

# IX.A.

## Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

### **To Be Proposed:**

June 1, 2022

**Resolved,** That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended by Section 258 of Public Act 15-5, adopts and approves the Turnaround Plan for McDonough Middle School in Hartford for the Commissioner's Network, subject to the conditions noted in the Commissioner's June 1, 2022, Executive Summary to the State Board of Education, 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 first day of June, Two Thousand Twenty-two.

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, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** June 1, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for McDonough Middle School

***Executive Summary***

**Introduction**

Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) establishes the Commissioner's Network to provide new resources and flexibilities to improve student achievement in a subset of the state's lowest-performing schools. The Network represents a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to empower teachers and leaders to implement research-based strategies in schools selected by the Commissioner to participate in the Network for a period of 3 years with the potential for a 1 or 2 one-year extension beyond the initial 3 years. Network schools remain part of their local school districts; the districts and the CSDE secure school-level autonomy for the schools in exchange for heightened accountability.

Successful school turnaround requires flexible policy conditions and targeted investments in high-yield reform strategies. There is a demonstrated need for support, financial and otherwise, to fully implement the Turnaround Plan for McDonough Middle School (MMS) located in Hartford, CT. This will require efforts at the state and local levels to create conditions that are conducive to scalable and sustainable reform.

**Background**

On April 15, 2021, the CSDE received an *Expression of Interest Form* from the Hartford Public Schools (HPS) volunteering MMS for participation in the Network. On May 27, 2021, the Commissioner initially selected MMS for possible participation in the Network based on the following factors: (a) the district's expression of interest; and (b) the academic and developmental needs of the school's students and the capacity of the district to address those needs. The school was approved for one year of planning to develop a turnaround plan. Following initial selection, MMS and the Hartford Federation of Teachers appointed members to serve on the school's Turnaround Committee, and the CSDE conducted an Operations and Instructional Audit on September 20, 2021. The Turnaround Committee developed the Turnaround Plan for MMS in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h (d).

On May 19, 2022, Hartford Superintendent Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez and MMS Principal Marjorie Rice appeared before the State Board Accountability and Support Committee to discuss the school's turnaround application to improve student outcomes.

### **Turnaround Plan for McDonough Middle School**

MMS, identified as a Turnaround School based on the Accountability Index under the Next Generation Accountability System, serves 316 students in Grades 6 through 8. Approximately 90 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Approximately 24 percent of the students are identified as needing special education services; 39 percent are English learners (ELs); 93 percent of the students are Hispanic; and 13 percent are Black. MMS is a feeder school of Hartford Public High School, a school currently in the Commissioner's Network.

The goal of MMS Turnaround Plan is to implement strong, differentiated Tier I instruction that holds students to high expectations while meeting their diverse needs through a learning environment that is inclusive, innovative, collaborative, engaging, and student-centered. This model emphasizes the use of targeted, job embedded learning that prioritizes research-based strategies for special populations with a focus on differentiation, accommodations/modifications, second language acquisition, and sheltered instruction, as well as student-centered instructional practices that build students' competencies towards the Hartford Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate. These practices will support a culture of achievement and a commitment to continuous improvement through practitioner reflection and shared beliefs in collective efficacy.

The following strategic components in the domains of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations speak to the transformative potential of MMS Turnaround Plan. Specifically, the school, in collaboration with HPS, will:

#### ***Talent:***

- Provide professional learning centered around a common vision for rigorous and engaging instructional practices including coaching and Professional Learning Community cycles in partnership with ReVISION Learning;
- Implement professional learning for Culturally Responsive Teaching and anti-racist practices; and
- Support new teachers through the enhancement of the New Teacher Academy with intensive coaching cycles, including teacher-led learning walks, distributive leadership, and the opportunity to earn a cross-endorsement in TESOL/Bilingual Education.

#### ***Academics:***

- Strengthen Tier I to ensure differentiated, culturally responsive instruction, and checks for understanding;

- Create systems and structures to implement and showcase high-quality teaching and learning through the creation of instructional vision “look for” and identifying model classrooms;
- Development and implementation of rubrics to foster student self-assessment and peer to peer feedback;
- Implement a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports to ensure equitable outcomes for all students; and
- Creation of a Virtual Academy Program for after-school hours on-demand access to tutoring from content area teachers, as well as a bank of online mini-lessons, to support the needs of all students.

### ***Culture and Climate:***

- Partner with community agencies to address barriers, build wraparound services, and provide additional interventions;
- Implement proactive schoolwide strategies to support attendance such as the “Walking School Bus” and the development of a comprehensive Family Resource Center;
- Implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports that focuses on building out the hybrid model of Restorative Practices, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and socio-emotional learning;
- Plan and implement intentional in-person and virtual events that expand opportunities for home/school engagement; and
- Create a Community Resource Center to support families and provide TESOL and target language classes for families and staff.

### ***Operations:***

- Restructure the school schedule to maximize instruction, provide interventions, and create time for high-quality teacher collaboration;
- Increase student-centered instruction and engagement with a focus on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, the Portrait of a Graduate, and improved classroom management;
- Integrate Portrait of a Graduate through the development of e-portfolios, Academic Review Systems, and student-led conferences, as well as creating a pipeline for staff collaboration with Hartford Public High School teachers; and
- Develop a mentorship program to increase engagement and support for middle to high school transition.

The CSDE shall make a final determination regarding the allocation of funds, following the Turnaround Plan’s approval by the State Board of Education. The Turnaround Office will collaborate with district leadership and the Turnaround Committee to prioritize expenditures identified through the planning process. Through this budgeting process, MMS will work to evaluate and repurpose existing funding streams (e.g., local, state, federal, and grants) to support Network reform efforts and foster long-term sustainability.

Funding for MMS is contingent upon the availability of funds and will be based on the transformative potential of the Turnaround Plan, as well as the size of the school. MMS will benefit from increased flexibility and additional resources in exchange for heightened accountability. Over the course of the school's participation in the Network, the Commissioner and/or CSDE Turnaround Office will review: (a) school progress relative to implementation of the Turnaround Plan and annual plan amendments; and (b) school performance relative to identified goals and leading and lagging performance metrics. MMS will participate in periodic monitoring sessions, including school and classroom walkthroughs, progress monitoring, NetStat professional learning sessions, and annual school audits. In addition, the CSDE will provide ongoing support and technical assistance to support MMS through site visits and targeted support based on the Turnaround Plan.

### **Recommendation with Conditions**

I recommend that the Board approve the Network Plan for MMS, which would be subject to the successful completion of the following items:

1. By September 30, 2022, HPS shall commit to specific transformation expectations outlined in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations as part of participation in the Commissioner's Network.
2. The Superintendent, on behalf of the MMS Turnaround Committee, shall submit plan amendments to the CSDE Turnaround Office on an annual basis in the spring, following school audits, detailing proposed strategies, budget requests, and implementation timelines for the following school year. The Commissioner or her designee may reconvene the Turnaround Committee to consider annual plan amendments, as appropriate and necessary. If the Turnaround Committee does not enact plan amendments or if the amendments are unlikely to result in sufficient progress or adequately address implementation concerns, the Commissioner may take appropriate actions to ensure sufficient progress at MMS, including, but not limited to, developing a revised Turnaround Plan and/or exercising all authorities prescribed in C.G.S. Section 10-223h.
3. MMS shall comply with all fiscal and programmatic reviews, provide any information requested by the CSDE in a timely manner, and report progress against goals and metrics in the format and frequency established by the CSDE.

### **Materials Enclosed**

1. MMS Audit Report resulting from the Operations and Instructional Audit conducted on September 20, 2021.
2. MMS Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan Application.

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Reviewed by: Lisa Lamenzo  
Division Director, CSDE Turnaround Office

Approved by: Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer

# Commissioner's Network Operations and Instructional Audit

McDonough Middle School  
Hartford Public Schools  
October 1, 2021



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McDonough Middle School  
October 1, 2021 | 2

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## Part I: Introduction

On May 27, 2021, the Commissioner initially selected McDonough Middle School to participate in the Commissioner's Network. Pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-223h(b), the Hartford Board of Education established the Turnaround Committee. On October 1, 2021, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) conducted, in consultation with the board of education, the McDonough Middle School Governance Council, and the Turnaround Committee, an operations and instructional audit of the school in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h(c). The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the audit.

The audit team would like to express its sincere appreciation to the McDonough Middle School community for its hospitality on the day of the school visit. We appreciate the openness and transparency demonstrated by members of the school community. There is a willingness and desire on the part of the staff, parents, students, and community partners to improve the school.

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### Commissioner's Network Overview

The Commissioner's Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the CSDE to dramatically improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. To that end, the Network offers new resources and authorities to empower teachers and school leaders to implement research-based strategies in schools selected by the Commissioner. Network schools remain part of their local school districts, but the districts and the CSDE secure school-level flexibility and autonomy for the schools in exchange for heightened accountability. Schools are accepted into the Network for a minimum of three years. Subsection (h) of C.G.S. 10-223h establishes that the Connecticut 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. At present, 15 Cohort (VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X) schools are participating in the Commissioner's Network.

Network schools make targeted investments in the following areas:

- **Talent:** Employ systems and strategies to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain excellent school leaders, teachers, and support staff.
- **Academics:** Design and implement a rigorous, aligned, and engaging academic program that allows all students to achieve at high levels.
- **Culture and Climate:** Foster a positive learning environment that supports high-quality teaching and learning, and engages families and the community as partners in the educational process.
- **Operations:** Create systems and processes that promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including through the use of time and financial resources.

As part of the operations and instructional audit, auditors identify school strengths and weaknesses in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. Audits are conducted by impartial and experienced educators who produce unbiased and objective reports supporting school planning and transformation efforts.

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## **Operations and Instructional Audit Overview**

Pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-223h(c), the operations and instructional audit shall determine the extent to which the school:

- (1) has established a strong family and community connection to the school;
- (2) has a positive school environment, as evidenced by a culture of high expectations and a safe and orderly workplace, and has addressed other nonacademic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, arts, cultural, recreational and health needs;
- (3) has effective leadership, as evidenced by the school principal's performance appraisals, track record in improving student achievement, ability to lead turnaround efforts, and managerial skills and authority in the areas of scheduling, staff management, curriculum implementation and budgeting;
- (4) has effective teachers and support staff, as evidenced by performance evaluations, policies to retain staff determined to be effective and who have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort, policies to prevent ineffective teachers from transferring to the schools, and job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support programs that are tied to teacher and student needs;
- (5) uses time effectively, as evidenced by the redesign of the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;
- (6) has a curriculum and instructional program that is based on student needs, is research-based, rigorous and aligned with state academic content standards, and serves all children, including students at every achievement level; and
- (7) uses data to inform decision-making and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data.

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## **Audit Process and Methodology**

The operations and instructional audit involves three phases of data collection and review:

- (1) The CSDE obtains and auditors review school artifacts, data, and documentation to gain a better understanding of the school's history and context. The CSDE collaborates with school and district leaders to administer a teacher survey.
- (2) The auditors conduct a school site visit to observe school systems and classrooms and meet with members of the school community. During the site visit, auditors conduct interviews and focus groups with a representative set of school and community stakeholders, including school and district administrators, staff, students, family members, community partners, and members of the School Governance Council and Turnaround Committee.

- (3) The auditors synthesize and use all available data to generate the operations and instructional audit report, identifying strengths and growth areas around talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

Please note that while this Audit Report identifies areas for improvement, it does not prescribe interventions or offer recommendations. The Turnaround Committee is responsible for developing a Turnaround Plan that addresses the deficiencies identified in the audit.

## Part II: School Information

McDonough Middle School in Hartford serves 345 students in Grade 6 through Grade 8. Approximately 13 percent of the students are Black and 83 percent of the students are Hispanic. Approximately 24 percent of the students are identified as needing special education services, and 39 percent are English Learners. Ninety percent of the students in the school are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Student achievement at McDonough Middle School is well below state and district averages in all grade levels and subject areas tested. The current principal is in her second year at McDonough Middle School having previously served as an assistant principal at another Hartford school.

### School Data Profile

The following chart provides a summary of McDonough Middle School current and historic data, including information about student enrollment and demographics, personnel, school climate, school performance, and student academic achievement. All data below is self-reported except where indicated with \*\*.

| Enrollment Data (2020-21):               |           |                               |  |           |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Grades:                                  | 6-8       | 5-Yr Enrollment Trend:        |  | 306       |
| Student Enrollment:                      | 345       | Stability Rate:               |  | 54%       |
| Personnel Data (2020-21):                |           |                               |  |           |
| # of Administrators:                     | 2         | # of Psychologists:           |  | 0.5       |
| # of Teachers:                           | 28        | # of Social Workers:          |  | 3         |
| 3-yr Teacher Retention Rate:             | 47%       | # of Support Staff:           |  | 8         |
| School Day Per Year (2020-21):           |           |                               |  |           |
| Total # of Student Days Per Year:        | 177       | Instructional Minutes/Day:    |  | 1055      |
| Total # of Teacher Days Per Year:        | 185       | Extended Day Program:         |  | Y         |
| Student Demographic Breakdown (2020-21): |           |                               |  |           |
| % Black:                                 | 13%       | % Male:                       |  | 50%       |
| % Hispanic:                              | 83%       | % Female:                     |  | 50%       |
| % White:                                 | 3%        | % English Learner Students:   |  | 39%       |
| % Other:                                 | 1%        | % Students with Disabilities: |  | 24%       |
| % Eligible for F/R Meals:                | 90%       |                               |  |           |
| School Climate Data:                     | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019                     | 2019-2020 <sup>1</sup><br>through March 2020 | 2020-2021 |
| Student Attendance Rate:                 | 91.9      | 91.1                          | 91.6   | 79.7      |

<sup>1</sup> For the 2019-20 school year, school climate data calculations are based only on in-person school days until mid-March 2020.

|   |                  |                  |                              |                  |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| Percentage of Students Chronically Absent**:            | 25.5             | 25.4             | 25.5                         | 61.5             |
| Suspension/Expulsion Rate**:                            | 17.3             | 11.7             | 18.1                         | NA               |
| Classroom Teacher Attendance (Average FTE Days Absent): | 10.2             | 18.0             | NA                           | NA               |
|   |                  |                  |                              |                  |
| Accountability Index:                                   | 47.4             | 47.7             | NA                           | NA               |
| <b>Smarter Balanced Assessment Level 3 and 4 Data**</b> | <b>2017-2018</b> | <b>2018-2019</b> | <b>2019-2020<sup>3</sup></b> | <b>2020-2021</b> |
| <b>Met or Exceeded:</b>                                 |                  |                  |                              |                  |
| Grade 6 – ELA   | 7.0%             | 14.4%            | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 7 – ELA   | 10.1%            | 21.7%            | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 8 – ELA   | 10.8%            | 18.0%            | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 6 – Math  | *                | 7.3%             | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 7 – Math  | *                | 7.9%             | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 8 – Math  | *                | *                | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 5 – Science                                       | NA               | NA               | NA                           | NA               |
| Grade 8 – Science                                       | NA               | 23.3%            | NA                           | NA               |

\* Data suppressed to ensure confidentiality.

NA = Data is not yet available.

<sup>2</sup> Next Generation Accountability Results are not available for 2019-20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> Statewide academic assessments were cancelled in 2019-20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Part III: Audit Findings

Part III of the Audit Report provides a summative analysis of audit findings in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

| Talent                                    |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicator:                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1.1. Instructional practice               |   | ✓ |   |   |
| 1.2. Evaluation and professional culture  |   |   | ✓ |   |
| 1.3. Recruitment and retention strategies |   | ✓ |   |   |
| 1.4. Professional development             |   | ✓ |   |   |
| 1.5. Leadership effectiveness             |   |   | ✓ |   |
| 1.6. Instructional leadership             |   | ✓ |   |   |

### Summary of Strengths:

#### **Evaluation and Professional Culture**

A majority of survey respondents, 88 percent (N=15) of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that “administrators provide regular, helpful, and actionable feedback to staff.” Teachers report that while the evaluation process is very clear in which the number of evaluations is outlined and the development of student learning objectives and timelines are adhered to, the majority of the staff is new to McDonough and the pandemic affected the teacher evaluation (TEVAL) process, so many have not experienced the full TEVAL cycle. District leadership shared that due to the high number of teachers new to McDonough Middle School, there is a focus on sharing expectations for teaching and learning and building staff capacity. Teachers report that administrators conduct frequent informal observations and provide feedback of “glows and grows” as well as actionable next steps. District leadership shared that instructional walkthroughs are conducted frequently and immediate feedback is provided. School leadership reports that coaching cycles are provided to teachers to support growth and the Data Wise cycle is used to analyze student growth and teacher problem of practice.

#### **Leadership Effectiveness**

The Next Generation Accountability Index has shown slight growth in the trend data, increasing 2.6 percentage points over three years to a current index score of 47.7 that is well below the state average of 74.2. The McDonough Middle School leadership consists of the building principal and an assistant principal that are both relatively new to the school, entering their second and third years respectively. On a teacher survey administered prior to the audit site visit, 87% (N=14) of respondents agreed that “school leadership effectively communicates a clear mission, vision and set of school wide priorities.” Eighty-two percent of parents surveyed also agreed that “the school has a clear mission and vision.” The principal has a school improvement plan in place that has been communicated to the staff. The leadership team shared that “Our mission and vision is not

the stated mission and vision that we inherited from 2016. Instead, it's what's happening on a daily basis here. It may not be posted on the walls, but it is super clear what we are working towards." Teachers and leadership focus group identified the ROAR (Respect; Organized; Achieve; Responsible; Safe) core values as the driving force of the school and agreed there is sense of urgency to support school improvement efforts.

District leadership reports that the principal is "a ball of energy...she's energetic, motivational, passionate about her school. She lives and breathes McDonough." The district leader continued by sharing that the assistant principal is "eager to learn, also passionate, and there for the students." As a leadership team, it is reported by district leadership that the principal and assistant principal "appreciate constructive feedback" and are leaders of change for the school. Teachers report that the building administration has "an open door policy" and they "reach out to us to see how we're doing and if we need support."

### **Summary of Growth Areas:**

#### **Instructional Practice**

The quality of instruction at McDonough Middle School is described as "variable" and "developing" by teachers, school leaders, and district leadership. On the teacher survey, 74 percent (N=11) of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that "instructional quality and academic rigor are consistently high at this school." Leadership reports that as there are many new teachers, "we need to grow their capacity in differentiation and Tier 1 instruction." Leadership shared that the teachers are "grounded in the standards" and intentional with their instruction, but there is a shift from planning for virtual instruction to in-person learning that needs ongoing support. The school leadership team reports that there are specific pieces of the instructional walkthroughs that are focused on, such as common posting of learning targets. "We focused on an area and saw improvements. Now we want to create more real-world discourse." Leadership and teachers both report that the structures within the professional learning time that are being re-examined and restructured to be more effective and efficient, such as which content areas meet together.

The audit team conducted classroom observations, separately, in 12 classrooms across all grade levels and content areas in the school. Most classrooms observed had clearly posted learning objectives or targets, as well as agendas for the progression of the lesson, but classroom management was an issue as students were not focused and off-task. Areas for improvement include work deepening practice through strategies such as questioning, differentiation, and increased opportunities for student discourse. This aligns with administrator comments on merging the classroom climate with instruction and teacher statements that there are "struggles with student behavior that impact the learning experience." Support going forward needs to include helping teachers identify and implement strong classroom management practices and merging them with engaging instructional practices.

#### **Recruitment and Retention**

McDonough Middle School has a 3-year teacher retention rate of 47%. District and school leadership noted the high number of teachers new to McDonough Middle School. Some of the turnover was attributed to the new leadership team that was brought in and changes in the building, along with retirements and relocation to other states. The principal did note that all staff from 2020-21 was retained this year. A mentor program has been established to help model the expectations and to support, and hopefully retain, new teachers. An intentional plan has been made to team veteran teachers with newer staff to provide peer to peer feedback and provide opportunities to plan lessons together. Participants in the teacher focus group shared that "as a new teacher, I feel like I have to figure everything out." In response to this need, school leadership shared that a New Teacher

Academy has been developed at the school to “get the supports to them in a timely manner and keep the staff positive.” Teachers shared that the current building leadership “makes us feel supported” and are “positive and acknowledge that the staff is valued.” Focus group members shared that at the district level, the support is not strong and McDonough has historically had high staff turnover. As one focus group participant shared, “There is nothing more frustrating than having to rebuild every year.”

### Professional Development

In response to the statement “the professional development I received this year has improved my professional practice and allowed me to better meet the needs of my students,” 62% (N=10) of respondents agree/strongly agree. Every Wednesday is a half-day for professional learning, but a concern was voiced across focus groups that this time has increasingly been district-led as opposed to school-based. Recently, district provided professional learning has focused on restorative practices, which ties in with the school’s culture and climate goals, but more school-level autonomy is needed to support a novice staff with linking effective instructional practices with classroom management. Teachers conveyed a sense of concern regarding their professional learning, sharing that the focus doesn’t always meet the current needs or their individual growth goals. Teacher focus groups expressed a need for ongoing support to help teachers implement the various professional learning that has been provided in previous years as the high turnover rates result in new teachers on staff that did not receive the appropriate training that was provided in previous years.

### Instructional Leadership

The McDonough Middle School administration consists of a building principal and one assistant principal which share oversight of the teacher evaluation process. Teacher focus group members shared that leadership is supportive and this is also evidenced by 94% (N=16) of survey respondents agreeing with the statement “I am professionally respected and supported by the leadership team.” Eighty-seven percent of teachers surveyed responded that “there is a common vision of what effective instruction looks like at this school.” Teacher focus group members report that the school’s vision for effective instruction includes the posting of a learning target and agenda, high expectations, data driven instruction, and increased student engagement. Lesson structures such as an Opener/Do Now, instructional time with a mini-lesson or guided practice and then an exit ticket were shared, but observed evidence in the classrooms was limited. Smarter Balanced Assessment scores for ELA have shown slow growth across time, but are still significantly below state averages. For example, the percent of students achieving a Level 3 or 4 on the ELA assessment increased from 10.8% in 2016-17 to 18.0% in 2018-19. Math proficiency on the Smarter Balanced Assessment demonstrates limited growth, increasing from 4.1% in 2016-17 to 6.3% in 2018-19.

| Academics   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicator:  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2.1. Academic rigor   |   | ✓ |   |   |
| 2.2. Student engagement   |   | ✓ |   |   |
| 2.3. Differentiation and checking for understanding                       | ✓ |   |   |   |
| 2.4. Curriculum and instruction aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards |   | ✓ |   |   |
| 2.5. Supports for special populations                                     |   | ✓ |   |   |



|   |  |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| 2.6. Assessment system and data culture |  |  | ✓ |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|

### **Summary of Strengths:**

#### **Assessment System and Data Culture**

Teachers and administration agree that McDonough Middle School has an established data culture based upon Harvard University's Data Wise process. While 62% (N=10) of survey respondents agreed that "this school has a comprehensive assessment system to measure student progress, identify necessary interventions, and provide teachers with data to inform instruction," concerns voiced in the focus groups centered on assessments not matching the curriculum rather than a data system not being in place. School administration shared that student achievement data is analyzed and a "problem of practice" is then identified. The instructional leadership team reports that the Data Wise process enabled the staff to "look at such different levels of data to help us drive instruction." Teachers meet by grade level content area at least once per week for 45 minutes for a data team in which assessment information is analyzed, time is spent reviewing instructional materials, and lessons are planned. While this suggests this school has embraced a data culture and use data to inform interventions, data-informed differentiation in Tier I instruction to support all learners was lacking in most classroom observations.

Based upon teacher and administrator focus group discussions, this year will be dedicated to "building out" a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). There is a dedicated interventionist that is the key person in organizing structures, and will also be used as a coach. There is a dedicated resource teacher for math and another for ELA that will "push" into grade levels this year to provide targeted supports for Tier 2 students. The principal reports that "our goals is then for MTSS to break across grade levels with additional support staff providing targeted supports." District leadership shared that student data is reviewed every six weeks in order to identify adjustments. Eighty-one percent of parent survey respondents agree that "there are additional supports and academic interventions provided if my child is struggling." When asked how students can access help if they are struggling to understand a concept, students and parents both shared that teachers provide feedback on assignments and are willing to set up a time for extra help.

### **Summary of Growth Areas:**

#### **Academic rigor and Differentiation**

Eighty-one percent (N=13) agreed that "teachers at this school engage students in higher-order thinking and push them toward content mastery" while 26% of teacher survey respondents disagreed that "instructional quality and academic rigor are consistently high at this school." Seventy-two percent of parent survey respondents agreed that "my child is appropriately challenged." Teacher focus group participants reports that while there are "pockets" of academic rigor, there is room for improvement including delivering standards-aligned instruction of the curricula that is implemented with fidelity. Teachers shared that a lot of time is spent "trying to manage the classrooms" which they believe impacts their ability to differentiate. During classroom observations, the audit team found insufficient evidence of instructional rigor and differentiation such as student-centered instruction, opportunities for students to engage in academic discourse, small group instruction, and higher-order questioning. In the majority of observed classrooms, higher-order Depth of Knowledge questioning was lacking and remained at the surface level. Student discourse to reveal reasoning and evidence was not prevalent as student voice was mostly limited to call-and-response to teacher questioning.

Teachers and administration both report that while the school's common vision for effective instruction includes planning for all levels of learning, there is little evidence of differentiated instruction in classrooms. District leadership also report that students at McDonough Middle School should be able to "articulate and know the material they are learning," but this is a work in progress. Administration shared that "we are seeing some efforts to differentiate, but it needs to improve in terms of richness." Auditors looked for evidence of students being held accountable for responding to questions, teachers using structures to engage all students in processing questions and generating responses, and opportunities for students to show what they know and applying the new information. In 11 of the 14 classroom classrooms, instructional activities and/or delivery methods lacked opportunities for students to actively engage in creating, understanding, and connecting to knowledge.

While 81% (N=13) of teachers surveyed agree/strongly agree that "teachers at this school use student assessment data to check for understanding to differentiate instruction," classroom observations by the audit team found only a few examples of challenging instruction, scaffolded instruction, or encouragement of student discourse to provide evidence to support their thinking or rationale for responses. Based upon focus group questioning and administrator feedback, teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable in what it means or how to deliver rigorous and well-differentiated instruction. While a formal assessment system is in place and the Data Wise process is utilized, it is not clear how well teachers use formative information to drive instruction and provide supports based upon the data. As shared by school leadership, rigorous instruction is evidenced "in the planning, but sometimes we don't see it in execution. They plan for it, but sometimes we deviate off course."

State assessment proficiency levels at McDonough Middle School, as shown in the chart below, are significantly below the state averages for ELA, Math and Science, with math being of particular concern as proficiency is in the single digits.

| Percent Proficiency (Levels 3+) |               |                  |                  |  |
|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| 2018-19 Assessments             | State Average | District Average | McDonough Middle | Difference between State and School Averages |
| SBAC ELA                        | 55.7%         | 24.5%            | 18.0%            | -37.7  |
| SBAC Math                       | 48.1%         | 18.2%            | 6.3%             | -41.8  |
| NGSS Science                    | 52.2%         | 28.5%            | 23.3%            | -28.9  |

### Student Engagement

While 90% of parent survey respondents agreed that "my child is interested and engaged in their classes," only 62% (N=10) of teacher survey respondents agreed that "students are engaged in their classes." Audit team observations noted that instruction was primarily whole group and opportunities for small group work or student discourse were limited. School leadership noted that "we're finding in this return to learn that students are having a tough time returning to the in-person learning...when we don't have the high level of differentiation to meet the various needs, then we do see a break down." Students report that group work occurs infrequently, which may be indicative of Covid-19 restrictions, and many lessons are structured for independent work. In classroom walkthroughs, auditors observed off-task behaviors such as students having off-topic conversations with their peers, students not engaged in the instruction and not attempting to complete the assigned task, and teachers not addressing students that were off-task. Teachers did share that student engagement is inconsistent

and technology issues such as spotty Wi-Fi have a negative impact. It is reported that the coaching cycles focus on student engagement practices within the curriculum. Teachers would benefit from additional professional learning on how to structure tasks and plan lessons to increase active engagement. Teacher focus group participants equated engagement with behavior and compliance, supporting the need to develop a common understanding of authentic engagement.

### Curriculum and instruction aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards

As reported on the teacher survey, 81% (N=13) of McDonough Middle School staff agree “the school has curricula for all grade levels and content areas aligned to the current content standards.” Currently, English Language arts, math, science, and social studies all have curricula or programs that are aligned to current content standards. While curricula is in place, teachers shared concerns with the lack of science labs for authentic, hands-on learning and the lack of resources to support students that are performing below grade level and require differentiated materials. School leadership states that the teachers are “grounded in the standards” but need to “grow their capacity in delivering Tier 1 instruction.” Teachers and administrators agree that rigor is a “huge focus this year.” As referenced in the charts above, student achievement in both ELA and mathematics are significantly below state averages. While teachers believe they have high expectations for their students, the rigor observed during walkthroughs was not aligned with the intent of the standards. Auditors observed instruction with mainly surface level questioning, limited student discourse to reveal evidence and reasoning, as well as inconsistent pacing. While teachers shared that time is spent collaboratively reviewing curricula content, developing instructional materials, and analyzing student work and data, instruction is aligned with the rigor of the standards is lacking as evidenced by classroom walkthroughs.

### Supports for Special Populations

As reported on the teacher survey, only 62% (N=10) agree that “the school adequately meets the needs of its special education students and English Learners.” Twenty-four percent of students at McDonough Middle School are identified as students with disabilities. McDonough has 6 special education teachers on staff with caseloads of approximately 20 students. There are also 3 paraprofessionals that support Special Education. The special education teachers do have scheduled time to collaboratively plan with their general education colleagues.

Approximately 39% of McDonough Middle School’s population are identified as English Learners (EL) with supports provided by three teachers. McDonough Middle School has an established Newcomer Center to support English Learners in all academic areas, and provides wraparound supports to aid students in becoming bilingual and biliterate in a positive environment. Teacher focus group participants would like to see supports and resources for ELs to continue to be expanded. School administration shared that while there has been a traditional bilingual program in place, it has not always been implemented with fidelity. School leadership reports that Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training, a research-based instructional model to address the academic needs of English learners, is needed for all staff members. Opportunities such as Rosetta Stone courses in Spanish and Portuguese has been offered to staff, along with classes for families in English.

| Culture and Climate     |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Indicator:              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3.1. School environment |   |   | ✓ |   |
| 3.2. Student attendance | ✓ |   |   |   |
| o Student behavior      |   | ✓ |   |   |

|   |  |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
|   |  |   |   |  |
| 3.3. Interpersonal interactions                 |  | ✓ |   |  |
| 3.4. Family and community engagement            |  | ✓ |   |  |
| 3.5. Community partners and wraparound strategy |  |   | ✓ |  |

### **Summary of Strengths:**

#### **School Environment**

One hundred percent of parent survey respondents were in agreement that “the culture and climate at this school is welcoming to all learners and their families.” All stakeholder focus groups report that the school is welcoming and positive. Students expressed that they enjoy coming to school and parent survey responses shared that the environment is welcoming and report positive interactions. Parents also shared that their children feel safe and expressed that bullying was not an issue at the school. Seventy-one percent (N=12) of the teacher survey responses supported that “the school environment is conducive to high-quality teaching and learning.” Teachers expressed concerns regarding the lack of science labs and a school library. Although the school building is older, it is clean and well-maintained. Auditor walkthroughs found evidence that classrooms were generally inviting, bright and clean with evidence of anchor charts to support student learning. The hallways had engaging bulletin boards such as “McDonough Wall of Fame” and “Our Profiles in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade” displayed. Although there was evidence of effective strategies such as learning targets posted, due to the staff rotating through the rooms this information was cluttered. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, furniture layouts were frequently in rows and did not promote student collaboration or discourse.

#### **Community Partners and Wraparound Strategy**

McDonough Middle School has an extensive partnership with Catholic Charities which provides clinical support during the school day and after-school programming to support students. The Catholic Charities partnership has been fully integrated with the McDonough School community and they sponsor events such as Barrio Readers during a back-to-school event, After School Orientation, and enrichment opportunities such as cooking classes. Administration reports that the school also has a partnership with the Charter Oak health clinic and there is also an in-house dental clinic. A new partnership with the Elks Club is also being explored. Administration shared that student needs are also supported through the three behavior technicians that are on-staff. One hundred percent of parent survey respondents agree that “the school supports students and families’ health, wellness, and/or social-emotional needs.”

### **Summary of Growth Areas:**

#### **Student Attendance**

The percentage of students chronically absent continues to be significantly higher than the state average. In 2018-19, which was pre-pandemic, McDonough’s rate of 25.4% was 15 percentage points higher than the state average of 10.4%. In comparison, in 2020-21 McDonough’s rate of 61.5% was 42.5 percentage points higher than the state average of 19.0. The attendance team meets weekly and is comprised of the Principal, Assistant Principal, the Family Community Support Services Provider, Student Engagement

Specialist, three Behavior Technicians, three Social Workers, and two School Counselors. During this weekly time in reviewing student data, students are tiered and supports are reviewed. McDonough Middle School implements several strategies to improve attendance ranging from robo-calls and personal calls home when absent, teachers engaging with students to understand the “why” behind an absence and providing mentoring, to home visits and celebrating the accomplishments of attendance goals with incentives such as an Escape Room challenge to save the school mascot. One hundred percent of parent survey respondents were in agreement that “student attendance is a priority.” Although numerous structures are in place, school leadership acknowledges that there is a need to continue to expand the range of services.

### **Student Behavior**

While 88% of teachers surveyed agreed that “the school implements an effective school wide behavior management system,” and 90% of parent survey respondents agreed with the statement “there are clear expectations of student behavior,” the suspension rate trends higher than the state average. McDonough Middle School’s suspension rate in 2019-20, the most recently reported year, was 18.1%, well above the state average of 4.9%. Teacher focus group members report that a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system is firmly in place and this is evidenced by the “ROARS” signage throughout the building and school gear such as T-shirts worn by staff displaying the values. Leadership reports they are currently examining behavior data to ascertain next steps which include more training on Restorative Practices.

Teachers report that an area for growth at the school is with behavioral support and share the belief that many behavioral concerns “stem from the pandemic and having anxiety. The pandemic has had an effect on how students deal with each other. We need to improve their social skills.” District leadership reported that “restorative practices in action. Behaviors are quickly addressed when they are not in line with school or district policies. There are peer mediation and restorative practices happening at the school and meetings to ensure re-entry back into the classroom.” Teachers and school leadership report school-wide values and norms. The principal shared that “we focus on the positive and there’s a lot of reminding to reinforce it.” Teachers and school leadership both shared that the Class Dojo app is used to reinforce positive behaviors along with incentives such as “Positive ‘Bear’avior” recognition, monthly ceremonies, school store incentives and ROARS Awards. While auditors did not observe any egregious behaviors during the site visit, it was noted that many classrooms had disrupted learning environments in which students were shouting out and engaging in off-task behaviors.

### **Interpersonal Interactions**

Seventy-six percent (N=13) of survey respondents agree/strongly agree that “Interactions between students and staff are positive and respectful.” Auditors observed positive interpersonal interactions with staff greeting each other and students and friendly banter was heard in the hallways. Teachers provided positive feedback to students in response to their participation in class. Students report that teachers and staff members at McDonough Middle School are “supportive and care about you” and report that most students at the school are “friendly” and “get along” with bullying being an infrequent occurrence. Eighty percent of parent survey respondents were in agreement that “interactions between staff, students and families are positive and respectful” and in response to the survey statement “My child feels connected with school staff,” 91% of parents were in agreement. Teachers shared those strategies such as CREW and Second Step are in place to build relationships with students, but report more support is needed with restorative practices as lack of support staff impacts following the whole restorative process. Teachers also reported that the staff generally gets along and colleagues are supportive, but shared that because of

COVID restrictions with the amount of virtual interactions and a relatively new staff, they “don’t know many of my colleagues...and the building set up doesn’t offer many opportunities to interact.” Members of the leadership team focus group shared that “there is an assumption of positive intentions” at McDonough which supports the “friendly, family feeling” atmosphere.

### **Family and Community Engagement**

Ninety-one percent of parent survey respondents agreed that “the school provides multiple opportunities for family involvement.” Seventy-five percent (N=12) of the teacher survey responses supported that “families are engaged in the school.” A parent/teacher organization does not exist, but a School Governance Council is established. Parent survey respondents enthusiastically supported the Family and Community Support Service Provider and the assistance she provides through avenues such as the frequent Zoom meetings on topics such as “Getting Your Student Ready for High School.” School leadership shared positive experiences are created through events/activities such as Open House, Backpack Run, Literacy Night, and Trunk or Treat, but also expressed a desire for higher participation from families which is challenging due to ongoing COVID restrictions. Administration reports that tools such as the ASPIRE Survey are being explored to help foster meaningful engagement with parents and other members of the school community. Parents did indicate that teachers communicate often through email, phone calls, or through apps such as Class Dojo and 91% of parent survey respondents “felt comfortable reaching out to administration, teachers or staff members with a question or concern.” The school principal and assistant principal appeared to have positive relationships with students, staff, and families. District leadership noted that “there are a lot of things going on in the building to ensure that students and their families feel safe and supported.”

| <b>Operations</b>                |          |          |          |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Indicator:</b>                | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |
| 4.1. Adequate instructional time |          |          | ✓        |          |
| 4.2. Use of instructional time   | ✓        |          |          |          |
| 4.3. Use of staff time           |          | ✓        |          |          |
| 4.4. Routines and transitions    |          |          | ✓        |          |

### **Summary of Strengths:**

#### **Adequate Instructional Time**

Sixty-three percent (N=10) of teacher survey respondents agree that the school schedule and calendar maximize instructional time. McDonough Middle School follows a seven-period day in which classes are approximately fifty-five minutes in length. The schedule provides for 1055 minutes of instruction per day. Students would benefit from increased instructional time in mathematics in light of the low proficiency rates on statewide assessments. The school schedule was developed with MTSS intervention supports built in, but additional

opportunities for interventions are needed. Students expressed appreciation of their teachers' willingness to provide extra support when they are struggling.

### **Routines and Transitions**

McDonough Middle School has established systems, protocols, and procedures to ensure smooth school operations. On the survey, 82% (N=14) of teachers agreed that "the school has clear routines and procedures in place that are consistently followed by students and staff to help create a smooth and orderly environment." Teachers shared that school procedures are still impacted by COVID protocols as student transitions are limited (and adults are the ones that transition between rooms), students are escorted to the bathrooms, and some classes eat lunch in the classroom. In the limited transitions that were observed by auditors, students were orderly and following adult directions.

### **Summary of Growth Areas:**

#### **Use of Instructional Time**

The audit team observed ineffective use of instructional time in many classrooms due to poor pacing, limited student engagement, and missed opportunities for interactive learning. Teachers also report that challenges this year with buses arriving late and lack of substitutes to provide coverage have an impact on instructional time. As a result of movement of teachers among classrooms rather than student transition, auditors observed a compromise of instructional time as teachers had to re-settle and coordinate instructional materials and technology.

#### **Use of Staff Time**

Only 38% (N=6) of teachers agreed that "teachers have enough time to work with each other to develop instructional materials, review student data, and improve instruction." Teachers at McDonough Middle School have five personal planning periods per week, plus one data team, and one collaborative planning period. Content-specific planning time allows for common planning and academic data analysis. Teachers would benefit from greater content collaboration between general education and special education teachers and ELL teachers.

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## Appendix A: Operations and Instructional Audit Rubric

| TALENT   |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Indicator  | Below Standard   | Developing  | Proficient   | Exemplary  |
| <b>1.1. Instructional Practice</b>               | Teacher effectiveness is inconsistent and highly variable from classroom to classroom. There are significant concerns about instruction. Staffing decisions do not reflect teacher effectiveness and student needs.  | Instructional quality is moderate; however, teacher effectiveness is variable from classroom to classroom. Staffing decisions do not always reflect teacher effectiveness and student needs.  | Most classes are led by effective educators, and instructional quality is strong. There are some systems in place to promote and develop teacher effectiveness and make appropriate staffing decisions.  | 100% of classes are led by deeply passionate and highly effective educators. There are strong systems in place to promote staff efficacy and make staffing decisions driven exclusively by student needs.  |
| <b>1.2. Evaluation and Professional Culture</b>  | There are significant concerns about staff professionalism. Staff come to school unprepared, and there is little sense of personal responsibility. There is a culture of low expectations; individuals are not accountable for their work. Evaluations are infrequent, and few if any staff were formally evaluated 3 or more times. Instructional leaders do not provide regular feedback to staff. | There are some concerns about professionalism. Some staff come to school unprepared. Some teachers feel responsible for their work. Some teachers were formally evaluated at least 3 times, but most were not. Leaders communicate some expectations for and feedback on performance, but do not consistently follow-up to see whether or not the feedback is acted upon. | The school is a professional work environment. Most staff are prepared to start the school day on time with appropriate instructional materials ready to go. Most individuals feel responsible for their work. Most teachers were formally evaluated at least 3 times in alignment with SEED expectations. Leaders provide feedback and hold individuals accountable for effort and results. | 100% of staff are prepared to start the school day on time with appropriate instructional materials ready to go. The vast majority of staff feel deep personal responsibility to do their best work. All teachers were formally evaluated at least 3 times. Leaders conduct frequent informal evaluations and provide meaningful feedback. Individuals are held accountable for their performance. |
| <b>1.3. Recruitment and Retention Strategies</b> | The school and/or district lack systems to recruit and attract top talent. Retention of high-quality staff is a significant concern. The school lacks systems and strategies to retain top teachers and leaders.   | The school and/or district have components of a plan for recruitment and retention of quality educators (e.g., mentoring, induction). The plan is not fully developed or consistently implemented.  | The school and/or district have systems for strategic recruitment and retention. Efforts are made to match the most effective educators to the students with the greatest needs. Retention of high-quality teachers is high.   | The school and/or district effectively implement a long-term plan for recruitment and retention. Efforts are made to match the most effective educators to the students with the greatest needs. Deliberate, successful efforts are made to retain top talent.   |



| TALENT                               |   |  |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Indicator                            | Below Standard  | Developing   | Proficient  | Exemplary  |
| <b>1.4. Professional Development</b> | Professional Development (PD) opportunities are infrequent and/or of inconsistent quality and relevance. PD does not align to staff's development areas and/or students' needs. As a result, teachers struggle to implement PD strategies. There is no clear process to support or hold teachers accountable for the implementation of PD strategies. | PD opportunities are provided; however, they are not always tightly aligned with student and adult learning needs. The quality of PD opportunities is inconsistent. Sometimes, teachers report that PD improves their instructional practices. Teachers are not generally held accountable for implementing skills learned through PD. | The school offers targeted, job-embedded PD throughout the school year. PD is generally connected to student needs and staff growth areas identified through observations. Most teachers feel PD opportunities help them improve their classroom practices. Most teachers are able to translate and incorporate PD strategies into their daily instruction. | The school consistently offers rich and meaningful PD opportunities that are aligned to student needs and staff growth areas identified through observations. Teachers effectively translate PD strategies into their daily instruction. The school has a process for monitoring and supporting the implementation of PD strategies. |
| <b>1.5. Leadership Effectiveness</b> | Leadership fails to convey a school mission or strategic direction. The school team is stuck in a fire-fighting or reactive mode, lacks school goals, and/or suffers from initiative fatigue. The school community questions whether the school can/will improve.   | The mission and strategic direction are not well communicated. A school improvement plan does not consistently guide daily activities and decision-making. The community generally understands the need for change, however actions are more often governed by the status quo.   | Leadership focuses on school mission and strategic direction with staff, students, and families. The school is implementing a solid improvement plan and has a clear set of measurable goals. The plan may lack coherence and a strategy for sustainability. Leadership conveys urgency.  | Leadership focuses on school mission and strategic direction with staff, students, and families. The school has a manageable set of goals and a clear set of strategies to achieve those goals. The plan is being implemented and monitored with fidelity. Leadership conveys deep urgency.  |
| <b>1.6. Instructional Leadership</b> | Few staff can articulate a common understanding of what excellent instruction looks like. Instructional leaders do not demonstrate a commitment to developing consistent and high-quality instructional practice school-wide.   | Some staff can articulate a common understanding of what effective instruction looks like. School norms and expectations are enforced with limited consistency. Instructional leaders demonstrate some commitment to improving instructional practice school-wide.   | Most staff articulates a common understanding of what effective instruction looks like. School norms and expectations are consistently enforced. Instructional leaders consistently demonstrate a commitment to improving instructional practice school-wide.   | All staff articulates a common understanding of what effective instruction looks like. Educators relentlessly pursue excellent pedagogy. Instructional leaders have communicated and enforced high expectations school-wide.   |

| ACADEMICS   |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Indicator   | Below Standard   | Developing  | Proficient   | Exemplary  |
| <b>2.1. Academic Rigor*<sup>4</sup></b>                     | Most observed lessons are teacher led. Teachers rarely engage students in higher-order thinking. Most students demonstrate a surface-level understanding of concepts. Observed lessons are indicative of low expectations and little sense of urgency.                           | Some observed lessons are somewhat student-centered, challenging and engaging. Teachers engage students in some higher-order thinking. Many students demonstrate only a surface-level understanding of concepts. Teachers demonstrate moderate expectations and some urgency.             | Observed lessons are appropriately accessible and challenging for most students. Teachers engage students in higher-order thinking, and students are pushed toward content mastery. Lessons begin to engage students as self-directed learners. Teachers communicate solid expectations. | All observed lessons are appropriately accessible and challenging. Teachers push students, promoting academic risk-taking. Students are developing the capacity to engage in complex content and pose higher-level questions to the teacher and peers. Teachers promote high expectations.               |
| <b>2.2. Student Engagement*</b>                             | Few students are actively engaged and excited about their work. The majority of students are engaged in off-task behaviors and some are disruptive to their classmates. Few students are truly involved in the lessons. Observed lessons primarily appeal to one learning style. | Some students exhibit moderate engagement, but many are engaged in off-task behaviors. Some observed lessons appeal to multiple learning styles. Students are involved in the lessons, but participation is more passive than active. Students are easily distracted from assigned tasks. | Most students are engaged and exhibit on-task behaviors. The observed lessons appeal to multiple learning styles. Students are involved in the lesson, but participation is, at times, more passive than active. A handful of students are easily distracted from the task at hand.      | All students are visibly engaged, ready to learn, and on task. Students are clearly focused on learning in all classrooms. Students are actively engaged in the lessons and excited to participate in classroom dialogue and instruction. The lessons appeal to and seem to support all learning styles. |
| <b>2.3. Differentiation and Checking for Understanding*</b> | Most teachers take a one-size-fits-all approach and struggle to differentiate their instruction to meet individual learning needs. There is no evidence around the use data to inform instruction and minimal efforts to check for student understanding.                        | Some teachers are differentiating at least part of the observed lessons; however, the practice is not consistent or widespread. There is some evidence of the use of student data to adapt the learning process. Some teachers use strategies to monitor understanding.                   | Most teachers employ strategies to tier or differentiate instruction at various points in the lesson. Most teachers use data or checks for understanding to differentiate the learning process on the fly. Teachers take time to support students struggling to engage with the content. | Teachers consistently and seamlessly differentiate instruction. Teachers use data and formal/informal strategies to gauge understanding, and differentiate the learning process accordingly. Teaching feels individualized to meet students' unique needs.   |

<sup>4</sup> Ratings for the four sub-indicators marked with an asterisk (\*) are largely based on a composite or average score generated from all classroom observations.

**ACADEMICS**

| Indicator   | Below Standard   | Developing   | Proficient   | Exemplary  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <b>2.4. Curriculum and Instruction Aligned to Common Core State Standards</b> | The school lacks a rigorous, standards-based curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and/or the curriculum is not being implemented with fidelity. As a result, pacing is inconsistent. The percentage of students at or above goal on state assessments is $\geq 10$ points below the state average.   | The school has curricula for some grades and content areas, some of which are rigorous, standards-based. Curricula are implemented with some fidelity. Teachers struggle with consistent pacing. The percentage of students at or above goal on state assessments is 6-10 points below the state average.  | Rigorous, standards-based curricula exist for almost all grade levels and content areas, and are being implemented consistently across classrooms. Teachers demonstrate consistent pacing. The percentage of students at or above goal on state assessments is within 5 percentage points of the state average.  | Rigorous, standards-based curricula exist for all grade levels and content areas. Curricula are aligned with the CCSS and are being implemented with a high degree of fidelity throughout the school. The percentage of students at or above goal on state assessments meets or exceeds the state average.   |
| <b>2.5. Support for Special Populations</b>                                   | The school is inadequately meeting the needs of its high-needs students. IEP goals are not regularly met. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is not fully considered when making placements. The school lacks appropriate interventions and supports for ELs. There are significant achievement gaps between subgroups and non-identified students as measured by state assessments, and no evidence of progress. | The school typically meets the needs of its high-needs students. Most special education students meet their IEP goals, but LRE is not always considered when making placement determinations. The school typically meets the needs of its ELs, and attempts to track progress and set content and language mastery goals. There are significant gaps between subgroups and non-identified students as measured by state assessments and marginal progress over time. | The school consistently meets the needs of its high-needs students. Special education students regularly meet their IEP goals and LRE is a critical factor in placement determinations. The school meets the needs, tracks progress, and sets content and language mastery goals for all ELs. There are small gaps between subgroups and non-identified students as measured by state assessments, and some signs of progress toward closing the gaps. | The school is successfully closing the achievement gap for its high-needs students. General and special education teachers work collaboratively to support students. The school tracks the effectiveness of language acquisition instructional strategies and adjusts programming accordingly. There is no achievement gap between subgroups and non-identified students as measured by state assessments. |
| <b>2.6. Assessment Systems and Data Culture</b>                               | The school lacks a comprehensive assessment system (including summative and benchmark assessments). Teachers rarely collect, analyze,  | The school has some consistent assessments; however, there are major gaps in certain grades and content areas. There are some efforts to collect and use data.   | The school implements a clear system of benchmark assessments. Some teachers are developing familiarity with regularly using formative   | Teachers consistently administer assessments throughout the year. Assessments are standards-based and provide real-time data. Teachers embed formative   |

### ACADEMICS

| Indicator | Below Standard  | Developing                                       | Proficient  | Exemplary  |
|-----------|---|--|---|--|
|           | and/or discuss data. The school lacks or fails to implement MTSS protocols linking data to interventions. | MTSS systems and processes are somewhat present. | assessments to differentiate instruction. The school has emerging processes in place to use the data to inform interventions. | assessments in their daily lessons. The school has strong processes to collect, analyze, and use data to inform interventions. |

### CULTURE AND CLIMATE

| Indicator                      | Below Standard  | Developing   | Proficient  | Exemplary  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>3.1. School Environment</b> | The school fails to create a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. Communal spaces and classrooms may be unkempt, rundown, unsafe, or sterile. Many classrooms are neither warm nor inviting and lack intellectual stimulation. Little to no student work or data is displayed to help convey a sense of pride and high expectations. | The school struggles to provide a welcoming environment conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. Large sections of the school are not clean, bright, welcoming, or reflective of student work. Though the school has some data and student work displayed, efforts to brand the school and convey high expectations are very minimal. Sections of the school need significant attention. | The school generally provides a welcoming learning environment. Most of the facility is in good repair and conducive to teaching and learning. Most classrooms and common spaces are bright and clean, displaying data and student work; however, some sections lack visual stimulation. The school has made an effort to foster school identity through branding and consistent messaging in classrooms and communal spaces. | The school provides a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. Common spaces and classrooms are bright, clean, welcoming, and conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. Data and student work are visible and present throughout the school, inspiring students and teachers to do their best work. There is clear branding and consistent messaging throughout the school, promoting school identity and pride. |
| <b>3.2. Student Attendance</b> | The school has few, if any, strategies to increase attendance. Average daily attendance is $\leq 88\%$ and/or chronic absenteeism is $> 20\%$ .   | The school has some strategies to increase attendance. Average daily attendance is $> 88\%$ and $\leq 93\%$ and/or chronic absenteeism is $> 15\%$ and $\leq 20\%$ .   | The school has multiple, effective strategies to increase attendance. Average daily attendance is $> 94\%$ and $\leq 97\%$ and/or chronic absenteeism is $> 10\%$ and $\leq 15\%$ .   | The school implements effective strategies to increase attendance and on-time arrival. Average daily attendance is $> 97\%$ and chronic absenteeism is $\leq 10\%$ .   |
| <b>3.3. Student Behavior</b>   | A school-wide behavior management plan may exist, but   | A school-wide behavior management plan is in place, and  | A school-wide behavior management plan is in place and  | A school-wide behavior management plan is consistently   |

**CULTURE AND CLIMATE**

| Indicator                                   | Below Standard  | Developing  | Proficient   | Exemplary   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|   | there is little evidence of implementation. Student misbehavior is a significant challenge and creates regular distractions. Disciplinary approaches appear to be inconsistent; students and staff do not have a common understanding of behavioral expectations. Discipline is mostly punitive. The rate of suspensions/expulsions as a proportion of student enrollment is greater than 20% (total # 2020-21 incidents/total enrollment). | there are some signs of implementation. Student misbehavior is a challenge and creates frequent disruptions. There may be confusion among students and staff regarding behavioral expectations. Discipline is mostly punitive, and there is inconsistent reinforcement of desired behaviors. The rate of suspensions/expulsions as a proportion of student enrollment is between 15% and 20%. | effectively implemented most of the time. Student behavior is under control. Misbehavior is infrequent with periodic distractions to instruction. Most students behave in a calm and respectful manner. Students and staff have a common understanding of the behavior policy. There is positive reinforcement of desired behaviors. The suspension/expulsion rate is between 10% and 14%. | and effectively implemented. All students behave in a calm, orderly, and respectful manner throughout the school day. Classroom distractions are minimal, and immediately and appropriately addressed. Rewards and consequences are clear and appropriate and are consistently applied across the school. The suspension/expulsion rate is $\leq 10\%$ .                                  |
| <b>3.4. Interpersonal Interactions</b>      | There is a weak sense of community. The quality and types of student, adult, and student/adult interactions raise concerns. There are signs of divisiveness or hostility among students and with staff. There are minimal signs of connections between students and staff; interactions are largely transactional or triggered when students are off task.  | There is a moderate sense of community. Students are somewhat respectful toward one another and adults. There are some concerns around climate and tone. There is some teasing and divisiveness; however, it does not define school culture. Communication between students and staff is somewhat positive. There are some connections between students and staff.                            | There is a good overall sense of community. Students are generally respectful toward one another and adults. Interactions are mostly positive. There is minimal teasing and divisiveness. Communication between students and staff is generally positive and respectful. There are signs of connections between students and staff. Most staff seem invested in their students.            | There is a strong sense of community. Students are respectful and courteous of one another and adults. Student interactions are overwhelmingly positive and polite. The school is an inclusive and welcoming environment. Student/Adult interactions are positive and respectful, demonstrating strong relationships. Staff seems invested in the well-being and development of students. |
| <b>3.5. Family and Community Engagement</b> | The school offers infrequent opportunities to involve parents in the school community. Family involvement is minimal. Teachers  | The school offers several family events throughout the year. Roughly half of families participate in school activities.   | The school offers periodic, meaningful opportunities for parents/families to engage in student's education. Most   | The school frequently engages parents/family as partners in student's education. Almost all families participate in school  |

### CULTURE AND CLIMATE

| Indicator  | Below Standard  | Developing  | Proficient  | Exemplary  |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  | rarely reach out to families regarding their child's academic progress.   | More than half of all teachers reach out to families regarding their child's academic progress.   | families participate in school activities. Most educators communicate regularly with families.  | activities. Nearly all educators communicate with families on a regular basis.   |
| <b>3.6. Community Partners and Wraparound Strategy</b> | The school offers inadequate supports to address students' nonacademic needs. There are limited wraparound services. The school makes little or no effort to engage community partners to expand services offered through the school. | The school offers some support to address students' nonacademic needs through wraparound services. Community and partner engagement is spotty and event-specific. | The school offers a range of wraparound services to address students' nonacademic needs. The school has several sustained community partnerships. | The school has a clear process for evaluating students' needs and connecting students to appropriate wraparound services. The school has sustained community partnerships to help address student needs. |

### OPERATIONS

| Indicator                               | Below Standard   | Developing  | Proficient  | Exemplary  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>4.1. Adequate Instructional Time</b> | There is not enough time in the school schedule to appropriately meet students' academic needs. There is a significant amount of wasted time in the school calendar and daily schedule. The schedule includes ≤ 5 hours of instruction per day, and ≤ 60 minutes of ELA time. <sup>5</sup> | Students would benefit from increased instructional and/or intervention time. The school calendar and daily schedule could be improved to increase time on task. The schedule includes > 5 and ≤ 5.5 hours of instruction per day, and > 60 and ≤ 90 minutes of ELA time. | The school has taken steps to increase instructional time on task through extended learning opportunities. The school calendar and daily schedule are well constructed. The schedule includes > 5.5 and ≤ 6 hours of instruction per day, and > 90 and ≤ 120 minutes of ELA time. | The school has multiple extended learning opportunities available to students. The school implements a thoughtful and strategic school calendar and daily schedule. The schedule includes > 6 hours of instruction per day, and > 120 minutes of ELA time. |
| <b>4.2. Use of Instructional Time*</b>  | Staff and students use time ineffectively. Misused instructional time results from   | Staff and student use of time is somewhat effective. Some students are off task and there   | Most staff and students use time well. A handful of students require redirection; however, the  | Staff and students maximize their use of time. There is no downtime. Transitions are   |

<sup>5</sup> The total amount of ELA instructional time per day at the secondary level can include reading- and/or writing-intensive coursework.

**Note:** The rubrics draw from the CSDE's School Quality Review and Network Walkthrough Tool, and Mass Insight Educations' School Readiness Assessment.



**OPERATIONS**

| Indicator                            | Below Standard  | Developing   | Proficient  | Exemplary  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
|                                      | misbehavior, poor scheduling, and inefficient transitions. There are missed opportunities to maximize time on task. Observed teachers struggle with pacing and fail to use class time in a constructive manner.   | are missed opportunities to maximize instructional time. Lesson schedules are moderately well planned, paced, and executed. Teachers could be more skilled and/or methodical in the use of class time.   | majority of students transition quickly to academic work when prompted by the teacher. There is minimal downtime. Lessons are well planned, paced, and executed. Teachers are adept at managing and using class time.   | smooth and efficient. Teachers meticulously use every moment of class time to prioritize instructional time on task. Students transition promptly to academic work with minimal cues and reminders from teachers.  |
| <b>4.3. Use of Staff Time</b>        | Educators lack adequate and/or recurring professional development and/or common planning time. Common planning time is currently disorganized and the time is not used effectively. As a result, staff members are unable to develop and/or share practices on a regular basis.                     | Most academic teams have common planning periods (less than 1 hour/week); however, the school has failed to secure vertical and horizontal planning. Collaborative planning time is used at a basic level (e.g., organization of resources or topics not directly related to classroom instruction). | All academic teams have common planning periods (1-2 hours/week) and they are seldom interrupted by non-instructional tasks. Staff members use this time to discuss instructional strategies, discuss student work, develop curricular resources, and use data to adjust instruction. | All educators have weekly common planning time for vertical and horizontal planning (more than 2 hours/week). Common planning periods are tightly protected and only interrupted by emergencies. The school has established tight protocols to ensure that common planning time is used effectively. |
| <b>4.4. Routines and Transitions</b> | The school is chaotic and disorderly. The safety of students and staff is a concern. The school lacks critical systems and routines. Movement of students is chaotic and noisy with little adult intervention. Adults are not present during transitions; therefore, this is very little direction. | The school is somewhat chaotic and/or disorderly, particularly in certain locations and during certain times of day. Some staff make an effort to maintain procedures and routines; however, staff presence is also an issue and redirection of misbehavior is lacking.                              | The school environment is calm and orderly in most locations and during most of the day. Rules and procedures are fairly clear, consistent, and evident. Routines seem somewhat apparent and institutionalized. Adults are present to reinforce norms.                                | The school environment is calm and orderly. Rules and procedures are clear, specific, consistent, and evident. Routines are largely unspoken and institutionalized. Adults are consistently present to reinforce norms.  |

# The Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan Application | Cohort XI

Form Number: ED 708  
Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes

July 23, 2021

Charlene M. Russell-Tucker  
Commissioner of Education  
Connecticut State Department of Education  
450 Columbus Boulevard | Hartford, CT 06103  
[www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov)





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Levy Gillespie

Equal Employment Opportunity Director/Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator (ADA)

Connecticut State Department of Education | 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 505 | Hartford, CT 06103-1841 |  
860-807-2071 | [Levy.gillespie@ct.gov](mailto:Levy.gillespie@ct.gov)

## PART I: COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK OVERVIEW

### A. Commissioner's Network Overview

The Commissioner's Network (the Network) is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to dramatically improve student achievement in up to 25 low-performing schools. The Network offers new resources and empowers teachers and school leaders to implement research-based strategies in schools selected by the Commissioner. Network schools remain part of their local school districts, but the districts and the CSDE secure school-level flexibility and autonomy for the schools in exchange for heightened accountability. Schools participate in the Network for a period of three to five years.

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) § 10-223h(a), the Commissioner may select a school that has been classified as a category four or five school, as described in C.G.S. § 10-223e, to participate in the Network. The Commissioner gives preference for selection to schools: (1) that volunteer to participate in the Network, provided the local board of education and the representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees mutually agree to participate in the Network; (2) in which an existing collective bargaining agreement between the local board of education and the representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees will have expired for the school year in which a Turnaround Plan will be implemented; or (3) that are located in school districts that (A) have experience in school turnaround reform, or (B) previously received a school improvement grant pursuant to Section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 6301, et seq.

#### C.G.S. § 10-223h

- authorizes the Commissioner to establish, within available appropriations, a Commissioner's Network of schools to improve student academic achievement in low-performing schools;
- authorizes the Commissioner to select not more than 25 schools in any single school year that have been classified as a category four school or a category five school pursuant to Section 10-223e to participate in the Network; and
- provides that the Commissioner may select not more than five schools in any single school year from a single school district to participate in the Network.

After the Commissioner initially selects a school to participate in the Commissioner's Network, the local board of education shall establish a Turnaround Committee pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-223h(b). Following the establishment of the Turnaround Committee, the CSDE shall conduct, in consultation with the local board of education, the School Governance Council, and the Turnaround Committee, an operations and instructional audit of the school in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h(c). Once the audit is performed, the Turnaround Committee shall develop a Turnaround Plan for the school by completing this application. As stated in C.G.S. § 10-223h(d), if the Turnaround Committee does not develop a Turnaround Plan, or if the Commissioner determines that a Turnaround Plan developed by the Turnaround Committee is deficient, the Commissioner may develop a Turnaround Plan for the school. If the Commissioner deems it necessary, the Commissioner may appoint a district improvement officer for a school to implement the provisions of a turnaround plan developed by the Commissioner.

## B. Turnaround Plan and Framework

The Turnaround Committee, in consultation with the School Governance Council, shall develop the Turnaround Plan in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h(d) and the guidelines issued by the Commissioner. Accordingly, the Turnaround Plan must:

- provide a rigorous needs analysis informed by the operations and instructional audit;
- identify an evidence-based turnaround model, aligned to school needs and growth areas;
- provide robust strategies to secure, support, develop, evaluate, and retain top talent;
- summarize the school's academic model, including curricula, assessments, and data-driven instruction;
- outline a comprehensive approach to build a positive school culture and climate; and
- develop operational structures to effectively utilize time and resources.

Pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-223h(d), the Turnaround Plan may include proposals changing the hours and schedules of teachers and administrators at the school, the length and schedule of the school day, the length and calendar of the school year, the amount of time teachers shall be present in the school beyond the regular school day, and the hiring or reassignment of teachers or administrators at the school. If provisions of the Turnaround Plan alter the collective bargaining agreements applicable to the administrators and teachers employed by the local board of education, the local board of education and the exclusive bargaining unit for the affected certified employees shall negotiate concerning such provisions in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-153s. See C.G.S. § 10-223h(g).

The Board of Education must approve the Turnaround Plan before the school may implement it. Once the Turnaround Plan is approved, Network school leaders will work with the CSDE Turnaround Office, and other partners, to operationalize the Turnaround Plan by planning and designing tools, systems, and/or policies including, but not limited to:

- school bell schedule;
- school calendar;
- annual assessment calendar;
- staff evaluation schedule;
- professional learning calendar;
- Scientific Research-Based Interventions processes and protocols;
- school organizational chart;
- curricular materials (e.g., lesson plan template, unit plans, pacing guides);
- school budget;
- school climate; and
- calendar of family and community engagement opportunities.

## PART II: TURNAROUND PLAN APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### A. Instructions

Review and follow all directions carefully when completing this application. Complete all of the required sections. The application will be deemed incomplete and/or deficient if required sections are not submitted. The specific timeline for this application will be determined by the CSDE. District leadership must participate in, at minimum, two benchmark meetings with the Turnaround Office to provide updates on elements of the draft Turnaround Plan as it evolves and receive formative feedback. Be prepared to share draft Turnaround Plan components prior to these meetings.

### B. Timeline Summary

Consistent with C.G.S. § 10-223h, the Commissioner's Network process is outlined below. As noted, the extension and expansion of the Commissioner's Network requires new legislative authorization; therefore, initial planning activities for an eleventh prospective cohort of Network schools are underway, pending legislative authorization.

1. Commissioner initially selects the school for the Network.
2. Local board of education forms the Turnaround Committee.
3. CSDE conducts the operations and instructional audit of the school.
4. Turnaround Committee, in consultation with the school governance council, develops the Turnaround Plan and budget proposal.
5. Turnaround Committee reaches consensus or the Commissioner may develop a plan.
6. SBE votes to approve or reject the Turnaround Plan.
7. Local board of education negotiates Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with collective bargaining units for certified staff, if necessary, to establish the working conditions for the school during its turnaround period.
8. Certified staff identified and/or selected to work at the school ratify MOUs on working conditions, if necessary.
9. CSDE awards resources to the school depending on available funds.
10. Network school begins implementation of the Turnaround Plan with support from the CSDE.

### C. Freedom of Information Act

All of the information contained in a proposal submitted in response to this application is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), C.G.S. Section 1-200 et seq. The FOIA declares that, except as provided by federal law or state statute, records maintained or kept on file by any public agency (as defined in statute) are public records and every person has a right to inspect such records and receive a copy of such records.

### D. Questions

All questions regarding the Commissioner's Network should be directed to:

Lisa Lamenzo  
Turnaround Office Division Director  
Connecticut State Department of Education  
E-mail: [lisa.lamenzo@ct.gov](mailto:lisa.lamenzo@ct.gov)

## PART III: COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK TURNAROUND PLAN

### Section 1: Cover Page

|   |  |  |                 |
|---|--|--|-----------------|
| Name of School District:                            | Hartford Public Schools  |  |                 |
| Name of School:                                     | McDonough Middle School  | Grade Levels:                                  | 6-8             |
| Name of School Principal:                           | Marjorie Rice  | # of Years Serving as Principal at this School | 2               |
|   |  | # of Years in Total as Administrator           | 4               |
| Turnaround Committee Chairperson: <sup>1</sup>      | Tory Niles   |  |                 |
| Phone Number of Chairperson:                        | 860-798-6063   |  |                 |
| E-mail of Chairperson:                              | <a href="mailto:Nilet001@hartfordschools.org">Nilet001@hartfordschools.org</a>       |  |                 |
| Address of Chairperson:                             | Street Address:  | 330 Wethersfield Avenue                        |                 |
|   | City:  | Hartford, CT                                   | Zip Code: 06114 |
| Name of School Board Chairperson:                   | Philip Rigue   |  |                 |
| Signature of School Board Chairperson: <sup>2</sup> |  |  | Date: 3/15/22   |
| Name of Superintendent:                             | Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez  |  |                 |
| Signature of Superintendent:                        |  |  | Date: 3/15/22   |

<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-223h(b)(1), the superintendent, or his or her designee, shall serve as the chairperson of the Turnaround Committee.

<sup>2</sup> By signing this cover page, the chairperson of the local board of education affirms that the board has established the Turnaround Committee in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h(b), and that the superintendent has informed the board of the content of the Turnaround Plan.

## Section 2: Setting the Direction

An organization needs to know where it is and where it wants to be in order to improve. Effective organizations have a clear direction that informs the work of all employees. An organization's direction is used as a filter for all work. As noted in *Turnaround Leadership Domain* (Center on School Turnaround, 2017), turnaround leaders set the direction and expectations, and articulate the commitment to school turnaround. The leadership team also engages all employees and stakeholders in the process of sharing and gathering feedback and making needed revisions to finalize and communicate the direction to others. Each person needs to own the direction and understand how his or her role supports the mission. Setting a direction is important for any organization and it is particularly critical for those seeking to make rapid improvement—as is the case for the lowest-performing schools. To improve rapidly, the school needs to be willing to identify and address the root causes of its successes and failures to transform its systems and practices.

**Instructions:** Using the space provided, identify the district's and school's vision and theory of action. (Please note for this section there is a limit of 200 words per response box.)

A **vision statement** serves as a common direction of growth for your organization and its stakeholders. This statement describes the organization's clear and inspirational long-term desired change resulting from its work.

**Theory of Action** uses the "If we do X, then we can achieve Y" construct for transformative outcomes. For example, if the state education agency (SEA), local education agency (LEA) or school focuses on implementing effective instructional practice, then the organizational goal of improved student performance is supported. Thinking through a theory of action allows organizations to more clearly see the chain of changes that will have to happen for the intervention to be successful. This can help in the planning stage to be sure the solutions that are chosen truly align with the impact that would like to be seen.

**District Vision Statement** (limit 200 words)

HPS students will graduate ready to transform our world.

**District Theory of Action** (limit 200 words)

If we set and hold all students to high expectations, engage all students in meaningful, differentiated ways that match their needs and meet their interests, focus on the growth of each and every student and school, expand the capacity of our leaders, staff, and schools, then we will achieve equitable outcomes in which every student thrives and every school is high performing.

**School Vision** (limit 200 words)

At McDonough Middle School, we empower our students to be agents of change in our community, and society, by instilling in them critical thinking skills, a global perspective, and our core values.

**School Theory of Action** (limit 200 words)

If the McDonough Middle School Community implements standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment through targeted professional learning on student-centered differentiation, and creates a collaborative school culture within an engaging, inclusive environment; then we will achieve the equitable outcomes in which every student thrives and is prepared for the rigor of high school and post-secondary success; ultimately transforming their world.



### Section 3: Leadership

One of the clear keys to successful turnaround is strong leadership at all levels (Herman et al., 2008). The objectives for both school and district leaders are to articulate a clear and compelling vision, create attainable short-term goals, define high performance expectations, hold faculty and staff accountable for those expectations, and continually celebrate wins (Leithwood, 2012). Research points to the importance of having a strong leader who can change culture and influence staff efficacy (Meyers & Hitt, 2017) and who demonstrates an intense focus and direction on academic outcomes (Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002). In addition, the district needs to embrace the turnaround effort as a district-led initiative. One study finds that the “district instructional leadership builds capacity by coordinating and aligning work of others through communication, planning, and collaboration” (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008, p. 318). Throughout the turnaround process, the district must coordinate the work by setting high performance expectations, sharing those expectations in a transparent way, continually checking progress on those expectations, and — with the school — co-developing further interventions, as needed, based upon the school’s progress (Leithwood, 2012). These types of leadership focuses can contribute to a productive, supportive and energizing school culture that enables adults in schools and district offices to collaboratively work toward improved outcomes for students (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

**Instructions:** In the boxes below, address the following:

Describe the process to hire and retain an exceptional school principal with a track record of success, preferably in school turnaround and/or an urban school environment.

Student success depends on high performing schools, which are driven by high performing leaders. It is imperative that HPS school leaders have a mindset of focusing their leadership on learning. The Office of Talent Management will ensure that each school is led by an effective leader and that each leader has the support to develop and retain highly qualified teachers from recruitment to induction and ultimately through their career path. The Office of Talent Management works to identify, screen, and hire highly effective school leaders who demonstrate the competencies outlined in the Common Core of Leading – Connecticut School Leadership Standards, to ensure students thrive, and schools are high performing.

Marjorie Rice is currently serving her second year as McDonough Middle School principal in 2021-2022 and will continue in the role as principal to lead the implementation of the Turnaround Plan. As part of the interview process Ms. Rice’s candidacy was thoroughly reviewed and screened to assess her prior experience relative to school leadership and her capacity to lead a school, based on the evidence of four critical leader competencies: Leading for Teaching and Learning, Leading for Equity and Access, Leading High Functioning Teams for School Improvement, and Leading for a Positive Culture and Climate.

As an educator with 24 years of experience in Hartford Public Schools, Ms. Rice has served the students and families of HPS in various roles ranging from classroom teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and now as principal of McDonough Middle School. During this time she has made significant contributions. Her educational background and certification in Remedial and Corrective Reading as well as her cross-endorsement in Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) have been an asset in supporting teachers across the district with building capacity to support early literacy skills and to plan and deliver high quality lessons that offer access to grade level standards to all students. Ms. Rice was instrumental in creating embedded Professional Learning for Best Practices for Multilingual Learners, infusing Data Driven decision making, developing Learner Centered Problems on Common Core Standards, and implementing Learning Walks in order to impact instructional change. Her leadership in this area resulted in multilingual learners



meeting growth targets. Ms. Rice also implemented a tiered approach to reading instruction that impacted student achievement as evidenced by local and state assessments.

Ms. Rice has demonstrated a drive to continue her own leadership development. As part of the first UCAPP Plus Hartford Cohort, she earned her degree in Educational Leadership with a focus on leading in an urban context. She participated in the district's Level I Principal Pipeline to strengthen her capacity as a school-based leader. As a result, Ms. Rice was transitioned from district instructional coach to assistant principal at a PreK-8 school after successfully completing the screening process to enter the district's assistant principal candidate pool. After serving in the capacity as an assistant principal and careful review of her experience and qualifications, Ms. Rice was recruited to apply for the Acting Principalship at McDonough. The Central Office Screening (COS) process for an Acting Principal was conducted by the Superintendent and Chief of Schools. During the interview, the interviewers assessed her ability to effectively meet the criteria of the district's leadership standards, which are aligned to the Connecticut School Leadership Standards: Instructional Leadership, Talent Management, Organizational Systems, Climate and Culture. After a successful interview, Ms. Rice was appointed as Acting Principal for McDonough Middle School in the Fall of 2020.

Under her leadership as Acting Principal, McDonough's chronic absenteeism was reduced from 86 percent to 59 percent through a team approach to providing outreach and equitable support. Through a focus on establishing and maintaining high expectations aligned to the HPS Instructional Vision, utilizing Data Wise practices, professional learning, job embedded coaching, learning walks, and feedback cycles; the school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) created instructional change to ensure all students thrive and succeed. In March 2021 Ms. Rice was recommended as a strong candidate to McDonough's School Governance Council (SGC) interview process. The feedback gathered from the SGC in regard to Ms. Rice's strengths and areas for growth was forwarded to the Superintendent for review. Ms. Rice was then invited to an interview with the Superintendent and the Chief of Schools. After advancing through the interview, Ms. Rice was recommended as Principal of McDonough Middle School to the Hartford Public Schools Board of Education who in turn unanimously accepted the Superintendent's recommendation. Ms. Marjorie Rice began her appointment as Principal of McDonough Middle School on April 20, 2021.

Explain how administrators will be evaluated on an annual basis to inform leadership staffing decisions.

Administrators will be evaluated on an annual basis as outlined in the Hartford Public Schools Administrator Development and Evaluation Handbook by the assigned HPS Executive Director of School Leadership. The HPS evaluation process is centered on best-practices by ensuring that leaders are growing with timely, focused feedback that is aligned to standards. The administrator participates in the evaluation process as part of a cycle of continuous improvement. The evaluation begins with goal-setting for the school year and setting the stage for implementation of a goal-driven plan. The cycle continues with a Mid-Year Formative Review, followed by continued implementation. The latter part of the process offers administrators a chance to self-assess and reflect on progress to date, a step that informs the summative evaluation. Evidence from both informal and formal observations with feedback and artifact reviews also inform the summative evaluation. The summative evaluation and self-assessment become important sources of information for the administrator's subsequent goal setting, as the cycle continues into the subsequent year.

Describe the district's role in supporting and monitoring school administration in regards to implementation and monitoring of the improvement plan and budget, if approved.

School administration, in particular the school principal, will be supported by the HPS Executive Director of School Leadership. In addition, an Executive Coach will be hired for the 2022-2023 school year to guide the school principal and the members of the administrative team in the implementation and monitoring of the improvement plan. The Executive Coach, an experienced urban school or turnaround administrator with a proven record, will assist the HPS administrative team in establishing the systems and structures necessary for effective teaching and learning, a safe and nurturing climate and culture for students and staff, and efficient daily operations of a highly diverse urban high school. HPS plans to seek a partnership with Achievement Network (ANet) for this purpose. ANet employs a facilitative, competency-based coaching model to coach for equitable practice in order to achieve transformational change. Furthermore, the administrative team will also participate in a variety of leadership opportunities: CSDE Network NetStat Sessions, Alliance District Symposiums, walk-through and feedback sessions conducted by the Commissioner's Network, district mandated professional learning comprised of Administrative Institute and Instructional Learning Practice (ILPs) held on a monthly basis, and leadership development conducted by external partners (e.g., ReVISION Learning). The district is fully committed to supporting the administrative team's participation in these learning opportunities.

Describe stakeholder (family, community, student, other) engagement processes and structures (planning and development, implementation, and revising of plan to meet current needs).

A McDonough Middle School Turnaround Committee was established in the 2020-2021 school year. The committee consisted of the following stakeholder groups: teachers, staff, students, parents, administrators, and community partners. This committee engaged in a series of meetings where they reviewed multiple sources of data, inclusive of the Commissioner's Network Operations and Instructional Audit Report conducted in October 2021, to inform a Turnaround Plan for McDonough. The result was submission of The Commissioner's Network Turnaround Application in February 2022.

The McDonough Middle School Executive Director of School Leadership, Ms. Tory Niles-Outler, was designated by the Superintendent of Schools as Turnaround Committee chair to lead the Turnaround Plan Application. The chair immediately engaged the current McDonough administrative team, Ms. Marjorie Rice and Mr. William Conroy-Longo, to provide an overview of the Commissioner's Network, review 2021-2022 timeline, establish a committee and discuss next steps. Principal Marjorie Rice provided an update on launching the Turnaround Committee to the McDonough staff in fall 2021. An invitation to participate on the 2021-2022 committee was extended to all faculty and staff. In addition, formal communication was sent to the McDonough Union School Committee to appoint two teachers and a parent to the Turnaround Committee. Outreach methods resulted in a 11-member Turnaround Committee: Ms. Evette Avila, Chief of Schools; Dr. Madeline Negron, Chief of Academics; Ms. Tory Niles-Outler, Executive Director of School Leadership; Ms. Marjorie Rice, Principal; Mr. William Conroy-Longo, Assistant Principal; Mr. Patrick Williams, Catholic Charities Community Partner; Ms. Amanda LoStimolo, union-appointed teacher; Ms. Kailyn Polzella, union-appointed teacher; Ms. Emilia Oliveira, teacher and HFT Union Rep; Mr. Eriberto Plaza, Board of Education-approved parent; Ms. Quiesha Davis, union-appointed parent.

## Section 4: Data and Needs Analysis

### PERFORMANCE TARGETS

**Instructions:** Network school progress will be compared to the leading and lagging indicators identified in the chart below. Under the “Baseline and Historic Data” columns, please enter school data for each of the past three years. The indicators with an asterisk must be in alignment to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Milestone targets when determining performance targets.

| Performance Indicators                                      | Baseline/Historic Data |         |               |             | Performance Targets |         |         |
|---|------------------------|---------|---------------|-------------|---------------------|---------|---------|
|   | 2018-19                | 2019-20 | 2020-21       | 2021-22 YTD | 2021-22             | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
| Student Enrollment  | 294                    | 391     | 345           | 316         | n/a                 | n/a     | n/a     |
| Next Generation Accountability Index                        | 47.7                   | N/A     | not available | N/A         | 60.5                | 63.5    | 66.6    |
| English Language Arts (ELA) School Performance Index (SPI)* | 47.8                   | N/A     | not available | N/A         | 55.6                | 58.0    | 60.5    |
| ELA Smarter Balanced Growth *                               | 48.0%                  | N/A     | N/A           | N/A         | 68.7%               | 72.6%   | 76.5%   |
| Math School Performance Index (SPI)*                        | 37.9                   | N/A     | not available | N/A         | 50.8                | 53.8    | 56.8    |
| Math Smarter Balanced Growth *                              | 35.8%                  | N/A     | N/A           | N/A         | 65.0%               | 69.4%   | 73.8%   |
| Average Daily Attendance Rate                               | 91.1%                  | 91.6%   | 79.7%         | 82.4%       | 90.0%               | 90.5%   | 91.0%   |
| Percentage of Students Chronically Absent*                  | 25.4%                  | 25.5%   | 61.5%         | 63.3%       | 19.4%               | 17.6%   | 15.8%   |
| Classroom Teacher Attendance (Average FTE Days Absent)      | 18.0                   | 19.01   | 14.7          | 9.9         | 16.0                | 14.0    | 12.0    |
| Suspension/Expulsion Rate                                   | 11.7%                  | 18.1%   | 3.2%          | 14.9%       | 14.3%               | 13.5%   | 12.8%   |

| Performance Indicators   | Baseline/Historic Data |         |         |                | Performance Targets |         |         |
|--|------------------------|---------|---------|----------------|---------------------|---------|---------|
|  | 2018-19                | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22<br>YTD | 2021-22             | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
| Grade 6 ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment- "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level"  | 14.4%                  | N/A     | 2.1%    | N/A            | 10.2%               | 18.3%   | 26.4%   |
| Grade 7 ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment- "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level"  | 21.7%                  | N/A     | 5.2%    | N/A            | 13.0%               | 20.7%   | 28.5%   |
| Grade 8 ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment- "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level"  | 18.0%                  | N/A     | 7.8%    | N/A            | 15.3%               | 22.7%   | 30.2%   |
| Grade 6 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment- "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level" | 7.3%                   | N/A     | 0.0%    | N/A            | 8.3%                | 16.7%   | 25.0%   |
| Grade 7 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment- "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level" | 7.9%                   | N/A     | 2.4%    | N/A            | 10.5%               | 18.5%   | 26.6%   |
| Grade 8 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment- "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level" | **                     | N/A     | 0.0%    | N/A            | 8.3%                | 16.7%   | 25.0%   |
| Grade 8 NGSS Science - "Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level"                    | 23.3%                  | N/A     | 14.0%   | N/A            | 20.8%               | 27.6%   | 34.3%   |

\* Indicators with an asterisk must be in alignment to ESSA Milestone targets

\*\* The data are suppressed to ensure confidentiality.

### Root Cause Analysis

Using the school data, along with the school audit findings reported by the Turnaround Office as a foundation, the turnaround committee will conduct a root cause analysis. Root cause is defined as: the deepest underlying cause or causes of positive or negative outcomes within any process that, if dissolved, would eliminate or substantially reduce the outcome. Root cause analysis is the process that allows us to move from data to action. The data analysis and identification of challenges and contributing factors tell us what is happening at our schools. Root cause analysis will tell us why it is happening. Once we understand the why, we can then develop targeted interventions to address the challenge. There are several resources available to conduct a root cause analysis. Two of the most common methods are the "5 Whys" model or the Fishbone Diagram. Root Cause Analysis: A School Leader's Guide to Using Data to Dissolve Problems (Preuss, 2013), provides additional examples specific to schools. Additionally, the [CSDE Needs Assessment with Root Cause Toolkit](#) utilizes data collection, analysis and protocols to aid in the process of identifying those root causes. **The root cause findings should serve as the basis for school improvement plan development.**

## Section 5: TURNAROUND MODEL

**Instructions:** Please select one of the following turnaround models described in C.G.S. § 10-223h(d). Using the space provided, describe the core components of the model that pertain to talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

### **(E) Model E (Turnaround Committee creates their own model):**

McDonough Middle School's Turnaround Committee developed a turnaround model that will utilize strategies, methods and best practices that have been proven to be effective in improving student academic performance. One of the core tenets and a cornerstone of the theory of action for McDonough's plan (Model E) is to implement strong, differentiated Tier I instruction that holds students to high expectations while meeting their diverse needs through a learning environment that is inclusive, innovative, collaborative, engaging and student-centered. We will achieve this through the use of targeted, job embedded learning that prioritizes research-based strategies for special populations with a focus on differentiation, accommodations/modifications, second language acquisition, and sheltered instruction, as well as student-centered instructional practices that build students' competencies in the Hartford Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate. These practices will result in a culture of achievement and a commitment to continuous improvement through practitioner reflection and shared beliefs in collective efficacy.

The McDonough Middle School turnaround model includes a clear and concise plan for how to approach talent, academics, climate/culture and school operations. This plan is summarized below.

### **Talent:**

McDonough Middle School will work to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain effective school leaders, teachers and support staff through the school's turnaround plan. Staffing decisions will be intentionally planned, based on student need, to leverage the strength and experience of teachers in their support of students. Some recruitment strategies will include reaching out to the many colleges and universities in our area, creating a recruitment video through "McDonough TV", attending recruitment fairs, and leveraging our student-led podcast as another recruitment strategy. Additionally, the team will work with specific intention in the recruitment, support, development, and retention of effective teachers, as consistency in effective teaching staff is integral to positive student outcomes. Currently, 45% of McDonough's teaching staff ("teacher" as defined by the Hartford Federation of Teacher contract) has been teaching for two or fewer years. In the areas of math, ELA, social studies, and science (12 positions total), 9 teachers have been teaching for fewer than two years. Currently, just eight teachers have attained tenure. A key component of the McDonough Middle School turnaround model involves intentional retention strategies, including buttressing the New Teacher Academy, where targeted Professional Learning is created and developed for teachers by veteran McDonough teachers. Here, to increase impact, the school will leverage the unique partnership between McDonough Middle School and Hartford Public High School (HPHS). As a feeder school, McDonough will seek opportunities to pair staff with TEAM mentors from HPHS who will be well-positioned to help teachers align their learning to the expectations of high school.

Critical to the talent strategy will be communicating a shared vision for high expectations through a comprehensive Professional Learning Plan. A clear plan for professional learning is paramount to supporting McDonough Middle School's vision for this turnaround plan which is aligned to the Instructional Vision for the Hartford Public Schools and the District Model for Excellence. This Professional Learning Plan will include professional learning on practices that are key to student success and contextualized to meet the needs of the McDonough community.

**Areas of focus include:**

- strong Tier I instruction
- differentiation
- standards-based lesson plan development
- classroom management strategies
- integration of Connecticut English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards
- sheltered instruction protocols
- student-centered instructional practices such as flipped classrooms and project-based learning
- engaging student discourse
- culturally responsive /anti racist pedagogy
- pathways to cross-endorsement for Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL)/bilingual education for all staff
- co-teaching models

Additionally, this Professional Learning Plan will include explicit structures to create a lab-school model that supports collaboration among and between staff, including, New Teacher Academy; teacher-led learning walks; a unique community of practice with educators at Hartford Public High School, and intensive coaching cycles. When McDonough implements this Professional Learning Plan, it will create clear pathways for instructional leadership within the school community.

A professional learning calendar will be published prior to the start of the school year based on the amount of time delineated by the Office of Academics for school-based use. Additionally, McDonough seeks to implement additional school-based professional learning time every Wednesday following students' early release to Community Based Organizations (CBO) for afternoon enrichment experiences. In an effort to maximize the amount of time for professional learning, McDonough will leverage instructional school-based coaches and the Instructional Leadership Team to develop, support, and facilitate these professional learning initiatives and differentiate the learning time for their colleagues. By leveraging veteran teaching staff as the facilitators and consultants for professional learning, the plan will create incentivized pathways for leadership within the school community. The plan will utilize four unified arts teachers built into the schedule to allow teachers increased time to observe vetted model classrooms through peer-to-peer walkthroughs, engage in coaching cycles and communities of practice, and learn via the New Teacher Academy.

**This plan will require:**

- Modified school-day schedule to include weekly Wednesday early dismissal/CBO activities for Professional Learning and Extended Work Days on Tuesdays and Thursdays (volunteer basis and compensation provided)
- 2-1.0 FTE Instructional Coaches-School Based (1.0 Math, 1.0 ELA)
- 1-1.0 FTE Multilingual Learner Coach
- 4.0 FTE Unified Arts Teacher
- ARCTELL partnership for Cross Endorsements for Teaching Staff
- Purchase of *The Art of Coaching Teams*
- Outside vendor for professional learning on anti-racist practices
- The Instructional Vision of the Hartford Public Schools
- School Vision Posters for all classrooms and offices printed by outside vendors
- School Vision banners for corridors, main entrances, and Cafeteria printed by outside vendors
- *LincSpring Culture Kit for Peer to Peer Walkthroughs*
- Stipend for New Teacher Academy Funding
- Partnership with ReVISION Learning
- Stipends for Tuesdays and Thursdays after school professional learning

**Academics:**

The McDonough Middle School turnaround committee's plan will ensure that all students have equitable access to strong Tier I curricula that are rigorous, culturally responsive, engaging, standards-based and differentiated to meet their learning needs.

The vision for high quality differentiated Tier I instruction at McDonough is focused on student-centered instruction that supports the development of the whole child, with a focus on high expectations to realize the Portrait of a Graduate competencies. Tier I instruction at McDonough will be rigorous and aligned to follow the demands of the Common Core State Standards. Culturally responsive teaching will be a hallmark for all lessons where student cultural identity is centered and honored. Students will be engaged deeply in the discourse of academics as they learn collaboratively. Student voice and choice will be leveraged to engage students as they learn. All instruction will be differentiated to meet the needs of students through product, process, and content to ensure all students are given access points so they may reach grade level proficiency and exceed expectations. Considerations for high needs populations of Multilingual learners, students with exceptionalities, students with 504 plans, and students with learning gaps from the pandemic will be made to ensure these students receive equitable instruction. Student assessment practices will be focused on self and peer assessment to ensure students are consistently reflecting on where they are in their journey towards grade level proficiency.

Intentional lesson planning and job-embedded professional learning is key to meeting this vision of high-quality Tier 1 instruction. The audit stated a need to ensure that teachers are "sufficiently knowledgeable in what it means or how to deliver rigorous and well-differentiated instruction (2021)." Therefore, each content team will provide the Instructional Leadership Team with a scope and sequence developed from the district provided curriculum. Curriculum mapping will take place to ensure all instruction is grounded in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation State Standards (NGSS) frameworks. The academic program will include intentional lesson planning, where teachers will utilize a universal lesson planning template that includes intentional plans for differentiation, accommodations and modifications, and checks for understanding in order to meet individual student needs. The Instructional Leadership Team will develop this lesson planning template for the school, and instructional coaches and administration will lead weekly department meetings in order to provide feedback on instructional plans. The Instructional Lesson Planner template will ensure all lessons contain comprehensive differentiation and checks for understanding. School-based coaches will engage in coaching cycles focusing on differentiation and assessment techniques. In the weekly-department meetings, teachers will analyze and provide feedback on these areas of each other's lesson plans and progress through a Data Wise cycle that positively impacts student outcomes and creates instructional change. Instructional coaches will engage in targeted coaching cycles with teachers in content areas to differentiate Tier I curriculum and to ensure access for all learners. Classroom Learning Walks will be conducted by administrators and instructional coaches weekly to observe instructional practices and provide feedback. These Learning Walks will be part of a greater system that showcases high-quality teaching and learning through a lab-school model and serve as data collection for identifying problems of practice through the Data Wise Process. Additionally, the Learning Walks will serve as a vehicle to model differentiated instruction and effective lesson planning. Finally, a major component of high-quality instruction is ensuring that McDonough puts students at the center of their learning. In addition to creating more voice and choice through differentiated instruction and self and peer assessment cycles, staff will receive professional learning to implement student-led conferences in alignment with the instructional vision of high expectations.

McDonough will refine its robust Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) plan that will ensure equitable outcomes for all students. The MTSS Academic team will be composed of a Math Resource teacher, an ELA Resource teacher, and an Intervention Specialist. To determine placement and cycle focus, all students will be administered baseline assessments in the areas of literacy and mathematics at the beginning of the year.



Students will also take diagnostic assessments for reading, such as Reading Plus Benchmark Assessments. A program such as Reading Plus will serve as a Tier II intervention for students during their MTSS block. The ELA Resource teacher will service Tier II and Tier III students as delineated by diagnostic assessments and will progress monitor student growth in weekly MTSS meetings while they are in the MTSS cycle. Similarly, in the area of math, students will take a readiness assessment and a math diagnostic assessment to determine Tier II and Tier III student groups. The Math Resource teacher will then service students in learning cycles that are similarly structured to ELA. During the MTSS block, students will utilize a program such as Zearn as a Tier II intervention. The Intervention Specialist will progress monitor all Tier II and Tier III students, as well as coordinate and analyze intervention data, provide professional learning around the area of Tier I differentiation and small Tier II groups in the classroom setting. Homeroom teachers will also service students in small groups during this block. All students will take math and literacy assessments three times a year (fall, winter, spring) in order to accurately gauge progress towards learning goals and ensure all students are on a pathway to proficiency. Student data will be monitored through a collaboration between the classroom teacher(s) and MTSS staff at weekly MTSS meetings.

The McDonough Middle School turnaround committee is dedicated to making distinct and visible progress in instruction for Multilingual Learners. Thirty-eight-point eight percent of students who are identified as ML students, many of whom are Newcomers. Of the 137 ML students, 41 are Newcomers. For this reason, this committee will prioritize training staff in TESOL strategies and the CELP Framework and will leverage the knowledge/skill set of the TESOL department as well as seek an expert in the field. McDonough Middle School currently has a sheltered instruction model where students who have been in the country for less than 10 months work directly with a teacher on acquiring English language skills in the Newcomer Center. The Newcomer Center will implement student success plan portfolios for the existing newcomer center students. The purpose of these plans will be to set goals with newcomers to support their acquisition of English language, to set and implement action steps to support the newcomer in meeting their goals, to monitor newcomers' progress toward meeting their goals, and to celebrate successes along the way as newcomers reach their goals. These plans will remain in effect for three years as students progress through the stages of second language acquisition and subsequent TESOL program models and will become permanent components of student's Portrait of the Graduate portfolios.

Due to the high-volume of Multilingual Learners in the school, professional learning will be critical to making sure students are able to access Tier I content. This will be accomplished through Professional Learning surrounding Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocols and the CELP Framework.

Students with exceptionalities make up 23.8% of the population of students at McDonough. McDonough will ensure that students are served in an efficient and effective manner starting with equitable access to Tier I instruction. Currently, there are 18 students in 6th grade with individualized education plans, 24 students in 7th grade, and 29 students in 8th grade. The students have a combination of push in and pull-out services. A resource alignment of all IEP, ML, and 504 plans will be conducted to ensure appropriate and equitable programming. If services are found to be insufficient or inefficient, a redirection of resources will be delivered to service providers in order to tighten systems and close learning gaps. Professional learning will be provided to ensure implementation of effective strategies for high needs subgroups.

Currently, there is not a set time where Tier I content area instructors have specified time to meet and plan with either the TESOL or Special Education team to work directly on modifying or accommodating student needs. This Turnaround Plan includes additional time for intentional collaboration between student support staff and content area teachers. A structure will be built where teachers and service providers will unpack major unit learning goals and highlight standards assessed so that lessons can be differentiated to meet



individual student needs. Additionally, staff will be trained in integrated co-teaching models in order to more effectively service students with exceptionalities and Multilingual Learners.

Finally, the implementation of a Virtual Academy will be developed and implemented as a robust after-school on demand tutoring/enrichment program. In Virtual Academy, students will have on demand access to tutoring from content-area teachers as well as a bank of online mini-lessons, which students and teachers will create for enrichment purposes. Here, students will be surveyed for their interests and clusters will be created to provide students with opportunities beyond the curriculum. Students will engage in self-selected activities and will be paired with experts in these areas. Our ASPIRE survey of families will also serve as a mechanism to connect students to the talents of family and community partners in a meaningful way. Students will remain in these clusters for a quarter and will switch their enrichment four times in a year. Possible activities may include social justice work, dance, art and design, coding, STEM pursuits, music (singing, composing, instruments), foreign language, and theater.

This plan will require:

- Internal and External partners to support creation of lab school model
- Site licenses to diagnostic assessment and to intervention programs for all students
- Funding “Virtual Academy”
- 4.0 Unified Arts Teachers to support additional coverage time
- Stipends for Instructional Leadership Team
- TESOL Consultant
- Professional Learning on effective differentiation and engagement strategies
- Professional Learning on Integrated co-teaching models from outside vendor
- Professional Learning around Rubric Implementation
- Student led conference template
- Professional Learning around conferencing, student led conferences
- Virtual Academy stipends
- Virtual Academy curriculum resources and staffing

### **Culture and Climate:**

McDonough will implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports that focuses on building out the hybrid model of Restorative Practices, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), socio-emotional learning, and strong attendance habits. The ACE (Attendance Climate and Culture and Engagement) Team to provide McDonough with consistent and supportive leadership since the 2020-2021 school year with a commitment to shifting the climate and culture to a positive, welcoming place for staff and students. Since 2020, McDonough has gone through a culture and climate “rebranding” where core values were established, developed, and maintained through the PBIS framework in order to set forth conditions that are culturally and socially responsive while holding students to high expectations for their behaviors. The McDonough Middle School core values are: respect, organize, achieve, responsible and safe. These values are incentivized and rewarded through a token economy where students earn points to spend at the school store and classes earn weekly incentives. Just as in academics, staff will focus their culture- and climate-building work on being student-centered. In that, staff will engage in professional learning that helps them to investigate and develop their understanding of what students need academically, emotionally, culturally, and socially. A newly hired Climate and Culture Coach will support staff in this learning. Additionally, staff will receive culturally responsive training based on Zoretta Hammond’s *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, which was purchased with planning year funds, designed, and delivered by a member of the Instructional Leadership Team. The newly hired Assistant Principal will also support this work.

McDonough will continue to be a place where students want to be, and therefore a major goal of the plan is to lower rates of chronic absenteeism. The school has struggled with chronic absenteeism; thus, the McDonough Middle School turnaround committee and the ACE team has worked to develop a plan to help cultivate a feeling of belonging and a culture of daily attendance. Every morning begins with Crew (an advisory period, similar to what they will experience in high school), where students meet with two teachers and do check-ins for social-emotional learning, academics, and culture setting. During this time, students participate in daily circles while the student government leads the announcements in English and Spanish to support Spanish and Portuguese speaking students. Crew teachers call families to check in with parents/guardians if a student is absent and help to generate solutions in order to get the child back in school. For Tier II attendance students, McDonough provides on-going mentoring with a staff member to help develop positive student-adult relationships in the school. A recurring barrier to attendance is the ability of students to have reliable and safe transport to and from school. For this reason, the McDonough turnaround committee aims to obtain licenses for the app “Waddle” in order to create a “Walking School Bus” -- a network where students can walk home in a group while parents/guardians track the students as they make it safely home through their phones. The “Walking School Bus” will further build community amongst our families and students.

The climate and culture team will organize, plan, and create a space for families in the form of a parent/culture center. McDonough, as a community school, needs to have a space for community resources to support families. The Culture and Climate team will provide a foundation for community events that will be held in this space. The turnaround team envisions this space to hold TESOL and target language classes for families and staff through this plan. Currently, McDonough hosts an annual backpack and school supply drive through a community partnership with the Barrio Riders. This event is one of many that supports the needs of families in the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, the school provides free breakfast and lunch to all students as 90.4% of students are eligible. Given the significant needs of students and their families exacerbated by the pandemic, the community requires more comprehensive wrap-around services. This means McDonough will create partnerships with community agencies and local nonprofits to provide support for the basic needs of families. The community partner of the school, Catholic Charities, has been foundational to the work that the school is doing to engage families, such as the food/toy drives and community garden events held earlier this year. This work is reflected in the District Model for Excellence. Hartford Public Schools values the community it serves and will support McDonough’s intentions to strengthen ties with families, businesses, and other local organizations.

As stated above, McDonough will implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support not only for academics but also behaviors. In order to achieve this, McDonough will create and implement a MTSS behavior system to support students in need of additional support. The MTSS Behavior Team will be composed of several support staff members including behavior technicians, social workers, school counselors, and an intervention specialist. Based on office referrals as well as teacher referrals, students will be observed in the classroom before starting a tier II support for behavior. McDonough will create a library of resources that could be used for tier II behaviors and specific interventions will be picked based on the behavior being exhibited. Each behavior cycle will last 6-8 weeks and be progress monitored throughout the cycle. At the completion of the cycle, the team will meet to discuss any progress made and how the student will continue or if there needs to be a change to the intervention being provided. Support staff will also be trained in understanding behavior as functions and learn how to complete Functional Behavior Assessment and develop Behavior intervention Plans needed for Tier III supports. McDonough will use tiered MTSS behavioral supports, and include specific strategies grounded in the philosophy of Restorative Practices and PBIS.

This plan will require:

- Attendance Works partnership

- *Kickboard* platform
- Climate & Culture Coach FTE 1.0
- Monitor for the “Walking School Bus”
- Purchase Waddle! App to monitor “Walking School Bus”
- Purchase additional *Circle Forward* books
- IIRP Resources and Professional Learning
- Professional Learning on PBIS and Classroom Management
- Funding for family/community events
- Funding for Family Center (technology and furniture)
- TESOL Classes/ Spanish/Portuguese Classes
- 1.0 Adult Ed TESOL Teacher
- 1.0 Spanish Teacher
- 1.0 Portuguese Teacher
- Rosetta Stone licenses
- APPL OPI Assessment licenses

### **Operations:**

McDonough Middle School’s master schedule will be revised to reflect the priorities of the improvement plan. In partnership with a consultant such as Education Elements, McDonough will reorganize student schedules to reflect the focus on student-centered instructional practices. These changes may include slightly longer core academic blocks to support key pedagogical practices of student-centered learning, in addition to skinny blocks for unified arts, interventions (MTSS), enrichment, and Crew, an advisory period that focuses on social-emotional learning. As the ILT redevelops this schedule, decisions will also be guided by the high priority assigned to meeting the unique needs of special education and the Multilingual Learner population. This will also provide increased time for teacher collaboration. Through the MTSS block, McDonough will schedule for special education pull-out, sheltered instruction for Newcomers, and/or Tier II Math/ELA groups. Additionally, students will need an X block, or an Enrichment block, in which students will participate in clubs, student government, and programming to support social emotional learning. In keeping with McDonough’s theme of student-centered practices, this enrichment period may also be used for interdisciplinary and project-based learning.

In addition to aligning the schedule to create enabling conditions for student-centered instructional practices, McDonough Middle School will promote personalized learning experiences through robust after school offerings. The school will continue to offer an extensive athletic program, while also adding unique support and enrichment experiences for students, such as clubs and a “Virtual Academy”, to address academic, social/emotional and behavioral needs.

McDonough Middle School will also build a close partnership with Hartford Public High School that will create a continuum of support to help students effectively transition into 9th grade. The school will create a robust mentoring program for grade 6 and 7 through a partnership with “Where Everybody Belongs,” a yearlong transition program that helps students successfully transition into and through their middle school years. In grade 8, HPHS’s Latinos in Action program, its student council, and even student Capstone projects will be utilized to draw on student mentors who can address students’ academic, social/emotional and behavioral needs will be invited to lead peer-to-peer mentoring.

A Summer Bridge Program will also be developed that pairs students with mentors at HPHS and will offer opportunities for students to begin exploring the high school’s career pathways. The program, developed in partnership with the RISE Network, ReadyCT, and the Freshman Academy team at HPHS, will provide students hands-on exposure to the Engineering and Green Technology and Allied Health pathways offered in grades

10-12. Additionally, rising 9th graders will work alongside teachers and support staff in the Freshman Academy to build culture and community as they prepare to enter 9th grade.

To further support grade eight students in their promotion to high school, academic and culture transition (ACT) teams will be convened consisting of teachers and support staff. These teams will meet each quarter to prepare student profiles of rising 9th graders that highlight student habits, attendance, and grades. These qualitative reports will be stored in PowerSchool and accessible to each student's high school teacher, school counselor, and support staff who will use them to provide early, data-driven interventions for students.

The proposed shifts in instructional practice will require new opportunities for collaborative planning and reflection. The schedule will be revised to maximize and optimize common planning time between general education teachers and support staff, such as special education teachers and TESOL teachers. The leadership team will continue to implement Data Wise protocols and procedures for team collaboration meetings so that discussions about pedagogy are grounded in student data. Within these collaborative spaces, teachers will also interact with grade level colleagues to plan and implement interdisciplinary, project-based learning for students. The support of our external partners will be critical to actualizing the goal of robust and purposeful common planning. In order to maximize time for professional learning as prioritized by this plan, the school plans to utilize the intervention and/or enrichment block as a time where teachers will engage in Communities of Practice to support school wide initiatives as part of our virtual library of professional learning and job-embedded experiences.

For teachers to effectively use instructional time in classrooms, McDonough will create and implement common expectations for the instructional block. Incumbent to the effective use of instructional time will be deep professional learning in the implementation of student-centered instruction with a focus on 21st century skills and the competencies in Hartford Public Schools' Portrait of a Graduate. The district's Instructional Vision identifies student-centered practices as one of the six core elements of highly effective practice. In partnership with Education Elements, a professional learning provider on student-centered practices and personalized learning, teachers will participate in learning that aligns to the core teacher actions of student-centered practices articulated by the HPS Instructional Vision. To prepare students for the academic experiences that await them in high school, especially at HPHS, the school will focus on core four practices of student-centered pedagogy, including targeted small group instruction, collaboration and creativity, flexible path and pace, and reflection and goal setting. Clearly defining student-centered practices in this way will be critical to improving student outcomes in two ways. First, these practices will support teachers' ability to more effectively differentiate to meet the diverse learning needs of students and achieve greater equity in instructional practices. Second, students will develop strong familiarity with an instructional model that HPHS has been utilizing in its Freshman Academy and in its pathways to support student learning.

In order to support teachers in effectively utilizing instructional time in classrooms and with these critical shifts in practice, McDonough will create Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that will focus on multiple facets of student-centered learning. One of the keys to effective implementation of student-centered practices is developing a nurturing classroom environment where routines, structures, norms, and procedures are explicitly taught and reinforced with fidelity. To that end, McDonough will create and implement a virtual library of professional learning for on-demand learning to support teachers. Using a platform like Edthena or Google Drive, instructional coaches and members of the ILT will record and upload exemplar clips of student-centered practices occurring in classrooms throughout the building. These practices, which will be organized and tagged in accordance with the discrete teacher actions of the Instructional Vision, will substantially multiply the impact any single classroom observation can have on future teacher practice. Given the need for greater collaboration amongst staff as outlined in our audit, additional time will be needed. This proposal for extended time would include weekly early dismissal days for students so that staff can engage in "Bear

Acceleration”, a time to build communities of practice for staff. These PLCs will include spaces focused on classroom management and engagement; New Teacher Academy; and even support of the community partners such as Edthena. In addition to the early dismissal Wednesdays, “Bear Acceleration” will also add two additional voluntary hours weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays for departmental time (staff will be compensated) focused on the continuous improvement cycles in Data Wise. A component of “Bear Acceleration” will be ongoing access to a virtual library of professional learning to facilitate highly personalized and differentiated PL. By utilizing this library, which will include videos of teacher practice at McDonough, sessions for staff from the New Teacher Academy, and professional learning sessions, all staff will have equitable access to the resources and supports they need to review, discuss, and implement the shared practices. Staff will also receive opportunities to engage in one hour “Bear Acceleration” sessions (voluntary basis) on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will be compensated for their time.

The success of the school’s desire to innovate its operations depends on having reliable access to functioning instructional materials, including but not limited to: classroom desktops, laptops, printers, class-wide display (Smartboard), and cords for charging and for connectivity. Classrooms must be equipped with functional charging stations for student technology. Teachers will also receive document cameras in order to model efficiently and effectively for students.

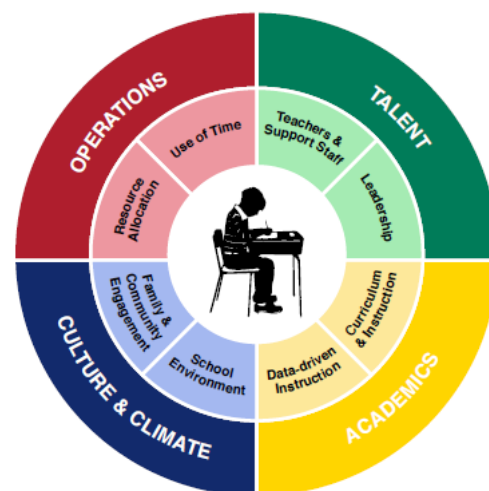
This plan will require:

- IPEVO V4K Ultra High Definition 8MP USB Document Camera
- Stipends for after school clubs, activities
- Partnership with partner such as Education Elements
- Student, staff, and family focus groups
- Student facing Portrait of a Graduate rubrics
- Community partnerships and city programs
- Stipends for leaders of “Bear Acceleration”
- Hourly compensation for volunteer participants of “Bear Acceleration” on Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Partnership with “Where Everybody Belongs”
- Partnership with ReadyCT
- Stipends for participation in ACT meetings

## Section 6: Turnaround Framework for School Improvement

The Commissioner's Network Plan is based upon the framework centered around four key overarching and research-based leverage points for school improvement: Talent, Academics, Culture and Climate, and Operations (TACO). Each of these domains play an integral role in the realization of school's goals to increase student outcomes.

- **Talent:** Systems and strategies to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain excellent school leaders, teachers, and support staff.
- **Academics:** Rigorous, aligned, and engaging academic program that allows all students to achieve at high levels, including aligned curricula, instruction, and assessments.
- **Culture and Climate:** Positive learning environment that supports high-quality teaching and learning, and engages families and the community as partners in the educational process.
- **Operations:** Systems and processes that promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including through the use of time and financial resources.



### Plan Development

#### ➤ Prioritize

As a result of the needs assessment and root cause analysis, the Turnaround Committee should engage in a prioritization process to identify key priority areas for each TACO domain. Although more can be identified, going deeper in improving fewer areas is often more effective. In the table below, list 1-3 priority areas for each domain based on the needs assessment.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.1 Instructional Practice - Provide professional learning centered around a common vision for rigorous and engaging instructional practices</li> <li>• 1.3 Recruitment and Retention - Enhance New Teacher Academy with intensive coaching cycles, including teacher-led learning walks</li> </ul>   | <b>Academics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.3 Differentiation &amp; Checking for Understanding - Strengthen Tier I instruction to ensure differentiated, culturally responsive instruction, and checking for understanding</li> <li>• 2.5 Supports for Special Populations - Implement a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports to ensure equitable outcomes for all students</li> </ul> |
| <b>Culture and Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.2 Student Attendance - Partner with community partnerships to investigate barriers, build out wrap around services, and provide more interventions</li> <li>• 3.3 Student Behavior - The school has established common, school-wide, tiered behavioral expectations but needs a consistent system for responding to behavior incidents</li> <li>• 3.5 Family &amp; Community Engagement - Development of a Family Center and a Culture Center</li> </ul> | <b>Operations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.2 Use of Instructional Time - Implement focused school schedule for supporting middle school students to ensure maximized instructional time and MTSS</li> <li>• 4.3 Use of Staff Time - Create structured collaboration time to plan interdisciplinary project-based learning, content, and grade level teams.</li> </ul>                  |

## ➤ Plan

Now that the priority areas have been identified in each of the TACO domains, a rigorous, yet attainable plan is created based on the needs assessment and root cause analysis. Each of the four domains will include two parts:

- **Part One** - A series of domain specific questions which provide an overview of high-level thinking regarding future actions.
- **Part Two** - An action plan which includes the following components:
  - **Goal:** A goal should be developed for each of the four domains including indicators, data source, baseline, and targets spanning three years. A goal performance measure is a means by which progress toward a goal is gauged.
  - **Root Cause:** Statements describing the deepest underlying cause, or causes, of performance challenges that, if dissolved, would result in elimination or substantial reduction of the performance challenge.
  - **Strategies:** A strategy should address the identified root cause. Strategies should take two or more years to implement, often much longer (Layland & Redding, 2016). If a strategy can be accomplished in one year, then it is too narrow and is most likely a useful milestone within a broader strategy. **Strategies are powerful, high leverage work that builds capacity and changes practice, behavior, and belief so students are more successful.** One bold strategy can have more impact than a litany of poorly implemented strategies.
  - **Timeline:** The strategies (effective practices) to address root causes should be outlined over the course of three years.
  - **Indicators of success:** Indicators of success help to monitor how well the strategies are working to address the root cause, i.e. If we do what we said we were going to do, how do we know it made a difference?
  - **Owner:** The person in charge of making sure it is implemented.



## Domain 1: Talent

### Part One

**Instructions:** The Talent domain focuses on systems and strategies to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain excellent school leaders, teachers and educator support specialists. In the boxes below, address the following:

Explain how the review of school data, school audit findings, and the completion of the root cause analysis will inform staffing decisions.

School data from the 2021 Summative (SBAC) assessment points to declining student achievement at McDonough Middle School. SBAC data from the administrations in 2019 and 2021 identifies a 12.7% decrease overall in English Language Arts while math identifies a decrease of 5.6 % overall in grades 6-8. In the 2020-2021 SBAC window, 2.1% of 6th graders, 5.2% of 7th graders, and 7.8% of 8th graders scored “Meets or Exceeds Achievement Level” in the ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment. During the same year in math, 0% of 6th graders met or exceeded, 2.4% of 7th graders met or exceeded, and 0% of 8th graders met or exceeded. The Reading Plus Assessment, used as a benchmark assessment administered for the first time in the 2021-2022 school year, indicates a sense of urgency around reading proficiency. 63% of students at McDonough scored 5+ years below reading level. Only 5 percent of students are proficient as measured by the Reading Plus Benchmark 1 assessment. Math Baseline Interim scores indicate that .09% (3/320 students) of McDonough students are at/approaching or have exceeded grade level goals. Additionally, on the 2019 NGSS Assessment, 23.3% of students met or exceeded achievement level. In 2021, only 14% of students hit that target, revealing a decrease in proficiency of 9.3%. See below for a table of the SBAC proficiency data:

|                       | Grade | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | Change in Proficiency |
|-----------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| SBAC ELA Proficiency  | 6     | 14%       | 2%        | 12% decrease          |
|                       | 7     | 21%       | 5%        | 16% decrease          |
|                       | 8     | 18%       | 7.8%      | 10.2% decrease        |
| Overall ELA:          |       | 17.7%     | 4.9%      | 12.8% decrease        |
| SBAC Math Proficiency | 6     | 7%        | 0%        | 7% decrease           |
|                       | 7     | 7.8%      | 2.4%      | 5.4% decrease         |
|                       | 8     | 4%        | 0%        | 4% decrease           |
| Overall Math:         |       | 6.3%      | .8%       | 5.5% decrease         |

These decreases in proficiency reveal a deeper need for retention of high-quality teachers. All positions of the Science, Math, and ELA departments, with the exception of 6th grade, have experienced a shift in personnel since 2018-2019. This prompts the turnaround committee to put an emphasis on attracting high-quality candidates as well as supporting, developing, capacity building, and retaining talent for content-area instructors in those roles. Additionally, McDonough will maintain its Multitiered Systems Support Team for Academics in the form of one ELA resource teacher, one Math resource teacher and one Interventionist in order to provide high quality interventions in Tier II and Tier III. In the Commissioner’s Network Operations and Instructional Audit Report it was found that, “the quality of instruction at McDonough Middle School is



described as variable or developing by teachers, school leaders, and district leadership with 74% of teachers strongly agreeing or agreeing that instructional quality and academic rigor are consistently high at this school.” A need identified by the report for improvement include “work deepening practice through strategies such as questioning, differentiation, and increased opportunities for student discourse.” There is a need to “identify and implement strong classroom management practices and merge them with engaging instructional practices.” The root cause analysis yielded a growth area for professional learning that grows teacher capacity, to deliver a student-centered curriculum and to “re-structure PL to be more efficient and effective.” Additionally, the root cause analysis led the team to conclude that there is a lack of teacher understanding and implementation of a student-centered environment. This has led to the decision to train, expect, and support a student-centered environment across all classrooms at McDonough Middle School. As staff continue to learn and implement the essential elements of a student-centered learning environment, McDonough must broaden its approach to include more coaching so that teachers can know what strong instruction looks like. In addition to coaching, McDonough must increase capacity in the areas of informal and formal actionable feedback, supervision, and accountability. Professional Learning will be reframed to ensure it is job embedded and responsive to data points gleaned in instructional walkthroughs, informal visits to classrooms, and student achievement. By focusing on the relationship between professional learning, observation/feedback, and professional learning communities, which can be facilitated through a partnership with ReVISION Learning, McDonough will build the professional culture that will lead to improved student outcomes.

New Teacher Academy (a structure for professional learning developed during the 2020-2021 school year) addresses the need to support teachers that are new to the profession, while simultaneously serving as a retention strategy. During New Teacher Academy, teachers have been learning about classroom management techniques by engaging in a book study on the work of Harry K. Wong and Katherine T. Wong in their works *The Classroom Management Book* and *The First Days of School*. The New Teacher Academy is teacher driven and was created for teachers by teachers to address the concern over the three-year teacher retention rate of 47%. It also addresses a finding of the state audit, where new teachers in the focus group shared that “as a new teacher I feel like I have to figure everything out.” Elsewhere, another teacher stated, “there is nothing more frustrating than having to rebuild every year.” As a result of this root cause analysis, New Teacher Academy will include intensive coaching cycles, affinity groups, and strategic support with lesson planning and execution.

Future candidates who come on board at McDonough must identify and commit to this student-centered approach. In addition to job-embedded professional learning surrounding Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, candidates must demonstrate: an anti-racist stance, a clear understanding of the CELF framework and sheltered instruction for Multilingual Learners, and a growth mindset surrounding differentiated Tier I instruction. In addition, a major goal is to support all teachers at McDonough to become cross endorsed in TESOL / Bilingual education. In addition to serving as a retention strategy, this also ensures high quality instruction for all learners. Perspective candidates should have a deep understanding of the Common Core State Standards and the CCT rubric for effective teaching as a means to be reflective practitioners and serve to build the capacity of their colleagues.

Explain how the district and school will cultivate a professional learning environment to attract, support, develop, and retain high-quality teachers?

#### **Attract**

New teachers applying for positions at McDonough Middle School participate in a rigorous selection process that includes an interview with a hiring committee composed of teachers and administrators; a demonstration lesson and lesson debrief with the committee. There is a new emphasis on finding teachers who are the right match for the school, and demonstrate personal and professional competencies, such as:

high expectations, growth mindset, strong determination, and an ability to build positive relationships, rather than teaching experience alone. McDonough is committed to ensuring recruitment strategies promote diversity in the workforce. McDonough Middle School will participate in recruitment fairs and engage in outreach in order to ensure high quality candidates are onboarded. Some recruitment strategies will include reaching out to the many colleges and universities in our area, creating a recruitment video through “McDonough TV”, attending recruitment fairs and leveraging our student-led podcast as another recruitment strategy.

Hartford Public Schools will leverage a data dashboard, Nimble, to make strategic recruitment decisions. Nimble relies on cutting-edge research to make real-time recommendations to hiring managers about which applicants will perform better and stay longer.

### **Support/Develop**

At McDonough, the Professional Learning Plan will be used to address both teacher needs and school-wide improvement, including articulating, branding, and sharing our school vision of high expectations. Professional learning will be differentiated in order to support teacher development. Teacher need is determined through student achievement, formal and informal walkthroughs, and TEVAL feedback. To support our many novice teachers, New Teacher Academy is designed to support teachers who have been in the classroom for two years or less. In this professional learning sequence, teachers work on management, routines/procedures, differentiation, and other skills that are foundational to the teaching practice. Content-area teams work through the Data Wise process (as developed by Harvard Graduate School of Education). This process is centered around problems of practice that are revealed through an in-depth look at student outcomes and leverages teachers as experts of their craft (Boudett, City & Murnane, 2018).

To support and develop the talent at McDonough, this team will implement professional learning that is most relevant to supporting teachers and students. For this reason, teachers need professional learning that is centered on delivering strong Tier I instruction and differentiation for middle school students, with a focus on adolescent learning and development. It is also critical to train staff in the integration of the CELF Standards and sheltered instruction across all content-area subjects to support EL students. Furthermore, teachers need support in student engagement. To be student centered, staff will be trained in Flipped Learning Opportunities, Project-Based Learning, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and Anti-Racist Practices. In order to achieve this, staff will need time on Wednesdays through early release and Community Based Organization provided enrichments to support these intensive professional learning cycles. In addition, the newly hired school-based instructional coaches for ELA, Math, and Multilingual Learners will create and implement coaching cycles based on teacher need from triangulated data including student achievement, learning walk feedback, and professional learning opportunities. Through the creation of a lab school model, exemplar classrooms that have been vetted will serve as learning spaces for instructional staff, therefore creating an intentional system for peer-to-peer walkthroughs. Model lessons and professional learning experiences will be housed in our virtual library so that staff can access learning on-demand.

Teachers are also provided professional learning through the district. During the 2021-2022 school year, 11 days (approximately 2.5 hours each) are departmentalized and led by district instructional coaches, 7 days are used for the district for R.E.S.T. (Restorative Practices/Equity/SEL/Trauma-Informed) and IIRP programming, and 6 days are left for the school for professional learning based on school-wide data trends. This works out to having school-based professional learning about once per month. District-led professional learning is predominantly department based where teachers from across the district come together to work on data analysis and curriculum planning.

**Retain**

Administration and the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) work as developers and facilitators of professional learning in order to provide teachers with high-quality support that is reflective of the school community. The ILT is composed of a school counselor, department heads and grade level team leads. Having a varied ILT that is responsible for supporting staff through their professional learning creates pathways to leadership and a deeper investment in the school community itself. The turnaround plan details how McDonough plans to use professional learning to increase retention rates of veteran staff by leveraging programs like ARCTEL, the newly hired Spanish and Portuguese teachers, and Rosetta Stone to build capacity and relationships with families by learning their Native Languages. The goal would be to help staff become cross-endorsed in TESOL/bilingual education so that staff can meet the needs of students and families more readily than previously.

Explain how teachers will be evaluated to inform professional learning offerings and staffing decisions?

McDonough Middle School will continue to utilize an evaluation system aligned to the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching. Teachers set Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) at the onset of each year by November 1 and these objectives are progress monitored through the Data Wise process and met on twice more in the mid-year conference and end of year conference. Teachers are formally observed throughout the year, tenured teachers are observed formally once, informally once, and conduct a review of practice; while non-tenured teachers are observed formally twice, and informally once annually. These observations are conducted by November 15, February 15, and May 15 of each year. Teachers set their SLOs based on benchmark assessments to show student achievement growth across the school year. The teacher evaluation process includes a pre-observation meeting with an evaluator, as well as a post-observation meeting. During the pre-observation meeting, teachers discuss the lesson that will be delivered during the observation. The evaluator provides feedback and strategies to work into the lesson. After the observation, the teacher meets with their evaluator again and discusses what went well, what they could have done differently and next steps.

Due to the teacher-turnover rate and an increased number of teachers who have been teaching for three years or less, it is critical that McDonough leverages the resources that it has in the building to build a collaborative, cooperative learning environment for staff. In a non-evaluative sense, staff will conduct Learning Walks as an initial “needs assessment” in terms of developing and responding to the needs of the school on both an instructional and management basis. In this way, staff can demonstrate their strength as well as areas for growth. Professional Learning will be selected based on the most meaningful, high-level needs. Where staff demonstrate strengths, it is critical to build capacity; in that, staff will have the opportunity to model for and directly support their colleagues either by leading professional learning or pairing up as a mentor teacher for that specific skill.

Additionally, the application of teacher evaluation data will aid in moving teachers across the spectrum of effective teaching based on school-wide trends. This can be done for returning staff based on this year’s teacher evaluations, thus allowing for some differentiation of professional learning opportunities. District Walkthroughs will reflect the professional learning so that staff receive actionable feedback aligned to the HPS Instructional Vision. For example, there is a whole school need for more learning around differentiation. Therefore, New Teacher Academy designed a professional learning session on differentiation to address this trend. Moving forward, administration and Instructional Lead Teachers plan to use the District Walkthrough data and monthly learning walks organized in partnership with ReVISION Learning to help identify whole-school trends for professional learning needs.

Describe ongoing supports and coaching opportunities for staff and school leadership.

There are a variety of supports in professional learning for staff and school leadership. New Teacher Academy (NTA) is a support system that is developed and run by the Instructional Leadership Team that functions to help first- and second-year teachers navigate the early waters of their educational career. The Instructional Leadership Team plans and implements professional learning sessions when the professional learning calendar allows (school-based professional learning days). Topics are selected by “high-need” areas; often, the topics are generated from the NTA participants themselves to help fit their needs. This year, sessions have covered classroom management through environment, classroom management through engagement, and are moving into the next professional learning session on differentiation. Through the review of research-based strategies, staff learns through the use of intentionally selected passages from *The Classroom Management Book* and *The First Days of School (5th Ed.)* by Rosemary T. Wong and Harry K. Wong. During these professional learning sessions, facilitators follow the workshop model to encourage collaboration but also to allow new teachers to customize their new learning to their classroom. The goal for each session is for teachers to learn an actionable strategy that will be implemented in their practice the next day.

Math and ELA teachers are engaged in specific learning cycles with coaches from the district. These coaches are split between multiple sites during the week (3 schools). The cycles are focused on the individual teacher’s need as well as a whole school lens. Teachers meet with their coach during their prep time (when available) to address these coaching cycles. Currently, ELA is working on accountable talk and higher order thinking strategies to promote student-to-student discourse in analysis of text. Math is working on integrity to implementation of content understanding in order to push higher order thinking strategies during weekly department meetings. While Social Studies and Science teachers have coaches, they are spread across all schools in the district.

McDonough has used Data Wise Learning Cycles to implement different instructional strategies to positively affect student learning outcomes for several years (Boudett, City & Murnane, 2018). Last year, staff noticed through data collection that students struggle with CCSS RL/RI 6-8.1 (working with evidence). By department, staff worked methodically to implement instructional strategies to help students grapple with text evidence in terms of relevancy and in their writing. In math, teachers looked at a different problem of practice where they noticed that while teachers were explicitly demonstrating mathematical models; however, they were not utilizing learning strategies to internalize the use of models in students, especially in the virtual environment (Boudett, City & Murnane, 2018). Again, teachers implemented research-based instructional practices that positively affected student outcomes. Teachers worked through the Data Wise cycle; however, there is a concern over the loss of strong instructional practices due to staff turnover. Moving forward, department leads will turn-key these instructional strategies throughout the school year so that there is no loss of strong instructional practices.

Learning Walks at McDonough function as a tool for staff to learn from each other. The Walkthrough Model is one that the Instructional Leadership Team has developed over the past two years at McDonough, and it will be refined through this turnaround plan. The tool is a google form that staff can easily use to see what is going on in the classroom and was developed out of the District’s Learning Walk tools as part of the Instructional Vision implementation to ensure cohesion. It includes clear look-fors (Do Nows, Learning Targets, etc.) and non-negotiables, next steps and areas for growth. This will continue to be implemented and built out over time so that teachers conduct their own peer to peer learning walks within the lab school.

A final piece of coaching opportunity is allowing staff a hand in planning and designing professional learning. Currently, there is a team working with admin on developing a professional learning via *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond. Similar to how NTA is run, this professional learning series will be a book study that goes in depth with the learning and application of the best practices of culturally

responsive teaching. Like NTA, this professional learning series is being developed by staff to be delivered to staff in the coming year. Furthermore, a system and structure for identification and vetting of presenters within the New Teacher Academy will be developed and implemented.

Additionally, to build staff capacity this plan aims to distribute leadership and create a leadership pipeline. Committees will be formed after vetting appropriate staff to lead and progress monitor the implementation of this plan within the four domains of Talent, Academics, Climate and Culture, and Operations. This team will use the Data Wise process to ensure the turnaround plan is fully implemented with fidelity and fiscal responsibility.

School leadership capacity is built through on-going job-embedded professional learning through the district. The principal engages in monthly professional learning through the Administrator Institute that is focused on leadership competencies and the Hartford Public School's District Model of Excellence. Specifically, session topics include data driven decision making, school improvement planning, the teacher evaluation process and calibration, operational effectiveness, and building positive climate and culture. The principal also engages in monthly executive coaching sessions with a coach developing action plans to ensure the school is moving towards its goals. Additionally, the assistant principal is also engaged in monthly on-going job-embedded professional learning through the district in the Assistant Principal Institute. The sessions are similar to the principal sessions but tailored to the work of assistant principals, more heavily focused on climate and culture work, as well as assessment literacy and monitoring. These professional learning experiences contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership in urban schools and support the implementation of strong school leadership strategies.

## Part Two

**Instructions:** Using the table below, identify the Talent three-year goal including indicators of success, data sources, and three annual targets

### Three-Year Talent Goal:

| Indicator   | Data Source  | Baseline Year:<br>2021-2022   | Target Year 1:<br>2022-2023   | Target Year 2:<br>2023-2024   | Target Year 3:<br>2024-2025   |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Increase percentage of veteran teacher retention                    | Returning veteran teachers (includes school counselors, SSW) (*3 or more years of service) | Total teaching Staff: 31<br><br>Staff with 3 or more years of service: 17<br>55%  | Maintain 17, add 4 more<br><br>Slated for 29 FTE according to budget plan for 2022-2023: Goal of 21/29 veteran staff or 75% | Maintain 21, add 2 more<br><br>Staffing to be determined by school-based budget process | Maintain 21<br><br>Staffing to be determined by school-based budget process |
| Increase percentage of first year teachers retained at McDonough    | Percentage of returning 2nd year teachers  | Total Teaching Staff: 31<br><br>Staff with 2 or less teaching years: 14<br>45%<br><br>Current first year teachers: 8<br>26% | Retain 90% of staff   | Retain 93% of staff   | Retain 95% of staff   |
| Teachers will score 2.5 or better on Domain 3 of the CCT framework. | Teacher evaluation criteria logged in My Learning Plan                                     | 19 teachers scored 3 or above, 1 teacher scored a 2, and 7 teachers were unrated  | 75% of staff scoring 2.5 of higher in Domain 3  | 80-85% of staff scoring 2.5 of higher in Domain 3                                       | 90-100% of staff scoring 2.5 of higher in Domain 3                          |

### Action Steps:

**Instructions:** Using the table below, describe key action steps which will be implemented across three years in order to achieve the three-year Talent goal.

| Talent Priority: 1.1 Instructional Practice - Provide professional learning centered around a common vision for rigorous and engaging instructional practices |   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Root Cause: Lack of capacity to deliver a student-centered classroom with differentiation strategies, student discourse, and embedded classroom management    |   |   |   |  |   |
| Person(s) Responsible: Principal, Assistant Principal, Office of Academics Coaches, Instructional Leadership Team, Resource Teachers, Interventionist         |   |   |   |  |   |
| Strategies to address root cause  | Timeline  |   |   | Indicators of Success  | Resources   |
|   | Year 1  | Year 2  | Year 3  |  |   |
| Articulate and brand a shared school vision for high expectations through a Professional Learning Plan  | Develop and articulate a shared school vision to set high expectations for teaching and learning          | Articulate a clear set of Year 2 SMART goals strategically set around the shared vision; progress monitor | Articulate a clear set of Year 3 SMART goals strategically set around the shared vision; progress monitor | The school vision is visible in all classrooms, offices, and common areas as evidenced by the Instructional Vision Look Fors | The Instructional Vision of the Hartford Public Schools                                       |
|   | Survey constituents on proposed shared vision   | Survey constituents on implementation of shared vision  | Review and revise the school vision as necessary based on stakeholder feedback                            | School staff use the vision to drive meetings and decision making  | School Vision Posters for all classrooms and offices printed by outside vendors               |
|   | Revise shared vision based on survey feedback   | Progress monitor implementation of vision   | Progress monitor implementation of vision   | School vision is consistently expressed, posted, and reiterated by the entire school community                               | School Vision banners for corridors, main entrances, and Cafeteria printed by outside vendors |
|   | Vote on adoption of shared vision   | Communicate the school vision during daily announcement, post signage school-wide                         | Communicate the school vision during daily announcement, post signage school-wide                         |  | Parent Square posts, daily announcements, school website, school twitter account              |
|   | Articulate a clear set of Year 1 SMART Goals set strategically around the shared vision; progress monitor | Revise Professional Learning Calendar with clear topics that reflect the vision                           | Refine Professional Learning Calendar with clear topics to to be reflect the vision                       | SMART Goals met each year  |   |
|   | Create committee: Delineate clear roles for   |   |   |  |   |
|   |   |   |   |  |   |



|  |   |  |  |   |   |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|
|  | <p>implementation of vision</p> <p>Communicate the school vision during daily announcement, post signage school-wide</p> <p>Develop Professional Learning Calendar with clear topics that reflect the school vision</p>   |  |  |   |   |
| <p>Develop and implement a Professional Learning Plan to include professional learning, observation/ feedback, and PLC cycles with ReVISION Learning</p> | <p>Conduct teacher survey to identify professional learning needs and strengths</p> <p>Create a professional learning calendar</p> <p>Implement Professional learning on differentiation strategies, in a menu format, based on teacher need</p> <p>Provide professional learning to teachers on how to plan and implement effective PLCs</p> | <p>Reflect on the effectiveness of year 1 strategies and revise professional learning plan; update professional learning calendar as needed</p> <p>Implement instruction utilizing differentiated lesson delivery methods</p> <p>ILT leads PLCs</p> <p>Adopt and Implement school-based coaching framework</p> | <p>Reflect on the effectiveness of year 2 changes and revise professional learning plan; update professional learning calendar as needed</p> <p>Teacher led PLCs</p> <p>Refine school-based coaching framework</p> | <p>100% of lessons will reflect the use of the CELP Framework</p> <p>High Quality Differentiated instruction implemented in 100% of classrooms</p> <p>Visible student engagement strategies</p> <p>Coaching framework</p> <p>Professional learning materials/ agendas</p> | <p>2 1.0 FTE Instructional Coaches-School Based</p> <p>1 1.0 FTE ML Coach-School based</p> <p>“The Art of Coaching Teams”</p> <p>PL from in and outside of the district</p> <p>Pineapple Chart</p> <p>Professional Learning Calendar</p> <p>Weekly half day for students with school based professional learning once</p> |



|   |   |   |   |   |  |
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|   | Develop school-based coaching framework   |   |   |   | the students leave<br><br>Partnership with ReVISION Learning   |
| Develop an intentional system to create Peer to Peer Walkthroughs           | Develop learning walk tool to establish peer-to-peer teacher led learning walks/host classrooms<br><br>Provide PL for Teacher leaders and coaches   | Implement peer-to-peer learning walks focused on differentiated strategies  | Refine and modify peer-to-peer learning walk tool as needed through stakeholder feedback  | A learning walk tool focused on differentiated instruction  | <i>LincSpring Culture Kit for Peer to Peer Walkthroughs</i><br><br><i>ReVISION learning walkthrough tool</i>   |
| Implement PLC for Culturally Responsive Teaching and anti-racist practices. | Implement a professional learning series: Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain (created by ILT in baseline year)<br><br>Investigate professional learning series on anti-racist practices | Survey staff to determine next steps for professional learning on Culturally Responsive Teaching<br><br>Develop library of resources to support Culturally Responsive Teaching<br><br>Implement PLCs to adapt curriculum to reflect CRP learning and student need; implement instruction<br><br>Implement professional learning series on anti-racist practices | Building based teacher led PL and coaching for Culturally Responsive Teaching<br><br>Implement student advisory board for CRP<br><br>Survey all constituents to ensure enduring practices | Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain Learning Series<br><br>Library of resources to support CRP<br><br>All lessons will reflect culturally relevant pedagogy<br><br>Student voice and choice will be evident in all lessons | Teacher leaders<br><br>Zoretta Hammond Anchor Text: <i>Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain</i><br><br>Geneva Gay anchor text such as: <i>Culturally Responsive Teaching</i><br><br>Outside vendor for professional learning on anti-racist practices. |

| <b>Talent Priority: 1.3 Recruitment and Retention</b>                                       |  |   |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Root Cause:</b> Underdeveloped plan to hire and support new teachers                     |  |   |   |  |  |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b> Principal, Assistant Principal, Instructional Leadership Team |  |   |   |  |  |
| Strategies to address root cause  | Timeline   |   |   | Indicators of Success  | Resources  |
|   | Year 1   | Year 2  | Year 3  |  |  |
| Expand the existing New Teacher Academy (NTA)   | <p>Create collaboration system for “buddy” teachers and increased grade-level/content collaboration</p> <p>Align NTA plan to reflect school vision and high leverage needs of school</p> <p>Set New Teacher Academy Calendar and create modules and scope and sequence</p> <p>Vet and screen NTA Teacher Leaders and provide professional learning for teacher leaders and coaches</p> <p>Provide PL for Teacher leaders and coaches to lead New Teacher Academy</p> | <p>Differentiate New Teacher Academy to have supports for first- and second-year teachers as different sessions</p> <p>Create pathway to leadership: as a teacher exits NTA they are provided the opportunity to help facilitate NTA the following year.</p> <p>Elicit feedback from second year NTA members and implement changes</p> <p>Revise New Teacher Academy Calendar and create new modules and scope and sequence; add to Virtual Library</p> | <p>Create pathway to leadership: as a teacher exits NTA they are provided the opportunity to help facilitate NTA the following year.</p> <p>Revise New Teacher Academy Calendar and create new modules and scope and sequence; add to Virtual Library</p> | <p>Teachers successfully complete two years of NTA</p> <p>TEVAL evaluations reflect growth in the areas of Domains 1-4</p> <p>Increased staff retention rates</p> <p>Stay Interviews</p> | <p>1.0 FTE Unified Arts Teacher</p> <p>Members of ILT to plan, implement, and facilitate NTA</p> <p>Additional stipend for NTA development</p> |

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| Distribute leadership to build capacity of staff and create a leadership pipeline          | <p>Refine ILT to reflect the TACO framework and establish committees for each indicator</p> <p>Identify staff strengths and talents through a survey to populate committees</p> <p>Adapt norms and create SMART goals and action plan/timeline for each committee</p> <p>Provide PL focused on building effective teams and coaching to the ILT</p> | <p>Through the Data Wise process TACO leadership committees will refine implementation of the turnaround model as needed</p> <p>Develop subcommittees for each specific TACO goal</p> <p>Utilize feedback from TACO leadership committees to inform practices</p> <p>Refine PL focused on building effective teams and coaching for ILT and monitor impact</p> | <p>Through the Data Wise process TACO leadership committees will refine implementation of the turnaround model as needed</p> <p>Continue subcommittees for each specific TACO goal</p> <p>Utilize feedback from TACO leadership committees to inform practices</p> <p>Refire PL for ILT focused on building effective teams and coaching and monitor impact</p> | <p>Establishment of TACO Leadership Committees</p> <p>Leadership committee norms, foci, SMART goals, and Action Plan/ Timelines</p> <p>Data Wise Process implemented with fidelity, artifacts include: learner-centered problem, problem of practice, action plan</p> <p>Turnaround Plan fully implemented</p> | <p>Meeting Time for Committees</p> <p>School Data</p> <p>Surveys</p> <p>Data Wise Norms and Rolling Agendas</p> <p>ANET Professional Learning</p> <p>PL on building effective teams</p> |
| Provide opportunity for all staff to earn a cross-endorsement in TESOL/Bilingual Education | <p>Partner with ARCTELL</p> <p>Staff apply for ARCTELL</p> <p>Participants sign MOU</p>   | Admitted participants complete ARCTELL program   | ARCTELL graduates train ML best practices to all staff  | Staff cross-endorsed in TESOL/Bilingual Ed will implement sheltered instruction and CELP Framework   | <p>ARCTELL Partnership</p> <p>Funds for tuition for ARCTELL</p> <p>Stipends for Year 3 staff trainers</p>   |

## Domain 2: Academics

### Part One

**Instructions:** The Academics domain focuses on how the school will redesign and/or strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment to increase student achievement. In the boxes below, address the following:

Describe the school's academic program and instructional philosophy, including the process to align the curricula and academic program to the rigor of the Connecticut Core Standards.

McDonough Middle School is a grade 6-8 comprehensive middle school that functions with a team-centered mindset. Students and staff are divided into three smaller teams, one for each grade level (6, 7, 8). Each team will be staffed with one English, one math, one social studies teacher and one science teacher, one unified arts teacher and other support teachers and staff that work with those grade level students. Examples would include but not limited to a behavior technician, a social worker, and Special Education Teacher. Each team will be heterogeneously grouped and offer enrichment and interventions for students. During the 2022-2023 school year, students will have scheduled time to receive a multi-tiered system of support for academics, behavior, attendance, and social/emotional learning. Students who score below proficiency in ELA and math will be identified and scheduled in literacy and numeracy intervention classes and provided with additional instructional time by school resource teachers that are part of the MTSS team.

Progress towards graduation, and preparation for High School success is a critical component to the theory of action that grounds this plan. In alignment with Hartford Public Schools, McDonough staff is invested in the development and implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate. The Instructional Vision acts as "a bridge between the District Model for Excellence and the Portrait of a Graduate" that serves to ensure students are prepared to thrive in their world once they leave school. (Hartford Public Schools, 2022). The Portrait of a Graduate is a collective vision for student success and has five domains with aligned rubrics: Informed & Engaged Citizen, Innovative Thinker, Problem Solver, Skilled Communicator, & Team Player. McDonough Middle School staff seeks to provide students with educational opportunities that help build and grow their capacity in those areas. To these ends, grades 6-8 will have electronic portfolios in Naviance that house cumulative, curated student work as well as student self-assessments/reflections of their own growth towards proficiency on aligned POG rubrics. These rubrics will also serve to ensure peer to peer assessment and actionable feedback is provided regularly to students that advances their learning. Additionally, students will participate in student-led conferences in lieu of traditional parent-teacher conferences where they will reflect on their habits, attendance, and grades in addition to their progress toward the POG competencies. The continuum of learning, reflection, and growth will be presented as an 8th grade Capstone. This progression will mirror the experience that McDonough students will have in high school, thus preparing them for success.

Hartford Public Schools and McDonough Middle School have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the basis for education of students. District curriculum has been specially crafted in ELA and Math to align to those standards. The Science curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and is currently utilized by science teachers. The Social Studies Curriculum is aligned to the CT Social Studies Framework while also infuses strategies to help support CCSS Reading for Information Standards.

The implementation of a Virtual Academy will be developed and implemented as a robust after-school on demand tutoring/enrichment program. In Virtual Academy, students will have on demand access to tutoring from content-area teachers as well as a bank of online mini-lessons, which students and teachers will create for enrichment purposes. Here, students will be surveyed for their interests and clusters will be created to provide students with opportunities beyond the curriculum. Students will engage in self-selected activities and will be paired with experts in these areas. Our ASPIRE survey of families will also serve as a mechanism to

connect students to the talents of family and community partners in a meaningful way. Students will remain in these clusters for a quarter and will switch their enrichment four times in a year.

At McDonough Middle School, the instructional philosophy is to implement organized rigorous instruction that is student-centered, collaborative, and differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. It is imperative that the school provides an engaging, inclusive, respectful learning environment for both students and the community. The school community fosters the development of the whole student using restorative practices, in a hybrid format with a PBIS model, to encourage a collaborative culture that is committed to equity, safety, and collective responsibility. McDonough Middle school values the strength of families, communities, students, and staff and leverages that strength to achieve equitable academic outcomes in which every student thrives and is prepared for the rigor of high school, ultimately transforming their world.

Describe how educators will use data to inform lesson plans, differentiate instruction, and provide remedial support to meet the academic and developmental needs of all students.

At the beginning of each school year, teachers begin with a blend of relationship building and assessment to build a base for where students are academically each school year. In order to support all students equitably at McDonough, it is critical for staff to understand, internalize, and use data in an innovative and informative way to ensure effective strategies for subgroups. Tier I content area instructors will use data during co-planning meetings with special education/TESOL teachers to ensure effective support to meet the academic and developmental needs of all students. These supports will be delivered through integrated co-teaching models and inclusion hours in the classroom. Data collected through learning walks will inform how students are receiving this support. Additionally, teachers will receive support in progress monitoring student learning through formative assessment strategies and effective ways to check for understanding.

The McDonough Middle School turnaround committee is dedicated to making distinct and visible progress in instruction for Multilingual Learners. Thirty-eight-point eight percent of students who are identified as ML students, many of whom are Newcomers. Of the 137 ML students, 41 are Newcomers. For this reason, this committee will prioritize training staff in TESOL strategies and the CELF Framework, and will leverage the knowledge/skill set of the TESOL department as well as seek an expert in the field. McDonough Middle School currently has a sheltered instruction model where students who have been in the country for less than 10 months work directly with a teacher on acquiring English language skills in the Newcomer Center. The Newcomer Center will implement student success plan portfolios for the existing newcomer center students. The purpose of these plans will be to set goals with newcomers to support their acquisition of English language, to set and implement action steps to support the newcomer in meeting their goals, to monitor newcomers' progress toward meeting their goals, and to celebrate successes along the way as newcomers reach their goals. These plans will remain in effect for three years as students progress through the stages of second language acquisition and subsequent TESOL program models and will become permanent components of student's Portrait of the Graduate portfolios.

To create data overviews, students must take grade-level baseline assessments. To begin the year in ELA, students will take an assessment such as the Reading Plus Assessment which delineates what grade-level students are reading and where the gaps in their skills exist. From there, the multi-tiered systems of support team (MTSS) will use that data to determine which students need Tier II interventions and place them in an MTSS group that focuses on building up specific skills, ranging from fluency to main ideas to text evidence usage. Students will also take pre-assessments and post-assessments (as written by the HPS curriculum writing team) at the beginning and end of each unit, respectively. This data is reflected in who is placed in a reading MTSS group and how the teacher plans instruction for each week. Students in need of Tier II and Tier III support work in pull-out groups of 6 students or less (Tier II) on an identified skill with the ELA Resource teacher in a cycle that should last for 6-8 weeks. Tier II groups are pulled twice per week from the MTSS

blocks built into the schedule. The Reading Plus InSight assessment data is shared with all educator stakeholders so that teachers can best service students while delivering their content.

Teachers will use an assessment, such as the Reading Plus InSight Assessment to determine the grade level that a student is reading on independently to help students select an AIR (Accountable Independent Reading) book. This is a reflection of the workshop model as delineated by Chris Lehman from The Education Collaborative. Teachers will complete a short mini-lesson where they model a skill with a grade level text, then students will have the opportunity to practice with a peer. Finally, students will demonstrate their skill with their AIR book. This way, reading itself will not be a barrier to learning and practicing the skill independently; the result is that the curriculum becomes individualized for that student.

In math, students will also take a readiness assessment at the beginning of the year. Similarly, math teachers will use readiness assessment and the first interim assessment to determine which students are in need of tier II support during the MTSS block. Math MTSS will be structured similarly to the ELA MTSS plan in that Tier II and Tier III students will meet with the Math Resource teacher twice a week in a cycle that will last for 6-8 weeks. Additionally, students will take three district wide benchmark assessments administered in Fall, Winter, and Spring. Each unit of study will incorporate a pre and post assessment as well. These data points will be utilized to determine next steps for student achievement in Math.

In Science, students will engage in the NGSS Interim Assessments to benchmark their progress toward the summative NGSS assessment in 8th Grade. The assessments will support the science teachers in tailoring science prerequisite skills for their units. In addition, the Science teachers will utilize the informational reading assessment data from Reading Plus Assessment, Reading Interim Assessment data, and pre- and post- unit assessments to support students in the area of claim, evidence, and reasoning when responding to informational text.

In Social Studies, teachers will utilize the informational reading assessment data from assessments such as Reading Plus Assessment, Reading Interim Assessment data, and the pre- and post-unit assessments from the ELA curriculum to support students in the area of claim, evidence, and reasoning when responding to informational text. In grades 6-8, the priority standards for ELA and Social Studies will be aligned so that students are used to seeing SBAC question stems.

Through this school-wide data collection process, teachers will differentiate their Tier I curricula to meet student needs. Through coaching cycles in the areas of checking for understanding, progress monitoring and differentiation, staff will build their capacity to meet the academic and development needs of students. In department and data-team meetings, staff will engage in the Data Wise process that will inform their lesson planning with the support of instructional coaches and administration. Through department time, teachers will break down rubrics and tasks into student-friendly language in order to ensure that students know what is being asked of them in any given task. Teachers will plan for and create opportunities for higher-order thinking tasks that help students engage in real-world problem-solving practices through project-based learning.

Describe ongoing professional learning opportunities to build staff capacity around the collection, analysis and use of data to drive and differentiate instruction.

This plan aims to refine data processes through the continued implementation of the Data Wise process. Data Wise has been an incredibly valuable resource when it comes to collecting data that has a direct impact on creating shifts in instruction. Teachers will collect, assess, and analyze short-, medium-, and long-term data sources around a content specific trend. Vertical content teams will use that data to assess the effectiveness of a research-based instructional strategy for that problem of practice in order to address a learner-centered

problem (such as struggling to select the most relevant text evidence). Through this process, teachers will also develop a problem of practice. Additionally professional learning will be given to staff around different strategies to use when differentiating instruction based on the data collected throughout this process.

McDonough will implement systems and structures to showcase and implement high quality teaching and learning. This will be accomplished by the creation of a lab school model, the implementation of intentionally created model classrooms. These classrooms will be aligned to the HPS Instructional Vision Look For document to ensure implementation of strong Tier I instruction. A lesson plan template will be developed and implemented that ensures intentional planning for differentiation strategies and checks for understanding that leads students to self and peer asses. In conjunction with this lesson plan template, we will provide on-going professional learning for all teachers on differentiation of tier I instruction and student engagement strategies.

Through this plan, staff will have increased and structured data-team meetings with more frequency in order to effectively plan to meet student needs in the classroom. This work will be grounded in the Data Wise process so that student data can be used to drive and differentiate instruction, especially in the thoughtful planning for students with exceptionalities, and will consult with a district trained Data Wise coach as necessary.

## **Part Two**

**Instructions:** Using the table below, the Academic three-year goal will include School Performance Index and Smarter Balanced Growth Model (as applicable) indicators for ELA and Math. The baseline and targets should reflect the ESSA Milestone Targets.

### **Three-Year English Language Arts Goal:**

| Indicator                         | Data Source | Baseline Year:<br>2020-21 | Target Year 1:<br>2022-23 | Target Year 2:<br>2023-2024 | Target Year 3:<br>2024-2025 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ELA School Performance Index      | SBAC        | N/A                       | 58.0                      | 60.5                        | 62.9                        |
| ELA Smarter Balanced Growth Model | SBAC        | N/A                       | 72.6                      | 76.5                        | 80.4                        |

### **Three-Year Math Goal:**

| Indicator                          | Data Source | Baseline Year:<br>2020-21 | Target Year 1:<br>2022-23 | Target Year 2:<br>2023-2024 | Target Year 3:<br>2024-2025 |
|------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Math School Performance Index      | SBAC        | N/A                       | 53.8                      | 56.8                        | 59.9                        |
| Math Smarter Balanced Growth Model | SBAC        | N/A                       | 69.4                      | 73.8                        | 78.2                        |



**Action Steps:**

**Instructions:** Using the table below, describe key action steps which will be implemented across three years in order to achieve the three-year Academic goals.

| <b>Academic Priority: 2.3 Differentiation &amp; Checking for Understanding</b>                                    |  |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Root Cause: Lessons lack differentiation and evidence of student-led opportunities to self and peer assess</b> |  |  |   |  |  |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b> Instructional coaches, administration, content-area teachers                        |  |  |   |  |  |
| <b>Strategies to address Root Cause</b>   | <b>Timeline</b>  |  |   | <b>Indicators of Success</b>   | <b>Resources</b>   |
|   | <b>Year 1</b>  | <b>Year 2</b>  | <b>Year 3</b>   |  |  |
| Provide ongoing professional learning for all teachers on differentiation of Tier 1 instruction                   | Assess teacher needs for Tier 1 instructional and professional best practices through survey<br><br>Create a professional learning calendar<br><br>Provide professional learning about what different data points mean for implications for differentiation<br><br>Implement targeted coaching cycles around differentiation of Tier I curriculum by instructional coaches | Include a clear differentiation plan in weekly planner based on needs of students in Tier 1 instruction<br><br>Implement consistent professional learning about differentiation based on student data<br><br>Implement targeted coaching cycles around differentiation of Tier I curriculum by instructional coaches | Teachers will assess and re-evaluate differentiation plan based on student data at monthly data meetings<br><br>Implement targeted coaching cycles around differentiation of Tier I curriculum by instructional coaches | 100% of lessons will include differentiated material<br><br>Decrease in referrals for Academic Tier II support | Professional Learning on differentiation<br><br>Instructional coaches to work with teachers<br><br>Professional Learning Calendar<br><br>Coaching cycles |
| Create and implement Lesson Planner template to include differentiation plan and checks for understanding         | Create lesson planner with ILT and launch with staff during August Professional Learning Implement and utilize lesson  | Refine Lesson Planner based on data from walkthroughs, coaching cycles, and student achievement  | Refine Lesson Planner based on data from walkthroughs, coaching cycles, and student achievement   | Lesson Planner Template impacts instructional practice as evidenced by the Data Wise process                   | Universal Lesson Planner template<br><br>Department meeting agenda   |



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|   | <p>planner to plan lessons in ELA and Math in Tier 1 instruction</p> <p>Leverage Lesson Plan Template in coaching cycles focused in intentional differentiation and checking for understanding student learning</p> <p>Refine and utilize walkthrough tool to monitor implementation of intentional differentiation and effective checking for understanding</p> | <p>Implement lesson planner in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies in Tier 1 instruction</p> <p>Implement coaching cycles around intentional differentiation and checking for understanding and progress monitoring student learning</p> <p>Continue utilization of walkthrough tool and continue walkthroughs to monitor implementation of intentional differentiation and effective checking for understanding</p> | <p>Implement lesson planner in all content areas in all Tier 1 instruction</p> <p>Refine coaching cycles around intentional differentiation and checking for understanding and progress monitoring student learning</p> <p>Continue walkthroughs to monitor implementation of intentional differentiation and effective checking for understanding</p> | <p>Walkthrough Tool used to progress monitor intentional differentiation and checking for understanding</p>  | <p>Department meeting data team agenda</p> <p>Professional learning about formative assessment</p>                                      |
| <p>Create systems and structures to showcase and implement high quality teaching and learning</p> | <p>Identify and prepare model classrooms for teachers to visit</p> <p>Refine instructional vision “look for” documents based on Planning Year baseline for Tier I.</p>   | <p>Implement model classrooms in at least one classroom for two content areas as a model for teachers to visit</p> <p>Conduct in-house learning walks based on instructional vision look for documents</p>  | <p>Increase number of model classrooms to at least two per content area</p> <p>Make necessary changes based on learning walks on instructional vision</p>  | <p>Model classrooms in the four content areas of ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies</p> <p>Instructional Vision Look For indicators in the “Mostly” and “Yes” category of the rubric</p> | <p>Internal and External partners to support creation of lab school model</p> <p>Instructional vision look for documents (District)</p> |

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| Develop and implement rubrics in order to foster student self-assessment and peer to peer feedback. | <p>ELA/Math will break down academic language in rubrics/tasks and translate into student friendly language</p> <p>ELA will have students complete peer-to-peer feedback in the writing process at least once/marking period for large process</p> <p>Teachers will model how to give useful feedback based on rubric language</p> <p>CREW (advisory) teachers will review feedback with students on assignments once a week</p> | <p>All content areas will use rubrics in student friendly language to give feedback on assignments</p> <p>Teachers will provide opportunities for students to give each-other feedback at least once per lesson</p> <p>Teachers plan for individual or small group conferencing with students once every two weeks</p> | <p>Students will co-create rubrics for assessment based on student friendly teacher-generated rubrics</p> <p>Students take more ownership of the learning process and reflect on their learning process</p> <p>Students use the rubric to lead conferences with teachers and parents</p> | <p>Students will take charge during Student Led Conferences</p> <p>Student portfolios complete with 5 assignments per unit that show evidence of meaningful implementation of feedback from teachers, peers, and self to align with Portrait of a Graduate.</p> <p>Learning walk through tools</p> | <p>Professional Learning around Rubric Implementation</p> <p>Time for meaningful feedback</p> <p>Student led conference template</p> <p>Professional Learning around conferencing</p> |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|

| Academic Priority: 2.5 Supports for Special Populations   |  |   |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| Root Cause: The school lacks appropriate interventions and there are significant achievement gaps between high-need subgroups and non-identified students |  |   |   |  |  |
| Person(s) Responsible:  |  |   |   |  |  |
| Strategies to address Root Cause  | Timeline   |   |   | Indicators of Success  | Resources  |
|   | Year 1   | Year 2  | Year 3  |  |  |
| Implement effective strategies for high-need subgroups.   | TESOL/SpEd department meets with Tier 1 teachers to co-plan at least 1x week for | TESOL department leads professional learning on best practices to | Implement integrated co-teaching models in ELA/Math spaces to | <p>LAS Links language assessment</p> <p>Visibility of multilingual</p> | <p>Universal Lesson Plan template</p> <p>Meeting Wise format</p> |

|   |   |   |   |  |  |
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|   | <p>ELA/Math; adds into the lesson planner template their supports</p> <p>Multilingual learning opportunities visible in the classroom materials and lesson plans</p> <p>Audit of all ML/IEP/504 plans to ensure appropriate programming</p> | <p>work with ML students</p> <p>TESOL department “owns space” in the classroom environment to provide ongoing support for ML students (ex. Word wall = domain of TESOL teacher)</p> <p>Professional Learning about Integrated co-teaching models</p> <p>SpEd department shares pull-out plan and goals with Tier 1 teachers in the same way that Tier 1 teachers share lesson plans with sped department</p> <p>Refine IEP/504/ML plans to ensure appropriate programming</p> | <p>support ML students</p> <p>Review student assessment data to consider revising or adding new training for staff</p>  | <p>learning displayed in educational spaces (e.g., Google Classroom and physical space)</p> <p>Ongoing documentation of collaborative work, with evidence of consistent meetings times</p> <p>Reduction in the number of referrals for special education</p> <p>Higher percentage of mastery on student IEP goals and objectives</p> | <p>to support documentation of meetings</p> <p>Professional Learning on ICT Models from outside vendor</p> |
| Implement student success plan portfolios for the existing Newcomers Center | <p>Investigate and adopt a student success plan for newcomers to monitor English proficiency levels</p> <p>Adopt criteria for success to exit students</p>  | <p>Implement student success plans for newcomers</p> <p>Utilize the academic review structure to progress monitor students in the</p>   | <p>Refine student success plans for newcomers</p> <p>Refine progress monitoring of students in the Newcomers Center</p> | <p>Newcomers will demonstrate growth as they experience the Newcomer Center</p> <p>Newcomers who experience the Newcomers Center will</p>  | <p>Student Success Plans for Newcomers</p> <p>Assessments aligned to CELP Standards</p>                    |

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|  | from the Newcomers Center   | Newcomers Center   |  | spend less time at each proficiency level   | CELP Standards  |
|  | Implement assessments for newcomers aligned to the CELP Standards   |  |  |   |   |
| <b>MTSS Tier II &amp; III</b><br>Design and communicate an academic MTSS continuum of interventions for students who need additional support | <p>Implement a tiered intervention approach to meet the needs of struggling students</p> <p>Complete three targeted cycles for ELA and Math</p> <p>Coaches assist teachers in using data to identify students in need of additional intervention</p> <p>Create a Math Lab and Literacy Lab for struggling students</p> <p>Clear and concise outline of the MTSS to PPT 1 referral process</p> | <p>Evaluate MTSS Academic process and make adjustments as necessary</p> <p>Complete three target cycles for ELA and Math</p> <p>Evaluate the effectiveness and resources of Math and Literacy Lab to meet the needs of struggling students.</p> <p>Have a library of instructional resources available for students needing intervention</p> | <p>Evaluate and redesign most used interventions, and analyze their effectiveness in student learning and achievement</p> <p>Adjust resources and intervention tools based on student data and/or teacher feedback</p> | <p>Improvement in student performance data on smarter balanced, district assessments and NGSS assessments</p> <p>Decreased enrollment in Tiered Academic support (Math and Literacy Labs)</p> | <p>Academic MTSS System</p> <p>Weekly MTSS Meetings</p> <p>Instructional resources and materials for Tier II and Tier III intervention) based on individual instructional needs)</p> <p>SBAC Data and growth baseline targets</p> <p>Site licensing for iready Math for diagnostic assessment and Lexia</p> |
| <b>Virtual Academy</b><br>Implement Virtual Academy after hours for on-demand tutoring for all students                                      | <p>Create Virtual Academy Program</p> <p>Recruit teachers for Virtual Academy</p>   | <p>Implement Virtual Academy Program</p> <p>Receive Feedback from</p>  | <p>Revise Virtual Academy Program</p> <p>Empower students to be</p>  | <p>Student enrollment</p> <p>Increase in performance scores</p>   | <p>Funding for teachers after hours</p> <p>Curriculum resources for</p>   |

|  |   |                                    |   |  |  |
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|  | <p>Publicize and market Virtual Academy to students</p> <p>Enroll students in Virtual Academy</p> | <p>participants on the program</p> | <p>mentors of Virtual Academy</p> <p>Create a “on demand” bank of teacher and student led “Mini Lesson” videos (academic and enrichment topics)</p> |  | <p>teacher planning</p> <p>Necessary Technology Supports</p> <p>Vouchers for home Broadband for Families</p> |
|--|---|------------------------------------|---|--|--|

### Domain 3: Culture and Climate

#### Part One

**Instructions:** The Culture and Climate domain targets creating a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment for all students and staff, and engages families and the community as partners in the educational process. In the boxes below, address the following:

Describe the school's behavior management system and strategies to shape positive school culture.

McDonough's behavior management system joins positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) to restorative practices that focus on putting relationships with students and families front and center in order to cultivate a positive school culture and climate. The management system also connects to the district wide ACE (Attendance, Culture and Engagement) model that utilizes the Datawise process to review attendance and behavioral data for all students and as needed through the Tiered MTSS process.

The climate and culture team also collects data that reflects student behavior. The data collected for behavior includes office referral data as well as a running record for incidents to which behavior technicians respond and how those incidents were handled. This data in return provides McDonough with different patterns of behavior, based upon what information you look at. By looking at just a single student's behavior office referrals and you can determine the behavior that is occurring the most and look at when the student is receiving the most referrals (time of day) and this will provide you with a starting point for providing more tiered support for that student.

A cornerstone of the PBIS model is to catch students doing the right thing or displaying their ROARS values. ROARS stands for respect, organization, achievement, responsibility, and safety. Like most PBIS models, the climate and culture team has created and runs an incentive program in order to reward students for showing their ROARS. The incentive program is a token economy run through Class Dojo. Students and classes can earn class dojo points from any adult in the building. All staff have a Class Dojo account and are encouraged to give points to students readily. Students can exchange points through purchasing items at the school store. The school store is run by students with support from the Engagement Specialist and Catholic Charities. Students can also earn BEAR-behavior Referrals, in which students are called out by staff for exceptional positive behaviors.

Additionally, like PBIS models encourage, there are clear expectations and rules for students to follow. These are posted in each classroom and reviewed regularly. Students who struggle to meet behavioral expectations are met with firm but clear consequences. Students receive a nonverbal warning, a verbal warning, and are referred to a behavior technician for any "level two" behaviors. Level Two behaviors are behaviors that require some sort of conversation, mediation, or quick reset before returning to the classroom environment. The next run on the behavior incident ladder is a "level three", which are behaviors that are so egregious that they preclude the student from returning to the classroom environment for that period. During that time, students are working with a behavior technician on the IIRP restorative practice questions and are reflecting on the situation. Teachers and behavior technicians reach out to families before and after a student misses class time for a level two or three so that parents and guardians are looped on the process. In this way, all stakeholders are involved in addressing and reflecting on the behavior, so the solution is one that works for all parties.

Explain how the school will promote strong family and community connections to support school goals.

McDonough Middle School values strong family and community partnerships to support its approach to educating the whole student. For this reason, both the Family-Community Service Provider (FCSSP) and in-house community partner (Catholic Charities) have been integral to this work. Parent-Teacher Organization

meetings and Student Governance Council meetings are held monthly, providing virtual and in-person options where district operating procedures allow.

The school year will kick-off with the FCSSP-led backpack drive with the Barrio Riders. This event takes place in the first few weekends of each school year. Teachers and staff will volunteer to give out hundreds of book bags and school supplies to the community. The backpacks and materials are donated by the Barrio Riders, who also ride their motorcycles to the event as an attraction to bring more people from the community to come. Catholic Charities assists here to provide food and music for the event. It is one of the best ways to bring everyone together before the schoolyear begins.

Catholic Charities is the in-house community partner for McDonough Middle School. They will operate an after-school program as well as a summer-program for students. The program will run from 3:30pm-6pm during the school year and it will involve extra-curricular activities such as cooking, learning to DJ, playing basketball and other options. Additionally, there is a homework-help component. The goal is to strengthen this partnership by having a teacher-role support the students in after-school, specifically by providing lesson planning guidance and data that leverages their programming to reap the most academic-behavioral benefits. One facet of their program is the BAG (Behavior-Academics-Growth) program where one of their staff acts as a mentor for students who have been determined to need support in these areas. We also seek to publicize engagement opportunities for families by creating a master calendar of events, seeking new platforms for publicity, and implementing the ASPIRE survey to gain an asset-based approach to partnerships with the family and community.

Catholic Charities also will continue to run events for parents and for the community. They will continue to run activities such as October's Trunk or Treat and November's food drive, to help students and families in the community. They will continue to build on the Community Garden, currently the team is growing garlic. The school aims to continue to plan and implement increased numbers of events that bolster family engagement.

Staff will continue to create academic-based community events to strengthen the connection between teachers and the families with whom they serve. This year, McDonough held its first STEM night where the math teachers and science teachers worked together for students to engage in fun STEM-based activities with their families. The ELA teachers are planning for a literacy night to take place this spring.

The climate and culture team will organize, plan, and create a space for families in the form of a parent/culture center. McDonough, as a community school, needs to have a space for community resources to support families. The Culture and Climate team will provide a foundation for community events that will be held in this space. The turnaround team envisions this space to hold TESOL and target language classes for families and staff through this plan.

Furthermore, through the school-based ACE team and in alignment with the LEAP initiative McDonough team members will engage families in regular home visits to support attendance and engagement. The LEAP team strives to build strong relationships between home and school so that McDonough creates a supportive and cohesive partnership. McDonough ACE team members review data in order to assign mentors that will travel to the home, meet over zoom or in a common place to provide support, determine barriers around attendance and provide resources to families and students.

Describe the school's attendance intervention system.

McDonough addresses attendance within the ACE team model that utilizes the district ACE Procedural Handbook (Hartford Public Schools, 2021) and focuses on a four-tiered approach utilizing all staff members to build strong home to school relationships. McDonough starts with the whole school's support by creating

healthy learning environments, challenging and engaging curriculum, structured learning supports, access to basic needs and a welcoming, safe school climate to name a few.

The school-based ACE team utilizes weekly team time to meet and discuss Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, with most of the meeting time being spent around students in Tier 2 and assigning clear interventions for support. The ACE Team consists of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Family Community Support Service Provider, School Engagement Specialist, Behavior Technicians, School Social Workers, School Counselors, and Community Partner Liaison. The team takes a tiered approach to attendance work. Students are grouped by their average daily attendance, students with an ADA of 90% and above are considered Tier I, students with an ADA of 89%-80% are considered Tier II, students with an ADA of 79% and below are considered Tier III. The ACE Team meets weekly to review data, identify root causes for absenteeism and to discuss interventions of support for students with a data driven focus. Interventions as an ACE Team are based on the tiered model. The district goal is an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of 90% with a Chronic Absenteeism rate of 27%. At McDonough, the goal is an ADA of 90% and a Chronic Absenteeism rate of below 56%. Overall, the ADA is at 82.9% for the year thus far.

Tier 1 support at McDonough aims to be proactive and encourage increased attendance for all students. To ensure student voice in the process McDonough utilizes Student Council meetings to discuss student celebrations for attendance and to plan school wide family and student engagement activities that appeal to all stakeholders. The school-based ACE team uses 10-15 minutes of each weekly meeting to review the school wide Tier 1 incentive calendar in order to align with the District Incentives and make changes as needed based on student, family, and staff feedback. Examples of ACE Tier 1 incentives are staff vs. student basketball games, PEP rallies, glow parties, grade level team challenges and school swag. In addition, McDonough has created a school wide Podcast that is created by students and messages attendance information, celebrations and supports weekly. McDonough also has a school wide attendance newsletter, "The Honey Pot" that will continue to be an important communication tool as part of this plan. Gearing up for the summer, the ACE Team will engage in sending out welcoming letters and phone calls to families that includes a calendar of yearlong events to foster engagement.

In addition to the steps outlined above, McDonough also has a Crew Buddy System where each homeroom has two staff members. Each time a student is absent, one of the two teachers calls home to see where the student is, why they are absent, and in what ways the family needs support in getting the student back to school. It is expected that teachers make these calls by 9am each morning. Of the 4,374 calls logged in PowerSchool as of February 1, the majority have to do with supporting students and families with attendance.

Tier 2 supports at McDonough are designed to determine the root causes and address barriers to attendance to support students who may be at risk of being chronically absent. Through this plan McDonough aims to refine the mentoring program to support Tier 2 students. As a part of the school personalization process students and families identified as Tier 2 receive individualized support through the MTSS process. Goals are set with students and families based on current data and attainment is monitored on a weekly basis during grade level and school wide ACE meetings. Based on the root cause analysis students will be assigned a specific intervention for 6-8 weeks. Integral to this plan will be student-staff mentors, LEAP home visitors assigned to family for in-home support that is proactive to support interventions and academics beyond the school day (McDonough currently has 56 families in the Tier 2 program), and after school programming through Catholic Charities to support academics and social-emotional supports as identified through the MTSS process.

Tier 3 interventions at McDonough provide intensive support to students identified as chronically absent and/or more than 20% of the school year. All students receiving Tier 3 support also receive everything in Tier



1 and Tier 2, however, they also receive intensive support not just at school, but also through community-based organizations housed at McDonough and within the school district. Families are a part of the LEAP home visit program as well as the assigned community partner that supports health, social services, case management and social-emotional support. Students in Tier 3 receive daily calls, weekly visits and have goals tailored to support attendance, culture and engagement that are monitored over a 6-week process and adjusted as needed.

Describe how the school will address students' social and emotional well-being.

In terms of supporting individual students, staff strives to put students' social and emotional well-being first. From a staffing lens, there are grade level behavior technicians and social workers to support students. McDonough has two school counselors splitting the school by alphabet. During enrichment blocks, all teachers implement a district curriculum called Second Step, which acts as a Tier I social-emotional support. New this year is the Effective School Solutions (ESS) program. They provide two additional social workers who work with students on a Tier II and Tier III level. These are students that they take on through their specific intake forms and operate like a community partner within the school.

To address students' social and emotional well-being, McDonough staff will implement a strong Multi-Tiered System of Supports that focuses more comprehensively on restorative practices and PBIS models, Socio-Emotional Learning, and Strong Attendance Habits. The team seeks to create and strengthen the school-wide Culture and Climate Team to focus on Restorative Practices, school-wide PBIS Models, and other best practices for adolescents. This work will be informed by focus groups of students, parents, faculty, and community partners in order to improve school culture and climate through an equity lens. Additionally, to leverage student voice and student choice, programs like student government will be utilized in order to provide students with agency in their learning environment. These systems will run alongside the current Social Emotional Learning curriculum, Second Step. A mindfulness room will be created and utilized to support students who need intentional social-emotional breaks.

All staff have received training in restorative practices through the International Institute of Restorative Practices with the district. Teachers are also supporting social and emotional health through Crew, an advisory period, where students are expected to participate in circles, set goals, and reflect in order to build a strong, supportive school community. Staff will participate in professional learning around culturally responsive pedagogy and anti-racist practices as the foundation for creating a safe space for students to come to school and learn.

In addition to Tiered Interventions, staff training and focus on Restorative Practices McDonough also has a comprehensive athletics program that ensures all students have access to an environment to build strong self-esteem, positive relationships, and a strong home to school connection. Through basketball, soccer, etc. McDonough provides a safe space with clear expectations that allow for students to feel personally acknowledged and able to grow their strengths. McDonough works with students to understand their frustration triggers and how to help them regulate their emotions. McDonough celebrates them and partners with families so they can cheer on their students and be a part of the school environment. Through structured middle school sports McDonough helps students to be confident, resilient, and persistent through high-quality relationships and safe learning spaces.

## Part Two

**Instructions:** Using the table below, identify the Culture and Climate three-year goal including indicators of success, data sources, and three annual targets.

### Three-Year School Culture and Climate Goal:

| Indicator                | Data Source | Baseline Year: 2019-20 | Target Year 1: 2022-2023 | Target Year 2: 2023-2024 | Target Year 3: 2024-2025 |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Suspension Rate          | EdSight     | 18.1%                  | 14.3%                    | 13.5%                    | 12.8%                    |
| Chronic Absenteeism Rate | EdSight     | 25.5%                  | 19.4%                    | 17.6%                    | 15.8%                    |

### Action Steps:

**Instructions:** Using the table below, describe key action steps which will be implemented across three years in order to achieve the three-year Culture and Climate goal.

| Culture and Climate Priority: 3.2 Student Attendance   |  |   |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Root Cause:</b> Barriers exist due to the COVID 19 Pandemic and families report safety concerns for walkers who live 1.5 miles away or less.          |  |   |  |  |  |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b> Student Engagement Specialist, Family Community School Support Provider, Administrators, Classroom Teachers, Support Staff |  |   |  |  |  |
| Strategies to address Root Cause   | Timeline   |   |  | Indicators of Success  | Resources  |
|  | Year 1   | Year 2  | Year 3   |  |  |
| Implement proactive school-wide strategies to support attendance   | Investigate, create, and implement “Walking School Bus” to support students in various neighborhood to get to school weekly<br><br>Monthly attendance celebration events for students, planned out at the beginning of the year and written into Master Calendar<br><br>Comprehensive Family Resource Center in collaboration with | Refine and continue implement “Walking School Bus” using data from first year, add additional modes of transportation (biking, skateboarding), four days per week<br><br>Student led monthly attendance celebration events for students | Full implementation of “Walking School Bus” 5 days per week<br><br>Continue student led monthly attendance celebration events for students | Master Calendar doc<br><br>Improved Average Daily Attendance & Chronic Absenteeism Rates | Attendance Works<br><br>Supports for FRC and celebrations<br><br>Monitor for the “Walking School Bus” (4) 1.0 FTE<br><br>Waddle! App to monitor “Walking School Bus” |

|  |  |   |   |   |  |
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|  | school-based community partner   |   |   |   |  |
| Refine mentoring program to support student attendance | <p>Implement a mentoring program for students identified as Tier II, pairing staff with students to support regular attendance.</p> <p>Implement student focus group to identify barriers and specific high leverage supports for these students</p> <p>Create a student mentoring program that allows students to support each other to attend school regularly</p> <p>Refine Case Management System Sessions</p> <p>Create Family Learning Sessions and Events/Wrap Around Services Fairs</p> <p>School wide celebrations with families before, during and after school so all families can attend</p> | <p>Implement a mentoring program for students identified as Tier II, pairing them with a staff mentor to support regular attendance</p> <p>Implement and grow Student focus groups</p> <p>Implement student mentoring program</p> | <p>Refine the mentoring program for students identified as Tier II using data to support students to regularly attend school</p> <p>Implement and grow student focus groups</p> <p>Implement and grow student mentoring program</p> | <p>Mentor Log</p> <p>Student attendance data will decrease as measured by the chronic absenteeism rate</p> <p>Increase in students having a trusted adult and staff will miss them when they are absent on the District School Climate Survey</p> | <p>Climate &amp; Culture Coach FTE 1.0</p> <p>“Where Everybody Belongs” partnership</p> <p>Latinos in Action partnership</p> <p>External partner to create a high-quality mentoring system</p> <p>Attendance Works</p> <p>Wrap Around Services/Connections</p> |

| <b>Culture and Climate Priority: 3.3 Student Behavior</b>  |                          |                       |                       |                         |                                |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Root Cause:</b> The school has established common, school-wide, tiered behavioral expectations but needs a consistent system for responding to behavior incidents |                          |                       |                       |                         |                                |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b> Administration, Culture and Climate Team, ACE Team, Teachers   |                          |                       |                       |                         |                                |
| Strategies to address Root Cause   | Timeline                 |                       |                       | Indicators of Success   | Resources                      |
|  | Year 1                   | Year 2                | Year 3                |                         |                                |
| Implement and refine hybrid  | Continued Book Study for | Restorative practices | Restorative practices | Evidence of restorative | <i>Restorative Literacies:</i> |

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| model of Restorative Approaches and Practices and Positive Behavior Intervention Support | <p>Restorative Practices using the text:<br/><i>Restorative Literacies: Creating a Community of Care in Schools</i></p> <p>Implement parent workshops on restorative practices quarterly</p> <p><i>Where Everybody Belongs</i> will support school staff during the summer months with training and introduction of restorative practices to new students and incoming 6th graders</p> | identified by the book study work will be implemented in a model classroom model (at least 1 classroom per grade level)  | identified and planned for will be implemented in all classrooms and spaces throughout the building | <p>practices in reflection templates</p> <p>ODRs/level two referral volume will decrease</p>   | <p><i>Creating a Community of Care in Schools</i></p> <p>PBIS</p> <p>SERC</p>   |
| Develop MTSS system for behavior supports  | <p>Create a MTSS Behavior Support Team which include Behavior technicians, students and other support staff.</p> <p>Create a list of Tier II and Tier III Supports for Behaviors</p> <p>Create and Implement a clear check in-check out plan</p>   | <p>Implement SSTs to collaborate with stakeholders to support students' behavior needs.</p> <p>Implement tier I classroom management strategies with instructional and support staff</p> <p>Refine MTSS behavior manual to include</p> | Refine and adjust the MTSS Behavior Supports based on surveys from all stakeholders                 | <p>Behavior log (level 2 and PS entry log)</p> <p>Restorative Practices identified by staff will be apparent in all activities of the school</p> <p>Number of students receiving tiered support for behavior will decrease</p> | <p>MTSS Behavior manual</p> <p>Resources for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Behaviors</p> <p>Training on FBA/BIP</p> <p>Behavior MTSS team meetings weekly</p> |

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|  | <p>Classroom Teachers and Behavior Technicians lead professional learning around Tier I classroom management systems throughout the year. (Book: Pre-Referral intervention manual)</p> <p>Create a library of resources and documents for the Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan Manual</p> <p>Create and implement a mindfulness room for students in need of social-emotional support</p> | <p>additional resources</p> <p>All school staff receives training in how to complete a functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plans for students in general education classes aligned to the MTSS process</p> <p>List of data sources for use with behavior plans.</p> <p>Tailor the mindfulness room to the needs of students through survey responses</p> |  | Number of office referrals will decrease |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|

| <b>Culture and Climate Priority: 3.5 Family &amp; Community Engagement</b>   |  |  |  |   |                                       |
|--|--|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Root Cause:</b> There is a sense of community and belonging, but a limited number of focused approaches to engage families as partners in their children's learning and school experience |  |  |  |   |                                       |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b> Climate and Culture team, Climate and Culture Coach, Administration, ILT, Calendar team  |  |  |  |   |                                       |
| Strategies to address Root Cause   | Timeline   |  |  | Indicators of Success                                 | Resources                             |
|  | Year 1   | Year 2   | Year 3   |   |                                       |
| Engage with parents to listen to needs and address barriers  | Create master calendar that takes in all the different events all in one place with a clear plan for virtual and | Events calendar print out to be sent home monthly and placed in McDonough google | Refine calendar process based on ASPIRE Survey results<br><br>Student Government | Master calendar of events<br><br>Clear and consistent | Calendar program<br><br>Calendar Team |

|   |  |  |  |                                       |  |
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|   | <p>in-person options</p> <p>Identify the point person to be the lead person to include all calendar information.</p> <p>ILT to bring events to calendar team meetings.</p> <p>ACE team to bring events to calendar team meetings</p> <p>Determine process for submitting events to calendar team</p> <p>Administer ASPIRE survey and disaggregate data</p> | <p>classroom as well as the website, McDonough TV, Podcast and Parent Square.</p> <p>Refine calendar process and make changes as needed based on ASPIRE Survey</p> <p>Ensure marketing materials for events are accessible for families (language support, flyers, timing).</p> <p>Illicit feedback from families as to what events they would like to attend in the school community.</p> <p>Implement activities and engagement with families utilizing ASPIRE survey data</p> | <p>takes over creation of calendar and all publicity</p> <p>Update marketing materials (innovations, languages)</p> <p>Refine usage of ASPIRE survey to build stronger activities and engagement with families</p> | <p>communication of events</p>        | <p>ASPIRE Survey</p>   |
| <p>Plan and implement intentional in-person and online events</p> | <p>Create and hold one family event each month during the school year</p>  | <p>Create and hold at least one family event each month during the school year</p> <p>Hold bi-monthly sessions based on Aspire Survey where parents</p>  | <p>Hold monthly sessions based on Aspire Survey where parents share their knowledge with students (Career/Interest Fair Format)</p>  | <p>Attendance rosters from events</p> | <p>Funds for family learning events</p> <p>Bi-monthly family engagement sessions</p> |

|   |  |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|
|   |  | share their knowledge with students (Career/Interest Fair Format)<br><br>Create Virtual Library of these sessions for ON DEMAND learning at home  | Increase and Refine Virtual Library of these sessions for ON DEMAND learning at home   |   | ASPIRE Survey  |
| Create welcoming, physical and online space(s) for families                               | Create physical space with adequate furniture for meetings with families<br><br>Community Resource space -- physical and virtual-- that contains resources that are relevant to the community (high school application information, legal services, public health information) | Directory of community resources/supports have a direct connection with school (someone that families can directly reach out to for support from the organization)<br><br>Community Resources hold "nights" for parents to be of service for our school | Assess the usage of physical and online spaces for families and make necessary adjustments to best support families<br><br>Enrich/Enhance physical and online spaces                           | Attendance Rosters for usage<br><br>Improved attendance at family engagement activities   | Funding to create a "welcome space" for family (Technology and furniture)<br><br>Directory of community resources<br><br>ASPIRE Survey |
| Implement TESOL and target language classes for families and staff (online and in person) | Implement TESOL classes for families of newcomer families (15 family members)<br><br>Implement target language classes for staff to learn Spanish and Portuguese (the high instance  | Increase TESOL classes for additional newcomer families (30 family members)<br><br>Increase target language classes for staff to learn Spanish and Portuguese (the high instance languages for  | Increase TESOL classes for additional newcomer families (45 family members)<br><br>Increase target language classes for staff to learn Spanish and Portuguese (the high instance languages for | Increased proficiency in English for families as measured by APPL OPI assessment<br><br>Increased proficiency in Spanish and/or Portuguese for the staff as measured by | Rosetta Stone<br><br>TESOL Certified (Adult Ed) Teacher 1.0 FTE<br><br>Spanish certified World Language Teacher 1.0                    |

|  |                                     |                      |                      |                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---|
|  | languages for newcomers) (10 staff) | newcomers (15 staff) | newcomers (20 staff) | APPL OPI assessment | Portuguese certified World Language Teacher 1.0<br><br>APPL OPI Assessment Licenses |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---|

## Domain 4: Operations

### Part One

**Instructions:** The Operations domain focuses on systems and processes that promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including through the use of time and financial resources. In the boxes below, address the following:

Propose the length of the school day and year for students and describe how the proposed schedule will maximize instructional time on task for each major instructional/content area.

The school day will be 7 hours and 10 minutes long, from 8:15-3:25 pm with a half hour built in for lunch. McDonough will follow the District Calendar for instructional days. McDonough Middle School intends to revisit its current framework for instructional time within the master schedule for core academic subjects, such as Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts, and Social Studies, to determine if changes must be made to better support student-centered practices. Additionally, the school will build in instructional time for academic intervention (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) and enrichment to bolster student engagement. This plan will also include structures for teaching bell to bell and maximizing instructional time as the audit indicated this as a need due to “poor pacing, limited student engagement, and missed opportunities for interactive learning (2021).” Common expectations for the instructional block will be co-created in the first year of implementation and further refined throughout the full three-year plan.

For the 2022-2023 school year, the current schedule will also be modified to include more time for restorative circles and social-emotional learning. Each school day will begin with CREW, otherwise known as advisory, which will support Second Step and time for restorative circles where students will check-in with one another to build community. Additionally, CREW will be the space where students reflect on their progress toward mastering the student competencies in the Portrait of a Graduate, as well as prepare for student-led conferences aligned to the same process students will experience at Hartford Public High School. Social-emotional learning, which will be critical to identifying and supporting student needs so that instructional time may be maximized, will also take place during the X block or Enrichment block, where clubs and activities can be posted on a weekly or biweekly basis.

Another important factor in students’ schedules is the role of the MTSS block. This block will be used to deliver multiple types of interventions. Currently, MTSS is used to support Newcomers engaging in sheltered instruction, students who receive pull-out hours per their IEPs, tiered Math groups and tiered ELA groups. Students who do not receive pull-out instruction for a specific learning intervention stay in the classroom and work on Reading Plus/Lexia for tier I support in ELA and Zearn for tier 1 support in math.



During each core content/instructional block, students will receive bell to bell instruction. This is a core-component of expectations for each instructional block. Part of this will be the implementation of bells to cue transitions. Because of COVID-19 safety protocols, students remain in the classrooms and teachers move from room to room without a bell (but on their schedule). This allows for ambiguity of transitions because teachers must set up each room before they can begin class. To maximize instructional time, students should transition, rather than the teacher, and this should be done in accordance with a bell ringing. The bell will cue students and staff for when class begins and ends, signaling the beginning and end of instructional time.

McDonough's work to engage students will be enhanced through the creation of a structure for clubs, activities, and support for students based on student voice and choice. Extracurricular offerings will be provided based on student interest surveys and will be delivered through a menu format for all students in person and virtually. This way if students do not live close, they may still participate in extracurricular after school programs. McDonough supports students within the daily structure by creating mentorship programs to increase engagement and support middle school students. Students in grades 6 and 7 will participate in the Boomerang Project's "Where Everybody Belongs" program. Students in Grade 6 will have the opportunity to engage in team-building activities and events to on-board them to McDonough Middle School in the summer prior to their arrival. Grade 8 students will participate in a newly formed mentoring program established with Hartford Public High School to expose students to the career pathways they will explore once they begin high school and to prepare them for entrance into the 9th Grade Academy and the expectations of high school level coursework. This mentoring opportunity will also include a summer bridge program for rising 9th graders.

Additionally, to prepare and excite grade 8 students about the unique academic offerings available to them at Hartford Public High School, students will participate in various career pathway exploration days organized by ReadyCT. Through hands-on, experiential activities, students will gain exposure to the knowledge and skills that are core to the student experience in the Allied Health and Engineering and Green Technology career pathways at HPHS. These days may also include field experiences to community partners, visits to HPHS pathway courses, and opportunities to meet with HPHS career pathway student ambassadors who will deepen students' understanding of the pathways.

Propose the length of the school day and year for staff, including additional time before and during the school year, for professional learning and/or common planning time.

The length of the year for teachers and staff will be 187 days. The regular school day is from 8:15 a.m.-3:25 p.m. for students. The additional four days (bringing it to 191 total) will be full day professional learning focused on the Instructional Vision and Climate and Culture work. An additional four days will be offered to all staff; those that choose to attend will be compensated for these days. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, staff will volunteer and will be compensated one extra hour to remain at school until 4:30 p.m. to engage in communities of practice.

The proposed weekly schedule will include early release Wednesdays for students to either go home or to a Community Based Organization, early release days running from 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. The regular school day is 7.5 hours for staff, with students engaging in academics for 6 hours and 40 minutes each day. The October Commissioner's Network Operations and Instructional Audit revealed "a need for increased time for teachers at McDonough to work with each other to develop instructional materials, review student data, and improve instruction (October 2021)." In order to meet this need for greater collaboration amongst staff, additional time will be added to the calendar.

The proposal for extended time includes weekly early dismissal days for students so that staff can engage in “Bear Acceleration”, a time to build communities of practice for staff. These communities of practice will focus on the greatest areas of need as revealed by the audit: classroom management, student engagement through flipped instruction and student-centered learning, sheltered instruction and best practices for multilingual learners, differentiation, and New Teacher Academy. In addition to the early dismissal Wednesdays, “Bear Acceleration” will also add two additional hours weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays for departmental time focused on the continuous improvement cycles in Data Wise. A component of “Bear Acceleration” will be ongoing access to a virtual library of professional learning reflecting strong practices outside and inside of McDonough. This will allow greater flexibility in where and when professional learning can be provided either before or during the school year, since such resources can be accessed anytime, anywhere.

As part of the schedule, staff will also need opportunities to convene for grade-level meetings, team meetings, collaborative planning, MTSS meetings, peer observation and family engagement and outreach. Staff receive 50 minutes of prep on regular days with the exception of Wednesdays where classes will run on an alternating half day schedule. Currently, staff meetings are 60 minutes after-school, usually held on Wednesdays after professional learning time. Staff meetings will focus on increasing the amount of professional learning staff will receive. To maximize touchpoints with staff, McDonough will utilize enrichment blocks to support grade-level team meetings during the school-day, while students complete social-emotional learning programs with a unified arts teacher. Previously, staff held these meetings during the school-based Wednesday professional learning. Additionally, as necessary, collaboration/co-planning time will be utilized during an assigned “duty” period in order to ensure systems and structures are in place for consistent meetings. Finally, a collaboration with Hartford Public High School will be developed and implemented to open up collaborative pipelines for staff. As their feeder school, this will support building the bridge to the current pathways provided at HPHS for all students.

In order to maximize student engagement and use of instructional time, a robust addition of technology will be required. The computers will serve a multi-purpose use during the school day and in the after-school programming.

While the bulk of the work in this plan can take place during the school day with creative and intentional schedule design, some of the work must happen after school. Based on this year’s model from the district, McDonough has one Wednesday per month as a school-based professional learning half-day and three Wednesdays each month of district-based professional learning. For next school year, the district is providing only one half-day per month for professional learning. This is not sufficient time to support the multitude of initiatives at McDonough. For this reason, McDonough will continue to allocate additional time on Wednesdays in order to meet the goals of professional learning tasks and increased teacher collaboration time. This means that at least two Wednesdays per month, students will be on a half day schedule where they transition at 12:15 p.m. to enrichment programming offered by CBOs while staff engage in the professional learning cycles outlined in the previous talent and academic sessions of this plans, 12:45-3:30 p.m. There will also be four additional voluntary workdays built into the work year schedule for increased Professional Learning and staff will be compensated.

In order to implement this plan with operational effectiveness and maintain the level of academic rigor expected, an additional Assistant Principal will be hired. This will support our school in building out all four domains of the TACO framework. This administrator will focus on Operations specifically and will be assigned to a specific grade level. This will also complete the administrative team and allow for one administrator to oversee each of the grade levels (evaluation of staff at each grade level, support behaviors) at McDonough Middle School.

## Part Two

**Instructions:** Using the table below, identify the school Operations three-year goal including indicators of success, data sources, and three annual targets.

### Three-Year School Operations Goal:

| Indicator                  | Data Source                 | Baseline Year:<br>2018-2019 | Target Year 1:<br>2022-2023 | Target Year 2:<br>2023-2024 | Target Year 3:<br>2024-2025 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Overall School Index Score | Next Generation Report Card | 47.7                        | 60.5                        | 63.5                        | 66.6                        |

### Action Steps:

**Instructions:** Using the table below, describe key action steps which will be implemented across three years in order to achieve the three-year culture goal.

| Operations Priority: 4.2 Use of Instructional Time  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Root Cause:</b> Staff need to improve their lesson pacing, classroom management, use strategies to increase student engagement, and address missed opportunities for interactive learning, to ensure teaching from bell to bell. |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b> Administration, Instructional Coaches, Instructional Leadership Team  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Strategies to address Root Cause  | Timeline   |  |  | Indicators of Success  | Resources  |
|   | Year 1   | Year 2   | Year 3   |  |  |
| Create and implement common expectations for an instructional block to ensure maximized instructional time  | Co-create common expectations for the instructional block<br><br>Provide professional learning to all teachers<br><br>Implement the common expectations for the instructional block<br><br>Implement bell system to signal clear, consistent transitional time | Monitor training impact and continue to support where needed | Monitor training impact and continue to support where needed | Common Expectations for Instructional Block<br><br>Classroom walkthrough data reflects teachers effectively using the instructional block bell to bell | Common Expectations for Instructional Block Document<br><br>Funds to compensate staff for extra days |

|  |   |  |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| Implement student-centered instruction with a focus on 21st Century Skills and the Portrait of a Graduate to increase student engagement | <p>Administer “Interest Surveys” to students and implement Student Centered Instruction based on survey results</p> <p>Deliver PL on Student Centered Instruction</p> <p>Review HPHS’s learning walk tool on student-centered practices and revise, if necessary</p> <p>Provide functional, up-to-date technology and instructional materials at the beginning of the school year for staff</p> <p>Perform inventory of all student technology.</p> | <p>Continue implementation of Student-Centered Instruction based on interest surveys</p> <p>Provide ongoing Coaching and Learning Walks on Student Centered Instruction</p> <p>Continue engagement with outside partner on student-centered learning</p> <p>Implement Learning Walk Tool</p> <p>Enhance technology with required updates or additional programming. If staffing changes, reevaluate technology needs</p> | <p>Refine implementation of Student-Centered Instruction based on interest surveys</p> <p>Refine Learning Walk Tool</p> <p>Continue engagement with outside partner on student-centered learning</p> <p>Reevaluate and update technology needs</p> | <p>Learning Walk Data</p> <p>Increased student attendance and engagement</p> <p>Evidence of appropriate technology use in the classroom</p> | <p>Partnership such as Education Elements to provide PL on Student Centered Learning</p> <p>Student Interest Surveys</p> <p>Student, staff, and family focus groups</p> <p>Desktop computers, necessary support technology (cords, etc.) for computer lab</p> <p>IPEVO V4K Ultra High Definition 8MP USB Document Camera</p> |
| Create PLC to engage students academically through improved classroom management   | <p>Create and implement PLC on classroom management</p> <p>Conduct learning walks</p> <p>Identify model teachers</p>  | <p>Review and refine implementation of the PLC on classroom management</p> <p>Conduct learning walks</p>   | <p>Refine the implementation of the PLC on classroom management</p> <p>Conduct learning walks</p>  | <p>Increased student attendance and engagement</p> <p>Classroom management techniques evident in all</p>                                    | <p>Harry K. Wong and Katherine T. Wong in their works <i>The Classroom Management Book</i> and <i>The First Days of School</i></p>   |

|   |   |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
|   |   | Model teachers are recorded, and video exemplars are uploaded to video library  | Model teachers continue to be recorded and video exemplars are uploaded to video library   | classrooms as evidenced by walkthroughs  | PLC on Classroom Management  |
|   |   | Model teachers share best practices through PLC   | Model teachers continue to share best practices through PLC  |  |  |
| Implement/<br>Integrate Portrait of a Graduate and create pipeline for staff collaboration with HPHS teachers | <p>Create format for e-portfolios that will house curated student work, POG self-assessment/reflection and Student Led Conferences aligned with POG .</p> <p>Modify and pilot student-led conference format utilized in high school with 8th graders</p> <p>Create system for Academic Review of Student Portfolios (ACT Teams)</p> <p>Collaborate with HPHS to create PL Plan re: 9th Grade Academy, Career Pathways</p> | <p>Implement e-portfolios aligned to Portrait of a Graduate</p> <p>Design/pilot 8th grade capstone focused on 5 domains of POG</p> <p>Implement student-led conferences for all grade levels</p> <p>Implement Academic ACT Reviews for all students</p> <p>Implement PL Plan with HPHS and monitor impact</p> | <p>Full 8th grade capstone launched based on reflections and revisions from previous year's pilot and encompass the cumulative learning from 6th, 7th and 8th.</p> <p>Refine student-led conferences</p> <p>Refine Academic Review System (ACT Teams)</p> <p>Refine PL Plan with HPHS and monitor impact</p> | <p>All students use student-facing Portrait of a Graduate rubrics</p> <p>All students participate in student-led conferences</p> <p>All students receive two Academic Reviews per year</p> <p>Implement student portfolios complete with 5 assignments per unit that show evidence of meaningful implementation of feedback from teachers, peers, and self to align with Portrait of a Graduate.</p> | <p>Student Facing POG rubrics</p> <p>Student-led conference format</p> <p>Catholic Charities Partnership</p> |
| Create a structure for clubs, activities, and   | Survey students for interests and   | Refine and implement club structure where   | Refine and implement club structure where  | All students matched to  | Community Partners   |

|  |  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| supports for students  | implement club structure.<br><br>Create menu of activities/supports  | students select two activities/clubs to engage in (one per semester)   | students select four activities/clubs to engage in (one per quarter)  | interest clubs/supports  | Partnership with City of Hartford<br><br>Partnership with Community Based Organizations<br><br>Stipends for staff for after-hours clubs/extracurricular activities   |
| Create a mentorship program to increase engagement and support Middle School Transition and transition to HPHS | Provide PL on "Where Everybody Belongs"<br><br>Develop Mentor Program with Hartford Public High School using pre-existing programs like Latinos in Action, student council, and Capstone | Implement Student Led Mentorship Program of Where Everybody Belongs<br><br>Implement Mentor Program with Hartford Public High School | Refine and Increase Mentorship Program Capacity of Where Everybody Belongs<br><br>Refine Program with Hartford Public High School | All students engaged in mentorship program (s): Grade 6 and 7: "Where Everybody Belongs"<br><br>Grade 8: HPHS Collaboration to bridge the gap between Grade 8 and 9. | Partnership with The Boomerang Project: Where Everybody Belongs<br><br>Summer Bridge Program for Grade 8<br><br>Stipends for staff for student council, capstone leaders (ACT Team)<br><br>Partnership with Latinos in Action<br><br>Transportation Budget |

| <b>Operations Priority: 4.3 Use of Staff Time</b>   |  |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Root Cause:</b> Lack a high-quality system and structure for teacher collaboration in grade level teams and department level teams which impacts teaching and learning |  |  |  |   |   |
| <b>Person(s) Responsible:</b>   |  |  |  |   |   |
| Strategies to address Root Cause  | Timeline   |  |  | Indicators of Success   | Resources   |
|   | Year 1   | Year 2   | Year 3   |   |   |
| Develop and implement a master schedule that supports school-wide interventions and creates time for high quality collaboration   | Implement master schedule that supports staff collaboration and support middle school students<br><br>Increase Crew/Advisory time to do more circles         | Revise master schedule to ensure it supports collaboration and support for middle school students<br><br>Review how increased time in crew/advisory is going | Revise master schedule to ensure it supports collaboration and support for middle school students<br><br>Make necessary changes to crew/advisory   | Implemented master schedule   | Master Schedule<br><br>Purchase more <i>Circle Forward</i> books<br><br>Partner to create master schedule   |
| Develop and implement a clear and consistent community of practice schedule to support school-wide initiatives  | Create “Bear Acceleration”<br><br>Develop professional learning schedule that includes half days on all Wednesdays   | Implement “Bear Acceleration”  | Refine “Bear Acceleration”   | All staff engage in “Bear Acceleration” activities<br><br>All staff demonstrate improved pedagogy as evidenced by TEVAL and informal classroom visits | Stipends for leaders of “Bear Acceleration”<br><br>Hourly Compensation for “Bear Acceleration”<br><br>Partner to provide professional learning on development Communities of Practice |
| Create and implement a virtual library of professional learning for on-demand learning  | Identify staff to begin filming professional learning sessions and high-quality model lessons<br><br>Create a process to identify high quality model lessons | Continue to add additional sessions and high-quality model lessons to the library<br><br>Implement process for identifying high quality model lessons        | Continue to add additional sessions and high-quality model lessons to the library<br><br>Refine process for identifying high quality model lessons | All staff engage in on-demand professional learning during “Bear Acceleration”<br><br>All teachers will improve pedagogy as evidenced by TEVAL and    | Platform for virtual library<br><br>High Quality model lessons  |

|  |  |  |  |                           |  |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------|--|
|  | Identify platform to house the virtual library | Utilize platform as a tool for on-demand professional learning | Utilize platform as a tool for on-demand professional learning | informal classroom visits |  |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------|--|



## Section 7: Sustainability Plan

**Instructions:** In the box below, describe the sustainability plan which addresses the following:

- How will the school build its capacity in order to sustain progress made using Commissioner's Network funds during Commissioner's Network participation years?
- How will the district support and monitor plans and activities subsequent to the end of Commissioner's Network participation?

**Building Capacity:** In order to create lasting progress and success through this turnaround plan, McDonough Middle School must make dramatic investments in its staff, its students, and its community to build capacity during its participation in the Commissioner's Network.

By the end of the Commissioner's Network program, McDonough's theory of action will be reflected in:

1. Growth of Staff and Retention of Teachers: Upon taking the previously outlined action steps under talent, the staff at McDonough Middle School will have had intentional, high-quality professional learning that underscores the foundational components of how to deliver strong Tier I instruction that is differentiated and culturally responsive, meets the diverse needs of learners, and how to create a collaborative, supportive classroom environment. It is the expectation of this committee that given that level of support and development, McDonough will retain its teachers by expanding their professional bandwidth as individuals and as teams. By establishing the aforementioned structures for professional learning and collaborative work, staff will have the skills and supports to deliver high-quality learning opportunities for all students. Stronger teachers and stronger teams allow for the school community to support itself and flourish beyond the years in the Commissioner's Network.
2. Increased Leadership Opportunity: As teachers grow and develop throughout their participation in the Commissioner's Network, they will be more prepared to become leaders within the school community. Teacher leaders can then continue this work by turn-keying their professional learning to others in future years at McDonough, beyond the Commissioner's Network participation.
3. Model of Interconnectedness with the Community: A key component of this plan is elevating the role of families and community in McDonough Middle School. This is reflective of a priority in Hartford Public Schools and is outlined in the District Model of Excellence, which emphasizes the importance of strong relationships with families, businesses, government and other community resources. Because this is a priority of the District, McDonough Middle School will have ongoing support to continue the initiatives set forth in this plan to make growth in developing the culture and climate of the school community.
4. Alignment and Implementation of Instructional Vision with the Portrait of the Graduate: McDonough Middle School will continue to focus on delivering high quality instruction equitably through the Instructional Vision of Hartford Public Schools and the key competencies of the Hartford Public School's Portrait of a Graduate.

**Supporting and Monitoring Activities Subsequent to the End of Commissioner's Network Participation:**

McDonough Middle School will continue to use the foundation set during the Commissioner's Network Participation in the areas of talent, academics, climate/culture, and organization.

Hartford Public Schools is fully committed to supporting the success and sustainability of the Turnaround Plan for McDonough Middle School. The Office of Talent Management (OTM) will assist in recruitment efforts through joint collaboration on recruitment events and outreach to attract highly qualified diverse candidates. OTM will be in the service of McDonough to support hiring practices. OTM will use Nimble to track the hiring

process to ensure timely hiring. The Office of Academics will assist with planning and/or facilitation of professional learning to build content, pedagogy as well as integration of instructional technology. This collaboration is intended to support the additional professional learning opportunities and the New Teacher Academy at McDonough. The Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships will assist with parent outreach, parent workshops and other events. The Office of School Leadership will continue to support the school principal through coaching and supervision on a weekly basis by the executive director and/or the Chief of Schools. An executive coach will support the school administrative team to strengthen leadership competencies, and intentional implementation of the turnaround plan. The district will also provide .5 assistant principal to support the school administrative team. The district's Assistant Director of Student Engagement will support the development of school-wide systems and structures to deepen restorative practice, a mentoring program, increase student voice and increase student attendance. The Assistant Director will collaboratively plan ongoing professional learning on engagement strategies, trauma-informed strategies, Attendance Works strategies and social emotional learning. The district will provide McDonough with The Office of Operations will assist McDonough to ensure it has proper infrastructure, technology resources, and addresses necessary equipment repairs to afford high quality teaching and learning to McDonough Middle School. Lastly, the Office of Finance and the Operation Management in the Office School Leadership will assist with financial advice and close monitoring of grant spending.

**How will the school build its capacity in order to sustain progress made using Commissioner's Network funds during Commissioner's Network participation years?**

Commissioner's Network funding for McDonough Middle School will be used for resources that will build capacity at the school so that the changes proposed will continue after the funding period is over. For instance:

- In the Talent domain, the Hartford Public Schools will provide the conditions for differentiated job-embedded professional learning for all staff in alignment with the goals set forth in this plan. An Executive Coach will work with the school principal and the administrative team to build instructional leadership capacity; professional learning experiences, mentors, and formalized coaching (utilizing external partners as necessary) will develop teachers' capacity to implement the Turnaround Model and provide effective instruction to prepare students for college and career. The skills developed through these efforts will not only continue after grant funding has ended but will be enhanced by the ongoing experience of school leader and teachers, creating a culture of life-long learning among the staff at McDonough.
- In the Academic domain, the school will work in partnership with ReVISION Learning, and other external partners, to develop and implement a strong standards-based, culturally responsive, and differentiated Tier 1 instructional model, including ongoing job embedded professional learning. The school will also implement a robust MTSS framework to address student need. In addition, a system to explore the Career Pathways at Hartford Public High School will be developed to build student interest, motivation, and persistence to support our students. The school will also offer a four-week Summer Bridge program for 6<sup>th</sup> graders in order to prepare them for the middle school experience at McDonough Middle School. To ensure the effective use of data, teachers will receive ongoing professional learning in the analysis and use of data to drive instruction through the Data Wise process. Once established, these initiatives can be carried into the future with minimal funding repercussions, with the exception of the Summer Bridge program and the instructional coaches, for which district or other funding will be needed.
- To address issues in the Climate and Culture domain, steps taken by McDonough Middle School will include refinement of our hybrid model of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) and

restorative practices through teacher and administrator professional learning and through the establishment of appropriate structures; sustaining a strong CREW (Advisory) Program; The school's plan will provide further support to families and community through the establishment of a Cultural Center to help new students and families as they transition into the school and community, and through strengthening translation capacities. PBIS, restorative practices and the CREW Advisory Program will be supported primarily by professional learning that will build staff capacity.

- Initiatives in the Operations domain include lengthening the school year for staff so that ample time is provided for professional learning. We will also sustain our Virtual Academy to include student enrichment, and on demand learning. We will develop an organizational structure to maximize learning, including intentional scheduling, MTSS blocks, and enrichments built into the school day. While continuing to provide additional time would require funding resources, the professional learning and collaboration will support McDonough in realizing its vision.

### **How will the district support and monitor plans and activities subsequent to the end of Commissioner's Network participation?**

Hartford Public Schools has a system of school support in place that will continue after the end of Commissioner's Network participation. Support will include ongoing professional learning through district and school staff that have received training throughout the course of participation in the Commissioner's Network and have developed capacity as a result of that participation. For instance, both school and district leaders will have been involved in learning related to the development of a strong Tier 1 curriculum and will work with other staff in an ongoing fashion to strengthen and support that work, as well as numerous other areas that are addressed in the Turnaround Plan. The school will also continue to receive support through the Office of School Leadership, which works directly with school leaders as they develop and implement their School Improvement Plans with monitoring incorporated into the School Progress Review process.

The McDonough School Improvement Plan will also be an important component for monitoring ongoing plans and activities. HPS collects and analyzes data related to school and district progress on a continual basis, and both school and district targets and milestones are tracked, as well as CSDE targets. This data will indicate whether the school is continuing to move toward its goals, areas of success and lack of success, and the need to revise plans for greater success. The Office of School Leadership works with the school leaders to analyze school data and develop plans for improvement in order to meet school goals. A School Review Process takes place three times each year, facilitated by the Chief of Schools, and including the Chief Academic Officer and the Executive Director of School Leadership. This process includes a deep data dive to identify areas of progress and needs, and it is closely aligned with goals in the district strategic operating plan as well as the school-specific goals in the School Improvement Plan.

The district has made a significant investment in training district and school teams in the Data Wise process, and as HPS continues to gain capacity in the use of Data Wise, it will ensure that there is a systematic way to review data as part of a continuous improvement process.

## Section 8: Budget Information

### 8.1 BUDGET PROPOSAL

After the SBE approves the Turnaround Plan, the school is eligible to receive a Network grant in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h(a). The district and school will work with the Turnaround Office to develop a proposed Commissioner's Network budget aligned to the SBE approved plan. Please note that personnel funded through the Commissioner's Network grant, will need to use the following formula for all salaries and benefits:

- Year 1:** 75 percent paid through Commissioner's Network funding/25 percent paid through other funding
- Year 2:** 50 percent paid through Commissioner's Network funding/50 percent paid through other funding
- Year 3:** 25 percent paid through Commissioner's Network funding/75 percent paid through other funding
- Year 4:** 0 percent paid through Commissioner's Network funding/100 percent paid through other funding

## Section 9: Modifications

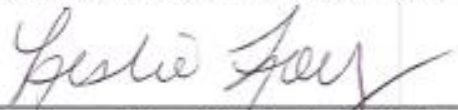
During the term of the school's participation in the Commissioner's Network, the Commissioner shall review the progress of each school. The Commissioner or designee may, on the basis of such review, convene the Turnaround Committee to, as part of its monitoring responsibility, address a lack of sufficient progress or other implementation issues at the school. The Turnaround Committee may consider and enact changes to the Turnaround Plan by consensus. If the Turnaround Committee does not enact changes or the changes are unlikely to result in sufficient progress or adequately address implementation concerns, the Commissioner may take appropriate actions to ensure sufficient progress at the school, including, but not limited to, finding the Turnaround Plan deficient and developing a revised Turnaround Plan.

## PART IV: APPENDIX SECTION

### Appendix A: Turnaround Committee Signatures Page

**Please Note: Applicants *should not sign* this section of the application until the Turnaround Committee reaches consensus on the Turnaround Plan and is ready to submit a final copy of such plan to the CSDE.**

We, the undersigned members of the Turnaround Committee, on the basis of a consensus agreement, submit this Turnaround Plan to the Commissioner for final selection of the school into the Commissioner's Network.



Signature of Superintendent, Non-Voting Chair

3/15/22

Date

Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez



Signature of Board of Education-appointed Parent

3/10/22

Date

Eriberto Plaza

Eriberto Plaza



Signature of Board of Education-appointed Administrator

3/10/22

Date

Marjorie E Rice

Marjorie E Rice

A. LoStimolo  
Signature of Union-appointed Teacher

3/10/22  
Date

Amanda LoStimolo  
Amanda LoStimolo

Kailyn Polzella  
Signature of Union-appointed Teacher

3/10/22  
Date

Kailyn Polzella  
Kailyn Polzella

Quiesha Davis  
Signature of Union-appointed Parent

3/10/22  
Date

Quiesha Davis  
Quiesha Davis

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commissioner of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Commissioner of Education (typed)

### Turnaround Committee Participation

In the table below, please input the names and titles of the additional stakeholders not referenced above that were involved in the development of this turnaround application:

| Name                     | Title   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Ms. Evette Avila         | Chief of Schools, Office of School Leadership   |
| Dr. Madeline Negron      | Chief Academic Officer, Hartford Public Schools |
| Ms. Tory Niles-Outler    | Executive Director of School Leadership         |
| Mr. William Conroy-Longo | Assistant Principal, McDonough                  |
| Mr. Justin Taylor        | Assistant Principal, HPHS                       |
| Ms. Amanda Baksa         | Operations Manager Office of Schools            |
| Ms. Suzanne Palmieri     | Assistant Director of Innovation                |
| Mr. Patrick Williams     | Catholic Charities Community Partner            |

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Ms. Emilia Oliveira    | HFT Union Rep                                    |
| Ms. Michelle Martinez  | Family and Community Support<br>Service Provider |
| Ms. Ivanelisse Arzuaga | Student  |
| Ms. Haven Pingo        | Student  |



## Appendix C: Statement of Assurances

### CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STANDARD STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES | GRANT PROGRAMS

**PROJECT TITLE:** Commissioner's Network

**THE APPLICANT:** Hartford Public Schools **HEREBY ASSURES THAT:**  
McDonough Middle School  
(insert Agency/School/CBO Name)

- A. The applicant has the necessary legal authority to apply for and receive the proposed grant;
- B. The filing of this application has been authorized by the applicant's governing body, and the undersigned official has been duly authorized to file this application for and on behalf of said applicant, and otherwise to act as the authorized representative of the applicant in connection with this application;
- C. The activities and services for which assistance is sought under this grant will be administered by or under the supervision and control of the applicant;
- D. The project will be operated in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and in compliance with regulations and other policies and administrative directives of the State Board of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education;
- E. Grant funds shall not be used to supplant funds normally budgeted by the agency;
- F. Fiscal control and accounting procedures will be used to ensure proper disbursement of all funds awarded;
- G. The applicant will submit a final project report (within 60 days of the project completion) and such other reports, as specified, to the Connecticut State Department of Education, including information relating to the project records and access thereto as the Connecticut State Department of Education may find necessary;
- H. The Connecticut State Department of Education reserves the exclusive right to use and grant the right to use and/or publish any part or parts of any summary, abstract, reports, publications, records and materials resulting from this project and this grant;
- I. If the project achieves the specified objectives, every reasonable effort will be made to continue the project and/or implement the results after the termination of state/federal funding;
- J. The applicant will protect and save harmless the State Board of Education from financial loss and expense, including legal fees and costs, if any, arising out of any breach of the duties, in whole or part, described in the application for the grant;

- K. At the conclusion of each grant period, the applicant will provide for an independent audit report acceptable to the grantor in accordance with Sections 7-394a and 7-396a of the Connecticut General Statutes, and the applicant shall return to the Connecticut State Department of Education any moneys not expended in accordance with the approved program/operation budget as determined by the audit;

## II. NONDISCRIMINATION

- A. For purposes of this Section, the following terms are defined as follows:
1. "Commission" means the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities;
  2. "Contract" and "contract" include any extension or modification of the Charter;
  3. "Contractor" and "contractor" include any successors or assigns of the Charter Board;
  4. "Gender identity or expression" means a person's gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth, which gender-related identity can be shown by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of the gender-related identity, consistent and uniform assertion of the gender-related identity or any other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held, part of a person's core identity or not being asserted for an improper purpose.
  5. "good faith" means that degree of diligence which a reasonable person would exercise in the performance of legal duties and obligations;
  6. "good faith efforts" shall include, but not be limited to, those reasonable initial efforts necessary to comply with statutory or regulatory requirements and additional or substituted efforts when it is determined that such initial efforts will not be sufficient to comply with such requirements;
  7. "marital status" means being single, married as recognized by the State of Connecticut, widowed, separated or divorced;
  8. "mental disability" means one or more mental disorders, as defined in the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders", or a record of or regarding a person as having one or more such disorders;
  9. "minority business enterprise" means any small contractor or supplier of materials fifty-one percent or more of the capital stock, if any, or assets of which is owned by a person or persons: (1) who are active in the daily affairs of the enterprise, (2) who have the power to direct the management and policies of the enterprise, and (3) who are members of a minority, as such term is defined in subsection (a) of C.G.S. § 32-9n; and
  10. "public works contract" means any agreement between any individual, firm or corporation and the State or any political subdivision of the State other than a municipality for construction, rehabilitation, conversion, extension, demolition or repair of a public building, highway or other changes or improvements in real property, or which is financed in whole or in part by the State, including, but not limited to, matching expenditures, grants, loans, insurance or guarantees.

For purposes of this Section, the terms "Contract" and "contract" do not include a contract where each contractor is (1) a political subdivision of the state, including, but not limited to, a municipality, unless the contract is a municipal public works contract or quasi-public agency project contract, (2) any other state, including but not limited to any federally recognized Indian tribal governments, as defined in C.G.S. § 1-267, (3) the federal government, (4) a foreign

government, or (5) an agency of a subdivision, state or government described in the immediately preceding enumerated items (1), (2), (3), or (4).

- B. The Contractor agrees and warrants that in the performance of the Contract such Contractor will not discriminate or permit discrimination against any person or group of persons on the grounds of race, color, religious creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, status as a veteran, intellectual disability, mental disability or physical disability, including, but not limited to, blindness, unless it is shown by such Contractor that such disability prevents performance of the work involved, in any manner prohibited by the laws of the United States or of the State of Connecticut; and the Contractor further agrees to take affirmative action to ensure that applicants with job-related qualifications are employed and that employees are treated when employed without regard to their race, color, religious creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, status as a veteran, intellectual disability, mental disability or physical disability, including, but not limited to, blindness, unless it is shown by the Contractor that such disability prevents performance of the work involved; (2) the Contractor agrees, in all solicitations or advertisements for employees placed by or on behalf of the Contractor, to state that it is an “affirmative action-equal opportunity employer” in accordance with regulations adopted by the Commission; (3) the Contractor agrees to provide each labor union or representative of workers with which the Contractor has a collective bargaining Agreement or other contract or understanding and each vendor with which the Contractor has a contract or understanding, a notice to be provided by the Commission, advising the labor union or workers’ representative of the Contractor's commitments under this section and to post copies of the notice in conspicuous places available to employees and applicants for employment; (4) the Contractor agrees to comply with each provision of this Section and C.G.S. §§ 46a-68e and 46a-68f and with each regulation or relevant order issued by said Commission pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 46a-56, 46a-68e and 46a-68f; and (5) the Contractor agrees to provide the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities with such information requested by the Commission, and permit access to pertinent books, records and accounts, concerning the employment practices and procedures of the Contractor as relate to the provisions of this Section and C.G.S. § 46a-56. If the contract is a public works contract, municipal public works contract or contract for a quasi-public agency project, the Contractor agrees and warrants that he or she will make good faith efforts to employ minority business enterprises as subcontractors and suppliers of materials on such public works or quasi-public agency projects.
- C. Determination of the Contractor’s good faith efforts shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following factors: The Contractor's employment and subcontracting policies, patterns and practices; affirmative advertising, recruitment and training; technical assistance activities and such other reasonable activities or efforts as the Commission may prescribe that are designed to ensure the participation of minority business enterprises in public works projects.
- D. The Contractor shall develop and maintain adequate documentation, in a manner prescribed by the Commission, of its good faith efforts.
- E. The Contractor shall include the provisions of subsection (B) of this Section in every subcontract or purchase order entered into in order to fulfill any obligation of a contract with the State and in every subcontract entered into in order to fulfill any obligation of a municipal public works contract for a quasi-public agency project, and such provisions shall be binding on a subcontractor, vendor or manufacturer unless exempted by regulations or orders of the Commission. The Contractor shall take such action with respect to any such subcontract or purchase order as the Commission may direct as a means of enforcing such provisions including sanctions for noncompliance in accordance with C.G.S. §46a-56, as amended; provided if such

Contractor becomes involved in, or is threatened with, litigation with a subcontractor or vendor as a result of such direction by the Commission regarding the State contract, the Contractor may request the State of Connecticut to enter into any such litigation or negotiation prior thereto to protect the interests of the State and the State may so enter.

- F. The Contractor agrees to comply with the regulations referred to in this Section as they exist on the date of this Contract and as they may be adopted or amended from time to time during the term of this Contract and any amendments thereto.
- G. (1) The Contractor agrees and warrants that in the performance of the Contract such Contractor will not discriminate or permit discrimination against any person or group of persons on the grounds of sexual orientation, in any manner prohibited by the laws of the United States or the State of Connecticut, and that employees are treated when employed without regard to their sexual orientation; (2) the Contractor agrees to provide each labor union or representative of workers with which such Contractor has a collective bargaining Agreement or other contract or understanding and each vendor with which such Contractor has a contract or understanding, a notice to be provided by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities advising the labor union or workers' representative of the Contractor's commitments under this section, and to post copies of the notice in conspicuous places available to employees and applicants for employment; (3) the Contractor agrees to comply with each provision of this section and with each regulation or relevant order issued by said Commission pursuant to C.G.S. § 46a-56; and (4) the Contractor agrees to provide the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities with such information requested by the Commission, and permit access to pertinent books, records and accounts, concerning the employment practices and procedures of the Contractor which relate to the provisions of this Section and C.G.S. § 46a-56.
- H. The Contractor shall include the provisions of the foregoing paragraph in every subcontract or purchase order entered into in order to fulfill any obligation of a contract with the State and such provisions shall be binding on a subcontractor, vendor or manufacturer unless exempted by regulations or orders of the Commission. The Contractor shall take such action with respect to any such subcontract or purchase order as the Commission may direct as a means of enforcing such provisions including sanctions for noncompliance in accordance with C.G.S. § 46a-56, as amended; provided, if such Contractor becomes involved in, or is threatened with, litigation with a subcontractor or vendor as a result of such direction by the Commission regarding a State contract, the Contractor may request the State of Connecticut to enter into any such litigation or negotiation prior thereto to protect the interests of the State and the State may so enter.
- M. The grant award is subject to approval of the Connecticut State Department of Education and availability of state or federal funds.
- N. The applicant agrees and warrants that Sections 4-190 to 4-197, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes concerning the Personal Data Act and Sections 10-4-8 to 10-4-10, inclusive, of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies promulgated there under are hereby incorporated by reference.

I, the undersigned authorized official, hereby certify that these assurances shall be fully implemented.

Superintendent Signature:



Name: *(typed)*

Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez

Title: *(typed)*

Superintendent, Hartford Public Schools

Date:

3-25-2022

## PART V: REFERENCES

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