



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



To: Superintendents of Schools

From: Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer

Date: November 1, 2019

Subject: Summer Melt Research Study – High school participation is strongly encouraged

Each year, approximately 1 in 5 graduating high school seniors admitted to college fails to matriculate, a phenomenon called “summer melt.” Moreover, of those who do matriculate, only 39 percent of students enrolling in community colleges, and only 60 percent of 4-year college goers will earn a credential within six (6) years¹. These issues—failing to matriculate and failing to complete a degree—are even more common among low-income and first-generation college students. Fortunately, the research provides promising evidence that sending text messages to students to remind them of critical college actions can increase the rate of college enrollment and persistence.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has partnered with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to examine the effectiveness of text messaging campaigns on reducing summer melt and improving college persistence. This effort is linked directly to improving the post-secondary entrance measure (Indicator 10) of the Next Generation Accountability System.

The five-year study, highlighted in the [August 2019 edition](#) of *Performance Matters*, is funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. Connecticut will join two other states to explore the feasibility of bringing this evidence-based approach to scale.

The CSDE strongly encourages all high schools to participate in this study. High schools will work with AIR to administer a brief 15-minute online survey to high school seniors graduating in the spring of 2020 and the spring of 2021. No other data collection or school-level involvement is expected beyond the brief survey administration.

Please encourage your high school principal(s) to participate in this study by **emailing David Blumenthal** (dblumenthal@air.org) **at AIR by Friday, November 15**. David can clarify any questions they may have about this study. Renee Savoie, CSDE, Performance Office may be contacted via email at (renee.savoie@ct.gov) or by phone at 860-713-6858 regarding questions about Connecticut’s participation in this research.

Thank you for your support of our continuous learning and improvement efforts.

¹ Castleman, B. L., & Page, L. C. (2014). *Summer Melt: Supporting Low-Income Students through the Transition to College*. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.