



Turnaround Office Newsletter



In this Edition:

- I. Message from the Chief Turnaround Officer
- II. Important Dates
- III READCONN: K-3 Reading PD
- V. Finance and Grants
- VI. Act Now: Stay Interviews
- VII. Mastery-Based Learning Conference
- VIII. Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS) Provide Alternatives to Disciplinary Sanctions
- IX. Chronic Absenteeism: The Role of School Attendance Teams
- X. The Winter Alliance District Convening
- XI. Seeking 2017 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Nominees
- XII. CABE

Spotlight on Excellence

Waterbury Public Schools

- Crosby High School

Click below to access the Turnaround Office Calendars



I. Message from the Chief Turnaround Officer

Greetings from the Turnaround Office. I want to begin by thanking everyone who attended our NetStat session last month. Participants feedback highlighted the importance of sharing best practices amongst each other. We will continue to provide opportunities for best practice sharing.

Thank you to all of the district staff who have entered their data into the tracker. We are grateful that each Alliance District is making the timely and accurate collection and reporting of leading and lagging indicator data a priority. I am aware that some of your local benchmark testing windows will lose after our due date. Please be diligent in getting your benchmark data into the tracker quickly upon the window closing.

Commissioner’s Network schools have now received their mid-year audits. As you know, we have made changes to how these audits are conducted to include leadership teams and parents in the process. We hope you found these changes to have added value to the mid-year audit process. By engaging more stakeholders, the audits become self assessments as well as progress and compliance checks. We believe this shift generates greater self reflection, discussion and planning for improvement.

In the coming days you will be receiving both the Alliance District application along with the Commissioner's Network Expression of Interest form, for those of you who are interested in nominating schools for a planning year. Questions regarding both should be directed to the Turnaround Office at 860-713-6760.

Best regards,
Desi Nesmith
 Chief Turnaround Officer

II. Important Dates in 2016



- March 7 - 25:** Network/AD Monitoring Meetings
- March 23:** Exploring Mastery-Based Learning Conference
- May 2:** 2016-17 AD Application Due
- May 25:** Spring AD Convening
- June 3:** Spring Network School NetStat Session
- July 1:** Network/AD Data Submission Deadline
- July 5-22:** Network/AD Monitoring Meetings

III. READCONN: A K-3 Reading System of Professional Development



The CSDE, in partnership with Public Consulting Group (PCG) and LearnZillion, present a professional learning series for school teams (teachers, specialists, and principals) focused on researched-based, effective K-3 reading instruction. Critical reading skills that can be taught using any reading approach or program. E-mail ctcorestandards@pcgus.com to reserve a spot for your school team and to receive additional information about this exciting, engaging, and hands-on learning experience beginning May 2016. Alliance Districts will receive priority registration!

V. Finance and Grants



Just a reminder that districts should have a plan to spend down their 2015-16 Alliance District, Priority School District, and Commissioner's Network grant funding prior to the end of the current fiscal year on June 30th. This includes any Alliance District funds which were carried forward from the 2014-15 fiscal year. The only amounts from 2015-16 that will potentially be allowed to carry forward into next fiscal year will be a maximum of 3% of Alliance District funding upon submission and approval of a request (details forthcoming), and Priority School District "holdback" amounts, subject to legislative approval. District points of contact can verify fund balances. Any unused funds beyond the above carryover provisions must be returned to the state.

VI. Act Now: Stay Interviews

It is almost spring and that means hiring season is starting in Connecticut school districts. Tremendous efforts to recruit and hire well-qualified educators is a crucial concern for school principals, human resource professionals and district leaders. Just as crucial is a district's ability to **retain** most effective teachers and administrators. Do you know which of your top performers is thinking of moving to a new district or a new profession? Many districts are asking, "Are there timely and effective methods to improve retention right now?" Human resource professionals believe there are. Stay interviews can be a powerful tool in your comprehensive talent management strategy to explore what your high-performing employees need to stay onboard as a member of your team. Below are suggestions for conducting stay interviews from the Society for Human Resource Management.

Opening the Interview: To open the stay interview, a principal may use a statement such as "I'd like to have an informal talk with you to find out how the job is going so I can do my best to support you with issues within my control."

Questions:

- Have several open-ended questions on hand and remember it is important to listen and gather ideas during this process.
- What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- What do you like most or least about working here?
- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What would make your job more satisfying?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- What talents are not being used in your current role?
- What would you like to learn here?
- What can I do to best support you?

Closing the Interview: To close the stay interview, summarize the key points and work with the employee to develop a stay plan. Be sure to end on a positive note. Examples of closing statements include:

- I appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me today. I am committed to doing what I can to make this a great place for you to work.

See more at: <http://www.shrm.org/templatestools/samples/hrforms/pages/stayinterviewquestions>.

VII. Mastery-Based Learning Conference

The CSDE is offering a one-day workshop, "Mastery-Based Learning: What, Why, and How it Can Help Student Engagement and Achievement" on March 23, 2016. The session is designed for school teams interested in creating a Mastery-Based Learning Model for your School Improvement Plan starting in the 2016-17 School Year. Teams of four should be comprised of a district-level leader, a building-level leader and classroom educators. To register, click [HERE](#). For further information contact suzanne.loud@ct.gov.

VIII. Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS) Provide Alternatives to Disciplinary Sanctions

Recent correspondence from Commissioner Wentzell reminds superintendents to collaborate with local EMPS providers as described in Public Act 13-178. EMPS deliver crisis response and stabilization services to children, youth, their families and caregivers. Additionally, EMPS increase a school's capacity to provide alternatives to disciplinary sanctions and assist in meeting the needs of students experiencing social-emotional, psychological or behavioral issues. Learn more at www.empst.org and visit the [CSDE Web site](#) to download the Commissioner's correspondence and a list of EMPS providers.

Strategic partnerships between districts and community agencies, such as EMPS, assist the district in developing policies and practices that address the health and developmental needs of young people in order to improve their academic performance and well-being. For questions, please contact Scott Newgass at 860-807-2044 or scott.newgass@ct.gov.

IX. Chronic Absenteeism: The Role of School Attendance Teams

Connecticut law, Public Act 15-225, [An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism](#), requires local and regional boards of education to monitor and address absenteeism rates in schools. Specifically, it requires boards of education to establish attendance review teams at both the district and school level if: 1) the district has a 10 percent or higher rate of chronic absence or one or more schools has a chronic absence rate of 15 percent or higher; 2) and at the school-level if individual schools have chronic absenteeism rates of 15 percent or higher.

School Attendance Teams play an important role at schools with concerning levels of chronic absenteeism. When forming the team, it is important to ensure that the right people are at the table. Team members may include school counselors, social workers, school nurses, family engagement liaisons, school resource officers, and others. Teams generally have two responsibilities. First, they are charged with ensuring individual students who are chronically absent receive needed supports and interventions from within the school or through community referrals and any additional recommendations as appropriate. Second, they monitor what is happening overall for all students and student sub-groups at a school site. If your school has a high rate of chronic absenteeism, attendance review teams may be your first step towards addressing this issue. Attendance Works has developed a fact sheet, [School Attendance Teams: Tips for Effectiveness](#), that can help guide the work of your school attendance teams. For additional information on addressing chronic absenteeism, please contact Kari Sullivan at kari.sullivan@ct.gov or 860-807-2041.

X. The Winter Alliance District Convening

The winter *Alliance District* convening was attended by one hundred twenty-five representatives from *Alliance Districts*. Thank you to all who attended. Family Engagement was the topic of the keynote address which was provided by Michele Brooks, of the Harvard Family Research Project. The Turnaround Office hosted an Education Resource Fair to promote resources provided by the Department of Education. Plans are being made for the spring *Alliance District* convening. If you have ideas for topics, keynotes, or activities please send them to Kelly Mero at Kelly.Mero@ct.gov or call 860-713-6739.



XI. Seeking 2017 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Nominees

The Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program recognizes outstanding paraeducator contributions to schools and communities. The program honors one paraeducator who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in the performance of his/her job, thereby earning them the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, coworkers, and parents. In March 2013, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council renamed the Connecticut Paraeducator of the Year Award to the *Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award* in honor of Anne Marie Murphy, a special education paraprofessional who lost her life during the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December, 2014.

In 2016, Seven (7) Alliance Districts (Ansonia, Bridgeport, Derby, East Hartford, Hartford, New Britain, New London), put forth nominees. The [2016 winner](#) was Hartford Public School's Denise Seel, a paraeducator at Batchelder Elementary School.

Nominees for 2017 are being accepted now through May 15, 2016. The materials noted below can be found on the CSDE Web site.

[Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year](#)

[Historical Background](#)

[Steps to Providing a Nominee](#)

[Paraeducator of the Year Award Informational Letter for District Nominations](#)

[2017 Paraeducator of the Year Application](#)

[District Selection Process Samples](#)

Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program Contact Information:

Talent Office

Bureau of Leadership Development

[Paraeducator of the Year Program](#)

Teresa Boyd Cowles

Education Consultant

Leadership Development

Teresa.Boyd@ct.gov

860-713 Ext. 6842

XII. CABE: Dedicated to strengthening public education through advocacy, professional development and service to boards of education

Collective Impact Model – Creating Change

How does a town or city make transformational change in an impactful, successful way? With so many organizations, including schools, town or city governments, hospitals, non-profits, business and others all moving in different directions, is transformative change even possible?

The Collective Impact Model is a broad-based collaboration to create change. Using cross-collaboration across all stakeholders of a city or town and coordinated by a single “backbone” organization, all energy and focus can be aimed at one goal.

Hear how cities in Connecticut are using the Collective Impact Model to bring about change in their communities. Come learn how these communities are finding success with this model and what you can do in your community to implement this change model.

For more information please contact Senior Staff Associate for Professional Development Lisa Steimer at lsteimer@cabe.org.

*Spotlight on Excellence***Waterbury Public Schools**

Illustration courtesy of Muzamil Zafar, Crosby High School Student

Crosby High School, Waterbury Public Schools, has been working hard to reduce the percentage of students who are chronically absent from school. In addition to reorganizing the work of the school's Chronic Absenteeism Team to focus on Tier I attendance strategies, the Crosby administration invited the School Governance Council to join the school staff in its commitment to improve attendance. In its first action, the School Governance Council sponsored a Crosby student attendance poster contest. The winning design by Muzamil Zafar, shown here, was produced on posters which hang around the school. The design is proudly displayed on the school's Web page, and school leaders distribute 4.5 x 5.5 cards with the design to students with notes of encouragement and acknowledgement as positive reinforcement. Actions the school has taken have produced positive results with a middle-of-the-year decrease in the chronic absenteeism rate.