

# **GREATER EXPECTATIONS**

Connecticut's  
Comprehensive  
Plan for  
Education

2001-2005

Connecticut State Board of Education



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# CONTENTS

Foreword ..... v

Introduction ..... vii

Statement of Core Beliefs ..... 1

The Building Blocks of Connecticut's Success ..... 5

Challenges Over the Next Five to Ten Years ..... 9

Strategic Priorities for 2001-2005 ..... 11

Working in Partnership to Achieve an Educational System of Excellence ..... 23

Measuring Success ..... 27







## FOREWORD

Every five years, the State Board of Education has an opportunity to set forth its vision for promoting educational improvement through the adoption of a comprehensive plan for elementary and secondary education.

In the 1996-2000 Comprehensive Plan, we asserted that "*there is genius in every child*" and that all of us – citizens and educators working together — are responsible for nurturing that genius. Over the past five years, we have taken that mission seriously and maintained an unwavering focus on **expectations** and **student achievements** as key to ensuring that Connecticut students achieve at high levels and become productive and responsible citizens.

In the aggregate, Connecticut has been highly successful. Connecticut's schools are among the best in the nation, and Connecticut students outperform the students of most other states as measured by national assessments of educational success. But is that enough? We don't think so.

There remain large and unacceptable gaps in the achievement, resources and opportunities for students in some schools and districts. Connecticut — a small state whose citizenry is often considered among the wealthiest and best educated in the country — is also home to citizens who, in contrast, live in conditions of poverty and lack fundamental educational and economic opportunities. We believe that we have a responsibility to address these inequities by producing the best possible public education system for all students – regardless of wealth, race, ethnicity, disability or place of birth.

As a result, we adopt as our vision for the next five years "**Greater Expectations.**" Our goal is to ensure that all Connecticut students achieve standards of excellence, no matter what community they reside in or what challenges they face. Our concurrent goal is that schools, educators, families and communities also achieve more in their support of Connecticut's children.

This plan builds on those that preceded it, while being more bold in its expectations, recommendations and actions. It also acknowledges the challenges of the 21st century — the rapid growth in technology, the changing demographics of Connecticut schools, and greater demands for skills for all citizens. This plan requires more political, financial, legislative and programmatic will than ever before to ensure the success of all Connecticut students. It expresses confidence in the ability of Connecticut citizens to meet those challenges in the next decade and beyond, as — **together** — we build on a solid record of success.

**Greater expectations** are the philosophy, the foundation and the energy for the success ahead.

Craig E. Toensing, Chairperson  
State Board of Education

Theodore S. Sergi  
Commissioner of Education







## INTRODUCTION

***A highly educated citizenry is Connecticut's most valuable resource.***

***The development of educated and productive citizens requires a plan and the passion to relentlessly pursue success for each student.***

This comprehensive plan addresses one part of the State Board of Education's statutory requirement under C.G.S. 10-4 to provide leadership to school districts with respect to preschool, elementary and secondary education, special education, vocational education and adult education by developing a comprehensive plan every five years. Since 1997, as a response to the Connecticut Supreme Court decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, the State Board of Education has also been required to establish a five-year plan with biennial updates and recommendations in order to accomplish the five statutory goals set forth in C.G.S. Section 10-4p:

- **to achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity;**
- **to increase student achievement;**
- **to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation;**
- **to improve effective instruction; and**
- **to encourage greater parental and community involvement in all public schools of the state.**

This plan articulates Connecticut educational goals and priorities for the period 2001-2005 and merges the requirements of the two statutory plans. It will guide the State Board of Education in preparing its biennial budget requests as well as developing legislative proposals; directing State Department of Education activities and staffing; helping local school districts to develop their own plans; and promoting the involvement of parents, community groups, and business and labor leaders in improving student achievement.

This document has six parts:

- **Statement of Core Beliefs**
- **The Building Blocks of Connecticut's Success**
- **Challenges Over the Next Five to Ten Years**
- **Strategic Priorities for 2001-2005**
- **Working in Partnership to Achieve an Educational System of Excellence**
- **Measuring Success**





## STATEMENT OF CORE BELIEFS

Today's generation of young people can and will achieve more than preceding generations, and we anticipate that the next generation will be able to achieve even more. The ongoing challenge for public education is to continuously improve the teaching and learning process so that these expectations can be met.

Public education benefits everyone. It is key to ensuring quality of life for Connecticut citizens both now and in the future. We value education because it is the foundation of opportunity and a fundamental principle in a democratic society. Thus, we — the public as well as educators — have the responsibility to continually strive for excellence in Connecticut's public schools.

Every Connecticut public school student has a fundamental right to an equal educational opportunity as defined by a free public education and a suitable program of educational experiences. Equity of opportunity means that each student is provided with the means to achieve the standard of an educated citizen as defined by Connecticut's Common Core of Learning. Suitable programs are dependent upon:

- **students having a high-quality preschool experience and entering school ready to learn;**
- **effective educators who have high expectations for student achievement;**
- **sound facilities and safe environments; and**
- **appropriate resources that are equitably distributed.**

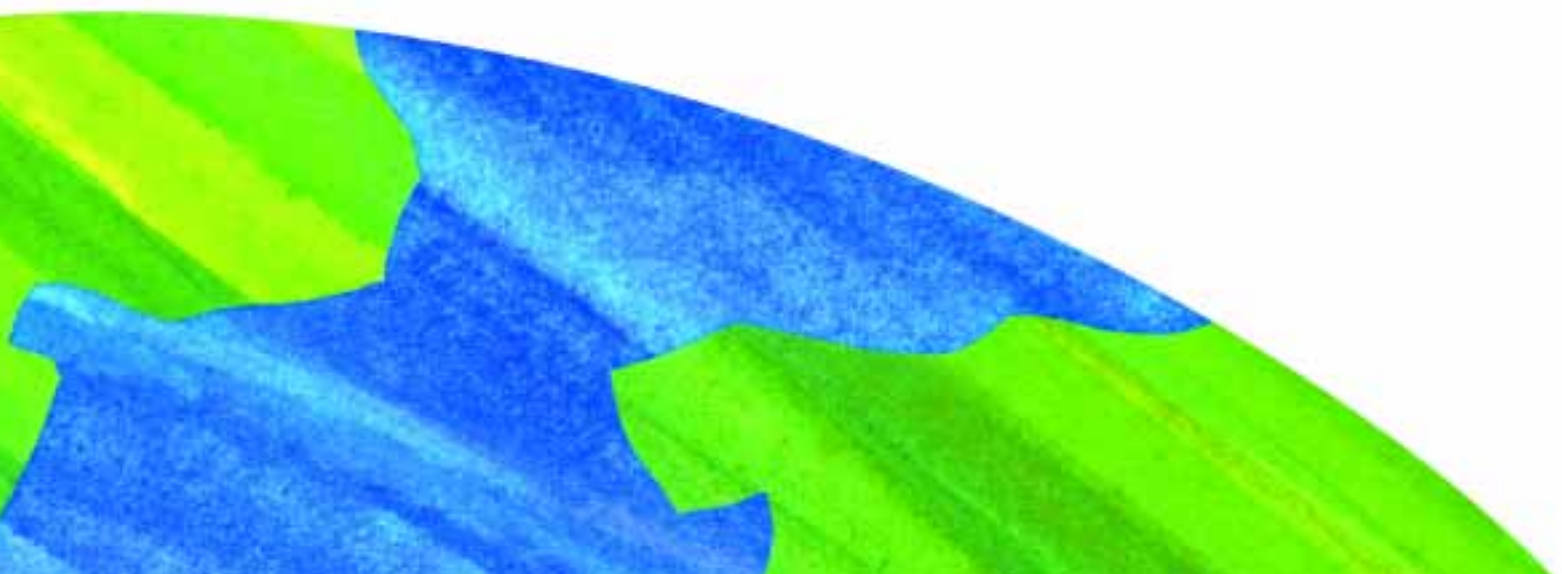
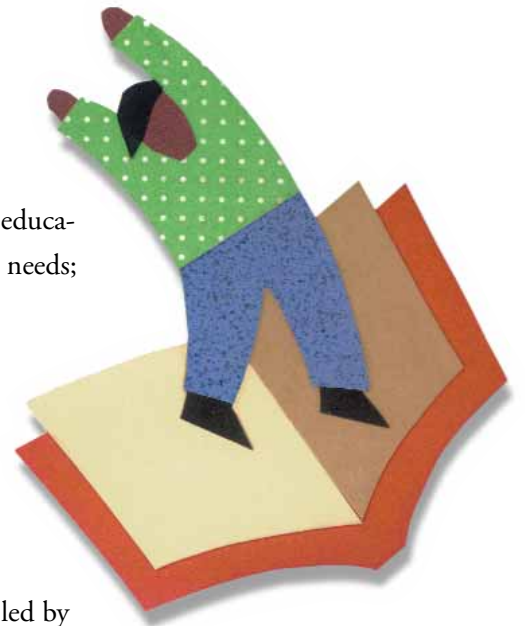
Schools must offer every student a challenging curriculum, common standards, appropriate program options, and opportunities to learn with and from students and teachers whose backgrounds differ from their own. Schools must also be held accountable for results, and the state and local communities must provide the resources for schools to be successful.

The State Board of Education defines successful students as those who read, write, compute, think creatively, solve problems and use technology. All students should enjoy and perform in the arts and athletics, and understand history, science and other cultures and languages. Each student must be responsible for his or her learning and behavior, work well with and be helpful to others, and contribute to the community. Every student must graduate from high school and be prepared to move on to productive work and further study and to function in the global economy. Ultimately, students must become active citizens and lifelong learners who lead healthy lives.



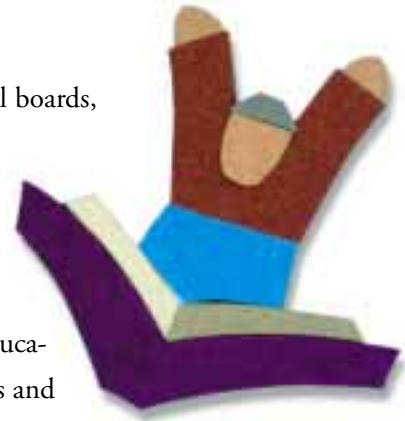
**We will achieve the outcomes of excellence, equity of opportunity and successful students only if we do the following:**

- strive for, assess and report on continuous improvement in the achievements of all of Connecticut students;
- take bold actions to close the achievement gap and reduce student isolation;
- guarantee to all students a challenging curriculum and high-quality educational experiences that are tailored to meet each student's individual needs;
- offer universal access to high-quality early childhood programs;
- raise expectations for each student's achievement and behavior;
- ensure that all students are taught by highly competent teachers and led by visionary administrators;
- make sure each student is supported by and connected to his or her school, family, peers and community;

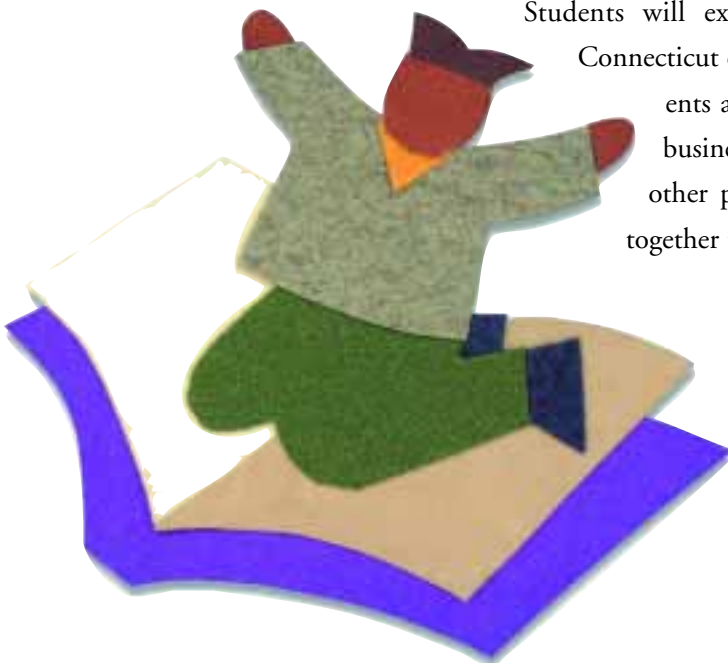




- make sure each teacher and administrator is supported by local boards, parents and community members to attain the critical knowledge, skills and resources necessary to support high levels of student achievement;
- provide more flexibility, creativity and innovation in public education by making available a wide range of educational programs and settings and promoting innovative uses of time and technology;
- reduce inequalities by enhancing resources, programs and opportunities for Connecticut students and ensuring that there is an equal sharing of the total cost of public education by state and local government;
- break the intergenerational cycles of poverty and low achievement by improving the educational competencies of parents and other adults; and
- engage partners outside of the educational system to help serve the special needs of learners from birth through school-to-career transition and into adulthood.



Students will experience success and achieve more when all Connecticut citizens — students, teachers, administrators, parents and families, board members, community groups, business and labor leaders, local and state officials and other partners outside the educational system — work together to continuously improve education in this state.







## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CONNECTICUT'S SUCCESS

Connecticut's commitment over the last two decades to high expectations, high standards and hard work have yielded positive, consistent growth in student achievement from 1990 to the present and a small closing of the gap between the performance of urban and suburban students over the last three years. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — one of the country's most important and reliable measures of educational success — has shown Connecticut students at the top of the achievement list:

- **first in writing, Grade 8, 1999;**
- **first in reading, Grades 4 and 8 (tied with three other states), 1998;**
- **first in mathematics, Grade 4 (tied with two other states), 1996.**

Some of Connecticut's success is undoubtedly attributable to the high average income and education level of its population. Equally important, however, has been the focus and consistency in Connecticut's educational policies over the last 20 years. These policies include establishing clear and high standards for students and teachers; measuring and reporting progress in achieving goals; equalizing school resources; reducing the racial, ethnic and economic isolation of students; and building partnerships.

Connecticut's **high standards** for student achievement are reflected in *Connecticut's Common Core of Learning* (CCL), which was first adopted in 1987 and revised in 1998, and the *Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards*, adopted in 1998. The CCL represents Connecticut's statement of the standard of an educated citizen and the skills, knowledge and character that are expected of high school graduates as a result of the entire K-12 school experience. The curriculum frameworks help guide districts in establishing a comprehensive and balanced curriculum that defines what students learn and what teachers teach at specific grade levels.

Connecticut's statewide **student assessment programs**, in place since 1979, have been key in raising expectations for student achievement. The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) Program, implemented in 1986, assesses students in Grades 4, 6 and 8 in mathematics, reading, language arts and writing. Since 1994, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) has used performance-based assessments in mathematics, language arts and science to evaluate the achievement of 10th grade students. A new generation of the CMT and CAPT will be implemented in the 2000-2001 school year, and these tests, together with appropriate alternative assessment options for students with special needs, will continue to be updated and improved every seven years.



**Teacher quality** was at the core of the Education Enhancement Act of 1986, which raised standards for teacher education and certification, created a comprehensive beginning teacher support and assessment program, increased teacher salaries to levels competitive with other professions, and required ongoing professional development for all educators. This balanced equation of higher standards and higher salaries has been very successful in attracting and retaining more academically qualified individuals in Connecticut schools. Not only must Connecticut teachers successfully pass examinations in basic skills and their subject area prior to entering the classroom, they must now successfully complete the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST)

Program portfolio assessments in their second or third year of teaching in order to

continue to be certified. Connecticut's commitment to excellence in teaching is now in its second generation of initiatives. Connecticut's Common Core

of Teaching (CCT) defines the knowledge, skills and com-

petencies teachers need to ensure that students learn and perform at high levels throughout their careers. The State

Board recently adopted new district guidelines for teacher evaluation, professional development and CEU

offerings that focus attention on the standards for effective teaching practice as defined by CCT.



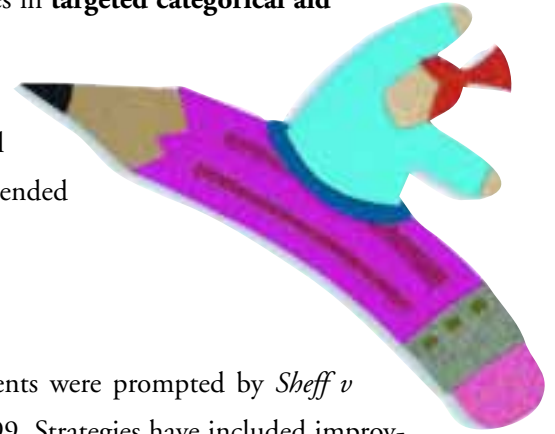
**Accountability** has been steadily increasing through the use of the **Strategic School Profiles** and **Condition of Education** reports, which provide each Connecticut school with an annual "report card" on achievement, expenditures, staff and students, and help make each district more responsible for the success of its students. This extensive information has helped drive changes in curriculum and instruction at the local level. Recently, these data have been made even more accessible to local districts and the public by providing Internet access to "Data Central," an electronic repository of information about Connecticut schools and districts which allows users to search, view data subsets and download data directly from the Department's web page.

Efforts to close the gap in student achievement through **equalization of school resources** began nearly 25 years ago with the Connecticut Supreme Court decision in *Horton v. Meskill* (1977). The state equalization grant (now known as the Education Cost Sharing [ECS] grant) was established in 1979. It now represents more than half of the state's investment in education. The state's major categorical grants — school construction, transportation, adult education — are distributed where need is greatest.





Over the last decade, the State Board of Education has supported local and regional school district efforts to reduce the achievement gap by recommending significant increases in **targeted categorical aid for the state's neediest districts**. There have been increases in grants for general school improvement (the priority school district grant, established in 1985) and for targeted educational strategies (categorical grants which support preschool education, early reading success, extended school hours and summer school during the period 1997-2000).



**Efforts to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation** of students were prompted by *Sheff v O'Neill* (1996) and specific legislative actions in 1997, 1998 and 1999. Strategies have included improving urban education to make schools in our largest cities more successful and providing students and their families with more choices and opportunities. The establishment of and growth in interdistrict programs, magnet schools and other public school choice options offer quality educational experiences to all Connecticut students. These programs provide opportunities for students and teachers from different communities and backgrounds to interact with and learn from one another. As of the 1999-2000 school year, more than 77,000 students participated in interdistrict programs and more than 21,500 students were enrolled in interdistrict magnet and other public school choice options. Furthermore, millions of dollars in state school construction grants have been allocated to interdistrict magnet schools.

Some states have attempted to leverage education reform through the use of statutory mandates or sanctions. Connecticut, on the other hand, has relied more heavily on incentives, leadership, resources, data, training and on-site help to local districts in order to implement its educational policies. Even in the case of the 1997 state intervention in the Hartford Public Schools, state efforts have focused on building capacity and providing technical assistance to implement programs and practices that directly contribute to improving student achievement. By working in **partnership with local school districts** — in particular with the major urban districts — the Connecticut State Board of Education has created an educational system of excellence and supported the adoption of flexible and innovative practices across the state. The State Board encourages all school districts to develop locally designed school improvement activities, adopt reforms and implement best practices.







## CHALLENGES OVER THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS

Despite the overall success of Connecticut's education system, there remain large gaps in achievement, resources and opportunities for students in some schools and school districts. These inequities are most severe in Connecticut's large urban districts. The future economic success and quality of life for Connecticut citizens require that we take bold actions now to address these inequalities. Schools cannot do the job alone. State government must promote successful urban revitalization through the enactment of policies targeting reducing poverty, creating quality jobs in the major cities, expanding access to affordable housing in and outside the cities, and making available adequate programs for health care and transportation.

### **All Connecticut school districts — not just urban schools — face significant challenges in the next 5 to 10 years. These include:**

- a world demanding ever-increasing levels of skills and knowledge for all students and particularly for students of poverty, African American and Hispanic American students, students with disabilities, students from diverse language backgrounds, and students at risk of academic failure;
- a predicted teacher and administrator shortage that will more severely affect the supply, quality and diversity of teachers and administrators working in the state's poorest districts;
- barriers to learning — in particular, those affecting the critical years from birth to age 5 — and conditions that threaten the well-being of students and prevent students from leading healthy, responsible and safe lives, such as child abuse and neglect, family violence, crime, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy;
- the rapid growth in technology that threatens to create a generation of underskilled and underemployed workers if students are not prepared to meet those challenges; and
- the changing demographics of Connecticut schools, in which some urban schools are becoming more isolated, while nearly all communities are experiencing growth in the number of students from different cultural, racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

As a consequence, 10 strategic priorities emerge as critical to guiding our individual and collective efforts to continue to ensure Connecticut schools are among the best in the nation.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2001-2005

**(A) Every student will be challenged to reach excellence.** We must expect the highest possible achievement from every learner. We must stretch their minds, increase their confidence in what they can do, and nurture their gifts and talents. Key to this is providing access to a rigorous curriculum in core areas of study, including language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, the arts, world language, health, physical education and technology. Students must be challenged to take more and higher-level mathematics and science courses, advanced placement (AP) courses, more art and music courses, and two or more years of world language. Expectations of what all students can achieve must be elevated.

 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- support new and innovative practices as well as curriculum and staff development through competitive grants;
- expand Institutes for Teaching and Learning to provide statewide professional development to administrators and teachers;
- fund initiatives such as the Connecticut Academy for Science, Math and Technology to improve mathematics, science and technology education;
- identify and disseminate examples of exemplary curriculum projects as well as instructional and assessment strategies that enhance student performance;
- implement new generations of Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)/Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and develop appropriate alternative assessment options for students with special needs;
- establish a state information system providing student, teacher, program and fiscal data;
- enhance the accessibility of Strategic School Profile data for schools, districts and the public through website applications;
- work with school districts to determine what success means in their districts and then to develop multiple measures of students' success; and
- expand grants to reward school district growth in student achievement using multiple measures of success.

**(B) There will be a continuous closing of the achievement gap.** We can be proud that Connecticut's students score among the highest in the nation in reading, writing and mathematics. While this indicates strong overall performance, not every student in Connecticut is achieving at the highest levels. Connecticut must strive for continued academic improvement for all students — including students of every



racial, ethnic and economic group, students with disabilities, and students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We must accelerate the growth in achievement for students who lag behind by promoting those practices that directly improve student achievement.

 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- increase investments in the state’s neediest schools and districts by continuing and expanding categorical grants (e.g., priority school district, extended school hours, library books, summer school, early reading success and transitional school districts);
- expand the support and assessment of special education, bilingual education and English-as-a-second-language students;
- award minority student achievement grants to assess gaps in achievement of poor and minority students and to promote collaboration between families, communities and schools to address specific deficiencies and elevate expectations for success;
- expand the number and types of alternative education programs to serve the increasing number of students attending public schools as a result of the extension of the compulsory schooling age to 18;
- assist districts in appropriately identifying students for special education services and promoting the successful participation of students with disabilities in general education programs;
- enhance the collection and reporting of data on progress in reducing achievement gaps; and
- identify, evaluate and disseminate exemplary instructional approaches, programs and interventions that lead to increased student performance and reduce the achievement gap.

**(C) All schools will offer all students positive, safe learning environments in which everyone behaves responsibly and respectfully toward others.** We all have a role to play in creating a safe and

productive learning environment for all students in the state. Adults and students

in schools must learn and model respect for each other, demonstrate civility and kindness, and behave responsibly toward others. This is a

call to action for all schools — with the support of families and communities — to improve school climate; to reduce or eliminate bullying, harassment and violence; and to promote academic success for all students.

Schools must develop initiatives that provide effective early intervention services and programs for students at risk for academic failure and/or for inappropriate social skill development. In addition, we must promote improvement in the general health of students, as this also affects their ability to learn and their self-esteem.





 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- encourage every local school board and education organization in Connecticut to implement a new or expanded initiative in the areas of improving school climate, enhancing students' health and safety, and promoting positive character development;
- disseminate best practices and provide grants for model programs in such areas as coordinated school health, school-family partnerships, community service, school volunteers, business partnerships, suicide prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, crisis intervention, violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, student leadership programs, anti-bullying strategies, acceptance of and respect for each other, alternatives to suspension and expulsion, attendance and truancy, mentoring programs and family literacy;
- increase support to Youth Service Bureaus to reduce school truancy through case management, direct services, referrals and in-school mentoring;
- provide more primary mental health grants to school districts to improve behavior, self-concept and student interactions, and assist districts in coordinating the services of providers of mental health services and programs to students;
- promote good nutrition by increasing funding of school breakfast and lunch accounts and providing nutrition education training and resources; and
- encourage school districts to engage every middle and high school student in extracurricular activities that connect them to the community and/or provide opportunities for the development of leadership skills.



**(D) Every student and teacher will be technologically literate.** Technology is now woven into the fabric of everyday life, yet the availability and use of technological innovations are unevenly distributed in schools and in homes across the state. It is imperative that we increase the accessibility of high-speed, Internet-accessible computers to students in all Connecticut schools as well as in the homes of students. In order to make use of educational technology, school districts must have an adequate wiring or satellite infrastructure and appropriate hardware and software. In addition, there must be a multiyear commitment to train elementary and secondary school staff members to use technology to enhance student learning, to help students gain access to information, and to become knowledgeable about the technology itself. Furthermore, video distance learning must be expanded among Connecticut schools in order to expand opportunities for learning and further reduce student isolation.



 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- provide significant annual funding to upgrade local school districts' technology infrastructure; help schools purchase computer hardware and software; and electronically link colleges, universities and public libraries to all schools in the state;
- work with school districts to help increase students' access to computers outside of school;
- provide training to teachers and administrators in how to use technology to help students learn; to gain access to the world of information; and to promote the sharing of information and educational resources through web-based applications between urban, suburban and rural school districts; and
- develop assessments of the technological competence of students.

**(E) Every school and district will have highly competent teachers and administrators with high expectations for students' achievement and for their own teaching and/or leadership.**

All our efforts to improve student achievement will fail without quality teachers and administrators. Schools need effective leaders who promote the success of all staff members and students, and dedicated teachers with

a strong command of subject matter and a deep commitment to the belief that all students can attain high levels of achievement. The projected shortage of teachers in certain areas

and the decline in the number of people interested in pursuing a career in educational administration call for a balanced approach of new strategies and incentives to attract qualified individuals into Connecticut schools combined with continued commitment to high standards. Special efforts must be made to attract and retain minority teachers and administrators in all Connecticut schools. The Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program — a nationally recognized induction program for new teachers — needs to be further strengthened by providing state-funded stipends to mentors and mentor teams. Programs for aspiring school leaders and mentorship programs for new administrators must be developed. Districts should be encouraged to promote differentiated staffing and career options for teachers.







★ **State actions to address this priority are:**

- establish loan forgiveness programs for new teachers employed in priority and transition districts and for those working in shortage areas such as mathematics;
- fund the design and implementation of new and expanded teacher preparation and cross-endorsement programs in shortage areas;
- promote alternative routes to teaching and administration;
- enhance the induction of new teachers in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program by providing two years of support, funding state stipends to mentors and mentor teams, expanding professional development for beginning and experienced educators, and promoting effective teacher evaluation practices;
- develop and validate teacher assessments in the areas of early childhood and bilingual education;
- adopt the Connecticut Administrator Test as a requirement for all in-state candidates seeking an administrator license;
- work with school districts in enhancing the attractiveness of school administrator positions by clarifying leadership roles, examining compensation schedules, developing new models of administration, and creating induction programs for new administrators;
- promote workplace and job redesign innovations for teachers and administrators through competitive grants and the dissemination of model programs;
- develop programs for aspiring administrators in collaboration with school districts, regional educational service centers and higher education institutions;
- provide incentives for minority students to pursue careers in teaching by expanding scholarships, establishing additional alternate route programs (such as a new Paraprofessionals-to-Teachers Program), funding future teachers clubs in middle and high schools, developing new programs of recruitment and training with community colleges, and coordinating out-of-state recruitment.





**(F) Each school district shall provide educational opportunities for its students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds.** As part of the state's response to *Sheff v. O'Neill*, quality educational experiences are now available to thousands of students from different communities and backgrounds. All students benefit from learning about others' differences and similarities. **Our goal is to make available at least one public school choice option for every parent and child who wants it.** Public school choice programs that bring together students from diverse backgrounds to learn together not only reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, they also provide laboratories for teachers and parents to try new and diverse instructional models and to share resources and staff. Flexible and innovative options include magnet schools, charter schools, lighthouse schools and interdistrict and multidistrict programs. Attracting nonminority students from suburban and rural communities into schools and programs in the inner city is critical to the future success of reducing racial, ethnic and economic isolation in Connecticut.

 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- expand the capacity of interdistrict programs to serve one-half of the statewide student body annually;
- promote collaboration between the state, the six regional educational service centers and statewide providers to design, implement and disseminate resources and programs which provide diversity training and multicultural curriculums and promote urban-to-suburban/rural teacher and administrator exchanges;
- increase funding and support for interdistrict and regional magnet schools and the establishment of statutory student attendance entitlements;
- expand the mission of magnet and lighthouse schools to serve the children of commuters who reside in more distant rural and suburban communities;
- increase funding for and access to public school choice programs by ensuring that communities make more extensive long-term projections of the availability of spaces for out-of-district students; and
- increase funding to regional educational service centers to support their role in reducing racial, ethnic and economic isolation of students.

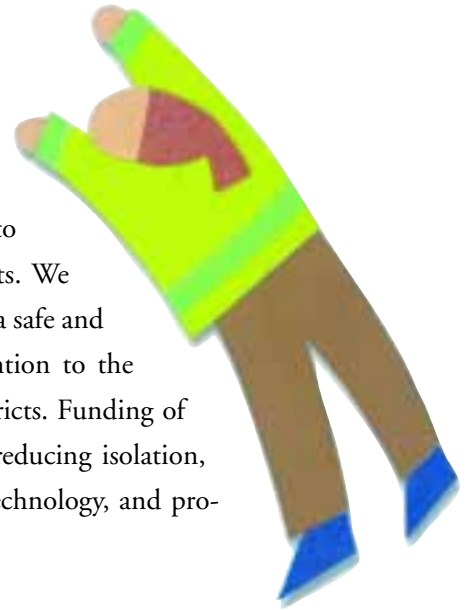


**(G) State resources will be increased, equitably distributed and used efficiently so that all schools will have the capacity to ensure that all students achieve at high levels.**

Increasing the state's share of the cost of education and reducing the reliance on the property tax for revenue will reduce the current inequities in and among Connecticut's schools and districts. The goal is to achieve an equal state-local share of the total cost of public schools within the life of this



five-year plan or shortly thereafter. In addition to more systematic increases in the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant, there must be continued growth in targeted categorical state funds for the districts, schools and children most in need and for specific programs that research suggests contribute to raising student achievement (such as early reading interventions and preschool education). More financial assistance is needed to mitigate the impact of rising special education costs on local school districts. We must ensure that all school buildings are renovated and maintained to ensure a safe and healthy environment for students and staff members, with particular attention to the increasing number of indoor environmental issues faced by local school districts. Funding of improvements in the school facility infrastructure must also contribute to reducing isolation, promoting preschool education and year-round use, increasing the use of technology, and providing facility repair where needs are the greatest.



 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- implement the recommendations of the 1999 ECS task force to (a) eliminate the cap on the ECS grant until its statutory phase-out in the 2003-2004 school year, (b) raise the per-pupil foundation on an annual basis, (c) provide an annual increase reflecting a "cost-of-living" growth in educational expenditures to all towns not under the cap or not benefiting from foundation increases, and (d) increase the state guaranteed wealth level in the ECS formula;
- fund a greater share of the cost of programs and services for students with disabilities by (a) resuming state aid for transportation of special education students, (b) reassigning responsibility for the cost of state-agency-placed children to the Department of Children and Families, and (c) increasing state support for local school district placements of high-cost special education students, thereby providing an incentive for in-district programs and services;
- increase the annual per-pupil state grant for charter schools to more adequately cover the operation and facility needs of the schools, and provide funding for additional charter schools that meet needs and standards as established by the State Board of Education;
- support — through competitive grants and dissemination of best practices — school restructuring initiatives that promote smaller and more personal schools and programs; the redesign of high school programs and graduation requirements; unification of regular, special and compensatory education; alternative middle and high school programs; differentiated staffing and incentives for master teachers; and collaborative efforts between public schools and colleges and universities that promote students' success in higher education; and



- maintain a commitment to school construction and renovation projects, including expanding bonus/incentive plans for multidistrict schools, ensuring adequate classroom space for pre-school and full-day kindergarten, increasing the number of schools with air conditioning in order to promote year-round use of schools, and assisting districts in making all schools compliant with codes governing building, fire, health, safety and accessibility as well as implementing appropriate strategies for improving air quality.

**(H) Services will be expanded to meet the needs of young children.** Children will be better prepared for academic achievement if children potentially at high risk of educational difficulties — including children from low-income homes and communities, children whose first language is not English, and children with developmental and learning disabilities — are provided with programs and services starting at birth. Families, service organizations, community agencies and other state agencies must work in partnership to help these children. The Department must promote collaboration and provide



leadership in integrating services and improving the quality, availability and cost-effectiveness of educational, health and social services provided to children and their families. Additional resources must be provided to increase the availability of quality early childhood programs, family resource centers, parent education, family literacy programs, and other integrated family support services. The qualifications of individuals working in early childhood programs will be improved by enhancing career paths and providing professional development.

 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- expand the availability of high-quality, full-day preschool programs to all eligible children;
- work in partnership with the Department of Social Services to link preschool programs with family care and other birth-to-age-five services to children and families;
- phase in full-day kindergarten for all students in priority and transitional school districts;
- increase the number of family resource centers in schools and communities with the greatest need;
- collaborate with the Department of Higher Education to develop an early childhood career development system that increases the number of instructional staff members hired with baccalaureate degrees; and
- evaluate the extent to which interventions such as preschool improve students' long-term academic achievement.



**(I) School-family-community-business partnerships will be expanded to meet the needs of at-risk students, prepare students for the world of work, and promote the educational competence of adults.** Family and community engagement in programs such as mentoring, tutoring and Youth Service Bureaus is critical in addressing issues of poor achievement, truancy, suspensions and dropouts. School-business partnerships help provide opportunities for the integration of content and skills with workplace applications and the enhancement of secondary school experiences for all students — not just those at risk of failure. Adult education programs need to be expanded and work in partnership with alternative providers. Community-based organizations can help address the lack of basic skills in the adult population without high school diplomas and help the parents of school-age children whose primary language is not English obtain the English-language skills they need to help their children. Partnerships with the community colleges can help assist adults who have obtained high school diplomas make the transition into postsecondary education and other career training opportunities.

 **State actions to address this priority are:**

- increase direct services to more adults in need of elementary and secondary education — including high school completion — by expanding the state reimbursement formula;
- promote innovative school-to-career transition programs by providing competitive and incentive grants and disseminating best practices; and
- develop assessments of students' career readiness.





**(J) Connecticut's Regional Vocational-Technical School System will provide students with a rigorous educational program meeting the needs of Connecticut's citizens and employers in the 21st century.**

The Regional Vocational-Technical School System (RVTSS) has experienced a five-year period of growth in student enrollment. Priorities have focused on expanding programs to meet building capacity and meeting the ever-increasing statewide expectations for graduates entering



construction, manufacturing and service trades. The next 10 years will be a time of selective growth in student enrollment and significant infrastructure renovation in every facility. This includes capital equipment; technological instructional systems; and modernization of classrooms, occupation-specific facilities and buildings. The RVTSS five-year plan addresses eight critical school practices, including teaching and learning, school culture, technology, leadership, fiscal management and facilities, professional development, assessment and accountability.



Programmatic priorities focus on ensuring that students attain the critical academic skills necessary for success in each occupational technology area; assessing student competencies in these areas by national performance examinations; analyzing both statewide and at the school level occupational technology offerings to ensure that students are able to meet the new technological demands of the workplace; and increasing the involvement of business and industry. In addition, qualified teachers must be recruited and trained, and more staff members hired to decrease class size, meet the needs of a more diverse student population, and provide quality services to all students, including those with special needs.



★ **State actions to address this priority are:**

- increase instructional time in core academic areas;
- implement National Occupational Testing in select technology areas, use CMT data analysis for school improvement, and increase pre-CAPT assessment in all areas;
- fund new technology instructional systems, increase the use of technology in instruction (including web-related distance learning), and provide staff members with ongoing professional development in integrating technology and instruction;
- reduce class size, increase student contact, and improve instruction by increasing the number of instructional staff members;
- update the academic curriculum to be aligned with state standards and assessments, and increase the skills and knowledge of professional staff members through targeted professional development;
- provide appropriate funding for instructional supplies and equipment, including textbooks, consumable materials for trade areas, and science and computer labs;
- provide additional resources to cover special education costs;
- provide sufficient funds to cover all fixed costs, including fuel and utilities;
- provide new funding for summer, Saturday and after-school programs; and
- support new programs and continuously update the curriculum related to technology in every trade area.







# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO ACHIEVE AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE

The following table shows how the State Board of Education and local school districts can work together to achieve the strategic priorities identified in this document as well as the statutory goals set forth in C.G.S. Section 10-4p:

- I. Increase student achievement
- II. Improve effective instruction
- III. Achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity
- IV. Reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation
- V. Encourage greater parental and community involvement

Strategic Priorities	Statutory Goals	SBE/SDE Actions to Address Priorities	Recommendations for Local School Districts
Every student challenged to reach excellence	I, III	<p>Support new and innovative practices in curriculum, instruction and professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative Practices Grants</li> <li>• Connecticut Institutes for Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Connecticut Academy for Math, Science and Technology</li> <li>• Exemplary curriculum projects</li> </ul> <p>Measure Success and Reward Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New generations of CMT/CAPT assessment and alternative assessment options</li> <li>• State Information System</li> <li>• Student Achievement Grants</li> </ul>	<p>Adopt challenging curriculum and performance standards aligned with assessments</p> <p>Begin World language instruction in kindergarten or first grade</p> <p>Offer more art and music from pre-kindergarten to Grade 4</p> <p>Introduce the basic concepts of algebra and geometry in Grades 3 and 4</p> <p>Encourage students to read more challenging materials</p> <p>Offer more advanced placement and college-level courses, PSAT/SAT preparation classes</p> <p>Develop data-driven school improvement plans to engage every teacher and administrator in improving student achievement</p>
Continuous closing of the achievement gap	I, III, IV, V	<p>Increase investment in the state's neediest districts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority School Districts</li> <li>• Extended School Hours</li> <li>• Library Books</li> <li>• Summer School</li> <li>• Early Reading Success</li> <li>• Transitional School Districts</li> </ul> <p>Expand support and assessment of bilingual education and English as a second language</p> <p>Promote growth in minority student achievement</p> <p>Expand alternative education programs</p> <p>Evaluate programs that lead to closing of the achievement gap</p> <p>Enhance collection and reporting of data on progress</p>	<p>Accept shared responsibility for accountability for student achievement, and demand annual continuous improvement</p> <p>Disaggregate all districtwide and school data to identify achievement gaps and take new actions to close those gaps</p> <p>Develop alternative programs/services for at-risk students and students with disabilities</p> <p>Keep schools open until evening for recreation, enrichment, remedial work, hobbies, tutoring and mentoring</p> <p>Communicate regularly with every student and family</p> <p>Adopt a philosophy of "zero loss" of students</p>

Strategic Priorities	Statutory Goals	SBE/SDE Actions to Address Priorities	Recommendations for Local School Districts
Safe, positive learning environments	I, III	<p>Expand initiatives and develop model programs to improve school climate, promote positive character development, and enhance students' health and safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants for model programs</li> <li>• Youth Service Bureaus</li> <li>• Primary Mental Health</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> </ul>	<p>Promote character education as early as second grade</p> <p>Promote a comprehensive approach to health to promote lifetime skills necessary for physical fitness and mental health</p> <p>Promote good nutrition by offering healthy foods</p> <p>Initiate community discussions on youth violence and behavior</p>
Technology literacy	I, II, III	<p>Promote new technology initiatives</p> <p>Upgrade technology infrastructure</p> <p>Provide training for teachers and administrators</p> <p>Develop assessments of the technological competence of students</p>	<p>Increase the use of technology in every classroom and by every student</p> <p>Encourage use of distance learning</p>
Highly competent teachers and administrators	I, II, III, IV	<p>Attract and retain qualified teachers and administrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loan forgiveness</li> <li>• New preparation and cross-endorsement programs</li> <li>• Alternate or different routes to certification</li> <li>• Workplace and job redesign initiatives</li> </ul> <p>Enhance the induction of new teachers — Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program</p> <p>Recruit minority teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paraprofessional Program</li> <li>• Community college partnerships</li> <li>• Future Teachers Clubs</li> <li>• Scholarship Program</li> <li>• Out-of-state recruitment</li> </ul>	<p>Promote strong induction programs for new staff members</p> <p>Encourage teachers to be trained as mentors or assessors of beginning teachers</p> <p>Ensure the availability of time for teachers to meet and discuss student work</p> <p>Ensure administrators spend at least one hour per day in classrooms observing and coaching teachers</p> <p>Develop new staffing models for teachers and administrators</p>
Interaction with teachers and students of other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds	I, II, III, IV	<p>Reduce isolation by expanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdistrict programs</li> <li>• Magnet and lighthouse schools</li> <li>• Public school choice</li> </ul> <p>Design and implement resources and programs promoting diversity and multicultural curriculums</p>	<p>Develop unique, specialized programs and/or schools of choice</p> <p>Offer all students regional choice opportunities</p>
Increased, equitable and efficient use of resources	I, III	<p>Increase the state's share of the cost of education</p> <p>Fund a greater share of special education programs and services</p> <p>Increase funding for charter schools</p> <p>Promote school restructuring initiatives</p> <p>Maintain commitment to school construction and special maintenance projects</p>	<p>Create smaller school organizational units</p> <p>Keep school buildings open and available Saturdays, vacation weeks and in the summer, and make facilities available to the public</p> <p>Reduce the number of students needing compensatory or special education services by providing accommodated instruction with adequate support services</p>







## MEASURING SUCCESS

The 10 strategic priorities represent the critical areas in which the state will be focusing its efforts over the next 5 to 10 years. The most important measures of whether we are reaching our goals of excellence and equity are those dealing with student achievements — e.g., the CMT/CAPT tests, SAT scores, graduation rates, participation in community service programs. Other measures relate to those critical aspects of education that enable students to be successful. Examples include expenditures, preschool experiences, instructional time and number of academic computers per student.

The indicators listed below do not represent all educational data used in Connecticut. They have been selected for use in this context for purposes of analyzing the extent to which we achieve the **joint goals of continuous statewide improvement over time in all measures of student achievements as represented by an increase in the state average, while simultaneously reducing the gap in achievement.**

In order to measure progress in reducing achievement gaps, these data will be disaggregated by groups whose progress we wish to monitor (e.g., Educational Reference Groups, economic groups, different racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, bilingual students, magnet and charter school students, Title I districts and schools, and vocational-technical school students).

### Student Achievement Measures

1. Increase in student performance on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), and other state and national measures of academic achievement (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress, career and technical education program assessments)
2. Increase in the participation rates and performance of students on the PSAT, SAT and AP-level courses
3. Increase in the number of districts requiring student demonstration of competencies in order to graduate
4. Increase in the percentage of students meeting physical fitness standards
5. Reduction in the percentage of students who are suspended or expelled from school
6. Increase in the general health of students as measured by the decrease in the percentage of students using cigarettes, alcohol and drugs, and reduction in the rates of teenage pregnancy



7. Increase in the percentage of students pursuing postsecondary education, employed full- or part-time in a trade or occupational area for which they have been trained, or serving in the military
8. Decrease in the percentage of students who drop out of school
9. Increase in the percentage of students participating in service learning, community service activities and extracurricular activities that connect students to the community and/or provide opportunities for leadership
10. Increase in the number of adult education diplomas awarded to adults who are 16 and older and who are not enrolled in school
11. Increase in the number of students with disabilities who meet state and local graduation requirements, thereby qualifying for a “standard” high school diploma

### **Measures of Other Critical Aspects of Education Contributing to Student Achievement**

1. Increase in the percentage of students entering school with preschool education experience
2. Increase in the number of schools using computer/technology-supported instruction
3. Increase in the percentage of teachers meeting teacher testing standards as measured by PRAXIS I and II, the BEST portfolio assessment, and National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) assessments
4. Increase in the number and percentage of certified staff members who are members of minority groups
5. Decrease in the racial, ethnic and economic isolation of students as measured by an increase in the percentage of students attending schools whose student populations are diverse and an increase in the percentage of students participating in interdistrict programs and magnet schools
6. Increase in the percentage of time that special education students spend with nondisabled students
7. Increase in the percentage of school buildings whose quality of facilities is rated as adequate or better



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