



For Immediate Release:

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## Two Schools Added to the Commissioner's Network

*State Board of Education Approves Remaining Two Schools in the Second Cohort*

(HARTFORD, CT)—The State Board of Education yesterday approved the turnaround plans for Windham Middle School in Windham and Crosby High School in Waterbury for participation in the Commissioner's Network, bringing the total number of schools in the Network to eleven. The Commissioner's Network is the state's lead initiative to improve Connecticut's most chronically underperforming schools. It was proposed by Governor Dannel P. Malloy and enacted as part of last year's bipartisan, landmark education reform legislation.

"A sound economic future for Connecticut is built on a strong public education system that graduates every student ready for college or a career," said Governor Malloy. "Turning around chronically underachieving schools requires thoughtful, targeted investments and a concerted, cooperative effort by local community leaders, administrators and teachers. We have invested millions of dollars to provide meaningful support to school districts and classrooms and developed a comprehensive set of tools to turn around low-performing schools so that we better prepare our students for a brighter future."

The biennial budget enacted by Governor Malloy and the General Assembly this legislative session included \$27.5 million dollars to fund the expansion of the Commissioner's Network to over 20 schools over the next two years.

"We are encouraged by the diligence and dedication demonstrated by all seven turnaround committees this year as they crafted and developed their respective plans and we look forward to seeing the implementation of their school reforms which will begin the transformation of some of Connecticut's lowest-performing schools," said State Board of Education Chairman Allan Taylor. "We are thankful to Governor Malloy and the General Assembly for their vision and leadership that make such reforms and innovative practices possible."

"The Commissioner's Network provides a pathway for the implementation of bold, transformative strategies necessary to turn around our state's lowest performing schools. We're pleased that, after a strong start with four schools last year, our Network has grown to include seven new participants this year. We will work vigorously in partnership with these eleven schools to provide new and enhanced educational opportunities to the students they serve," said State Department of Education

Commissioner Stefan Pryor. "School turnaround requires dedication, and we are grateful both for Governor Malloy's unmistakable, unwavering commitment to this effort and for the General Assembly's deepened investment in this initiative."

Both turnaround plans for the Commissioner's Network approved during yesterday's State Board of Education meeting focused on using the 2013-14 school year to build a strong infrastructure to support their respective models and turnaround strategies, to be followed by full programmatic implementation in fall of 2014. Both school turnaround committees will submit annual plan amendments to the Commissioner detailing Year 2 and Year 3 strategies and timelines. These amendments will also be presented to the State Board of Education for its approval.

The overall goals of Windham Middle School's turnaround plan are to increase student achievement, to improve school culture and climate, and to improve teacher and leader retention. The Year 1 plan outlines a strong focus on implementing a new curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards, extending instructional time, improving school culture, and laying the foundation for full implementation of small learning communities (SLCs) in the 2014-15 school year. Highlights of the plan include the implementation of SLCs, including a dual-language SLC, which will promote strong peer interactions and student-adult relationships. Additional noteworthy aspects include investments into technology which will provide access to online instructional tools, extended instructional time, and continued collaboration with the Special Master.

The turnaround plan for Waterbury's Crosby High School aims to increase proficiency in math and reading, to advance school climate, and to improve college- and career-readiness. Under the guidance of a Director of School Turnaround in Waterbury's newly created District Turnaround Office, Crosby High School will focus on aligning curriculum to the Common Core State Standards, reconfiguring the school schedule, identifying potential supporting partners, and preparing the school for full implementation of small learning communities (SLCs) in the 2014-15 school year. Other highlights of the plan include dual-enrollment opportunities allowing students to earn high school and college credit and the creation of the Crosby Teaching and Learning Institute to offer school-specific professional development opportunities.

In other action, the State Board of Education re-authorized the appointment of Dr. Steven Adamowski as Special Master for New London Public Schools and for Windham Public Schools through June 30, 2014 when the extension will again be considered by the State Board of Education. Appointed to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness, Dr. Adamowski has served as Special Master for two years in Windham and for one year in New London.

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