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**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO BE PROPOSED:**

June 6, 2012

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education adopts guidelines for Alliance Districts funding in accordance with Public Act 12-116.

Approved by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_ this sixth day of June, Two Thousand Twelve.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stefan Pryor, Secretary



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**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Stefan Pryor, Commissioner  
**DATE:** June 6, 2012  
**SUBJECT:** Guidelines for Alliance Districts

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*Executive Summary*

**Background**

Public Act 12-116 establishes a process for identifying thirty Alliance Districts – the districts with the lowest district performance index scores statewide – and allocates to these districts \$39.5 million in increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding for the upcoming fiscal year. The Alliance District program is intended to help districts raise student performance and assist in closing the achievement gap. Each district's receipt of its designated funding allocation is conditioned upon district submission, and State Department of Education (SDE) approval, of an application that includes a plan for the expenditure of this new increment of conditional funds in the context of the district's overall strategy to improve academic achievement. The proposed guidelines, if approved, will define the requirements for district receipt of conditional funding and the process for SDE approval of district plans. The Alliance Districts are listed below:

- Ansonia
- Bloomfield
- Bridgeport
- Bristol
- Danbury
- Derby
- East Hartford
- East Haven
- East Windsor
- Hamden
- Hartford
- Killingly
- Manchester
- Meriden

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- Middletown
- Naugatuck
- New Britain
- New Haven
- New London
- Norwalk
- Norwich
- Putnam
- Stamford
- Vernon
- Waterbury
- West Haven
- Winchester
- Windham
- Windsor
- Windsor Locks

**Follow-up Activities**

Upon SBE approval of Alliance District guidelines, the SDE will develop an application for district plans and hold an information session with Alliance District superintendents to explain the requirements for receiving funding and the process for approval.

### **Guidelines for Alliance Districts**

In accordance with Public Act 12-116, the Connecticut State Board of Education hereby adopts the guidelines below to govern the implementation of Alliance District funding by the Commissioner and State Department of Education (“SDE” or “the Department”).

#### **A. Eligibility**

- The Department shall designate the thirty lowest-ranked public school districts on the statewide District Performance Index as Alliance Districts.
- This designation will take effect for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and will be active for a five-year period. On or before June 30, 2016, the Department of Education shall determine whether there are any additional Alliance Districts.

#### **B. Funding**

- Funding for this initiative will be disbursed by the Department directly to school districts and not to municipalities.
- Any balance remaining for each local or regional board of education at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward for the next fiscal year.
- Districts that receive funding through the Alliance District program shall be required to submit an annual expenditure report to the Commissioner.
- In accordance with statute, districts that fail to expend funds in accordance with an approved application, as determined by the Department, may be required to repay such funds, or may have such funding reduced in a subsequent fiscal year.

#### **C. Timeline**

- For districts designated as Alliance Districts for the 2012-2013 school year, the following timeline is proposed (subject to change as deemed necessary by the Commissioner).
- No later than:
  - **May 25, 2012:** Department notifies districts of their designation as Alliance Districts
  - **June 11, 2012:** SDE holds an informational session for Alliance District superintendents and staff; applications are distributed
  - **August 15, 2012:** Deadline for submission of Alliance District funding application
  - **August 31, 2012:** Goal for approval of Alliance District funding application, subject to an iterative process (may conclude sooner, or may require further extension)

#### **D. Alliance District Plans**

- Alliance District Plans must propose reform activity over the entire five-year period of the Alliance District designation.

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- Alliance District Plans will require review and approval by the Department on an annual basis.
- Districts must include specific, multi-year objectives and performance targets in their Alliance District Plans. Wherever possible, metrics should include student achievement and graduation targets.
- Department approval of plans in years 2 through 5 will be predicated upon progress towards the described performance targets, among other factors.
- Alliance Districts are required to reserve the substantial majority of conditional funding for new reform efforts, or the extension of existing reform efforts, that are specifically designed to improve student achievement. The Department may develop and define more precise parameters to define “substantial majority,” as appropriate.
- Districts should provide evidence of lessons learned from preexisting District Improvement Plans (“DIPs”), if applicable. Alliance District Plans may supersede DIPs.
- Districts must propose differentiated interventions for each school based on school performance indicators, subject to parameters set by the Department.
- Districts must include a specific rationale describing how the use of Alliance District funds will lead to improved student performance. The rationale must include:
  - Data documenting the student performance issues of greatest concern
  - Evidence that the actions proposed have been successful in improving student performance in similar circumstances
- Alliance District Plans must follow any additional criteria presented in the Alliance District application prepared by the Department.
- Districts must describe specific actions proposed for Alliance Districts funds, including:
  - a. Activities being funded and the projected cost of each activity;
  - b. An accounting process to track expenditures;
  - c. Starting and ending date of each activity;
  - d. Person(s) responsible for the implementation of each activity; and
  - e. Major steps required to implement each activity.
- Districts must describe monitoring activities, including the identification of district personnel responsible for conducting such monitoring, that will be established to perform the following tasks:
  - a. Measure student progress in targeted grades, if appropriate, during and at the end of each school year;
  - b. Measure institutional or personnel changes (e.g., increased student instructional time) being targeted in the Alliance District Plan; and
  - c. Revise the Alliance District Plan in response to the monitoring data.
- Districts must demonstrate collaboration with key district stakeholders.

### **E. Approval Process**

- The Department will provide technical assistance to districts whose Alliance District Plans are not immediately approved.
- The Department may issue approvals of Alliance District Plans using an iterative process.

**Alliance District authorizing language in SB 458, *An Act Concerning Educational Reform***

Sec. 34. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2012*) (a) As used in this section and section 10-262i of the general statutes, as amended by this act:

(1) "Alliance district" means a school district that is in a town that is among the towns with the lowest district performance indices.

(2) "District performance index" means the sum of the district subject performance indices for mathematics, reading, writing and science.

(3) "District subject performance index for mathematics" means thirty per cent multiplied by the sum of the mastery test data of record, as defined in section 10-262f of the general statutes, for a district for mathematics weighted as follows: (A) Zero for the percentage of students scoring below basic, (B) twenty-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at basic, (C) fifty per cent for the percentage of students scoring at proficient, (D) seventy-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at goal, and (E) one hundred per cent for the percentage of students scoring at advanced.

(4) "District subject performance index for reading" means thirty per cent multiplied by the sum of the mastery test data of record, as defined in section 10-262f of the general statutes, for a district for reading weighted as follows: (A) Zero for the percentage of students scoring below basic, (B) twenty-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at basic, (C) fifty per cent for the percentage of students scoring at proficient, (D) seventy-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at goal, and (E) one hundred per cent for the percentage of students scoring at advanced.

(5) "District subject performance index for writing" means thirty per cent multiplied by the sum of the mastery test data of record, as defined in section 10-262f of the general statutes, for a district for writing weighted as follows: (A) Zero for the percentage of students scoring below basic, (B) twenty-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at basic, (C) fifty per cent for the percentage of students scoring at proficient, (D) seventy-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at goal, and (E) one hundred per cent for the percentage of students scoring at advanced.

(6) "District subject performance index for science" means ten per cent multiplied by the sum of the mastery test data of record, as defined in section 10-262f of the general statutes, for a district for science weighted as follows: (A) Zero for the percentage of students scoring below basic, (B) twenty-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at basic, (C) fifty per cent for the percentage of students scoring at proficient, (D) seventy-five per cent for the percentage of students scoring at goal, and (E) one hundred per cent for the percentage of students scoring at advanced.

(7) "Educational reform district" means a school district that is in a town that is among the ten lowest district performance indices when all towns are ranked highest to lowest in district performance indices scores.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, the Commissioner of Education shall designate thirty school districts as alliance districts. Any school district designated as an alliance district shall be so designated for a period of five years. On or before June 30, 2016, the Department of Education shall determine if there are any additional alliance districts.

(c) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Comptroller shall withhold from a town designated as an alliance district any increase in funds received over the amount the town received for the prior fiscal year pursuant to section 10-262h of the general

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statutes, as amended by this act. The Comptroller shall transfer such funds to the Commissioner of Education.

(2) Upon receipt of an application pursuant to subsection (d) of this section, the Commissioner of Education may award such funds to the local or regional board of education for an alliance district on the condition that such funds shall be expended in accordance with the plan described in subsection (d) of this section and any guidelines developed by the State Board of Education for such funds. Such funds shall be used to improve student achievement in such alliance district and to offset any other local education costs approved by the commissioner.

(d) The local or regional board of education for a town designated as an alliance district may apply to the Commissioner of Education, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes, to receive any increase in funds received over the amount the town received for the prior fiscal year pursuant to section 10-262h of the general statutes, as amended by this act. Applications pursuant to this subsection shall include objectives and performance targets and a plan that may include, but not be limited to, the following: (1) A tiered system of interventions for the schools under the jurisdiction of such board based on the needs of such schools, (2) ways to strengthen the foundational programs in reading to ensure reading mastery in kindergarten to grade three, inclusive, with a focus on standards and instruction, proper use of data, intervention strategies, current information for teachers, parental engagement, and teacher professional development, (3) additional learning time, including extended school day or school year programming administered by school personnel or external partners, (4) a talent strategy that includes, but is not limited to, teacher and school leader recruitment and assignment, career ladder policies that draw upon guidelines for a model teacher evaluation program adopted by the State Board of Education, pursuant to section 10-151b of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and adopted by each local or regional board of education. Such talent strategy may include provisions that demonstrate increased ability to attract, retain, promote and bolster the performance of staff in accordance with performance evaluation findings and, in the case of new personnel, other indicators of effectiveness, (5) training for school leaders and other staff on new teacher evaluation models, (6) provisions for the cooperation and coordination with early childhood education providers to ensure alignment with district expectations for student entry into kindergarten, including funding for an existing local Head Start program, (7) provisions for the cooperation and coordination with other governmental and community programs to ensure that students receive adequate support and wraparound services, including community school models, and (8) any additional categories or goals as determined by the commissioner. Such plan shall demonstrate collaboration with key stakeholders, as identified by the commissioner, with the goal of achieving efficiencies and the alignment of intent and practice of current programs with conditional programs identified in this subsection. The commissioner may require changes in any plan submitted by a local or regional board of education before the commissioner approves an application under this subsection.

(e) The State Board of Education may develop guidelines and criteria for the administration of such funds under this section.

(f) The commissioner may withhold such funds if the local or regional board of education fails to comply with the provisions of this section. The commissioner may renew such funding if the local or regional board of education provides evidence that the school district of such board is achieving the objectives and performance targets approved by the commissioner stated in the plan submitted under this section.



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(g) Any local or regional board of education receiving funding under this section shall submit an annual expenditure report to the commissioner on such form and in such manner as requested by the commissioner. The commissioner shall determine if (A) the local or regional board of education shall repay any funds not expended in accordance with the approved application, or (B) such funding should be reduced in a subsequent fiscal year up to an amount equal to the amount that the commissioner determines is out of compliance with the provisions of this subsection.

(h) Any balance remaining for each local or regional board of education at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward for such local or regional board of education for the next fiscal year.