

# IX.B.

## CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

### TO BE PROPOSED:

April 7, 2021

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves continued participation of New Britain High School, New Britain, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional year commencing July 1, 2021, and directs the Acting 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 seventh day of April, Two Thousand Twenty-One.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary  
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** April 7, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Approval of Commissioner’s Network Extension for New Britain High School,  
New Britain

*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 (SBE) 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, New Britain High School in New Britain is recommended to 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 (CSDE) to improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. There are fifteen schools presently participating in the Network.

## **Background:**

New Britain High School currently serves 2,270 students in Grades 9 through 12. Seventy-one percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Twenty-two percent of students are identified as needing special education services, and 18 percent are English learners (ELs). Approximately 62 percent of the students are Hispanic, 15 percent are Black, and 19 percent are White.

New Britain High School entered the Commissioner's Network in the fall of 2017. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network, an Operations and Instructional Audit was conducted on November 16, 2016, leading to a turnaround plan that was developed by the school and district, recommended by CSDE, and accepted by the SBE. The initial audit evidenced a school staff and administrative team that had general alignment in terms of improvement areas, but student achievement outcomes were well below state benchmarks. It also revealed a high degree of variability across the building in the quality of instruction, teacher effectiveness, and teacher's use of data. Relatively low levels of academic rigor and active student engagement in classrooms were also evidenced in the initial audit. The effectiveness of the school's improvement would be dependent on implementation of evidence-based, high impact instructional practices in all classrooms.

Supported by its Commissioner's Network budget, New Britain High School has engaged and integrated staffing and consulting resources to build staff capacity, provide professional learning for staff and school leadership; develop curricula and instructional improvement; and add family engagement and climate improvement support.

## **Improvements:**

- Four-year graduation rates have exhibited a continuous upward trend, growing from 77.6 percent in 2017 to 85.6 percent in 2019, the most recently reported year. The four-year graduation rate improved for Black and Hispanic students, increasing by 5.8 percentage points to 83.8 percent in 2019 and increasing by 12.1 percentage points to 83.8 percent in 2019, respectively. Improvement in the four-year graduation rate for English learners and special education students was also evident, increasing by 7.8 percentage points to 79.0 percent and increasing by 31.5 points to 77.9 percent, respectively.
- The six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for high-needs students improved from 77.3 percent in 2014-15 to 82.6 percent in 2016-17. Both four-year and six-year rates continue to exceed pre-established ESSA interim year milestone targets.
- Suspension rates decreased from 11.5 percent in 2016-17 to 8.9 percent in 2019-20, New Britain High School's lowest levels in over five years. A decrease in suspension rates is seen across all student subgroups including Black, Hispanic, English Learners and Special Education.

## **Continued Areas of Focus:**

- The Accountability Index decreased 0.3 percentage points from 56.3 in 2016-17 to 56.0 in 2018-19.

- School Performance Indices (SPI) for New Britain High School have decreased over the past two school years, 2017-18 and 2018-19, and are tracking below ESSA interim milestone targets. ELA SPI is 43.7 percent, below the 2018-19 target of 49.1 percent, and Mathematics SPI is 40.3 percent, below the 2018-19 target of 46.8 percent.
- The chronic absenteeism rate increased from 34.0 percent in 2016-17 to 36.8 percent in 2019-20.
- The percentage of New Britain High School students meeting or exceeding the achievement standard in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics on the SAT varied increasing in mathematics from 10.7 percent in 2016-17 to 13.8 percent in 2018-19; but, decreasing in ELA from 30.8 percent to 27.4 percent over the same period.
- Proficiency in mathematics on the SAT is below the state average of 40.6 percent in 2018-19.
- Proficiency of ELA on the SAT is below the state average of 61.6 percent in ELA in 2018-19.

**Next Steps:**

During the 2021-22 school year, New Britain High School will continue to emphasize strategies that address foundational Tier 1 curriculum and instruction, as well as, climate and attendance improvement. The CSDE Turnaround Office will provide intensive monitoring and supports as New Britain High School enters Year 5 of the Commissioner’s Network. The Year 5 plan will prioritize the following:

- Improvement to Tier 1 instruction in order to produce student academic gains in ELA and mathematics. The focus will be on building staff capacity and professional learning around intentional instruction, and continuing curriculum redesign, which is currently underway.
- Decrease in chronic absenteeism rate through a multi-tiered systems approach. Continue to understand and monitor attendance trends through weekly data and attendance team meetings and active participation in CSDE attendance and engagement initiatives, including Communities of Practice. Continue to monitor the effectiveness of strategies to determine their impact and adjust as needed especially for students who are not on track to graduate in four years.
- Providing on-going coaching and guidance to teachers in data analysis.

**Recommendation:**

The CSDE recommends that the SBE approve an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2021.

Prepared by:

Michael Kent, Education Consultant, Turnaround Office

Reviewed by:

Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director, Turnaround Office

Approved by:

Irene E. Parisi, Chief Academic Officer