



For Immediate Release:

Thursday, August 9, 2012

Contact: Jim Polites 860.713.6525

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES FOUR COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK TURNAROUND PLANS

Union, charter led turnarounds among models to be implemented

The Connecticut State Board of Education approved Commissioner's Network turnaround plans submitted by the school district offices of Bridgeport's Curiale School, Hartford's Core Knowledge Academy at Milner School, New Haven's High School in the Community, and Norwich's Stanton School at a special meeting held Thursday.

The approvals follow an intensive, iterative planning process that began in June, when each of the four districts voluntarily expressed interest in having these schools join the Commissioner's Network for the 2012-2013 school year.

The Commissioner's Network provides intensive supports and interventions on behalf of underserved students in the state's most chronically underperforming schools. Today's four approved schools will be the first to enter the Network.

"For too long, we failed to bring about meaningful reform in our struggling public schools, especially those in the lowest performing districts," said Governor Malloy. "Thanks to the comprehensive education reform bill that we passed and I signed earlier this year, those days are over.

"In just this first year, we have both a union-led and a charter-led turnaround plan," continued Governor Malloy. "This diversity in these approaches proves that we can take different roads to reform, but ultimately reach the same destination. And the beneficiaries of this effort are our more important resource - our children. I want to thank everyone from Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Norwich who worked so hard on putting these plans together, and the State Board of Education for their unanimous approval."

The Commissioner's Network is a centerpiece of the education reform legislation proposed by Governor Dannel P. Malloy, passed with revisions by the Connecticut General Assembly, and

signed into law by the Governor in June. Public Act 12-116, *An Act Concerning Education Reform*, authorizes intensive interventions in 25 of Connecticut's lowest performing schools over the next three years. In addition to initiating turnarounds in these schools, the Commissioner's Network is designed to serve as a vehicle for innovative initiatives, a platform for sharing effective practices, and a model for other schools and districts throughout the state.

"I applaud each of the districts for their willingness to take on the immediate, transformative strategies needed to turn around student performance in these first four Commissioner's Network schools," said Allan Taylor, Chairman of the State Board of Education. "Today's Board vote was an endorsement of the strength and vision of these plans, and of the collaborative process and partnerships that led to them."

"For years, despite the best efforts of many dedicated professionals, these four schools have struggled in their primary mission: producing gains in student achievement," said Commissioner Stefan Pryor. "Today, the schools' leaders, teachers, parents and other stakeholders have embraced change. They have worked with the state to produce turnaround plans with the potential to drive improvements in leadership and instruction, as well as to create meaningful gains in student learning. The students of Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Norwich will benefit from these teams' hard work, for which I am grateful."

Curiale, Milner, and Stanton Schools (among elementary/middle schools) and High School in the Community (among high schools) are all in the bottom 10% and have been deemed a high-priority, low-performing Turnaround, Focus, or Review school under Connecticut's new system of school classification and accountability. Each of the four schools has previously been designated as "in need of improvement" under No Child Left Behind for four or more years, and each has more than 75% of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Last month, instructional and operational audits were conducted to assist districts with Commissioner's Network planning. Following an iterative process, districts submitted turnaround plans documenting transformative proposed action items that would lead to greater student achievement in the following turnaround areas: family and community connections, school climate and environment, leadership, teaching and support staff, use of learning time, curriculum and instruction, and use of data to drive decision-making.

Development of each turnaround plan was directed by a local turnaround committee, with representation from school district administration, parents, and teachers, as well as a designee of the state's Education Commissioner.

Bridgeport's Curiale School plans to extend instructional time by 300 hours, lengthening the school day by 88 minutes and the school year by five days. In partnership with the Bridgeport Education Association, highly rated and dedicated teachers will remain or be recruited to Curiale.

Hartford's Milner School will partner with Jumoke, a successful charter organization, to bring Jumoke's community-based schooling model to Milner. To increase instructional time, Milner

will extend the school year by 25 days and hold 12 Saturday Academies targeting struggling students.

New Haven's High School in the Community's (HSC), which has been teacher-led since the 1960's, will be operated in partnership with the New Haven Federation of Teachers. HSC will move from a seat time system of learning to competency based requirements, where students will progress through high school by demonstrating mastery of education skills.

Stanton School in Norwich will increase parent outreach efforts by opening a Greenville satellite office and launching a summer language immersion program. Stanton will add 123 instructional hours to the 2012-2013 school year, growing over time; and as part of their ongoing talent strategy, the school will evaluate teaching candidates based on skills that will advance Stanton's turnaround model.

To implement their comprehensive set of turnaround strategies, each school will be eligible to receive a portion of the \$7.5 million approved as part of Public Act 12-116 this year for the Commissioner's Network. Schools will participate in the Commissioner's Network for a minimum of three years, which may be extended based on the status of turnaround efforts.

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