

# NEWS

## Connecticut Department of Education



Dr. Mark K. McQuillan  
Commissioner

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## State Department of Education Forges New Partnership with Windham

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Windham Public Schools have begun a new partnership to improve learning opportunities for students in the district under the state's new accountability system.

"Over the years, the state has intervened in several school districts, including Hartford, Bridgeport, West Haven and others as part of a state financial intervention often referred to as a state takeover, said Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan. "This new involvement with Windham is not structured like those models. Under this arrangement, the local board and its administration maintain full authority and work with state teams to address issues identified for improvement."

Through legislation adopted last year, the commissioner and state board of education were given new authority and responsibility to work in concert with 12 local districts in partnerships to improve student achievement.

The SDE began working with the Windham Public Schools this fall in collaboration with Cambridge Education to conduct the district and school instructional assessments.

After reviewing Cambridge's findings and meeting with the Windham Board of Education in February, the Department learned a month later about the pending retirements of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Grants in June. With this much turnover coming to Windham, the Department determined that it would be wise to develop a different focus in their partnership for assisting the district in this moment of rapid change. The partnership, approved by the Windham Board of Education on March 27, 2008 calls for:

- The Commissioner to meet with the Superintendent, the Chair of the Board of Education and the full Board of Education and offer assistance from the CSDE to assist in identifying an Interim Superintendent to serve for up to two years.
- A review of potential candidates by the CSDE, interviews of four candidates at CSDE, and subsequent interviews of two candidates by the Windham Board of Education. With these steps now complete, Dr. Diane Summa will be filling in as Acting Superintendent during the brief time between Superintendent Perzanoski's departure and the Interim Superintendent's appointment.
- In addition to the assistance with appointing the Interim Superintendent, the CSDE will contract with Dr. David Calchera, former Executive Director of EASTCONN and current

Interim Executive Director of Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents to serve as an external advisor to the district. Dr Calchera will be specifically assigned to work with the Windham Board of Education, the Windham Federation of Teachers, the local universities and the community at large.

- Dr. Michael Wasta, an external consultant to the CSDE, to be assigned to work with the Windham administrative team. He will expand his responsibilities to work in an advisory capacity to the Interim Superintendent. Heather Levitt Doucette, Warren Logee, and Tony Gasper, consultants from the CSDE will also serve as part of the monitoring and technical assistance team working in Windham.

“The Department would like to emphasize that this new arrangement is a genuine partnership,” said Commissioner McQuillan. “The challenges that Windham faces are similar to the challenges faced by many urban districts in Connecticut and across the country. The staff and consultants from the CSDE feel the same sense of urgency and commitment to support the staff in Windham that the staff in Windham has to support their students. We are confident that with our collective efforts and commitment, the students in the Windham Public Schools will continue to learn and grow to their full potential.”