

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

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** January 5, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Partner District Monitoring Reports Summary

**Introduction**

The State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223e of the Connecticut General Statutes, is required, in conformance with the No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110, to direct the Commissioner of Education to prepare a statewide education accountability plan, consistent with federal law and regulation. Such a plan shall identify the schools and districts in need of improvement, require the development and implementation of improvement plans and utilize rewards and consequences.

**History/Background**

In June 2007, state accountability legislation was enacted that required low-performing districts to participate in instructional and financial assessments (conducted by Cambridge Education). Upon completion of the Cambridge assessments, the districts were required to meet with the State Board of Education Ad Hoc Committee on Accountability to review the results of the assessments. The districts were required to revise their previously submitted District Improvement Plans (DIPs) to reflect the findings of the assessments and the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations. The districts developed the revised DIPs with a broad-based district team in collaboration with staff from the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement (BAI). The DIPs were presented to the local boards of education for approval. The DIPs were then presented to the State Board of Education for approval.

The districts that were involved were chosen based on their identified need through No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The districts were in year three or greater and in need of improvement at the whole district level in reading, math or in both subjects. In the 2008-09 school year, 12 districts were involved in the process. The districts were Bridgeport, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Waterbury and Windham. The districts are referred to as the Partner Districts.

In the 2009-10 school year, three additional districts (Ansonia, Danbury and Stamford) were identified to go through this process. In addition to the above requirements, the districts have been required to develop a district system of accountability. Each district has a district-level data team, school-level data teams and instructional-level data teams. Staff members from the BAI attend the district data team meetings to monitor implementation of the DIPs. Annually, the State Department team submits a formal monitoring report to the Commissioner on the progress related to the district implementation of the DIPs. All reports for the 2009-10 school year have been completed and submitted. Districts are currently revising their DIPs based upon the recommendations of these reports and the results of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)/Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). In an effort to support implementation of the DIPs, the districts receive the following supports:

- staff members from the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement are assigned to each district;

- an external consultant (retired superintendent) is assigned to each district;
- technical assistance with creating a district system of accountability;
- providing or brokering direct support in K-8 Literacy and Mathematics K-8 model curriculum development and implementation, benchmark assessments in Grades 3-8 reading and mathematics and walkthrough protocols;
- participation in a K-2 assessment consortium;
- support from the Department for interventions for students with disabilities, English Language Learners or school-family-community partnerships;
- access to district- and school-level training and technical assistance from the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) in Effective Teaching Strategies, Data-Driven Decision-Making, Common Formative Assessments, Making Standards Work, Climate and Culture and the Scientifically Research-Based Interventions;
- establishment of two demonstration schools in each district, which provides additional resources to fund an executive coach and data team facilitator;
- for select districts, external consultants to work with local boards of education or provide training for the local boards of education; and
- participation in an Accountability and School Improvement Advisory Committee.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the spring monitoring is for the Partner Districts, working with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) technical assistance teams, to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies in their DIP. The monitoring also provides feedback on the status of progress toward achieving the student outcomes goals set forth in each districts' DIP.

Each CSDE technical assistance team met with their district's data team (DDT) in the spring and focused on the monitoring of changes to instructional strategies, benchmark data from district formative assessments and the results gained from a district self-assessment using the Standards for District Data Teams.

Data from the 2010 administration of the CMT and CAPT was incorporated into the reports. Each report contains information on the Change in Percent At/Above Proficiency by Grade Level for Reading, Writing and Math and a Comparison of 2008 and 2010 Gap in Percent of Students At/Above Proficiency by Subgroup (CMT and CAPT).

The reports were distributed to the districts in the fall of 2010 for fact checking and input. Revised reports were then sent to each district superintendent for signature. The reports serve as an additional data point for districts as they continue to review and revise their DIPs.

**Overall Findings:**

A review of the reports indicates that Partner Districts have clearly identified both Student Outcome goals and Results Indicators for Adult Actions. In addition, the districts have worked diligently to align school improvement goals with identified district goals. Each district uses the Standards for District Data Teams, developed by CSDE, to assess the effectiveness of both the structure and work of the DDT. Districts have also adopted the Standards for School Level Data Teams for building level use. Findings indicate that the frequency of DDT meetings varies from monthly to every six weeks with meeting length varying from two hours to a full day. The makeup of the DDTs is representative of the school community with teachers, school leaders, central office staff, union representatives and parents as members. In all but one district (New Britain) the superintendent is an active member of the DDT.

The focus of each district's DIP is generally organized around the following: curriculum, effective teaching strategies, climate, data team implementation and system accountability. Two districts (Meriden and Stamford) have included de-tracking as a major initiative. In order to accomplish their goals, the DDTs operate as professional learning communities and have adopted a subcommittee structure in order to direct and monitor progress for each identified target area.

There are 267 schools in the 15 Partner Districts. Of these, 71 schools made Safe Harbor with an additional 22 schools making Adequate Yearly Progress. The Middletown Public School District made Safe Harbor as a district.

**Policy Implications:**

The State Board of Education should continue to review and amend the requirements of the state accountability legislation to provide support and guidance to the Partner Districts. There is a continued need for increased fiscal resources to fully implement the reform efforts necessary to turn around low performing schools and districts. In 2010-11, three Partner Districts have been added: Hamden, West Haven and Windsor. CSDE technical assistance teams have been assigned to each new district and are working with DDTs to review and, where appropriate, revise the DIPs.

**Follow-up Activities:**

In addition to the supports previously identified, staff members from the BAI will participate on a regular basis on the District Data Teams to monitor implementation of the DIPs and offer support and resources. The BAI teams will continue to conduct formal monitoring visits and prepare a report for the Commissioner on progress related to implementation of the DIPs.

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