. Quarterly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated training modules in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 2. Updated training module in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, culturally responsive pedagogy 3. State-directed needs assessment with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 4. SEA-directed evidenced-based interventions on targets not met 5. SEA-directed LEA Plan revision 6. Increase monitoring frequency to quarterly 7. Alter monitoring format to include SEA walkthroughs to observe fidelity of implementation 8. Bi-monthly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met 9. Consider elimination of CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 	<p>As outlined in our 2015 ESEA Flexibility Request Renewal, and consistent with C.G.S. § 10-223j, chronically underperforming schools (Category 4 and 5) that do not meet target(s) at Interim Progress Check #3 will enter into a “State Structured Decision-Making Pathway” including, but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reconstitution, such as (a) LEA retains management but reorganizes/ re-staffs the school; (b) LEA retains authority but enters into a management partnership with an external entity; or, (c) LEA transfers the entire management and oversight of a school to an external entity. 2. Consolidation / Closure: 3. Restructuring School Governance Council 4. Restructuring School Board Governance
Districts Receiving Tier II Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SEA Point of Contact 2. Electronic grant system 3. Mandatory initial training held at AD Symposiums (3x year) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mandatory training modules in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated training modules in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State-directed needs assessment with significant stakeholder input from whole school/ subgroup populations on target(s) not met

Supports <i>(20 Alliance Districts)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. LeadCT Leadership Academy for Turnaround Principals 5. Combining state and federal improvement strategies to streamline process and focus on LEA Plan 6. One annual site visit and two CSDE data reviews using data from School/District Profile & Performance Reports and district formative data required under AD program 7. Provide RFP for <i>competitive</i> Comprehensive School Improvement Grants (CSIG) up to \$500,000 annually 8. Provide RFP for <i>competitive</i> Targeted Assistance School Improvement Grants (TASIG) of no less than \$50,000 annually 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Mandatory training module in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and culturally responsive pedagogy 3. Repeat needs assessment with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 4. LEA Plan revision 5. Continued monitoring format and frequency 6. Continue competitive CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 7. Semi-annual submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Updated training module in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and culturally responsive pedagogy 3. State-approved needs assessment plan with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 4. SEA recommends evidenced-based interventions based on local needs and data 5. LEA Plan revision with SEA input 6. Maintain monitoring format and frequency 7. SEA continues competitive CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 8. Quarterly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Customized training based on needs assessment 3. SEA-directed evidenced-based interventions and LEA Plan revision 4. Increase monitoring frequency to three annual site visits using data from School/ District Profile & Performance Reports and district formative data required under AD program 5. Alter monitoring format to include SEA walkthroughs to observe fidelity of implementation 6. Bi-monthly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met 7. SEA considers elimination of competitive CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 8. SEA reserves the right to employ “State Structured Decision-Making Pathways” outlined above
Districts Receiving Tier I Basic Supports <i>(All Other Districts)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SEA Point of Contact 2. Electronic grant system 3. Annual self-assessment with six annual desk audits representing geographic/socio-economic diversity 4. Data analysis using School and District Profile & Performance Reports 5. Initial training materials and support in multiple formats (workshop, archived webinars, guidance documents) 6. Provide RFP for <i>competitive</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mandatory training modules in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 2. Mandatory training module in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and culturally responsive pedagogy 3. Repeat needs assessment with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated training modules in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 2. Updated training module in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and culturally responsive pedagogy 3. State-recommended needs assessment plan with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 4. SEA recommended evidenced- 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Title I LEA Plan Symposium for LEAs in this category 2. Customized training in targets not met including evidence-based interventions to meet subgroup needs 3. Customized training in fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and culturally responsive pedagogy 4. State-directed needs assessment plan with significant stakeholder input from whole school and subgroup populations on target(s) not met 5. Quarterly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for

	Comprehensive School Improvement Grants (CSIG) up to \$500,000 annually 7. Provide RFP for competitive Targeted Assistance School Improvement Grants (TASIG) of no less than \$50,000 annually	4. LEA Plan revision 5. Maintain monitoring frequency and format 6. Continue CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 7. Semi-annual submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met	based interventions based on local needs and data LEA Plan revision with SEA input 5. SEA increases monitoring format and frequency 6. SEA continues competitive CSIG and TASIG grant opportunities 7. Quarterly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met	target(s) not met 8. SEA considers increasing monitoring format and frequency 9. Bi-monthly submission of “Evidence for Fidelity of Implementation” for target(s) not met
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III. Academic Assessments

A. Descriptions of State Academic Assessments

Federal requirements for our annual state assessments have not changed under ESSA. The USED has previously approved the use of:

- Smarter Balanced Assessments in English language arts and Mathematics for use annually in grades 3-8 and the SAT for English language arts and mathematics once in high school.
- Science Assessments (currently CMT, but transitioning to an NGSS assessment in coming years) once in each grade band (3-5; 6-8; once in high school)

B. Languages Other Than English

The CSDE considers any language among more than 1 percent of its students to be present to a significant extent. Though all assessments required pursuant to Section 1111(b) of ESEA are available only in English and current resources do not support new assessment development in additional languages, the CSDE is committed to making its current assessments accessible to all students and offering a broad array of multilingual supports for English learners (ELs).

i. Embedded Designated Supports for English Learners

- Translations – Math (Glossary)
- Translations – Math (Stacked), Spanish Only
- Translation Test Directions – Math, Spanish Only

ii. Non-Embedded Designated Supports for English Learners

- Bilingual Dictionary – Science
- Native Language Reader Directions Only – Science
- Read Aloud in Spanish – Math
- Translations – Math (Glossary),
- Translations Test Directions – English Language Arts Items and Math Items

IV. Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools

A. Indicators

Connecticut's accountability system incorporates 12 indicators. They are valid for their purposes, reliable in their measurement, and are comparable statewide. All indicators use data from statewide, uniform data collection systems. These systems incorporate rigorous checks and validations and require district certification. External data sources are integrated from official and reliable data sources. The indicators were selected after extensive consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders over a two to three year period. The rationale for each indicator along with practitioner feedback was captured in [Connecticut's ESEA Flexibility request](#) (pages 67-91) that the U.S. Department of Education approved on August 6, 2015. The research supporting each indicator as well as resources to improve outcomes are included in the document entitled [Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#). The system aligns with the requirements in ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B) and Connecticut General Statutes section 10-223e.

- **Indicator 1 – Academic Achievement:** This is the current status of student achievement. Performance indices ranging from 0 to 100 for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science are produced by transforming scale scores from the state summative assessments into an index. The ultimate target for a subject performance index for any student group is 75. ([See page 45 of the Using Accountability Results Guide](#) for a description of the index methodology.)
- **Indicator 2 – Academic Growth:** This indicator evaluates the change in achievement of the same student from one grade in year 1 to the next higher grade in year 2 on the Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics summative assessments for students in grades 4 through 8 (see [technical paper](#)). The average percentage of the growth target achieved is the accountability indicator. The ultimate target for this average is 100 percent. *Effective 2019-20 (i.e., 2018-19 data), progress toward English language proficiency is expected to be added to this indicator.*
- **Indicator 3 – Participation Rate:** This indicator is the participation rate of students on state summative assessments. Not meeting the 95 percent participation rate threshold has implications for district and school categorization as discussed later in this section.
- **Indicator 4 – Chronic Absenteeism:** This indicator is the percentage of students missing 10 percent or greater of the total number of days enrolled. The chronic absenteeism rate should not exceed 5 percent; therefore, full points will be awarded if the rate is 5 percent or lower. Conversely, no points will be awarded if the rate is 30 percent or higher. Rates between 30 percent and 5 percent receive proportional points.
- **Indicator 5 – Preparation for Postsecondary and Career Readiness Coursework:** This indicator is the percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 who participate in at least one of the following during high school (a) two courses in advanced placement (AP)/international baccalaureate (IB)/dual enrollment; (b) two courses in one of 17 career and technical education (CTE) categories; or (c) two workplace experience “courses.” The ultimate target is 75 percent.
- **Indicator 6 – Preparation for Postsecondary and Career Readiness Exams:** This indicator is the percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 who attained benchmark scores on at least one college/career readiness exam (e.g., SAT, ACT, AP, IB). The ultimate target is 75 percent.
- **Indicator 7 – Graduation, On Track in Ninth Grade:** This indicator is based on the work of the University of Chicago's Consortium on School Research. It is the percentage of ninth-

graders earning at least five full-year credits in the year. It applies to middle schools (with eighth grade) and high schools. The ultimate target is 94 percent.

- **Indicator 8 – Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate:** This indicator is the percentage of first time ninth-graders who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less. It is based on the consistent method defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.19. The ultimate target is 94 percent.
- **Indicator 9 – Six-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate:** This indicator is the percentage of first time ninth-graders who graduate with a regular high school diploma in six years or less. It is based on the consistent method defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.19. The ultimate target is 94 percent.
- **Indicator 10 – Postsecondary Entrance:** This indicator is the percentage of the graduating class that enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution any time during the first year after high school graduation. The ultimate target is 75 percent.
- **Indicator 11 – Physical Fitness:** This indicator is the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the “Health Fitness Zone Standard” in all four areas of the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment. This assessment (like FitnessGram) includes tests that assess muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness. It is administered to all students in grades 4, 6, 8, and once in high school. Criterion-referenced standards are used. Multipliers are applied if participation rates are between 70 percent and 90 percent (0.5) or 50 percent and 70 percent (0.25). The ultimate target is 75 percent.
- **Indicator 12 – Arts Access:** This indicator is an “access” metric that evaluates the extent to which students in high school participate in at least one arts course. It is the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 participating in at least one dance, theater, music, or visual arts course in the school year. The ultimate target is 60 percent.

Recent feedback from stakeholders affirms that a multiple-measures approach that moves beyond test scores and graduation rates to recognize the whole child, as implemented in the Next Generation Accountability System is definitely a change in the right direction. Academic growth as an indicator received strong support, further affirming Connecticut’s decision to include and substantially weight growth in its model. Most frequently cited additional indicators for consideration include school climate, social-emotional supports, and life-career readiness.

B. Weights and Summative Rating

- **Weights:** Connecticut’s model awards substantial weight to achievement, growth (including progress toward English language proficiency), and high school graduation (both four and six year) and, in the aggregate, much greater weight, than the other indicators. See below with weights for a sample K-12 district. Note: Indicator 3 is participation rate and does not carry points.
- **Summative Rating:** Based on the outcome achieved for each indicator, the district or school earns points on a sliding scale proportional to the ultimate target for that indicator. The total percentage of available points earned by a school or district is the “accountability index” (C.G.S. Section 10-223e). The accountability index is the summative rating. It ranges from 0 to 100 and allows for meaningful differentiation.

C. Student Groups Receive Extra Weight in the System

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) reports the outcomes of all ESSA student groups. These include all racial/ethnic groups, gender, socioeconomic status, English learner (EL) status, and disability status. To include several thousand ELs and students with disabilities in accountability calculations, the CSDE employs a high needs group — an unduplicated count of students who are from a low socioeconomic background, an English learner, or a student with a disability. Separate points are awarded for subgroup performance such that students in subgroups contribute to more than 40 percent of the summative rating.

D. Minimum Number of Students

The minimum number of students in a group for an indicator to be reported is 20. CSDE lowered the minimum *N* size from 40 to 20 in 2012-13. This decision has made visible many more student groups across the entire state. To protect the privacy of student data, the CSDE applies a [complex disclosure avoidance algorithm](#).

E. District and School Categories

- **Five Categories:** All schools are placed into one of five categories. Elementary and middle schools (where the highest grade is less than or equal to 8) and high schools will be classified separately. Categories 4 and 5 represent those identified for comprehensive or targeted support. The remaining schools are categorized into either 1, 2, or 3. Category 1 schools are those with an accountability index of 90 or greater. Category 2 schools have an accountability index that is 70 or greater but less than 90. Category 3 schools have an accountability index that is less than 70.
- **Data Averaging:** Schools in categories 1, 2, and 3 are classified annually. To maintain reasonable stability in annual determinations, the CSDE uses a weighted average of the accountability index for the three most recent years to determine the annual category. The three years carry weights of 3, 2, and 1, respectively; recent performance has greater influence on the classification.
- **Participation Rate:** Schools that would otherwise be categorized as 1 or 2 will be lowered a category if the participation rate in the state summative assessment in any subject for either the all students group or the high needs group is less than 95 percent.
- **Gaps:** Schools that would otherwise be categorized as 1 or 2 will be lowered a category if the achievement gap (Indicator 1) in any subject or the graduation rate gap (Indicator 9) between the non-high needs group (or the ultimate target – whichever is lower) and the high needs group is a significant outlier, i.e., at least one standard deviation greater than the statewide gap.
- **Classifying all schools:** There are approximately 50 schools in Connecticut that do not have any grades assessed using state summative assessments (e.g., a K-2 school). For accountability purposes, the CSDE will apply school classification rules to district-level data and apply the appropriate classification status to the school with no tested grades. For divided high schools, the school classification for the portion with the tested grade will be applied to the other.
- **Districts:** The lowest performing districts are the Alliance Districts. All remaining districts are categorized as 1, 2, or 3 in a manner similar to schools.

F. School Identification

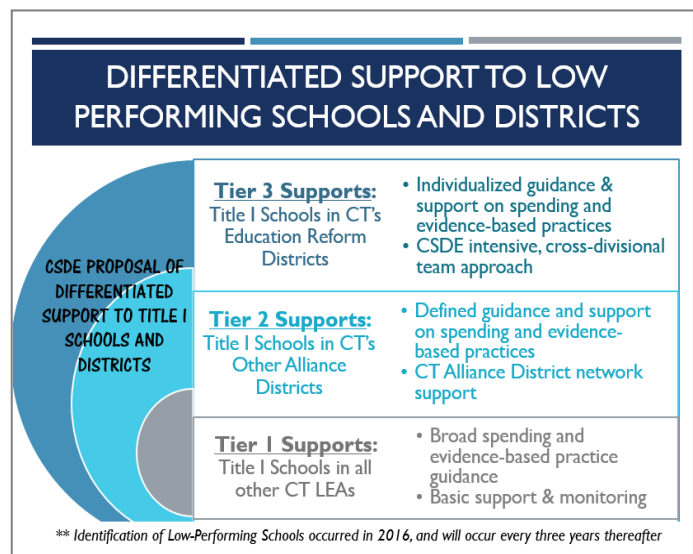
- **Comprehensive Support Schools (Turnaround):** In 2018-19, these will be schools whose three-year average of the accountability index is in the bottom 5 percent of all schools statewide. In addition, schools with six-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for all students that are less than 70 percent in each of the three most recent cohorts will also be identified for comprehensive support.
- **Targeted Support Schools (Focus):** In 2018-19, these will be schools in the bottom 10 percent of all schools statewide based on the average percentage of target achieved by high needs students in ELA or mathematics (i.e., matched student cohort growth – Indicator 2) in each of the prior three years. In addition, schools with six-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for the high needs group that are less than 70 percent in each of the three most recent cohorts will also be identified for targeted support.
- **Exit Criteria:** Comprehensive and targeted support schools will exit if they no longer meet the reason for their identification in two consecutive years after identification.
- **Recognition – Schools of Distinction:** These are schools in categories 1, 2, or 3 that are in the top 10 percent in any of the following four categories *and* are not flagged as having an achievement gap, a graduation rate gap, or participation rate below 95 percent on the state summative assessments.
 1. Overall Performance (top 10 percent of accountability index)
 2. Growth – All Students (top 10 percent on points earned for All Students for Indicator 2)
 3. Growth – High Needs (top 10 percent on points earned for High Needs Students for Indicator 2)
 4. Overall Improvement – Schools without Indicator 2 growth only (top 10 percent of rate of improvement on the Accountability Index from one year to the next)

G. State Support and Improvement for Low-performing Schools

ESSA provides the CSDE the opportunity to build on the foundation of a turnaround program already in existence. The CSDE Alliance District program is a unique and targeted investment in Connecticut’s 30 lowest-performing LEAs. Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) § 10-262u established a process for identifying Alliance Districts and allocating increased Education Cost Sharing funding to support bold and innovative district reforms focused on dramatically increasing student outcomes and closing achievement gaps. Alliance Districts serve over 200,000 students in more than 400 schools.

i. Tiered Support, Guidance

As mentioned previously, a key element of our Consolidated State Plan is a state *tiered system of increasing support, guidance, and oversight* that better meets the diverse needs of students, as well as organizations such as schools. This approach is intended to maximize the effective use of both federal and state school improvement funds and to concentrate SEA resources, expertise, and effort where they are needed



most — in districts with the greatest number of students from poverty and in districts with the lowest performance levels, both whole school and subgroup performance. The system is depicted in the graphic on page 12.

ii. Evidenced-based Practices

ESSA requires the use of evidenced-based strategies, programs, and instruction, collectively known as practices. This federal requirement is consistent with Connecticut’s focus on Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), and use of federal and state funds will be restricted to implementation of CSDE-approved evidence-based interventions. CSDE will support LEAs by creating lists of effective practices with the accompanying levels of research/evidence support.

iii. Periodic needs assessment as part of the development of the LEA Plan

ESSA requires a periodic needs assessment for each school. The assessment requires input and collaboration with stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, school and district administrators, and community partners. It requires an analysis of “unmet needs.” The CSDE will develop a template that includes the components of the state’s Turnaround Framework, including:

- needs of students for wraparound supports
- school leadership, and/or instructional staff
- quality of the instructional program
- school climate
- family and community engagement
- distribution of resources

iv. LEA Improvement Plan

Following the needs assessment, in collaboration with district and school stakeholders, the LEA will develop a school improvement plan, choosing evidence-based interventions designed to meet the challenges identified in the needs assessment, as well as the state’s long-term goals for growth in academic achievement; improved graduation rates; and progress toward English language proficiency. The LEA will be required to describe how it will reduce barriers to implementation of evidence-based interventions and how it will allow operational flexibility to school leadership for each school receiving federal and state funding. The Title Grant LEA budget will be tied to the LEA improvement plan.

v. Technical Assistance

As outlined in the Performance Management System on page four, if LEAs do not reach growth targets at Interim Progress Check points across the long-term goal period of 13 years, a series of increased support, guidance direction, and technical assistance will be provided based on level of tiered support an LEA is receiving.

V. Supporting Excellent Educators

A. Funding for the following Talent Systems

- Certification and Licensure Systems
- Educator Preparation Program Strategies
- Educator Growth and Development Systems

As discussed with the board during previous ESSA updates, a new federal funding formula for Title II allocations has resulted in Connecticut losing approximately five million dollars over the next six years. Given this declining funding, the CSDE proposes that we pass through all Title II funds to districts, except for the allowable percentage required for CSDE to administer the grant and to provide state-level activities summarized in the next section.

B. Support for Educators

i. Resources to Support State-level Strategies

To ensure that teachers and leaders are effective in improving student achievement, the CSDE will continue to implement the existing educator evaluation and support system that differentiates educator practice across four performance levels (i.e., Exemplary, Proficient, Developing, and Below Standard). Funds from Title I Part A will only be used to support CSDE staff positions to provide the following on-going activities:

- engaging practitioners in revising the CT Evidence Guides, which were developed as a supplement to observation rubrics. The CT Evidence Guides will continue to be updated to provide content-specific examples of PK-12 teacher practice across four performance levels and will include research and evidence-based instructional practices for English learners and special education students;
- implementing a rigorous educator evaluation and support system for educators and leaders and promoting greater consistency of practice in evaluating and supporting all educators statewide;
- refining the resource “CT Standards for Professional Learning” (May 2015) through technical assistance, curation of resources, and training to LEAs as they develop new systems of professional learning;
- modernizing the existing certification system and streamlining processes to remove barriers, while creating flexible pathways to teaching in Connecticut;
- implementing an array of strategies to build the pipeline of qualified and certified educators to fill persistent content shortage areas; and
- implementing powerful strategies to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce. Collaborating with institutions of higher education (IHEs), six regional educational service centers (RESCs), and other education preparation providers (EPPs) to create new programs/pathways and new accelerated/alternate routes to certification (ARCs).

ii. Skills to Address Specific Learning Needs

State funding supports early career support through its statewide teacher induction program, the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program. The TEAM program provides state and district support to new teachers. The CSDE continues to provide resources and materials to support teacher growth in developing strong instructional skills, including skills in identifying specific student learning needs, meeting the individual needs of all students, and providing culturally responsive instruction.

C. Educator Equity

The CSDE identified eight Equity Districts in its 2015 Equity Plan. Given the opportunity provided by ESSA for states to submit a consolidated state plan, the CSDE will focus its most intensive resources and

supports in the ten educational reform districts—the ten lowest performing districts identified as receiving Tier 3 supports in section 4.3. This agency-wide focus will allow for intentional, proactive coordination relative to these ten districts. When working with educational reform districts, the Talent Office will prioritize the strategies outlined in section 5.3 to help ensure students attending high-poverty, high-minority schools have equitable access to effective teachers and school leaders.

Likely Causes of Most Significant Differences in Rates	CSDE Talent Office Strategies
<i>Early-career teachers/principals at high-poverty and high-minority schools often lack relevant, robust pre-service experience.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Office of Higher Education and the Board of Regents, as well as other educational entities, to develop a coordinated partnerships among IHEs, PK-12 systems, and other educational entities to develop innovative solutions that increase learner-ready teachers and school-ready principals entering the field. • Develop cultural competence resources for use by EPPs and LEAs. • With the CSDE Performance Office, develop and launch an EPP dashboard (fall 2017) and an educator profile (fall 2018) at the district level. • Provide additional resources and levels of support to early career teachers teaching in high-poverty and high-minority schools including extended time with a mentor and improving matches between mentors and mentees to better align grade, content, and school to support their induction into the profession and increase retention rates. This would supplement existing supports provided through Connecticut’s TEAM Program.
<i>High-poverty, high-minority schools experience greater challenges in filling vacancies with certified educators in several shortage areas, including diversity of the workforce.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new EPPs and strategic partnerships to actively address persistent shortage areas and increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator candidate pipeline. • Increase the current statewide percentage of educators of color from 8.3 percent to 10 percent (approximately 1000 educators) by 2021. • Decrease the number of vacancies that remain or are filled with noncertified educators as of the annual October 1 count by 5 percent for each of the next five years (specifically in math, science, special education, and bilingual). • Develop a repository of best practices, resources, and guidance documents for advancing long-term and short-term recruitment and retention of educators. • Identify, disseminate, and showcase promising practices — nationally and statewide — for increasing the pool of qualified PK-12 educators with a focus on increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the workforce and decreasing vacancies in designated shortage areas. • Hold a summit to activate new EPPs and partnerships with a focus on increasing racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity and increasing the number of teachers certified in priority shortage areas. • In partnership with the Department of Labor, the CSDE will develop a plan for targeted recruitment of career changers.
<i>There are currently constraints, both real (e.g., regulatory) and perceived, on meeting 21st-century workforce needs.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Connecticut’s certification system and processes to increase flexibility, remove barriers, and expand career pathways to increase the current pool of certified and qualified educators. • Increase certification pathways and endorsement areas, with a focus on shortage areas. • Increase the number of well-established partnerships among EPPs, historically black colleges/universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and PK-12 districts. • Increase enrollment/completion rates for educators of color and candidates in designated/priority shortage areas over the next five years.

VI. Supporting All Students

A. Well-Rounded and Supportive Education for Students

To fulfill the four goals/promises to students outlined in Board’s Five-Year Comprehensive State Plan, Office of Student Supports will implement the following strategies, funded through a combination of

state and federal funds, including Title I school improvement grants, Title IV, Part A and B grants, and state Alliance District grants or Priority School District Grants.

- Develop a next generation Student Support System utilizing available student data that provides an early indication of students with the greatest need for supports;
- Develop an Early Indication Tool (EIT) that will allow state, district, and school leaders to use the state's EdSight data warehouse to closely monitor student-level attendance, bullying incidents, discipline, course completion, test results, and mobility factors to ensure that these students receive the necessary supports as early as possible. In addition to the EIT, Indicator 7 of the state's Accountability System focuses on ninth-graders who are on track for high school graduation, providing districts and high schools with student performance data at the start of high school;
- Provide the training and support for districts to use the data early indication tool;
- Provide LEAs with technical assistance focusing evidence-based practices that reduce bullying and support trauma informed practices; social and emotional learning; chronic absenteeism; restorative discipline; behavioral and physical health; promotion practices and school transitions that recognize and support students, and dropout prevention;
- For Education Reform Districts, and LEAs with the lowest four-year cohort graduation rates, the Office of Student Supports will provide evidence-based practices for school transitions at critical grade points, particularly the PreK to K transition; elementary to middle school transition; and middle school to high school transition. These LEAs will be required to include plans to address school transitions and dropout prevention in LEA Plans; and
- Continue development and use of guidance documents for school promotion practices and smooth transitions following the model used in the *Best Practices for Transition to Kindergarten* document that the CSDE and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) have developed and disseminated to schools and districts. The revised documents will be developed and disseminated to districts prior to the start of the 2018-19 school year.

B. State's Strategies to Support Equitable Access to Well-Rounded Education and Rigorous Coursework

Connecticut's accountability system includes indicators that capture well-rounded education and rigorous coursework. Indicator 12 measures access to arts courses and Indicator 5 measures enrollment in Advanced Placement, international baccalaureate, and college dual enrollment courses. These strategies are funded through a combination of state and federal funds, including Title I school improvement grants, Title IV Part A and B grants, and state Alliance District grants or Priority School District Grants.

- Train and support LEAs in the use of the accountability system, the new Early Intervention Tool (referenced above), and available statewide course-taking data to develop strategies for students who have been underrepresented, including females, students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students to increase access to a well-rounded education and rigorous coursework.

C. Strategies to create safe positive learning environments and engage families/communities

- Provide districts and schools with a wide variety of tiered services and supports to schools and students related to safe and healthy schools, including school climate, bullying and harassment,

trauma informed services, chronic absenteeism, social-emotional learning, and reducing exclusionary discipline by employing restorative practices.

- Build the capacity of families, schools, and districts to cultivate and sustain active, respectful, and effective partnerships that foster school improvement, link to educational objectives, and support children’s learning and development.
- Provide guidance and training to LEAs to implement best practices related to creating welcoming and inviting schools, linking Title I school-parent compacts to student learning goals, and building relationships through parent-teacher home visits.
- Provide tiered support and training to school staff in districts to lead school-based efforts to increase family and community engagement utilizing these strategies.
- Build the professional capacity of LEA staff members working as “family liaisons.”
- Continue monthly meetings with family and community engagement professionals.
- Develop a family engagement certificate program.
- Train families and community members in school-family engagement.

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