



# Turnaround Office Newsletter



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## I. Message from the Chief Turnaround Officer

Dear Colleagues,

As Ms. Cohn announced in last month’s newsletter, my name is Desi Nesmith and I am the new Chief Turnaround Officer at the Connecticut State Department of Education. I bring a range of experiences to this role including classroom teaching, central office and administrator experiences. I have worked in East Hartford, Hartford and most recently, Bloomfield Public Schools.

I pride myself on being a practitioner and look forward to bringing a practitioner’s perspective to this role. In the coming weeks, I will be visiting the Alliance Districts and Commissioner’s Network schools with the current consultants, to inquire about what is working and what supports are needed to ensure success.

I hope to meet many of you next week at the Alliance District Convening. My team and I look forward to supporting and working with you throughout the school year.

Best regards,  
*Desi D. Nesmith*  
 Chief Turnaround Officer

## II. Important Dates in 2015

- October 8:** Alliance District Convening  
*New Location! Courtyard by Marriott, Cromwell, CT*
- October 13:** Math Science Partnership Grant Submission Deadline
- November 6:** Alliance District Data Tracker Submission
- November 13:** NetStat Session
- November 16 - December 4:** Network/AD Monitoring Meetings



Click below to access the Turnaround Office Calendars



### III. SAVE THE DATE! Alliance District Convening - October 8, 2015

The Alliance Districts Convening will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2015 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott, Cromwell. Staff and student development is the focus of the Convening. The workshops planned for this Convening are focused on Talent, Academics, Climate/Culture, and Operations. To register for the Convening, please [click here](#). If you have ideas regarding a speaker, workshop title, and/or topic that you would like to see presented at an Alliance District Convening please, complete the Convening evaluation at the end of the Convening and/or contact Kelly Mero in the Turnaround office at 860-713-6739 or [Kelly.Mero@ct.gov](mailto:Kelly.Mero@ct.gov).

### IV. Strategies to Reduce Chronic Absence

Don't miss [Mapping the Early Attendance Gap](#), a new report from [Attendance Works](#) and the [Healthy Schools Campaign](#)! A new resource for schools and districts to help reduce chronic absence in schools.

This study shows how disparities in school attendance rates starting as early as preschool and kindergarten are contributing to achievement gaps and high school dropout rates across the country. The report also highlights the connection between health and attendance and the power of states to tackle absenteeism by tapping key champions, leveraging data, and learning from places that have improved attendance despite challenging conditions.

### V. Achieve the Core

Achieve the Core is a Web site created to assist educators with the effective implementation of Common Core State Standards. The site includes hundreds of math and literacy resources for teachers, resources for leaders who are putting college and career readiness standards into action, and opportunities to become an advocate for the Common Core and college and career readiness for all students. To explore what this site has to offer, please [click here](#). To access the Focus by Grade Level resource to find out which content is emphasized by the Standards at each grade level, please [click here](#).

### VI. Finance and Grants



Priority School District 2015-16 Summer School/School Accountability and Extended School Hours grant applications have been received and are now in the process of review. Upon final approval, districts will be notified and funds will be accessible. As a reminder, both grants carry an end date of June 30, 2016.

All 2015-16 Commissioner's Network and SIG 1003(g) grants have now been fully processed and are available to districts for draw-downs.

For districts that have received Low-Performing Schools bond funds, just a reminder that funds may only be expended on projects which have been previously approved through the State Bond Commission for that school. It is a misuse of public funds to assume that any savings may be automatically applied to other projects. In the event of a desired reallocation of bond funds, a formal request for consideration must be made and submitted to your Turnaround Office point of contact or Mike Kent at [Michael.Kent@ct.gov](mailto:Michael.Kent@ct.gov). An approval decision will be communicated back to you.

### VII. Paraeducator of the Year

#### HARTFORD'S DENISE R. SEEL NAMED CONNECTICUT'S 2016 ANNE MARIE MURPHY PARAEDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

State Department of Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell joined Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman and Hartford Public School officials Monday to announce that Denise R. Seel, a Lisbon resident and paraeducator at the L.W. Batchelder Elementary School in Harford, has been named Connecticut's 2016 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year. 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. To view the entire press release, please [click here](#).

## VIII. Math Science Partnership (MSP) Request for Proposal

New Request for Proposals (RFP) has been posted, opening a competition for Math Science Partnership (MSP) grant-funded professional development projects. MSP grants support partnerships between institutions of higher education and local education agencies to improve student achievement, interest and aspiration in **mathematics and science** through sustained professional development institutes that enhance teachers' content knowledge and teaching practices. Funded projects will offer K-12 teachers opportunities for in-depth study of **math and science concepts and practices** in CT Core Standards as well as Next Generation Science Standards (currently under adoption consideration by the State Board of Education). You may know of schools whose educators could benefit from participating in MSP PD projects which will begin forming soon for start-up in early 2016. School districts can participate in MSP projects in either of 2 ways:

- as a Lead Partner and Fiscal Agent that designs and manages the PD project in conjunction with university partners; or
- as a participating district that commits teams of teachers to take part in the professional learning program managed by others.

To view the complete RFP, please [click here](#). Deadline for submission is October 13, 2015.

## IX. 2015 Connecticut Equity Plan

On May 29, 2015, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) submitted the Connecticut Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (2015 CT Equity Plan) to the United States Department of Education. All states were required to submit a plan to the United States Department of Education outlining the steps it will take to ensure that students from low-income families and students of color are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified or out-of-field teachers or school leaders.

To develop the five-year plan, the CSDE engaged a diverse set of stakeholders who reviewed a wide range of data, examined root-causes and developed strategies to eliminate equity gaps. Data analysis showed that Connecticut's high-poverty/high-minority schools employ teachers and principals with four years and less teaching experience at a significantly higher rates than other schools. Similarly, teacher and principal retention rates in these schools was much lower than compared with other schools.

The Connecticut plan focuses on six overarching strategies to:

- Expand and strengthen existing principal preparation and support programs and redesign support and ongoing development programs for currently serving principals.
- Revise teacher preparation program requirements to ensure that candidates possess the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to be successful in Connecticut's high-poverty/minority schools.
- Expand efforts to increase the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the workforce and expand cultural consciousness and competence training throughout the career development continuum.
- Enhance working conditions in Connecticut's high-poverty/high-minority schools to ensure multi-tiered behavioral frameworks are implemented as designed, expand supports for students experiencing emotional and mental health challenges, and employ strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism.
- Explore new approaches to increase the supply of qualified and fully-certified teachers who apply for and are hired in designated shortage areas.

If you would like more detailed information about the Equity Plan, please contact Anne McKernan, Bureau Chief of Leadership Development at [anne.mckernan@ct.gov](mailto:anne.mckernan@ct.gov). An Equity Plan Advisory group will meet two times per year to adjust strategies, monitor progress and publicly report results. If you are interested in serving on the Equity Plan Advisory Group Committee, please contact Georgia Stathoulas at [georgia.stathoulas@ct.gov](mailto:georgia.stathoulas@ct.gov).

## Spotlight on Excellence

### John C. Clark School, Hartford Public Schools Second Grade Goals!

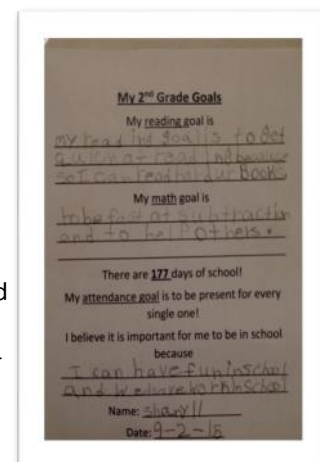


One of the “big rocks” for John C. Clark School is attendance and parent engagement. Second graders engaged in a lesson on goal setting and the importance of improving reading and math skills. To encourage a homeschool connection, students created a reading and math goal with their families. When students returned to school the following day, they were introduced to the writing process, and completed every step as a class. After students published their writing, they engaged in another lesson on self-worth, reputation and the Positive Behavior Interventions and Support core values.

Students discussed the type of reputation they wanted to uphold and what they needed to do to maintain a good reputation, not only in school, but also in their community. Students worked with partners and created large life-size drawings of themselves. They decorated their names at the top of the paper in large bubble letters. Students were instructed to draw and label the things they love inside their hearts and the things they like to eat in their stomachs. When students were done, they presented their portraits and goals and then placed them in the hallway.



The next day students engaged in a math lesson on attendance. Students had to use the school calendar to figure out how many school days are in each month for the entire school year and then place the information in a table. Then, as a class, they created an attendance chart template to use for the year to log how many days students are present. After the first month of school, students will start an attendance line or bar graph to keep track of their attendance. Together they wrote an attendance goal for the class and students shared the importance of school attendance. Students placed both the goal sheet and attendance chart on their life-size portraits. At the end of the lesson, each student’s picture was taken in front of their life-size drawing, posted to our classroom Web site and then sent home to parents. The class feels the best part of this activity is they see themselves and their goals every day before they walk into class. They are their own constant reminder of the importance of goal setting and attendance.



### Wilbur Cross High School, New Haven

Ms. Victoria Lassek, mathematics teacher at Wilbur Cross High School, New Haven, understands how to create a personalized classroom environment. Ms. Lassek began the 2015-16 school year with class meetings focused on developing classroom behavior expectations and rules. She even collaborated with her students to develop a set of expectations and rules for the teacher, which she signed and hung in the classroom as a daily reminder. Ms. Lassek and one of her students proudly shared the teacher and student rules on a recent CSDE walkthrough visit.

#### A203 Teacher Rules:



1. I will have patience with my students.
2. I will have faith in ALL my students at ALL times.
3. I will be open-minded to reasonable ideas and look at both sides.
4. I will challenge and encourage ALL of my students.
5. I will try my hardest not to be absent.
6. I will make class fun and happy.
7. I will be ready to help those who need it and ask.
8. I will not take bad days out on my students.
9. I will push you to always do your best.

I will abide by all the rules the students and myself have developed above.

*Ms. Lassek*