

# Connecticut State Department of Education



## *At a Glance*

**DR. MIGUEL A. CARDONA, Commissioner**

***Established: 1838***

***Statutory authority: Sec. 10-3 (1949), Revised (1969) Sec. 10-3a CGS and Sec. 10-4(a) CGS***

***Central office: 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford, CT 06106***

***Number of employees: 1,860 (1,658 full-time, 202 part-time)***

***Recurring operating expenses: \$2,949,956,308***

***Organizational structure: See chart***

## **Mission**

***The Connecticut State Board of Education will provide leadership that promotes an educational system supporting all learners in reaching their full potential.***

## **Statutory Responsibility**

Under Sec. 10-3a of the Conn. Gen. Statutes, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is the administrative arm of the State Board of Education (SBE), which is responsible for implementing the educational interests of the state from preschool through Grade 12.

Under Sec. 10-4(a) of the Conn. Gen. Statutes, the State Board of Education provides leadership and promotes the improvement of education in the state. Connecticut's 13-member State Board of Education is responsible for "general supervision and control of the educational interests of the state, which interests shall include preschool, elementary and secondary education, special education, vocational education and adult education." Sec. 10-4(a) further defines the educational interests of the state as including ". . . the concern of the state that (1) each child shall have for the period prescribed in the general statutes equal opportunity to receive a suitable

program of educational experiences. . .”

The Governor, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, appoints members of the State Board to four-year terms.

The State Board and Department of Education also protect the educational interests of the state by serving school districts and teacher preparation programs at Connecticut’s public and private higher education institutions. Among the Department’s many partners are parent and teacher groups; the six regional educational service centers; nonpublic schools; public and independent colleges and universities; and the Connecticut Departments of Children and Families, Developmental Services, Labor, and Corrections.

Specific functions carried out by the Department of Education include leadership and communication with the state’s school districts, charter schools, and regional educational service centers; research, planning, evaluation, educational technology (including telecommunications); the publishing of guides to curriculum development and other technical assistance materials; the presentation of workshops and other professional development for educators and leaders; teacher and administrator certification; oversight of teacher preparation programs; data collection and analysis; and the administration of annual standardized assessments.

A [report on education-related legislation](#) enacted in the 2019 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly is available on the Department of Education’s website. This summary of public acts applicable to school districts includes information on new legislation and was emailed to all superintendents in the state.

### **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

In December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act as the nation’s school accountability law.

ESSA is grounded in the concept of equity and the promise of an excellent, well-rounded education for every student regardless of race, color, national origin, family income, citizenship, or disability status. To achieve this, the law gives states the flexibility they need to innovate, while simultaneously holding them accountable for student outcomes. The U.S. Department of Education approved Connecticut’s plan to meet the requirements of ESSA on August 15, 2017.

The plan incorporates a [Next Generation Accountability System](#) that uses a set of 12 indicators to show how well schools are preparing students for success in college, careers, and life. The system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates and instead provides a holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance, and incorporates student growth over time.

The plan also includes different levels of interventions and supports for district and school improvement based on the results of the accountability system. It includes elements designed to help recruit, prepare, induct, evaluate, support, and advance a strong and diverse educator workforce. It addresses the needs of English learners, and outlines supports for students in high-need schools to succeed and decrease the risk of dropping out. It addresses opportunities for academic enrichment, extended learning time, project-based learning, art, and music. It details supports for programs that promote safe and healthy schools, after-school programming, youth

development activities, and prevention programs.

### **Public Service**

The Department of Education serves educators, students, and the public through the work of the following offices: the Academic Office, the Performance Office, the Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness, the Talent Office, the Finance and Internal Operations Office, the Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs, the Turnaround Office, the Office of Internal Audit, the Office of Strategic Planning, and the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS).

### **Academic Office**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Academic Office provides guidance and leadership regarding legislated educational mandates to assist local education agencies (LEAs) in preparing students to succeed in college, career, and civic life. The Academic Office supports LEAs and schools in effectively implementing rigorous standards, curriculum, and instruction. The Academic Office engages all stakeholders for the stewardship of human, fiscal, and intellectual resources toward the mission of ensuring equity and excellence for all students.

The Academic Office provides technical assistance, professional learning, and resources to support LEAs and schools with various initiatives including:

- Implementing the Connecticut State Board of Education's Goal 2 of the five-year comprehensive plan, *Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students*;
- implementation and development of effective instruction aligned to Connecticut's rigorous academic standards and frameworks;
- building LEA internal capacity and structures pertaining to early literacy and numeracy success for all students;
- supporting expansion of access to humanities and STEM programming for all students; and
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) grant programs.

### **Performance Office**

#### *Overview*

The Performance Office improves student outcomes through the use of data. Key goals/initiatives of the office are:

1. [Data Collection](#): Collect accurate data in a highly efficient, secure, and timely manner.
2. [Student Assessments](#): Implement high-quality assessments that are aligned to standards, inclusive, efficient, reliable, and enable valid interpretations of achievement and growth.
3. Information Technology: Utilize the latest technologies to implement robust data systems and reliable infrastructure that reduces district burden and increases agency efficiencies.

4. [EdSight](#) - Data Integration/Reporting: Aggregate data and deliver accurate information in a secure, timely, and transparent manner.
5. Research and Analyses: Analyze and report data trends and insights to support informed decision-making and action by schools, districts, the CSDE, and other stakeholders.
6. [Accountability](#): Develop performance models and metrics, establish targets, and publish reports that enable a suite of differentiated supports and interventions for schools and districts.

The Performance Office provides a variety of reports and analyses with actionable data on Connecticut's districts and schools. [EdSight](#) is the one-stop portal for all data/reports published by the office. These reports include the Condition of Education; the Profile and Performance Reports; the Connecticut Report Cards; Next Generation Accountability reports; the special education Annual Performance Reports; data and research bulletins; and numerous interactive reports on topics like chronic absenteeism, discipline, educator demographics, graduation rates, and test results. In addition to the public portal, the EdSight Secure portal offers authorized users in districts and schools with secure access to actionable, student-level data; reports include the Early Indication Tool, Smarter Balanced Growth, LAS Links, etc. The office also manages data submissions to the federal government, responds to numerous custom data requests, and engages in research partnerships.

### **Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness**

The Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness (OSSOE) improves the educational success of each and every learner by providing comprehensive supports to students and families and ensures high-quality programs and services.

Key services of the office include improving student outcomes for each and every learner through effective delivery and implementation of family and student support programs and services.

The following structures within the OSSOE provide additional services:

#### *Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education*

- Promotes health, fitness and wellness, as well as supporting food and nutrition services and the provision of health and nursing services.
- Promotes positive school environments through physical, social-emotional, behavioral and mental health supports, and school climate development efforts.
- Supports school, family and community engagement and youth development programs.
- Supports the delivery of quality adult education programming.

#### *Bureau of Choice Programs, Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) and Sheff*

- Supports magnets, Open Choice—statewide and Interdistrict Cooperative Grant Programs.

- Provides educational choices designed to promote increased student achievement and reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation.
- Promotes regional school choice programs and activities.
- Manages the RSCO lottery in the Hartford regions.
- Ensures equity and access by meeting the requirements of the court settlement in *Sheff v. O'Neill*.

## **Talent Office**

The mission of the CSDE Talent Office is to develop and deploy talent management strategies to schools and districts statewide in order to ensure that each and every student in the state has access to great teachers and leaders to prepare for success in college, careers, and life. This is done in close collaboration with numerous education organizations including the state teachers' and administrators' unions, the Regional Education Service Center (RES-C) Alliance, State Education Resource Center (SERC), the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), and Connecticut's 24 Educator Preparation Programs (EPP).

The Talent Office develops strategies intended to attract and recruit individuals to the teaching profession, ensure strong preparation at Connecticut educator preparation programs, support early career induction through the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program, continuously improve practice through high-quality professional learning and effective evaluation and support systems and creating supportive school and district culture to reduce attrition and increase retention. Additionally, through the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development and Reform (CEEDER) and University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI) grant opportunities, the Talent Office continues to build stronger partnerships between EPPs and school districts.

Since 2016, with the development of the State Board of Education's five-year comprehensive plan, the Talent Office has amplified efforts to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce and address persistent shortage areas (e.g., math, science, comprehensive special education, bilingual etc.).

The following bureaus within the Talent Office implement the strategies outlined above:

### *Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification*

- Issue new and continuing certificates to nearly 30,000 educators annually.
- Provide customer service to individuals (current and prospective Connecticut educators) and all 24 of Connecticut's educator preparation providers, as well as representatives of all public school districts.
- Pursue avenues to modernize certification to better meet contemporary workforce needs (e.g., new certification endorsements such as Computer Science, STEM) given outdated regulations (1998).

- In alignment with these goals, the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification has made significant progress over the past two years to streamline certification processes, to the extent possible, given existing regulations (*Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permits and Authorizations*).
- Explore and operationalize changes to the current certification system to streamline internal processes to both enhance the customer experience, and address reduced staffing capacity.
- Coordinate all aspects of Connecticut's pre-service licensure assessment system (e.g., Praxis II, Foundations of Reading, Connecticut Administrator Test, ACTFL, edTPA).
- Collaborate with higher education and professional organizations to explore increasing pathways to certification in order to address the persistent shortage areas.

### *Bureau of Educator Effectiveness*

- Coordinate Connecticut's new and continuing program review and approval process for the 24 educator preparation programs, including Alternate Routes to Certification (ARCs).
- Implement the recommendations made by the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC), a broadly representative stakeholder group composed of several organizations, including the Board of Regents (BOR), CBE, CAS, CAPSS, American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut (AFT-CT), Connecticut Education Association (CEA), with the goal of transforming the way teachers and principals are prepared.
- Develop, validate, and in fall 2019, launch a new public-facing Educator Preparation Data Dashboard to provide real-time data about Connecticut Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) for the purposes of public transparency, program improvement, and accountability.
- Partner with the University of Connecticut (UConn), a recipient of a Wallace Foundation University Principal Preparation Program Initiative (UPPI) grant to support UConn's program improvement process, and share information and resources to support all Connecticut administrator preparation programs with a focus on equity-driven leadership.
- Facilitate and coordinate all aspects of the phased implementation of edTPA, a teacher candidate performance assessment that will be required of all pre-service teacher candidates during student teaching. Effective during the 2018-19 academic year, all candidates were required to complete the assessment; in 2019-20, a passing score will be required for successful program completion. Work with the State Board of Education to adopt the multi-state cut scores for edTPA.
- Provide oversight of the 12-member CSDE Review Committee, which considers the continuing approval status of all Connecticut EPPs, based on each provider's participation in the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) review process.
- Coordinate and advance the statewide implementation of Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system, and standards for professional learning.
- Oversee all aspects of statewide implementation of the TEAM program (training, allocation of funding, mentor training, etc.).

- Support districts in developing and implementing standards-based, high-quality systems for professional learning.
- Participate on the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards and the Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards.
- Participate on the Connecticut Paraprofessional Advisory Council to support the development of paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities. The council advises the Commissioner on a quarterly basis regarding the needs for the training of paraprofessionals and the effectiveness of the content and the delivery of existing training.
- Coordinate statewide recognition events as part of an effort to both recognize excellent educators and to elevate the image of the teaching profession as a recruitment strategy: Connecticut State Teacher of the Year process, Milken Educator Award, Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year.
- Coordinate quarterly Teacher of the Year Advisory Council meetings with various CSDE departments. The council consists of semifinalists for Connecticut Teacher of the Year and provides input and feedback to the CSDE and the Commissioner on a variety of Department initiatives.
- Develop and deploy strategies, to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce to more closely mirror the increasing diversity of Connecticut's student population.
- Develop and deploy strategies to address longstanding shortages in specific shortage areas (e.g., math, science, comprehensive special education, bilingual, world language, etc.).
- Assist with planning for and facilitating the CSDE Minority Policy Oversight Council.
- Develop and maintain a repository of promising practices (EdKnowledge) designed to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator pipeline.
- In collaboration with Teach.org and TV Access Now, with funding support from the Buck Foundation, developed and launched TeachConnecticut, a comprehensive recruitment campaign consisting of a website, social media, television, and radio advertisements, designed to elevate the image of the teaching profession more generally and specifically to encourage a teaching career in Connecticut. Connecticut was the first state to both partner and launch with Teach.org at the statewide level.
- Coordinate statewide efforts to provide pathways to teaching for veterans through a \$1.1 million grant awarded to the CSDE by the Department of Defense.

### **Finance and Internal Operations Office**

The Finance and Internal Operations Office coordinates the effective delivery of financial services to support the Department's strategic direction and compliance needs.

Key services provided by the Finance and Internal Operations Office include managing and aligning financial resources to support CSDE's organizational structure in the successful implementation of key strategic priorities and managing the annual calculation and disbursement of over \$3 billion to support state and local education initiatives, including education reform

initiatives, early childhood, adult education, general and special education, and choice programming.

Below are additional responsibilities of the Finance and Internal Operations Office:

- Budget process and implementation
- Asset management
- Purchasing, contract, and travel administration
- Accounting
- Cash management
- Operational services
- Federal and state grants
- Analysis of budget proposals and legislation for impact on CSDE grant related-functions
- Collection of local expenditure data for calculation and reporting purposes
- Prepayment grant system

### **Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs**

The Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs provides legal counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and Department offices, including supporting the legal director for the Connecticut Technical High Schools, on a wide range of issues pertaining to education and school operations. The division also provides guidance and assistance to local school districts, educational organizations, and other constituents regarding the interpretation of laws and regulations pertaining to education. In addition, the division manages certain statutory responsibilities of the Department, including but not limited to, teacher and administrator contract negotiations, monitoring of racial imbalance requirements, investigations and enforcement proceedings concerning revocation of educator certificates, school accommodations, Freedom of Information Act requests, and regional school district establishment and governance.

#### *Bureau of Investigations and Professional Practices*

The Bureau of Investigations and Professional Practices investigates educator misconduct, where such misconduct has the potential to result in certification action. During the 2018 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation that expanded the Department's available certification actions to include revocation, suspension, probation, and denial. When warranted, the bureau will initiate the process necessary to seek an appropriate certification action against an educator's certificate, authorization, or permit, which ultimately requires an administrative hearing before a hearing officer. Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-221d, this bureau collaborates closely with the Department of Children and Families, criminal justice authorities, and local school districts to ensure the safety of schoolchildren. Additionally, the bureau works with district administration and human resources staff to develop awareness regarding professional practices by discussing educator ethics and situations that could lead to disciplinary action including dismissal or certification action against an educator or teacher candidate.

## **Turnaround Office**

The Turnaround Office works to improve student outcomes in Connecticut's lowest-performing schools and districts through support, technical assistance, direct intervention, and the creation of high-quality new schools.

Key services provided by the Turnaround Office include investing in and transforming Connecticut's lowest-performing schools and districts through various programs, including the Commissioner's Network, Alliance and Opportunity Districts, Priority School Districts, charter schools, and Titles I, II, and III federal grants; implementation of effective English learner (EL) programming and supports, including the Connecticut Bilingual Education Grant; building capacity and infrastructure in the state's highest-needs districts; fostering collaboration across districts; expanding educational options by opening high-quality new schools; piloting innovative strategies, scaling promising practices, and serving as the catalyst for statewide reform.

Additional services provided by the Turnaround Office include:

### *School and District Support*

- Support district transformation through the state's Alliance District, Opportunity District, Priority School District, and Bilingual Education Grant programs.
- Support school turnaround through the Commissioner's Network and Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG).
- Provide ongoing support, technical assistance, and monitoring through differentiated and targeted fieldwork.
- Support districts on school climate, bullying, restorative practices, cultural competence, and childhood trauma through training and development, inquiry handling, and information dissemination.

### *Internal Operations and Accountability*

- Support effective implementation of the Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan, specifically Goal 4: Great Schools.
- Distribution, monitoring, and ongoing management of state grants and bonds, as well as federal Title I, II, III, and School Improvement Grant programs.
- Development and maintenance of the state's electronic consolidated eGrants Management System applications (eGMS), including district applications for Titles I, II, and III; Alliance District; Priority School District; and Title I Part A School Improvement Grants.
- Promote accountability and data-driven improvement.

### *Charter Schools*

- Provide public school choice options to students and families.
- Create and implement systems and processes for charter monitoring and accountability.

- Promote reduction of racial, ethnic, and economic isolation, and serve high-need student population groups.
- Support Priority School Districts or districts with a racial or ethnic minority enrollment of at least 75 percent.
- Support new schools in underserved geographic locations.

*ESSA Consolidated State Plan Implementation (including Titles I, II, and III)*

- Manage, provide resources for, and ensure effective implementation of federal programs under the state’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Plan, including the following federal grant programs:
  - Title I, Part A - Improving Basic Programs
  - Title I, Part A - School Improvement Grants (SIG)
  - Title I, Part D - Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
  - Title II, Part A - Supporting Effective Instruction
  - Title III - Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students

**Office of Internal Audit**

The mission of the Office of Internal Audit (OIA) is to assist the State Board of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) management in identifying, avoiding, and mitigating risks. In support of this mission, OIA reviews and analyzes all aspects of CSDE’s and the Office of Early Childhood’s (OEC) operations.

Key services provided by the Office of Internal Audit include:

- reviewing and evaluating the soundness, adequacy, and application of accounting, financial, and operating controls and procedures, and the cost effectiveness of such controls and procedures;
- determining the extent of compliance with established statutes, regulations, policies, plans and procedures;
- auditing accounts and financial transactions, including performing forensic analyses and;
- recommending improvement in the operations and the use of resources in the department.

**Office of Strategic Planning**

The mission of the CSDE Office of Strategic Planning is to oversee numerous projects within the CSDE, including Open Choice and Interdistrict Magnet School (Sheff and Non-Sheff regions) programs as it relates to legislative requirements, operations, operating budgets and grants. Office staff conducts in-depth data analysis and research for a variety of important CSDE projects. In addition, the Office of Strategic Planning is about to embark on projects aimed at maximizing postsecondary readiness and opportunities for Connecticut high school graduates.

As the policy and long-term planning branch of the agency, this office collaborates cross-divisionally and with outside parties to develop clear and consistent policies, procedures, and resources for agency, school, and district leadership.

Key services the Office of Strategic Planning provides include:

- overseeing the implementation of the Open Choice program statewide. The program allows urban students to attend public schools in nearby suburban towns and suburban and rural students to attend public schools in the Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven regions;
- overseeing the Interdistrict Cooperative Grants programs that satisfy the requirements of C.G.S. 10-74d in assisting in reducing racial and economic isolation and as a part of the remedy for the *Sheff v. O'Neill* stipulation;
- managing the per-pupil grants for the Open Choice and Interdistrict Magnet School Programs to maximize learning opportunities for students from different backgrounds centered on excellence and achievement;
- responding to inquiries from various parties including, state agencies, legislators, and superintendents, and answers media inquiries through the CSDE Communications Office;
- collaborating cross-divisionally and with outside parties to develop clear and consistent policies, procedures, and resources for agency, school and district leadership; and
- conducting in-depth data analysis and research for a variety of important CSDE projects.

### **Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)**

The Connecticut Technical High School System was renamed to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS). CTECS provides a unique and rigorous high school learning environment that: (1) ensures student academic success and trade/technology mastery instilling a zest for lifelong learning; (2) prepares students for post-secondary education, including apprenticeships, and immediate productive employment; and (3) responds to employers' and industries' current and emerging global workforce needs and expectations through business/school partnerships.

CTECS consists of 17 high schools, one technical education center and two post graduate schools for aviation maintenance technicians. CTECS is the state's largest high school system serving over 10,700 undergraduates and had over 2,400 adult-student registrations in postgraduate and apprenticeship programs throughout the 2018-19 school year.

CTECS students excelled at more than just academics and trade technologies. CTECS takes pride in giving back to local communities. Schools held food, clothing, toy and blood drives, and fundraising activities for cancer awareness and the Connecticut Police Working Dog Association. Students also used the skills learned in their career technologies: hairdressing students gave free haircuts; and culinary students prepared meals for soup kitchens and veterans. Grasso Tech biotech students completed three rain gardens at government buildings. Wilcox Tech senior Luke Johnston received the Shining Star Award from the United Way, which recognizes active members and volunteers.

## **Improvements/Achievements**

### **Academic Office**

#### *Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Careers*

Connecticut Statewide Career and Technical Education (CTE): On July 31, 2018, President Trump signed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act into law. This bill amends the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) and this amended act is now referred to as Perkins V. The CSDE opted to submit a transition plan to the United States Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education for the 2019–20 school year. The CSDE launched Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Careers, a career-ready initiative to incorporate career and technical education connected pathways of learning.

#### *Promoting the Arts and Civic Engagement*

The CSDE worked with various partners and state agencies throughout the 2018-19 year to promote the arts and civic engagement, including:

- releasing an interactive webinar series to assist LEAs in creating curricula that align to the Connecticut Arts Standards;
- co-sponsoring regional conversations with the Old State House to assist high school students and teachers in discussing important political and social issues;
- creating resources to assist LEAs in the inclusion of Holocaust and genocide education and awareness as part of the social studies curricula;
- creating lesson plans, information, and resources to assist LEAs in teaching Connecticut labor and working class history; and
- recognizing graduating high school students earning the Connecticut Certificate of Global Engagement.

#### *Climate Change/Environmental Education Resources*

The CSDE works in collaboration with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to compile resources that assists LEAs in developing instruction in the area of climate change instruction consistent with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

#### *Operationalizing Goal 2*

The Academic Office provided support, guidance, and training to assist LEAs with two identified, powerful strategies:

- **Increasing Early Literacy Success:** Through the leveraging of early literacy initiatives, K-3 administrators, special education teachers, teachers of English learners, and regular education teachers were provided specialized professional learning and supports to assist K-3 students in the understanding of early literacy standards, valid and reliable reading

assessments, and scientifically research-based reading instruction.

- Establishing High-quality Mathematics Curriculum and Instruction: The Academic Office provided technical assistance and professional learning to administrators and teachers on evidence-based practices, including an in-person professional learning series for school principals and coaches.

### *Bureau of Special Education*

#### *General Monitoring and Supervision*

- Assigned the top ranking of “Meets Requirements” for its 2018 annual determination based on the state’s performance on the 17 indicators monitored through the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) by the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Implemented phase 3, year 2 of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), Indicator 17 of the SPP/APR, including an in-district technical support system. SSIP’s focus is early literacy instruction (K-3) and increasing the reading performance of all third-grade students with disabilities statewide. Multitiered supports were provided to a cohort of districts based on data obtained from the 2017 statewide assessments and the district literacy evaluation tool.
  - In collaboration with the reading/literacy director, offered Special Education ReadConn Professional Development Series to districts. The series identifies critical early literacy skills and delivery of explicit instruction regardless of the reading approach or program and was designed specifically to support both K-3 special education teachers and K-3 general education teachers who serve students with disabilities.
- Designed and introduced a fiscal monitoring system that determined the overall risk level associated with any subgrantee (LEA) award use of IDEA Part B funds. Supports and resources were delivered to LEAs in a tiered model depending upon the determined risk status: universal, advanced, targeted, or intensive.
- Conducted a special education compliance file review for 56 districts in collaboration with the Performance Office to review practices related to the Statewide Alternative Assessment system and IEP documentation of student present levels of performance.
- Designed and updated an electronic directory of Approved Private Special Education Programs.

#### *Special Education Dispute Resolution*

- Trained and supervised new hearing officers and mediators to support the dispute resolution system that addressed 287 requests for mediation and 234 requests for due process hearings.
- Investigated 169 special education complaints.
- Contracted with 21 new surrogate parents to support over 1,400 students with disabilities in the care of the Department of Children and Families.
- Introduced a student member to the State Advisory Council for Special Education and under the leadership of a new chairperson updated by-laws, and instituted a new training/orientation process.

### *Communications and Resources*

- Redesigned LEA professional learning opportunities to align activities with the 17 indicators within the Special Education State Performance Plan.
- Developed a Youth Advisory Professional Development Series, including student forums, student leadership training, and advisory structures as part of the Student Voice Initiative.
- Provided LRP Special Education Connections subscription to all LEAs as a resource to support federal and state special education requirements.
- Created and disseminated guidelines and online resources regarding independent education evaluations at public expense and in-school observations.
- Revised restraint and seclusion guidelines and resources to reflect legislative updates.
- Collaborated with state agencies to develop Connecticut Student Transition Resource Website (STR) for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provided technical assistance and training related to the new Maintenance of Effort calculator to assist districts with “supplement not supplant” standards within the IDEA Part B grant.

### **Performance Office**

The mission of the Performance Office is to improve student outcomes through the use of data. The accomplishments of the office during 2018-19 under each of its six goals are listed below:

#### *Data Collection*

- Successfully collected accurate data about students, educators, districts/schools, and assessments in a timely manner as required by federal/state legislation and regulations.
- Implemented data freeze protocols with fidelity to facilitate timely reporting.
- Delivered professional development, streamlined data collection systems, added new data validations, eliminated/trimmed data collections where possible, and provided documentation/communication to support districts and reduce their burden.
- Studied the feasibility of implementing a statewide student information system in Connecticut and submitted a report to the Connecticut General Assembly.

#### *Student Assessments*

- Successfully implemented all state summative assessments in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and English language proficiency (ELP); delivered most assessments, including the ELP assessment, via computer.
- Successfully implemented new science standard and alternate assessments aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards.
- Expanded training and support to districts in the use of interim assessment blocks that are aligned to state standards and designed to inform classroom instruction.
- Conducted extensive monitoring/review of IEPs and Learner Characteristic Inventories to evaluate the appropriateness of the evidentiary basis for the assignment of alternate assessments.

- Provided preliminary assessment results to districts within a week after testing to help educators use the information for planning and professional development.
- Assembled and submitted extensive evidence for the federal peer review process for all state assessments (standard and alternate) in ELA and mathematics.

### *Information Technology*

- Supported ongoing maintenance and implementation of several data collection applications to support agency priorities (e.g., PSIS, special education, teacher-course-student, Directory Manager).
- Completed development and launch of the Education Finance System (EFS).
- Continued implementation of the Direct Certification application and expanded data matching with DSS to include Medicaid data.
- Successfully automated student rostering for statewide summative assessments (e.g., Smarter Balanced, LAS Links) with multiple online vendors.
- Designed, developed, and implemented a seat declaration application for the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) application as well as a new data collection application for noncertified staff.
- Systematized backup and disaster recovery protocols for all CSDE servers.
- Organized and managed the CSDE's virtualized environment to improve productivity and achieve cost efficiencies.
- Implemented iBOSS content filtering system.
- Migrated all end users to Windows 10 environment.
- Phased out the use of McAfee Safeboot encryption software for all laptops and replaced with Microsoft Bit-Locker.
- Enhanced teacher certification to new IVR system using AVAYA.

### *EdSight - Data Integration/Reporting:*

- Launched the Connecticut Report Cards—a new visual report that provides trend information on key metrics for all districts, schools, and the state as a whole.
- Updated data in the numerous interactive public reports available through EdSight (e.g., suspension rate, course enrollments by subject, graduation rates, educator demographics, primary disability, Smarter Balanced growth model, SAT).
- Fully implemented the Early Indication Tool for students in all grades; created an interactive, visual report within EdSight Secure that allows users to filter, sort, and/or disaggregate the data in so that they can identify students who need additional support to achieve academic milestones.
- Continued deployment of EdSight Secure—a visual data analytics portal that gives authorized users in districts and schools secure access to their own data (Smarter Balanced, SAT, LAS Links, EIT, etc.); expanded access to school-level users and added a new report called the Educators with Active Endorsements Report to facilitate talent management strategies.
- Shared historical, longitudinal student-data securely with the Department of Children and Families and with the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch on a regular basis.

### *Research and Analyses*

- Published numerous analyses and reports to support decision-making across the CSDE including the Condition of Education, special education performance reports, school discipline report, and restraints and seclusions.
- Partnered with other agencies through P20WIN to gather critical information about employment and postsecondary outcomes of Connecticut high school graduates.
- Conducted psychometric studies to validate the calibration and scoring processes of Connecticut's new science assessments.
- Used cohorts of longitudinal student data to develop the models, methods, and rationale for Connecticut's Early Indication Tool.
- Developed a new method to analyze Smarter Balanced summative assessment target-level data to provide more actionable information for schools and districts.

### *Accountability*

- Implemented the fourth year of the next-generation multifactor district/school accountability model that provides a holistic picture of performance.
- Developed and deployed new reports on EdSight for the accountability system.
- Published bright spots by identifying schools of distinction for high achievement as well as high growth, and nominating Blue Ribbon schools.
- Provided technical assistance, in-district training sessions, documentation, videos, and support to facilitate the use of accountability results for program improvement.
- Conducted NAEP assessments and analyzed NAEP results to identify areas for curriculum/instructional improvement.

## **Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness**

### *Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education*

- The Connecticut School Breakfast Program added 10 new schools totaling 900 participating schools and residential childcare institutions. The program served 18,796,978 breakfast meals, an increase of 822,131 breakfast meals from 2017-18.
- The 1,032 participating schools and residential childcare institutions in the Connecticut National School Lunch Program served 46,745,892 lunch meals, an increase of 900,552 lunch meals from 2017-18.
- The Connecticut At-Risk Supper Program provides nutritious evening meals to children through structured after-school programs that are located at sites where at least half of the children in the school attendance area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Meals are provided in conjunction with educational or enrichment activities after the regular school day ends, on weekends and holidays, and during other times of the year when school is in session. In the 2018-19 school year, Connecticut schools provided over 1.1 million meals at 156 sites to a daily average of 10,476 students.
- The Connecticut Summer Meals Programs served 1,677,703 meals to a daily average of 37,039 children at 641 sites statewide. Connecticut continues to be one of the top 10 performing states in meals served to children and teens compared with school year lunches served. Among the top performing states, Connecticut is third in the nation in the

provision of two meals per day at the same meal service site—breakfast and lunch.

- In summer 2018, through the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program (Summer EBT), the Connecticut State Department of Education and Department of Social Services (DSS) provided debit cards to purchase food valued at a total of \$351,037 to 7,479 children. Eligible households included those with children in school districts identified as rural, where a limited number of Summer Meals Program sites operate and transportation can be a barrier to access existing meal sites. Families received \$30 for each eligible child during the summer months to a maximum of \$60 in benefits.
- The federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows the service of school meals to all children at no cost in high poverty schools without collecting household income applications. The CEP can provide numerous benefits to schools, including substantial administrative savings from the elimination of household applications for free and reduced price meals, streamlined meal service operations, higher student participation in school lunch and breakfast and more opportunities for children to receive nutrition necessary to optimize academic achievement. During the 2018-19 school year, 37 school districts, inclusive of 308 schools, participated in the CEP. Because of the CEP, 150,383 students had the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch daily at no cost to their families.
- In September 2018, the CSDE issued federal Temporary Emergency Impact Aid Funding totaling \$10.6 million to 43 school districts to assist in supporting students displaced by natural disasters in 2017-18. A total of 2,051 students enrolled in Connecticut schools after being displaced from Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and areas of the United States by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.
- Initiated in 2016, the Commissioner’s Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education, reflects a balanced representation of parents/guardians, school district staff, community organizations and stakeholders and students, advises the Commissioner of Education on meaningful and effective school-family-community partnerships, the new Connecticut Report Card on school performance and student achievement, and strengthening career and technical education for the 21st century.
- In 2018, the CSDE launched the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative. The collaborative advises the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education on strategies for transforming school discipline to reduce the overall and disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline. The collaborative includes representatives from state agencies, the General Assembly, advocates, higher education, parent/family organizations, law firms that represent families and school districts, teachers’ unions and associations of boards of education and school superintendents.
- The Connecticut State Board of Education adopted the *Position Statement on Reducing Disproportionality in Suspensions and Expulsions, 2019 (Exclusionary Discipline)*. Additionally, over the past five years, Connecticut has made major strides in reducing exclusionary discipline. The total number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions has declined by nearly 22 percent. Incidents coded as school policy violations declined 32.8 percent over the past five years and now accounts for 48 percent of all incidents—down from 71 percent five years ago. Among young children in Grades PK through grade 2, in-school suspensions declined by 39 percent while out-of-school suspensions declined by over 75 percent.

- In September 2018, the Office of Student Supports, in collaboration with the Turnaround Office and Attendance Works, launched the Chronic Absence Peer Learning Network (PLN) for eight Opportunity Districts that identified reducing chronic absence as one of the district's priorities. The PLN delivered four core elements: district self-assessment analysis; four peer learning sessions; coaching calls with each district; and on-site technical assistance. As a result of the PLN, districts were able to: (1) build district capacity to reduce chronic absence; (2) strengthen district attendance team functioning; (3) implement effective early intervention and prevention strategies; and (4) begin to improve the effectiveness of school-based attendance teams.
- The Connecticut After-School Grant Program provides funding to schools to support high-quality after-school programs that offer educational enrichment and health and wellness activities that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of students in Grades K-12. In 2018-19, the CSDE awarded a total of \$4,626,281 to 30 school programs throughout the state, which provided consistent after-school opportunities to 5,190 students throughout the school year.
- The 21st Century Community Learning Centers provides funding to school and community partnerships to implement after-school programs that support academic assistance and enrichment in high-poverty schools. In the 2018-19 school year, the CSDE awarded \$9,563,948 in federal funding to 112 community learning centers that provided 3-5 days of after-school programming each week to 8,111 students.
- The Priority School District (PSD) Extended School Building Hour (ESH) grant, initiated in 1995, is an entitlement grant that provides funding to support after-school programs in high need schools. The ESH program targets specific students in need of additional supports and tailors those supports to fit the individual needs of the students. Services include academic support in specific subjects, enrichment instruction not available during the school day and physical activity and wellness programming. The CSDE awarded \$2,919,879 to 17 school districts that provided extended-day learning programs to 22,473 students.
- The School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) is a multiagency collaboration directed toward reducing negative youth contact with police and school-based arrests and increasing local educational agency (LEA) capacity to address psychological, emotional, developmental, and behavioral needs among students in collaborating schools. Outcomes for the 2018-19 school year include an increase in Mobile Crisis Calls by 62 percent. Court Referrals are projected to be down 35 percent, while a 26 percent reduction is projected for out-of-school suspensions.
- The CSDE Adult Education Unit has worked with the Department of Labor and the Department of Rehabilitative Services to complete the third year of implementing the goals of the Unified State Plan as mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The CSDE has enhanced and supported programs and services that are more comprehensive, cost-effective, and responsive to community needs by supplementing Connecticut's commitment of state and local adult education dollars with WIOA Title II dollars. Sixty organizations, including school districts, volunteer programs, community-based organizations, and other agencies provided adult education services in Connecticut by recruiting and retaining educationally and economically disadvantaged adults. By focusing on the needs of learners, families, communities and employers, adult education programs succeeded in: improving the skills of Connecticut's

learners; enabling thousands of residents to attain a secondary school diploma; helping to close the skills gap in the workplace; assisting non-English speakers to learn English; easing the transition to postsecondary education; preparing residents to attain U.S. citizenship; and helping families to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.

*Bureau of Choice Programs, RSCO, and Sheff*

- The bureau provides oversight of magnet schools and the Open Choice program statewide. These programs were developed to foster integration in quality educational settings. There are approximately 40,000 students enrolled in 88 magnet schools in the state. The Open Choice program allows urban students to attend public schools in nearby suburban towns and suburban students to attend public schools in the Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven regions. In 2018-19, 3,085 students participated in the Open Choice program, attending 253 schools outside of their home district.
- In 2017-18, in accordance with C.G.S. Section 10-233d(d)3, the OSSOE and the Alternative Schools Committee developed the *Standards for Educational Opportunities for Students Who Have Been Expelled*, which the State Board of Education approved in January 2018. The standards describe the circumstances when an alternative educational opportunity must be offered to students who have been expelled, student placement, the development of an individualized learning plan, transition planning, and guiding principles for such educational opportunities. In 2017-18 and again in 2018-19, CSDE staffers held five Community of Practice meetings for educators in alternative programs. The meetings focused on the guidelines and standards as well as reducing chronic absenteeism and improving family engagement.
- Under ESSA Title IV, Part A, a new federal grant opportunity was made available to states and LEAs in 2017-18. The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants are available to all LEAs that receive Title I funding. They are intended to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of states, LEAs and local communities to provide all students with a well-rounded education; improve school conditions for student learning; and improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. In 2018-19 Connecticut received approximately \$9,000,000 through this grant.
- In 2018-19, the CSDE was awarded a five-year grant to support student mental health through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) grant partners CSDE with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families to provide focused support to three school districts with the goals of: (1) increasing the awareness of mental health issues among school-aged youth; (2) providing training for school personnel and other adults who interact with school-aged youth to detect and respond to mental health issues; and (3) connecting students with mental health issues and their families to needed services. Middletown, Naugatuck and Windham Public Schools were selected as the participating districts. The state will receive \$1,800,000 for each of the five years of the grant. Ultimately, best practices related to student mental health will be shared with all school districts.

## Talent Office

- The Talent Office continues its commitment to increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator workforce and diminishing vacancies in persistent shortage areas. Since 2015-16, the percentage of educators of color in the Connecticut workforce has increased from 8.3% to 8.9%. The percentage of administrators of color has also increased, over that same period, from 12.24% to 13.5%. The growth in the number of educators of color in the workforce is encouraging. Efforts to engage broad stakeholder groups to achieve collective impact are ongoing.
- Issued 29,074 educator certificates and answered over 13,026 calls to the call center between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019.
- Completed numerous actions aligned to the six high-level principles for the transformation of educator preparation programs for both teachers and school leaders recommended by the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) and approved by the Connecticut State Board of Education, including development of a public facing educator preparation data system, a new teacher/employer survey, a new principal survey, successful phased implementation of a new administrator licensure assessment, edTPA, and the review and approval of new, innovative educator preparation programs.
- Continued to provide ongoing support to both traditional and alternate route educator preparation programs specific to persistent shortage areas and/or align with the CSDE/SBE goal to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce. During 2018-2019, the State Board of Education granted full approval to new educator preparation programs to prepare certified educators in shortage areas:
  - the University of Hartford (UHART): initial certification program in special education;
  - Southern Connecticut State University: integrated elementary/bilingual program at the graduate level;
  - Teach For America: bilingual education, cross endorsement with Elementary Education, alternate route to certification program;
  - Fairfield University: comprehensive special education, K-12, undergraduate level (initial certificate) program to create a 5-year integrated bachelor's/master's degree; and
  - Capitol Region Education Council (CREC): alternate route to certification (ARC) residency program leading to an endorsement in elementary education with a specific focus on recruiting and preparing candidates of color.
- Entered into a "Teacher Table" partnership with Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Coalition to Elevate Teaching (CET), and the College Football Playoff Foundation (CFPF) to investigate Connecticut's persistent shortage areas, particularly in the areas of special education and bilingual education. As a result of the partnership, the Rockefeller Institute of Government published *The State of Connecticut Teacher Workforce* report (public release fall 2019) and the Talent Office is partnering with University of Connecticut (UConn) to host two "Teacher Tables" during 2019-20, focused on addressing special education and bilingual education shortage areas).
- Continued to implement various actions to streamline certification processes and procedures designed to increase efficiency while maintaining high-quality service to

Connecticut educators. These efforts addressed legislative changes to testing exemptions, cross endorsement pathways and content major designations. Additionally, the bureau shifted the ED126 “successful service” form to our Connecticut Educator Certification System (CECS) to continue efforts to digitize the certification process. These efforts are intended to both improve service to Connecticut educators and address decreased staffing capacity in the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification.

- Developed and implemented a CSDE Equivalency Advisory Committee for 093 Superintendent Planned Program waivers. The process is portfolio based and aligned with the National Education Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards for District Leaders.
- Collaborated with the RESC Alliance leadership, district TEAM (Teacher Education and Mentoring Program) facilitators and TEAM stakeholder groups to support individual educators and local district staff adjust to the shift in TEAM allocations. Developed and implemented a mechanism to successfully distribute \$1,449,087 of TEAM allocations to LEAs to support the implementation of TEAM at the local level.
- Continued to provide technical assistance to support implementation of Connecticut’s educator evaluation and support system in all local and regional school districts and Connecticut Approved Private Special Education Facilities under which every Connecticut teacher and leader is evaluated by a standards-based system based on multiple measures of growth and development.
- As follow-up to a research and state policy scan conducted in 2016-17, developed *EdKnowledge*, an online repository of promising practices and models of success to attract, support, develop, and retain educators of color is complete, pending an announcement by the Governor’s office. Leadership and faculty at educator preparation programs and local school districts can access the repository to locate and submit potential ideas for replication through the CSDE website.
- The CSDE Talent Office was awarded a third round of funding by the Office of Special Education Programs to partner with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development and Reform Center in continuing efforts around reforming Connecticut EPPs. This continued funding will support the work of the faculty at four EPPs: Central and Western Connecticut State Universities; Fairfield University; and Sacred Heart University and five local school districts in aligning the training and support of Connecticut educators from pre-service to in-service, specifically focusing on using edTPA, Connecticut’s pre-service performance assessment, as a bridge between student teaching and TEAM.
- Continued the Talent Office partnership with the University of Connecticut on the University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI), through a grant funded by the Wallace Foundation, to transform principal preparation. In its second year, the focus of UPPI is to engage with a preparing institution, state and district partners to improve the effectiveness of principals, specific to raising the quality of urban schools. To meet the aims of UPPI, UConn formed a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of leaders from partner districts (Hartford, New Haven, Meriden), state-level administrators, and university faculty. NIC’s goal is to make significant changes to the (1) content and pedagogy of principal preparation instruction, (2) supervised clinical practice, and (3) measure graduates’ impact. Connecticut has eight administrator preparation programs all of which are invited to the table to contribute to the work of “transforming the Connecticut principalship” through several joint

convenings. The two-day convening focused on developing school leaders to support family, school, and community partnerships; equity frameworks for culturally responsive teaching and learning; and leadership through an equity lens.

- Continued the Talent Office partnership with the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) to provide career counseling and employment services to prospective educators. The DOL now has readily available and updated resources regarding pathways to a career as an educator and advertised TEACH Connecticut through a full-page ad in the DOL's annual *CT Career Paths* guidebook published spring 2019.
- Successfully developed and launched [TEACH Connecticut.org](https://teachconnecticut.org), a digital recruitment platform, aimed at attracting educators to the teaching profession. The platform has expanded to include a "Talk to a Teacher" option for aspiring educators to get first-hand information on a variety of pathways into the profession and certification options. New resources are available for aspiring educators to include preparation program application checklists, one to one coaching, best practice guides, and an opportunity to win a \$1,000 scholarship. Currently, 16 educator preparation programs and 68 school districts are committed partners in the program.
- Successfully implemented Year 1 of Connecticut's five-year, \$1.1 million dollar grant, from the Department of Defense creating a Connecticut Troops to Teachers program. [The Connecticut Troops to Teachers \(CTTT\) Program](#) facilitated communities of practice at Groton Public Schools and Consolidated School District of New Britain and the Heroes Teach Convening to attract and support service members and veterans to "serve again" as public school educators. Since the beginning of the Connecticut program in May 2018, 58 veterans have enrolled in the program and are at various points in pursuing their career in education. CTTT is interested in expanding district partnerships to support service members and veterans in the program through facilitating or hosting events, identifying teacher ambassadors, and connecting candidates with hiring representatives.
- Collaborated with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) and the Northeast Comprehensive Center (NCC), federally funded technical assistance providers, to design and deliver a [Creating a District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of Your Educator Workforce: A Guidebook for Hiring and Selection](#) to assist districts in meeting requirements outlined in Public Act 18-34. The guidebook, and companion resources, are intended to support districts in the development and implementation of a plan to attract, recruit, hire, and select educators of color. The Talent Office is currently working with GTL and NCC on part two of the guidebook that will focus on retaining and supporting educators of color through equity driven leadership.
- Facilitated two workshops with the State Student Advisory Council on Education to discuss the challenges related to increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce to more closely align with the increasing diversity of Connecticut's student population. At the request of the former chief talent officer, the Commissioner advised that, in 2018-19, the sole focus for the council would be on developing strategies to elevate and market the profession to attract a diverse educator workforce.
- Sponsored several shortage area educator networking events hosted by school districts in East Hartford, Norwalk, and Wallingford. The number of school districts at each event ranged from 18-27, with school district personnel available to meet with 121 certified educators in shortage areas.

- Developed an Active Endorsement search tool with EdSight Secure Reports in partnership with the CSDE Performance Office. This tool provides authorized district level personnel with easier access to the certification database to better support strategic recruitment and hiring efforts.

## **Finance and Internal Operations**

### *Bureau of Fiscal Services*

- Continued to improve the stability and operation of all agency fiscal processes to ensure all cost-saving measures are implemented effectively and result in overall budgetary savings.
- Processed over 45,000 vouchers for payment, including over 19,000 grant payments in excess of \$3.2 billion.
- Processed over 8,000 purchase orders.
- Processed and managed over 200 personal service contracts.
- Managed budgets for nearly \$3.5 billion of expenditures across over 100 state and federal accounts.
- Assisted in the development of the Department's current services budget request for education grant programs.
- Prepared various state and federal financial reports.
- In collaboration with the Bureau of Information Technology, completed the development and successful implementation of the new Education Financial System.
- Performed over 40 state and federal education grant calculations.
- Processed over 2,500 individual grant budgets for approximately 500 subrecipients.

### **Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs**

- Served as general counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner and deputy commissioner, and the Department in general. This includes responding to all requests for advice and information about interpretation of statutes and regulations and advising about the duties and responsibilities of Department staff.
- Responded to inquiries from the public, including parents and school districts, about their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- Acted as liaison to the Office of the Attorney General with regard to pending litigation, including *Sheff v. O'Neill* (racial and economic isolation case), and supported the Attorney General's office in successfully defending the appeal of *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding, Inc. v. Rell* (equitable education funding litigation). Advised the State Board of Education concerning litigation developments and coordinated all litigation efforts on behalf of the Department, including, but not limited to, all discovery and monitoring efforts.
- Collaborated on all matters related to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* litigation and activities managed by the Regional School Choice Office and Sheff Office within the State Department of Education. Served as the Department representative and advisor during Sheff negotiations and court proceedings.
- Served as the attorney general designee in employment matters, including actions before the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, in arbitration proceedings, and in federal and state court proceedings.

Drafted responsive pleadings and negotiated settlement agreements. Advised human resources, affirmative action and Department personnel on employment and labor-related issues.

- Administered statutorily required functions as well as contract review and internally required functions such as forms review.
- Served as support to legislative liaison to the General Assembly, including assisting the liaison with legislative proposals, tracking pending legislation, and ensuring that the interests of the Department and State Board of Education are coordinated with the executive branch and properly communicated to the legislative branch. Provided technical assistance to the Education Committee and others regarding legislative proposals and assisted legislators and the liaison in responding to constituents on education issues.
- Advised bureaus within the Department on the promulgation of regulations and implements the regulation-making process under the Connecticut Uniform Administrative Procedures Act.
- Investigated requests to revoke, suspend, or place on probation the certification and/or permits of Connecticut teachers, administrators, and coaches and managed the revocation/denial process through hearing and/or action by the State Board of Education.
- Represented the Department and Commissioner in administrative actions including declaratory rulings and actions under Section 10-4b of the Conn. Gen. Statutes.
- Developed guidance on critical civil rights issues affecting students in Connecticut, including in the areas of immigration, enrollment, and the rights of transgender students.
- Consulted with school districts concerning the statutory process of forming or modifying a regional school district.
- Worked with Department staff and school districts to implement State Board of Education Standards for Educational Opportunities for Expelled Students.
- Represented the State of Connecticut on the Interstate Compact for Educational Opportunities for Military Children and manage the State's activities pursuant to the Compact, codified at Section 10-15f of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- Advised the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) regarding admissions and employment-related policies and acted as a liaison to CTECS with federal agencies on matters related to admissions. Facilitated the transition of A.I. Prince Technical High School, Howell Cheney Technical High School, and E.C. Goodwin Technical High School to an online application and placement process through the Regional School Choice Office.

## **Turnaround Office**

The CSDE Turnaround Office oversees the work of Connecticut's 33 Alliance Districts as well as the Commissioner's Network Schools.

### *Alliance Districts*

The Alliance District program is a unique and targeted investment in Connecticut's 33 lowest-performing districts. C.G.S. Section 10-262u establishes a process for identifying Alliance Districts and allocating increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to support district strategies to dramatically increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps by pursuing

bold and innovative reforms. Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 262u, each Alliance District's receipt of its designated ECS funding is conditioned upon district submission and the Commissioner of Education's approval of a plan, district progress and performance relative to that plan, and subsequent annual amendments, in the context of the district's overall strategy to improve academic achievement. The CSDE reviews district plans annually and approves plans aligned to the goals of the program. Annual plan approval is predicated on district implementation and performance during the prior year.

The Alliance Districts consist of the following: Ansonia, Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, East Windsor, Groton, Hamden, Hartford, Killingly, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Thompson, Torrington, Vernon, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, Windham, Windsor, and Windsor Locks.

### *Opportunity Districts*

Under Connecticut's ESSA Consolidated State Plan, the 10 highest-need Alliance Districts were designated in 2017 as Opportunity Districts that would receive a significantly greater system of supports. Under the Opportunity District program, each district defines its three highest strategic need areas. A district-specific, cross-divisional team composed of appropriate members from the Turnaround, Academic, Student Supports and Climate, Special Education, Talent, and Early Childhood offices has been assigned to collaborate and work closely with each district to provide an even higher level of resources, targeted and differentiated evidence-based support, district capacity building, and oversight to advance those priorities. In-person monitoring meetings, including district leadership and the cross-divisional team, are also conducted three times per year.

Opportunity Districts include Bridgeport, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, and Waterbury.

### *Commissioner's Network*

The Commissioner's Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education to dramatically improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. In 2018-19, 17 schools were included in the network. The network offers resources and authorities to empower teachers and school leaders to implement research-based strategies in schools selected by the Commissioner of Education. Schools are selected and accepted into the network for a minimum of three years. The Connecticut State Board of Education may allow schools to continue in the network for an additional year, not to exceed two additional years. Network schools remain part of their local school districts, but the districts and the CSDE secure school-level flexibility and autonomy for the schools in exchange for heightened accountability. The Commissioner's Network included the following schools in 2018-19:

#### Cohort III: joined the network in fall 2014

Luiz Munoz Marin School, Bridgeport  
Lincoln-Bassett Community School, New Haven  
O'Brien STEM Academy, East Hartford  
Uncas School, Norwich

Cohort IV: joined the network in fall 2015  
East Hartford Middle School, East Hartford

Cohort V: joined the network in fall 2016  
Batcheller Early Education Center, Winchester  
Clinton Avenue School, New Haven  
Columbus School, Bridgeport  
Pearson School, Winchester

Cohort VI: joined the network in fall 2017  
New Britain High School, New Britain

Cohort VII: joined the network in fall 2018  
Wexler-Grant School, New Haven  
Windham High School, Windham

A list of [frequently asked questions](#) about the Commissioner's Network is available on the CSDE website.

#### *Priority School Districts and Summer School*

Under C.G.S. Section 10-266q, the emphasis remains on improving the quality of education available and focuses on funding any of the following initiatives: (1) the creation or expansion of programs or activities related to dropout prevention; (2) alternative and transitional programs for students having difficulty succeeding in traditional educational programs; (3) academic enrichment, tutorial and recreation programs or activities in school buildings during non-school hours and during the summer; (4) development or expansion of extended-day kindergarten programs; (5) development or expansion of early reading intervention programs, including summer and after-school programs; (6) enhancement of the use of technology to support instruction or improve parent and teacher communication; (7) initiatives to strengthen parent involvement in the education of children, and parent and other community involvement in school and school district programs, activities, and educational policies, which may be in accordance with the provisions of section 10-4g; or (8) for purposes of obtaining accreditation for elementary and middle schools from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Specific funding for Summer School is also a specific component of Priority School District funding.

The Priority School Districts for the 2018-19 school year were Ansonia, Bridgeport, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Waterbury, and Windham. Putnam was officially dropped as a Priority School District in 2015-16 but received funding under its three-year phase-out.

#### *Charter Schools*

Connecticut has both state and local charter schools that represent innovative school models utilizing diverse, research-based educational methods. A local charter school is a new school or

part of a public school that is converted into a charter school approved by the local board of education and the SBE. As independent local education agencies, charter schools are granted significant autonomy in exchange for strict accountability and high expectations for school performance. The CSDE's charter school performance framework holds charter schools accountable for impact and results in four key areas: school performance; stewardship, governance, and management; student population; and legal compliance. The 2018-19 charter school network included 23 schools statewide, located in 11 host districts, serving approximately 10,000 students.

State charter schools in 2018-19 included:

- Bridgeport: Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, The Bridge Academy, Capital Preparatory Harbor School, Great Oaks, New Beginnings Family Academy, Park City Prep Charter School
- Hartford: Achievement First Hartford Academy, Jumoke Academy Charter School
- Manchester: Odyssey Community School
- New Haven: Amistad Academy, Booker T. Washington, Common Ground High School, Elm City College Preparatory School, Elm City Montessori (local charter), Highville Charter School
- New London: Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)
- Norwalk: Side by Side Charter School
- Norwich: Integrated Day Charter School
- Stamford: Stamford Academy, Stamford Charter School for Excellence, Trailblazers Academy
- Waterbury: Brass City Charter School
- Winsted: Explorations Charter School

#### *Title I Part A School Improvement Grants*

The Turnaround Office manages and distributes the state's allocation of Title I Part A School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds, providing technical support to nine SIG schools, which have received allocations for comprehensive support under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2018-19, these schools included:

- Bridgeport: Roosevelt School
- Brookfield: Brookfield High School
- Meriden: John Barry Elementary School
- New Haven: Troup School, James Hillhouse High School, and Truman School
- New London: Jennings School
- Charter schools: Explorations Charter School, Great Oaks Charter School

In 2018-19, the Turnaround Office also managed and monitored ESSA-SIG awards to 47 schools for targeted support under ESSA.

Additional improvements and achievements of the Turnaround Office included the following:

- Alliance Districts participated in two symposiums. The first provided an overview of the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school and introduced a framework and process for adopting a universal trauma-sensitive approach across schools and districts. The second provided strategies for districts and schools to work together to develop and implement their vision of the graduate for preschool-grade 12.
- Leadership teams from Commissioner's Network, SIG, and charter schools participated in professional learning sessions (NetStat) three times a year to share best practices, network, and problem solve with colleagues from other schools. Sessions focused on areas of school improvement, including, supporting English learners, instructional coaching, linking family engagement to school improvement goals, scheduling remediation and enrichment, and creating and maintaining a positive school climate and culture.
- 25 Alliance Districts completed basic school climate and/or restorative practices training and professional development.
- Provide formal monitoring sessions for Alliance Districts three times during the year, in addition to ongoing support.
- Provide technical assistance to Commissioner's Network Schools on a biweekly basis.
- Published evidence-based practice guides as a resource to support implementation of the state's ESSA Consolidated Plan.
- Distributed \$4.6 million in state bond funding for school improvements related to student learning.

## **Office of Internal Audit**

Key accomplishments include the following:

- Conducted a review of a board of education's (BOE)'s and city's budgets and financial records to determine if the city transferred operating revenues in accordance with the established BOE appropriation for FY2017-18 and FY2018-19. In addition, OIA's review included how the city and BOE reported and transferred BOE grant funds including the CSDE's Alliance District grant. OIA determined that the city transferred operating funds to the BOE in accordance with the appropriations established for FY2017-18 and FY2018-19. In addition, the city transferred grant funds, including the CSDE Alliance District grant, to the BOE during FY2017-18. OIA noted that the city's budget overestimated CSDE grant revenues in the 2017-18 fiscal year for the Education Cost Sharing grant and the CSDE Alliance District grant. The overestimate of grant revenues caused a shortfall in city revenues for FY2017-18 but did not affect the BOE's operating budget/expenditures nor their grant related budget/expenditures for FY2017-18. Corrective action has been taken by the city. OIA also recommended that the BOE set up a bank account specifically for grant funds so that operating funds and grant funds can be accounted for separately.
- The State Board of Education filed a complaint pursuant to Section 10-4b of the Connecticut General Statutes against a board of education and city. OIA conducted a review of the BOE's and city's budget and financial records to determine if the BOE failed to implement the educational interests of the state and if the city failed to meet its obligation to fund the BOE by failing to meet the minimum budget requirement (MBR)

for FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18 and whether there was reason to believe that the BOE and the city would be in compliance for the current fiscal year 2018-19. The OIA determined that the city met its obligation to fund the BOE for fiscal year 2016-17 and fiscal year 2017-18 and complied with the MBR. The MBR for fiscal year 2018-19 could not be determined until a legal opinion was rendered.

- Provided program management with financial analysis, audit services, and recommendations for the charter school and magnet school programs. These services included participating at five site visits for charter renewals and evaluating the financial and management controls related to fiscal operations and recommending improvements.
- Conducted a compliance review with state laws and CSDE policies and procedures related to the administration of the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program at four charter schools. Based on review of documentation provided and inquiries with charter school staff, OIA identified findings related to beginning teacher registration, the assignment of mentors, mentor teacher training requirements, reporting of mentor hours, district administration requirements, and mentor stipend payments. Additionally, OIA reported stipend payments totaling \$69,250, which were determined to be unallowable. A corrective action plan was submitted by the charter schools and a refund for the unallowable stipend payments was received by CSDE.
- Conducted a review of a State charter school's public school information system (PSIS) data submission for October 2017 to verify student enrollment numbers. Based on review of documentation provided, determined that the district provided documentation for all the students reported in the October 2017 PSIS data collection. Confirmed that students enrolled in the charter's Virtual Academy were not included in the CSDE's calculation of the State Charter School grant. OIA also recommended revisions to the resident town for eight students.
- Conducted a compliance review of various business office functions performed at a Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) high school, including general fund revenues, student trustee account operations, automotive production, and payroll and attendance to evaluate compliance with CSDE and CTECS policies and procedures. OIA identified instances of noncompliance with established policies and procedures associated with general fund deposits, student trustee account operations, and compliance with CTECS gift and donations policies and procedures. In addition, we recommended improvements regarding the internal control structure of the school's business office.
- Ascertained the extent to which assets were accounted for and safeguarded from losses by monitoring reports of irregularities involving funds or equipment at various schools. OIA made referrals to appropriate state agencies, school administration, and CSDE management.
- Coordinated work with external certified public accountant (CPA) firms and the Auditors of Public Accounts (APA) to provide assurance to the Board, departmental managers, and state and federal regulators that resources are being used efficiently, effectively and in compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, policies and procedures.
- Provided audit services for the OEC including preparation of the compliance supplement for OEC grants and monitoring of federal and state single audits of OEC's grantees.
- Advised grantees receiving federal awards of their responsibilities to have audits performed in accordance with Uniform Grant Guidance requirements, reviewed audit

reports for compliance with Uniform Grant Guidance provisions and required grantees to provide corrective action plans to ensure resolution of audit findings that may include questioned costs. OIA worked with appropriate program management to determine whether or not questioned costs were allowable and if necessary, notified the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS) of the need to recover funds.

- Worked with OPM on issues identified in audits performed by CPA firms of grantees receiving State financial assistance from the CSDE. This activity included addressing questioned costs and compliance or internal control findings. In addition, OIA developed audit compliance supplements for the grants administered by CSDE to be included in the State Single Audit Compliance Supplement for use by CPA firms.

### **Office of Strategic Planning**

- Developed a series of policies and communications for school leaders and program operators so that education statutes and departmental policies are provided in a clear, concise manner.
- Released communications that involve other offices within the CSDE as well as other state agencies and key stakeholders;
- The Open Choice programs statewide served 3,085 students at 252 schools in 47 school districts at a cost of \$16,435,000 in enrollment tuition to those schools. The transportation cost for those students was \$17,050,610.
- The Interdistrict Cooperative Grant programs served 6,790 students in 18 programs statewide and \$1,537,500 in grants were issued to the programs.

### **Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)**

CTECS has continued its mission of contributing to Connecticut's economic vitality and economic self-sufficiency by bolstering the size and quality of Connecticut's skilled workforce. In response to current and emerging employer and industry workforce needs, the CTECS prepares students for both postsecondary education and licensed apprenticeships or immediate productive employment. For the 2018-19 school year, the CTECS served a ninth through 12th grade population that was 44% white and 56% minority, 40% female and 60% male. Out of the 169 Connecticut resident towns, 164 were represented within the CTECS student body.

Improvements toward the integration of academic and career technology education more fully prepare students for both career and college transition. Students participate in college career pathways programs, earning college credit while attending tech schools. There were 860 students who participated in work based learning programs. The district embraces blended learning and the use of technology with Google Classrooms and will deploy over 3,000 Chromebooks to freshman for class and home use.

CTECS students were among the best in the nation and state. Three students from the district won bronze medals at the SkillsUSA Nationals competition: Donald Ducas (Norwich Tech) in Graphic Communications, Levi Moon (Norwich Tech) in plumbing and Ian Mannings (Vinal Tech) in CNC Milling. An additional 20 students placed in the top 10 and 13 students placed between 12th and 18th place in competitions.

Bullard Havens Tech was named the 2018 School of the Year by WIX Filters and Tomorrow's Tech magazine for excellence in its automotive technology programs. Prince Tech bio-science seniors, Lixsweth Garcia, Kendra Rodriguez, Jessica Rosario, Ashleigh Singh and Danasia Smith, were awarded First Prize in the Connecticut GIS Day poster contest competing against GIS professionals from UCONN, environmental engineering firms, and the Department of Public Health. Goodwin Tech earned the College Board's AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award for attaining female student representation in AP Computer Science Principles for 2018. Female students from O'Brien Tech qualified for the National Championship for Girls Go CyberStart 2019. Wolcott Tech Mechanical Design and Engineering sophomores won first place in Engineering in the in the Skills21 Advanced Manufacturing Competition. Kaynor Tech junior Joenlis Vale-Moran received Bay Path University's Presidential Book Award and four-year merit scholarship.

### **Information Reported as Required by State Statute**

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of affirmative action/equal opportunity employment for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of age, ancestry, color, criminal record (in state employment and licensing), gender identity or expression, genetic information, intellectual disability, learning disability, marital status, mental disability (past or present), national origin, physical disability (including blindness), race, religious creed, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, sex (pregnancy or sexual harassment), sexual orientation, veteran status or workplace hazards to reproductive systems, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes.

The Affirmative Action Office, under the direction of the Commissioner, is responsible for ensuring the agency's compliance with a wide variety of federal and state laws and department policies relative to affirmative action and equal opportunity employment. This includes investigating discrimination complaints, as well as determining and documenting reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

During this reporting period, the Department hired 142 employees: 52 white males, 60 white females, 5 black males, 10 black females, 6 Hispanic males, 8 Hispanic females, 0 AAIANHNPI (Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian Native, or Pacific Islander) males, and 1 AAIANHNPI female. Of the 142 hires, 66 individuals were goal candidates: 11 white males, 42 white females, 1 black male, 4 black females, 2 Hispanic males, 5 Hispanic females, 0 AAIANHNPI males, and 1 AAIANHNPI female.

**ORGANIZATION CHART FOR THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

