

IX.A.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:
May 2, 2018

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves continued participation of O'Brien STEM Academy, East Hartford, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2018, 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 second day of May, Two Thousand Eighteen.

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: May 2, 2018

SUBJECT: Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for O'Brien STEM Academy,
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 the O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford remain in the Network for an additional year. Pending State Board of Education approval, O'Brien School will be in its fifth and final year of the Commissioner's Network.

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 15 schools presently participating in the Network. Each school receives increased financial investments to assist in the implementation of its turnaround plan. For each year a school is in the Network, the funding level decreases in order to promote financial sustainability of its turnaround over time.

History/Background:

O'Brien STEM Academy currently serves 421 students in grades kindergarten through five. Sixty-two percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Twelve percent of the students are identified as needing special education services, and twenty-two percent are English learners. Approximately 55 percent of the students are Hispanic, 31 percent are black, and 5 percent are white.

O'Brien STEM Academy entered the Commissioner's Network in the fall of 2014. Prior to receiving State Board approval to enter the Network, an Operations and Instructional Audit was conducted on February 12, 2014. The audit revealed a lack of a clear discipline policy, low level of instructional rigor, including higher-order thinking and questioning; lack of staff to support high needs students, and the need for school-based, ongoing and job-embedded professional development for teachers and non-certified staff. Upon entering the Network, O'Brien STEM Academy had declining test scores, with only 22 percent of 3rd graders reading at grade level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

For sustainability purposes, East Hartford Public Schools has absorbed the costs for the Literacy/Media/Technology Coach, the STEM Coach, and personnel benefits for the Family Community Outreach Coordinator and School Social Worker. The school's leadership team has worked to ensure that spending is maximized for student benefit by building teacher capacity through job-embedded coaching, and implementing sustainable efforts around family and community outreach and reducing chronic absenteeism. Students in Commissioner's Network Schools are expected to show academic growth from fall to winter and from winter to spring on benchmark assessments. The lack of expected growth in student outcomes may reflect a variability in instructional practice or curriculum use across grade levels.

Improvements:

- On average, across all grade levels, the percentage of O'Brien STEM Academy students scoring at/above level 3 in mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 8.4 percent in 2015-16 to 13.3 in 2016-17.
- The average percentage of growth target achieved for all students on the mathematics Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 38.3 percent in 2015-16 to 56.5 percent in 2016-17. The average percentage of growth target achieved for high needs students on the mathematics Smarter Balanced Assessment also increased from 42.7 percent in 2015-16 to 58.8 percent in 2016-17.
- The suspension rate continues to decrease annually. Over the last five years, the rate has decreased from 16.2 percent in 2012-13 to 1.8 percent in 2016-17.
- The Next Generation Accountability index score increased from 61.3 percent in 2015-16 to 66.7 percent in 2016-17.

Continued Areas of Concern:

- On average, across all grade levels, the percentage of O'Brien STEM Academy students scoring at/above level 3 in reading on the Smarter Balanced Assessment decreased from 26.2 percent in 2015-16 to 23.7 in 2016-17. This decrease fails to meet the expected gains for a Commissioner's Network school.
- The ELA Performance Index for all students showed minimal gains. The index score was 56.1 in 2015-16 and 56.7 in 2016-17. This demonstrates a continued need to improve instruction of literacy, ensuring the curriculum is aligned to the inherent rigor of Connecticut Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment.
- The percentage of students considered chronically absent increased from 7.7 percent in 2015-16 to 10.0 percent in 2016-17.

Next Steps:

During the 2018-19, O'Brien STEM Academy must deeply reflect upon the strategies that have not shown adequate improvement over the past four years, and target areas requiring further growth and development. The Year 5 plan will prioritize the following:

- Continued focus and sense of urgency on improvement of literacy and math achievement, with explicit instruction in K-3 reading which requires a change in either curriculum, instructional approach, or both.
- Engage in professional learning opportunities with the Literacy Leadership Institute and ReadConn professional learning modules for K-3 teachers to support the implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards in English Language Arts: foundational skills and comprehensive reading instruction. O'Brien School shall expand enrollment to include every grade level, K-5.
- O'Brien Leadership Team members will continue to provide teachers with professional development in literacy and math instruction in order to meet the rigor of the Connecticut Core Standards. Professional development shall include a focus on explicit reading, lesson design, and implementation that provides for rigor and increased opportunities for differentiation.
- Increase opportunities for parent and community engagement in literacy through work with the Family and Community Liaison.
- With the support of the Turnaround Office, O'Brien STEM Academy will continue to plan opportunities for teacher collaboration to plan literacy instruction, review student literacy data, and develop differentiated literacy materials and small group explicit instruction with a focus on literacy supports for English Learners.

Recommendation:

The CSDE recommends that the SBE approve an additional fifth and final year of participation in the Commissioner's Network for O'Brien STEM Academy at a funding level to be determined by CSDE, within state budget appropriations.

Prepared by: Jennifer Webb, Education Consultant, Turnaround Office

Approved by: Desi D. Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer



Next Generation Accountability Report: 2016-17

Choose a District Choose a School School Category (1-5)
(1 is highest) State Support Designation
(Cat. 4 and 5 schools only) School of Distinction?

East Hartford School District	Robert J. O'Brien School_0431811	2		No
		Grade Range: K - 6		

Choose a District, then Choose a School. To refresh the District List, clear the School name.

No:	Indicator	Index/Rate ¹	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State Avg Index/Rate
1a.	ELA Performance Index – All Students	56.7	75	37.8	50	75.6%	67.1
1b.	ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students	54.1	75	36.1	50	72.2%	55.9
1c.	Math Performance Index – All Students	47.7	75	31.8	50	63.6%	62.2
1d.	Math Performance Index – High Needs Students	44.9	75	29.9	50	59.9%	50.5
1e.	Science Performance Index – All Students	43.1	75	28.7	50	57.5%	55.3
1f.	Science Performance Index – High Needs Students	40.7	75	27.1	50	54.3%	45.2
2a.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	65.6%	100	65.6	100	65.6%	55.4%
2b.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	66.3%	100	66.3	100	66.3%	49.8%
2c.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	56.5%	100	56.5	100	56.5%	61.7%
2d.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	58.8%	100	58.8	100	58.8%	53.7%
4a.	Chronic Absenteeism – All Students	10.0%	<=5%	40.0	50	80.1%	9.9%
4b.	Chronic Absenteeism – High Needs Students	11.1%	<=5%	37.8	50	75.7%	15.8%
5	Preparation for CCR – % taking courses		75%	0.0	0		70.7%
6	Preparation for CCR – % passing exams		75%	0.0	0		43.5%
7	On-track to High School Graduation		94%	0.0	0		87.8%
8	4-year Graduation All Students (2016 Cohort)		94%	0.0	0		87.4%
9	6-year Graduation - High Needs Students (2014 Cohort)		94%	0.0	0		82.0%
10	Postsecondary Entrance (Class of 2016)		75%	0.0	0		72.0%
11	Physical Fitness (estimated part rate) and (fitness rate)	100.0% 84.1%	75%	50.0	50	100.0%	92.0% 51.6%
12	Arts Access		60%	0.0	0		50.5%
Accountability Index				566.5	850	66.7%	

These statistics represent the results from the third year of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Model for districts and schools. For detailed information and resources about every indicator including the rationale for its inclusion, the methodology used as well as links to resources, research, and evidence-based strategies, please consult the document titled [Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#).

This model is the direct result of an extensive consultation process over a two year period. The CSDE sought feedback from district and school leaders, Connecticut educators, state and national experts, CSDE staff, and many others. This model was originally outlined in Connecticut's flexibility application to the U.S. Department of Education and formally approved by the USED in August 2015 and is now included in Connecticut's state plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.

¹ Unrounded index/rates are used in calculations. Values rounded to 1 decimal are displayed.

Gap Indicators	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Size of Gap	State Gap Mean + 1 Stdev**	Is Gap an Outlier?
Achievement Gap Size Outlier?					N
ELA Performance Index Gap	62.9	54.1	8.7	16.6	
Math Performance Index Gap	54.4	44.9	9.5	18.5	
Science Performance Index Gap	47.5	40.7	6.8	16.5	
Six-Year Graduation Rate Gap (2014 Cohort)					N/A

^{*} If the Non-High Needs Rate exceeds the ultimate target (75 for Performance Index and 94% for graduation rate), then the ultimate target is displayed and used for gap calculations. ^{**} If size of gap exceeds the state mean gap plus one standard deviation, then the gap is an outlier.

Participation Rate	Rate
ELA – All Students	99.6%
ELA – High Needs Students	99.4%
Math – All Students	99.2%
Math – High Needs Students	98.8%
Science – All Students	100.0%
Science – High Needs Students	100.0%



COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK FAST FACTS

ROBERT J. O'BRIEN SCHOOL
GRADES K-5
 COHORT III — ENTERED NETWORK FALL 2014
 East Hartford Public Schools

SUCCESS

Since entering the Commissioner's Network, O'Brien STEM Academy has implemented a focused plan to improve reading performance in grades K-5. In addition, O'Brien has implemented an inquiry-based instructional model with a strong emphasis on instructional coaching to build teacher capacity and programming for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The work of the family and community outreach coordinator and social worker has allowed the school to open a family center that hosts Parent Talk Cafes on topics of interest to and requested by parents as well as providing kits to families so they can support literacy, math and STEM at home. With a stronger implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices, O'Brien has seen a decrease in out-of-school and in-school suspensions.



COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK FUNDING

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
\$473,118	\$550,000	\$410,000	\$365,000

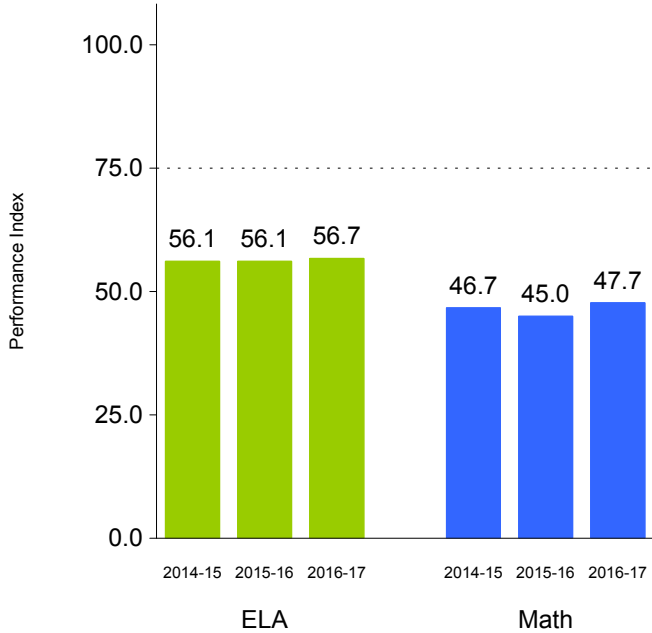
PRIORITIES

Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build teacher capacity through a coaching model that focuses on assessment analysis and instructional planning. • Provide school-based professional learning focused on literacy, math, STEM, and school climate.
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop effective K-5 standards-based literacy and math instruction. • Deepen the implementation of schoolwide STEM programming. • Provide enrichment activities for students through field trips, in-class programs, and an afterschool program.
Climate/Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop family and community outreach programming and family center. • Provide and implement Basic School Climate and Restorative Practices, Social Emotional Learning standards and lessons, and culturally responsive practices.
Operations	N/A

LEADING AND LAGGING INDICATORS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

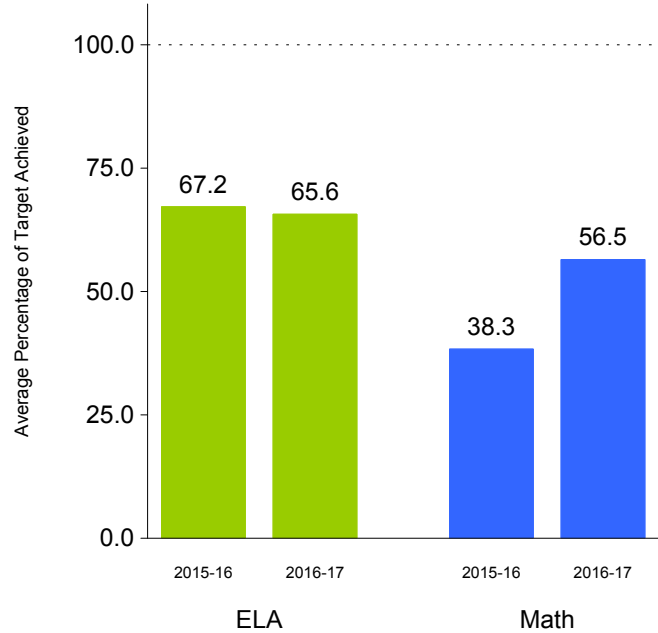
Academic Achievement

The Performance Index represents average performance of students in a subject area. When the index is 75 or better, the students are on average, performing solidly in the desired achievement level. The target for 2029-30 is 75.0 as indicated by the dotted line in the chart.



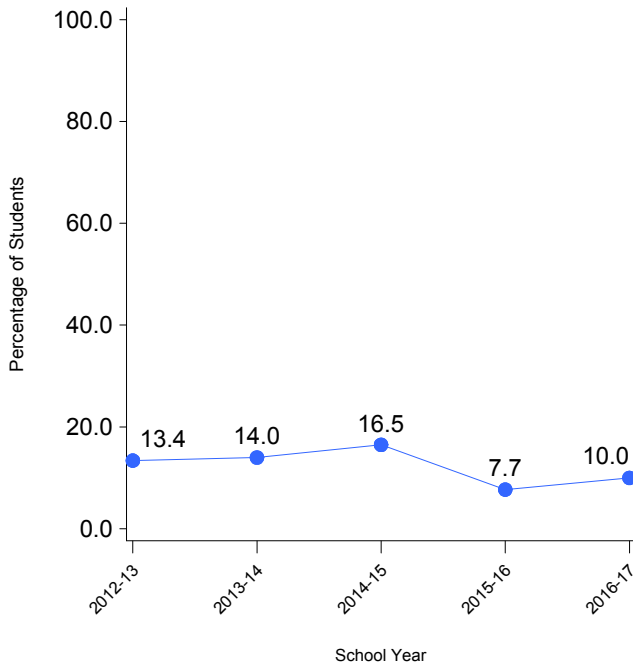
Academic Growth (Matched Students)

The Average Percentage of Target Achieved is a percentage of the individualized growth target achieved by students on average. The target for 2029-30 is 100% as indicated by the dotted line in the chart.



Chronic Absenteeism

The percentage of students who missed at least 10% of their enrolled school days for any reason.



Suspension Rate

The percentage of students who received at least one suspension or expulsion during the school year.

