

IX.D.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

February 6, 2019

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves continued participation of East Hartford Middle School, East Hartford, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2019, 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 sixth day of February, Two Thousand Nineteen.

Signed: _____
Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: February 6, 2019

SUBJECT: Commissioner's Network Extension for East Hartford Middle School in East Hartford

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 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, I am recommending that East Hartford Middle School in East Hartford remain in the Network for an additional and final year.

The Commissioner's Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education to improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. There are 12 schools presently participating in the Network.

Background:

East Hartford Middle School currently serves 1,057 students in grades six through eight. One hundred percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Approximately 49 percent of the students are Hispanic, 33 percent are Black, and 11 percent are English Learners. Nineteen percent of the students are identified as needing special education services. Thirty-seven of the 198 identified special education students are in specialized programs at East Hartford Middle School. Nineteen percent of these students are automatically placed at East Hartford Middle School due to their needs and the range of services the school can provide.

East Hartford Middle School entered the Commissioner's Network in the fall of 2015. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network, an Operations and Instructional Audit was conducted on May 6, 2015. The audit indicated several challenges impeding success. The quality of teaching and learning was inconsistent, including a lack of academic rigor and student engagement, lack of high expectations for all students, and inconsistent quality of curriculum. There was a need for increased instructional resources and technology to support Tier 1 instruction, as well as to further develop interventions.

Improvements:

- The percentage of East Hartford Middle School students meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in English Language Arts (ELA) on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 31.5 percent in 2016-17 to 35.3 percent in 2017-18.
- The percentage of East Hartford Middle School students in grades 7 and 8 meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in English Language Arts (ELA) on the Smarter Balanced Assessment demonstrated gains. Grade 7 increased from 29.1 percent in 2016-17 to 37.2 percent in 2017-18 and grade 8 increased from 33.1 percent in 2016-17 to 37.5 percent in 2017-18.
- The percentage of East Hartford Middle School students meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 10.7 percent in 2016-17 to 19.1 percent in 2017-18.
- The percentage of East Hartford Middle School students in grades 7 and 8 meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment demonstrated gains. Grade 7 increased from 16.8 percent in 2016-17 to 21.6 percent in 2017-18 and grade 8 increased from 9.7 percent in 2016-17 to 16.2 percent in 2017-18.
- Smarter Balanced Growth Model for ELA increased from the rate of 28.2 percent in 2016-17 to 38.0 percent in 2017-18. Smarter Balanced Growth Rate for math increased from 29.4 percent in 2016-17 to 41.6 percent in 2017-18. The average percentage of target achieved for ELA is 58.8 percent and math 59 percent.
- There has been a 34.6 percent decrease in the number of in-school suspensions since joining the Commissioner's Network in 2015.

Continued Areas of Focus:

- There is a continued need to improve instruction in literacy and mathematics, implementation of tiered interventions, and ensuring the curriculum is aligned to the inherent rigor of the Connecticut Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment. Demonstrated gains on Smarter Balanced Assessments need to continue in order to meet Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Milestone targets.
- Continued focus on reducing the suspension rate.
- Continued focus on reducing chronic absenteeism.

Next Steps:

During the 2019-20 school year, East Hartford Middle School will continue strategies that have shown some improvement over the past four years, abandon those that have not, and target areas requiring further growth and development. The CSDE Turnaround Office will provide more intensive monitoring and supports as East Hartford Middle School enters Year 5 of the Commissioner's Network. The Year 5 plan will prioritize the following:

- Improvement of literacy and mathematics achievement through continued expansion of high quality, student led, and engagement focused instructional experiences providing increased academic discourse, problem solving, and higher order questioning in order to sustain achievement.
- In partnership with the Turnaround Office consultant, the district must continue to provide professional development to the leader and teachers and provide on-going support on effective instruction and deep understanding of standards in mathematics and literacy. Professional learning should continue to focus on curriculum alignment with CCSS clusters, effective use of Interim Assessment Blocks and formative assessment to inform instruction, incorporating the close reading process and reading strategies across content areas through the Project Cali model.
- Improvement of daily attendance and reduction of chronic absenteeism through continued implementation of a tiered system to strengthen the school-based attendance team that is communicative and consistent. The attendance program will continue to expand strategies to engage students, faculty, and families for chronically absent students.
- Strengthen the school-wide behavior system by focusing on Social Emotional Learning, Restorative Practices and Cultural Competence to meet the needs of the students. Strengthen SEL implementation through advisory sessions and team-based activities, provide additional support and training to EHMS staff on Trauma Informed Instruction, and continue expansion of the work of the Student Success Team.
- Continue parent engagement through "Let's Talk" community based dialogue sessions to focus on family needs and school improvement. The faculty will also engage families through monthly face to face meetings or home visits focused on meeting student needs.

Recommendation:

The CSDE recommends that the SBE approve an additional year commencing July 1, 2019.

Prepared by: Jennifer Webb, Education Consultant, Turnaround Office

Reviewed by: Lisa Lamenzo, Bureau Chief, Turnaround Office

Approved by: Desi D. Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer