

# IX.C.

## 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 Pearson School, Winchester, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional 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 Pearson School in Winchester

*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, Pearson School in Winchester is recommended to remain in the Network for an additional 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:**

Pearson School currently serves 292 students in grades three through eight. Sixty-four percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Eighteen percent of the students are identified as needing special education services, and four percent are English learners. Approximately 5 percent of the students are Hispanic, 3 percent are Black, and 90 percent are White.

Pearson School entered the Commissioner's Network in the fall of 2016. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network, an Operations and Instructional Audit was conducted on January 22, 2016. The audit revealed a lack of common curriculum in all content areas, lack of consistent programming in servicing students with disabilities; absence of wraparound services for children and their families to address often urgent and chronic needs; and lack of formal or effective informal structures to engage families in their child's education. Upon entering the Network, Pearson's math test scores had been on the decline. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding the achievement standards in mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment decreased from 23.2 percent in 2014-15 to 22.1 percent in 2015-16.

Winchester Public Schools has shared the costs of the Assistant Principal, Instructional Specialist, and Community Partnerships/STEAM Coordinator, with the CSDE. The school and/or district continue to repurpose funds to align expenditures more closely with school goals and student needs.

**Improvements:**

- The percentage of Pearson students meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in English Language Arts (ELA) on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 41.7 percent in 2016-17 to 47.4 percent in 2017-18.
- The percentage of students meeting or exceeding the achievement standards in mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 28.9 percent in 2016-17 to 47.7 percent in 2017-18.
- The 2017-18 Smarter Balanced Growth Model reports Pearson's growth rate for math as 79.7 percent, an increase from 54.9 percent in 2016-17.
- The 2017-18 Smarter Balanced Growth Model reports Pearson's growth rate for ELA as 61.9 percent, an increase from 56.2 percent in 2016-17.
- The suspension rate decreased from 6.5 percent in 2016-17 to 3.8 percent in 2017-18.
- Implementation of new ELA and math curriculum aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards. Units of Study in ELA and math were developed for each grade level. Professional learning was provided to all staff before the new curriculum was implemented.
- Development and implementation of a plan to transition the Next Generation Science Standards, including a partnership with the Connecticut Science Center, to provide professional learning to teachers on inquiry-based instruction and embedded coaching in order to increase teacher capacity to deliver inquiry-based instruction.
- Increasing parent and community engagement is a core focus for Pearson. Families receive quarterly reports focused on the improvement process that the district is implementing.

**Continued Areas of Focus:**

- Continued focus on reducing chronic absenteeism.
- Ensure curriculum is implemented with alignment and fidelity through classroom walkthroughs, professional learning, embedded coaching, and facilitation of data teams.
- Provide professional learning to support the Inclusion model with special education teachers implementing small group instruction in the general education classroom.
- Provide professional learning to teachers in incorporating student discourse and accountable talk in daily lessons in order to increase active student engagement and accountability.

**Next Steps:**

During the 2019-20 school year, Pearson School will continue strategies that have shown some improvement over the past three 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 Pearson School enters Year 4 of the Commissioner's Network. The Year 4 plan will prioritize the following:

- Continue academic gains in both ELA and mathematics.
- Continue to utilize a systematic approach to support students and families on improving attendance through: monthly attendance team meetings; recognition of attendance for students and on-going efforts to identify and resolve the obstacles preventing the child's regular attendance.
- Continue to provide professional learning to teachers to support full implementation and fidelity of Next Generation Science Standards and Inquiry Curriculum.
- Integrate student discourse to make cross-curricular connections in all content areas.
- Provide professional learning to support the Inclusion model with special education teachers implementing small group instruction in the general education classroom.
- Continue formal and informal teacher observations with explicit, timely feedback.

**Recommendation:**

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

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