

III.A.

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

August 4, 2021

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(1)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, grants full approval for the period August 4, 2021, through March 31, 2028, to the Relay Graduate School of Education (Relay/GSE) Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, with Relay/GSE submitting annual progress reports to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the CSDE continuing to monitor Relay/GSE progress using program data from the Connecticut Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Data Dashboard, until Relay/GSE's next Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) spring 2027 site visit, for the purpose of certifying graduates from CT Relay/GSE in the following certification areas:

Program	Grade Level	Program Level	Program Type
Elementary Education	1-6	Initial	Graduate
Secondary Education:			
English	7-12	Initial	Graduate
Mathematics	7-12	Initial	Graduate
General Science	7-12	Initial	Graduate
Biology	7-12	Initial	Graduate
Chemistry	7-12	Initial	Graduate
Physics	7-12	Initial	Graduate

and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____ on this fourth day of August, Two Thousand Twenty-One.

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

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

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

DATE: August 4, 2021

SUBJECT: Continuing Approval of Educator Preparation Provider, Relay Graduate School of Education, Master of Arts Program

Executive Summary

Introduction

In November 2016, the Relay Graduate School of Education (Relay/GSE) was approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) for a Connecticut-based alternate route to certification program (CT Relay/GSE ARC) in elementary education and the secondary areas of English language arts, mathematics, and science. In May 2020, Relay/GSE was granted provisional approval by the SBE for a Master of Arts in Teaching program (CT Relay/GSE MAT) in these same licensure areas through to October 31, 2021, with the expectation that the CT Relay/GSE ARC program phase out over time.

This report presents the Acting Commissioner of Education’s recommendation to the SBE regarding continuing approval for the CT Relay/GSE MAT program based on: (1) CT Relay/GSE’s continuous improvement efforts relative to two areas for improvement; and (2) the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) evaluation findings and national accreditation decision for Relay/GSE based on a fall 2020 site visit. Additionally, the SBE program approval histories for both the CT Relay/GSE ARC program and the CT Relay/GSE MAT program are presented here for context.

History/Background

CT Relay/GSE ARC Program. Relay/GSE is a national, nonprofit institution of higher education initially granted a charter by the New York State Board of Regents in 2011. Since its initial charter, Relay/GSE has expanded to include educator preparation programs leading to initial teacher certification, master’s degrees for teachers and teaching residents, and fellowships for experienced principals, with campuses now in 18 states across the country.

On November 2, 2016, the SBE granted approval to Relay/GSE for CT Relay/GSE ARC, a Connecticut-based ARC program leading to recommendation for the Connecticut temporary 90-day teaching certificate in elementary education and the secondary areas of English language arts, mathematics, and science. CT Relay/GSE ARC, which focuses on creating partnerships with Connecticut priority districts to recruit and train minority educators, is a part-time, non-degree, non-credit bearing program designed for non-certified staff members (e.g., paraeducators) employed with CT Relay/GSE ARC partner districts. Program

candidates, who must hold an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, receive on-the-job training while gradually building pedagogical knowledge and skills as a full-time teacher-in-residence supporting a lead classroom teacher. In addition to on-the-job training, candidates complete a combination of in-person class days (two to four per month) and on-line learning (approximately 40% of program coursework). After successful completion of the CT Relay/GSE ARC program and the 90-day certificate teaching period, candidates are eligible for Connecticut initial licensure.

Per Connecticut regulations, the maximum period of approval for new programs for institutions or organizations that have no other SBE-approved programs is two years. The SBE granted CT Relay/GSE ARC initial approval for the period November 2, 2016, to October 31, 2018, and required the program to host a continuing approval site visit during spring 2018.

During a May 2, 2018, site visit conducted by the CSDE, an evaluation team determined that CT Relay/GSE ARC is fulfilling its promise to recruit and train candidates of color for Connecticut schools, with 70% of program candidates being candidates of color. Additionally, the team determined that CT Relay/GSE ARC was continuing to meet state regulatory and statutory requirements. However, two areas for improvement were identified, one related to licensure pass rates and one related to partnership school expansion.

Regarding licensure pass rates, at the point of the site visit, CT Relay/GSE ARC had a total of 45 program completers from the program's first cohort (2016-2017), and of these 45, only 17 (38%) had passed all required licensure tests, specifically, Praxis II and Foundations of Reading (elementary education only) tests, which are measures of content knowledge. CT Relay/GSE ARC needed to ensure that program completers possess the content knowledge required to be an educator as measured by the Praxis II and Foundations of Reading tests.

Regarding partnership schools, twice as many candidates (n=30) from the 2016-2017 program cohort completed residency placements in Connecticut charter schools compared to non-charter schools (n=15); 51 (65%) completed residency placements in charter schools during 2017-2018, compared to 28 (35%) completing residency placements in non-charter schools. CT Relay/GSE ARC needed to increase the number of program candidates completing residency placements in Connecticut non-charter schools.

Based on these two areas for improvement, CT Relay/GSE ARC was granted provisional approval by the SBE for the period November 1, 2018, through October 31, 2021, with a site visit required no later than October 2020, and annual progress reporting required up to the point of the site visit. During October 2019, CT Relay/GSE ARC submitted to the CSDE the SBE-required progress report pertaining to the two areas for improvement, which the CSDE presented to the SBE during a December 2019, meeting. Additionally, CT Relay/GSE ARC scheduled the SBE-mandated site visit for September 16, 2020.

CT Rely/GSE MAT Program. On May 13, 2020, the SBE provisionally approved the CT Relay/GSE MAT program for the same content areas and timeframe as the CT Relay/GSE ARC program. Additionally, the SBE directed that ongoing continuing approval status for the CT Relay/GSE MAT program be determined based on evaluation findings from the site visit originally mandated for the CT Relay/GRE ARC program, to be conducted no later than October 2020.

The CT Relay/GSE MAT program is a two-year, 36-credit hour program that leads to a MAT and recommendation for teacher certification in the content areas for which Relay/GSE is approved currently by the SBE—elementary education and the secondary areas of English Language Arts, mathematics and science. The first year of the proposed MAT program consists of graduate-level coursework and training now approved by the SBE as an ARC program, focusing on the fundamentals of classroom management, lesson planning, student assessment, and building and sustaining relationships with students, families, and colleagues. The second year of the proposed MAT program both broadens and deepens candidate theoretical and applied, content-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills, including methods for incorporating literacy instruction across all content areas and training in culturally responsive pedagogy. This second year also culminates in a Master’s defense capstone project requiring candidates to create and orally defend a comprehensive teaching portfolio consisting of video examples of teaching, written reflections, and analyses of student assessment data for instructional planning. Program candidates must hold an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education. The delivery model for the CT Relay/GSE MAT program is the same as the current ARC program, with candidates assigned as a full-time teacher of record in a partner district and receiving on-the-job training while completing a combination of in-person and on-line coursework. Candidates serve under the two-year, Connecticut Resident Educator Certificate, with the option of pursuing certification upon passing edTPA and meeting all licensure testing requirements or continuing in the program to complete coursework and other programmatic requirements for the MAT degree. Because program candidates have the option to pursue certification only in the MAT program, the CT Relay/GSE ARC program has been phased out over time. The Relay/GSE ARC cohort that began the program in summer 2019 was the last ARC cohort, with all candidates completing programmatic requirements by the end of July 2020. All candidates enrolled in the Relay/GSE program after July 2020 are part of the MAT program.

CT Relay/GSE Progress Report/Site Visit. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the CT Relay/GSE program site visit originally scheduled for September 16, 2020, for the purpose of verifying progress regarding the two areas for improvement—licensure pass rates and partner school expansion efforts—was tentatively rescheduled for spring 2021. However, due to the continued impact of COVID, the 2021 “visit” was conducted virtually and through a review of program data. Below is a summary for both areas for improvement being monitored by the CSDE:

- (1) Licensure Testing Pass Rates. Unlike some other Connecticut post-baccalaureate educator preparation programs, CT Relay/GSE does not require applicants to pass licensure tests for content knowledge before acceptance into the program (although some candidates do take and pass licensure tests upon program admittance). Rather, program candidates receive content knowledge remediation and test preparation support from program faculty throughout the program and for up to five years after program completion, including access to all state and national Relay/GSE program resources.

TABLE 1 below shows licensure pass rates for CT Relay/GSE ARC program candidates only, as the two-year MAT program wasn’t approved until spring 2020, and only began operating in fall 2020. As shown in the table, 232 candidates have successfully completed the CT Relay/GSE ARC program since 2016, with 125 (54%) program completers passing all licensure test requirements.

TABLE 1: Licensure Test Pass Rates, CT Relay/GSE Candidates, 2016-2021

Cohort Year	# Enrolled Candidates	# Program Completers	#/% Program Completers Passed Licensure Test(s) by Sept 2019	#/% Program Completers Passed Licensure Test(s) by April 2021
2016-2017	57	45	26 (58%)	29 (64%)
2017-2018	80	79	45 (57%)	46 (58%)
2018-2019	59	53	16 (30%)	25 (47%)
2019-2020	58	55	0	25 (45%)
TOTALS	254	232	87 (38%)	125 (54%)

In addition to program and post program faculty support, CT Relay/GSE has developed and implemented several initiatives to support candidates around content knowledge remediation, all of which continue now in the MAT program. A major initiative, launched in October 2018, is a pre-program academy that provides tutoring, test preparation support, and course work recommendations for candidates who do not meet credit requirements or who seek to strengthen their content knowledge. CT Relay/GSE ARC has also implemented these initiatives to support candidates with Praxis II and Foundations of Reading test preparation:

- Collaborating with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to analyze data demonstrating differential performance on Praxis II testing by race/ethnicity.
- Hired content experts who provide Praxis II group tutoring at the beginning of each Praxis II testing window at no cost to candidates.
- Hired content area experts to provide support (e.g., workshops) to candidates preparing for the Foundations of Reading test at no cost to candidates.
- Partnering with Teachers Test Prep, a nationwide leader in credentialing exam preparation, to provide Praxis II diagnostic information and tutoring at a steep discount.
- Partnering with Mometrix Test Preparation database available at no cost to candidates. Mometrix is a test preparation database that contains unofficial study guides and practice questions for a variety of tests, including Praxis II tests and the Foundations of Reading test.
- Developed and began implementing culturally responsive advisement structures that include support in navigating the emotional and social pressures of test preparation and testing anxiety.

(2) Partner District Expansion Efforts. In 2017-2018, CT Relay/GSE expanded its partner district network to 16 districts and charter schools from seven, with the addition of East Haven Public Schools, Hartford Public Schools, New Britain Public Schools, and Middletown Public Schools. For the academic year 2019-2020, the number of partner districts and charter schools increased to 19. For the academic year 2020-2021, the

number of partner districts and charter schools has increased to 21. The current list of CT Relay/GSE ARC and MAT partner districts and charter schools includes:

- Achievement First Charter School
- Booker T. Washington Academy
- Canton Public Schools
- Capital Prep Harbor
- Common Ground High School
- Consolidated District of New Britain
- East Haven Public Schools
- Elm City Montessori School
- Great Oaks Charter School
- Greenwich Public Schools
- Hartford Public Schools
- Highville Academy
- Manchester Public Schools
- Meriden Public Schools
- Middletown Public Schools
- New Haven Public Schools
- Norwalk Public Schools
- Regional Multicultural Magnet School
- Shelton Public Schools
- Waterbury Public Schools
- Windsor Public Schools

TABLE 2 below shows CT Relay/GSE ARC and MAT residency placement numbers and percentages for non-charter schools versus charter schools for 2016-2020. Although the placement numbers indicate slightly more charter school placements (53%) compared to non-charter school placements (47%) for the four years overall, data by year indicate an increase in non-charter school residency placements for the last two program cohorts. Beginning with the 2018-2019 CT Relay/GSE ARC cohort, more residency placements were in non-charter schools (57%) compared to charter schools (43%); and the 2019-2020 cohort shows a significant increase comparatively, with non-charter school placements at (63%) and charter school placements at (37%).

However, the academic year 2020-2021—which also includes the first year of the MAT program implementation—shows a slight decrease of non-charter school placements (45%) in relation to charter school placements (55%), although 13 out of 21 (62%) CT Relay/GSE partners for 2020-2021 are public districts. CT Relay/GSE attributes this decrease to the impact of COVID on school districts; mainly, the uncertainties related to reopening produced by the pandemic during a time—between March 2020 and September 2020—when CT Relay/GSE and public school district partners work together to set recruitment needs and placement projections for the upcoming year. CT Relay/GSE continued to work to cultivate strong partnerships with public districts. As of April 2021, Farmington Public Schools, Stratford Public Schools, and South Windsor Public Schools, have all already confirmed interest in partnering with Relay for the 2021-2022 school year.

**TABLE 2: CT Relay/GSE Residency Placements,
Non-Charter Schools Versus Charter Schools, 2016-2021**

Cohort Year	#/% of Non-Charter School Residency Placements	#/% of Charter School Residency Placements	Total # Placements
2016-2017	15 (33%)	30 (67%)	45
2017-2018	28 (35%)	51 (65%)	79
2018-2019	30 (57%)	23 (43%)	53
2019-2020	42 (63%)	25 (37%)	67
2020-2021	30 (45%)	38 (55%)	68
Totals # Placements	145	167	312

Relay/GSE National Accreditation. Per Special Act No. 16-22 (Attachment A), beginning June 2016, all Connecticut educator preparation providers (EPPs) must seek and achieve national accreditation through CAEP. The national Relay/GSE organization hosted its first CAEP accreditation site visit, May 31, 2020 – June 2, 2020 (conducted virtually due to COVID-19). Based on visit findings, the CAEP Accreditation Council determined that Relay/GSE is meeting all five of the CAEP standards, with no areas for improvement or other stipulations identified by the Council. Consequently, CAEP granted national accreditation status to Relay/GSE at the initial and advanced program levels, with the next CAEP site visit scheduled for spring 2027. Due to the national Relay/GSE programming structure, this national accreditation status applies to each state-specific Relay/GSE program, including the CT Relay/GSE MAT program.

CSDE EPP Review Committee. Per Connecticut EPP program approval regulations (Attachment B), the CSDE EPP Review Committee is a 12-member decision-making body that makes recommendations to the Commissioner of Education relative to both new and continuing approval of Connecticut EPP programs based on site visit findings and other supporting data. Attachment C provides the names of the current committee members, along with professional affiliation, representation, and term dates.

Due to COVID-related circumstances, the Review Committee met virtually during spring 2021 for two separate meetings (May 18 and May 20) to accommodate all committee members' schedules for the review of Relay/GSE's progress regarding the two areas for improvement discussed above. Attendance was split equally across the two meetings, with four committee members at each meeting. Committee members in attendance for the May 18 meeting recommended that the SBE restore Relay/GSE to full continuing approval, with the CSDE continuing to monitor progress related to licensure testing pass rates, noting that Relay/GSE holds national accreditation through CAEP. Committee members in attendance for the May 20 meeting recommended that Relay/GSE remain on provisional approval due to licensure testing pass rates. Both recommendations moved forward to the Commissioner, who ultimately decides which recommendations will go before the SBE.

Recommendation and Justification

I recommend that the Relay/GSE MAT program be granted full approval for the period August 4, 2021, through March 31, 2028, with a progress report pertaining to licensure testing pass rates due annually up until the next CAEP site visit, scheduled for spring 2027. This recommendation is based on multiple factors. First, CT Relay/GSE ARC is fulfilling its promise to recruit and train candidates of color for Connecticut schools, with 70% of program candidates being candidates of color who are currently serving in Connecticut schools in paraeducator or other non-certified staff positions. Additionally, CT Relay/GSE has developed and implemented several initiatives to support candidates around licensure testing, including a pre-program academy that provides tutoring, test preparation support, and course work recommendations for candidates who do not meet credit requirements or who seek to strengthen their content knowledge. Finally, based on a fall 2020 site visit, CT Relay/GSE has been granted national accreditation by CAEP to 2027.

Follow-up Activity

If granted full approval by the SBE, CT Relay/GSE will submit to the CSDE annually through Relay/GSE's CAEP site visit scheduled for spring 2027, progress reports related to: (1) licensure testing pass rates; and (2) partner district expansion efforts. Additionally, the CSDE will conduct annual progress monitoring of the CT Relay/GSE MAT program using program data from the Connecticut EPP Data Dashboard.

Prepared by: Katie Moirs, Ph.D., Program Approval Coordinator, Talent Office

Approved by: Shuana K. Tucker, Ph.D., Chief Talent Officer, Talent Office

ATTACHMENT A

Senate Bill No. 382

Special Act No. 16-22

AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than December 31, 2016, the Department of Education and the Office of Higher Education shall enter into an agreement with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation for the purposes of accrediting and establishing standards for programs of educator preparation leading to professional certification, under chapter 166 of the general statutes, offered at public and independent institutions of higher education in the state.

Approved June 10, 2016

**Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies for Educator Preparation Program Approval
Section 10-145d-9(g)**

Board Action

After reviewing the recommendation of the Review Committee, the Commissioner shall make one or more recommendations to the Board. Based on the Commissioner's recommendation, the Board shall take one of the following actions.

(1) For programs requesting continuing approval:

- (A) Grant full program approval for five years, or for a period of time to bring the program into alignment with the five year approval cycle. The Board may require that an interim report be submitted to the Department, on a date set by the Board, prior to the end of the approval period.
- (B) Grant provisional approval for a time period not to exceed three years, if substantial non-compliance with current standards is identified. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, on a date set by the Board, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in meeting the standards which were not fully met. The Board may require an on-site visit in addition to this report.
- (C) Grant probationary approval for a time period not to exceed three years, if significant and far-reaching non-compliance with current standards is identified. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, on a date set by the Board, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in meeting the standards which were not fully met. The Board shall require an on-site visit in addition to this report.
- (D) Deny approval.

(2) For new programs in institutions which have current approved programs:

- (A) Grant full program approval for a period of time to bring the new program into the five year approval cycle of all other programs offered by the institution. The Board may require that a written report be submitted to the Department, on a date set by the Board, prior to the end of the approval period.
- (B) Grant provisional approval for a time period not to exceed three years, if substantial non-compliance with current standards is identified. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, on a date set by the

Board, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in meeting the standards which were not fully met. The Board may require an on-site visit in addition to this report.

- (C) Grant probationary approval not to exceed three years, if significant and far-reaching non-compliance with current standards is identified. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, on a date set by the Board, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in meeting the standards which were not fully met. The Board shall require an on-site visit in addition to this report.
- (D) Deny approval.

(3) For new programs starting in institutions without other approved programs:

- (A) Grant program approval for two years. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, after two semesters of operation, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in implementing the new program. The Board shall require an on-site visit in addition to this report.
- (B) Following the on-site visit after two years of operation, grant full program approval for three years. The Board may require that a written report be submitted to the Department, on a date set by the Board, prior to the end of the approval period.
- (C) Following the on-site visit after two years of operation, grant provisional approval for a time period not to exceed three years, if substantial non-compliance with current standards is identified. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, on a date set by the Board, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in meeting the standards which were not fully met. The Board may require an on-site visit in addition to this report.
- (D) Following the on-site visit after two years of operation, grant probationary approval for up to three years, if significant and far-reaching non-compliance with current standards is identified. The institution shall submit to the Review Committee, on a date set by the Board, a written report which addresses the professional education unit's progress in meeting the standards which were not fully met. The Board shall require an on-site visit in addition to this report.
- (E) Deny approval.

Attachment C**CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Educator Preparation Program Approval Review Committee**

Name	Affiliation	Representation	Term Ending
1. Megan Mackey	Central Connecticut State University	Higher Education	March 2, 2022
2. Tamika La Salle	University of Connecticut	Higher Education	June 30, 2023
3. Catherine O'Callaghan	Western Connecticut State University	Higher Education	June 30, 2023
4. Julie Sochacki	University of Hartford	Higher Education	June 30, 2023
5. Stephanie Storms	Fairfield University	Higher Education	March 2, 2022
6. Joseph Bonillo	Waterford Public Schools	K-12	June 30, 2023
7. Thomas Danehy	Area Cooperative Educational Services	K-12	June 30, 2023
8. Sinthia Sone-Moyano	Manchester Public Schools	K-12	June 30, 2023
9. Kevin Walston	Danbury Public Schools	K-12	June 30, 2023
10. Paul Whyte	New Haven Public Schools	K-12	June 30, 2023
11. Michael Livingston	Capitol Region Education Council	Community	March 2, 2022
12. Shannon Marimon	Connecticut Council for Education Reform	Community	March 2, 2022