



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **FOUR DISTRICTS INVITED TO DEVELOP SCHOOL TURNAROUND PLANS FOR COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK CONSIDERATION Union, charter led turnarounds among models proposed by districts**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has invited the Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Norwich school districts to convene turnaround committees and develop turnaround plans for schools to be considered for selection into the Commissioner's Network for the 2012-2013 school year. A final selection of schools for the Network from among these four will occur later in the summer.

Additionally, CSDE invited the Waterbury and Norwalk school districts to apply for a planning grant to prepare for possible selection into the Network for the 2013-2014 school year.

The Commissioner's Network was created as part of education reform legislation signed into law by Governor Dannel P. Malloy. Public Act 12-116 authorizes intensive interventions in 25 of Connecticut's lowest performing schools over the next three years. 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.

Connecticut Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor said: "Superficial reforms haven't worked. These schools have been nominated by their districts because they have been struggling to improve their performance for years. Today, we are asking each of these districts to reach beyond the surface in order to take the dramatic steps necessary to turn these schools around and help their students achieve at high levels. We are prepared to work intensively and collaboratively with local stakeholders to achieve meaningful progress."

Districts have expressed interest in convening a turnaround committee and preparing a turnaround plan for the following schools. Each school is in the bottom 10% in the state (among elementary/middle schools or among high schools) and has 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.

### **Bridgeport Public Schools: James J. Curiale School**

The district's vision for Curiale's turnaround includes increasing academic rigor, offering a wide variety of learning opportunities to students by creating smaller classes, using new standards-based curriculum, providing more time for instruction for all students by reinventing the school day and extending the school year, as well as developing strong partnerships between the school and the community .

**Hartford Public Schools: Core Knowledge Academy at the Thirman L. Milner School**

The district’s vision for Milner’s turnaround includes replicating Jumoke Academy's successful model of developing the whole child. The proposed Commissioner’s Network partnership would permit Jumoke to implement major elements of its school design including flexibility to use innovative educational methods; implementation of a structured, disciplined, yet caring environment that focuses on accountability; and development of strong parent, family and community engagement and involvement.

**New Haven Public Schools: High School in the Community (HSC)**

The district’s vision for HSC, which has been teacher-led since the 1960’s, is based on creating a more personalized and meaningful student experience led by teachers. HSC will reinstitute the “Family Group,” a mandatory freshman class focused on social development and team building and teachers will be expected to offer classes to parents throughout the year. An additional hour of teacher time will be allocated between extended student time and team planning and development, consistent with the landmark 2009 New Haven Federation of Teachers contract.

**Norwich Public Schools: John B. Stanton School**

The district’s vision for Stanton’s turnaround will focus on building effective home-school collaborations that will ensure high expectations and elevated achievement for all students in order to close the achievement gap. This collaboration will build strong, respectful relationships between the school and families; and develop a strong sense of community and shared responsibility for decision-making within the school while monitoring and adjusting to meet the changing needs of students and their families.

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To assist and inform planning activities, the CSDE will conduct an instructional and operational audit in each of the four proposed Commissioner’s Network schools.

The CSDE met with districts that voluntarily expressed interest in the Network to discuss the feasibility of turnaround efforts for either September 2012 or September 2013. The capacity of local districts and the need for turnaround assistance was also considered in making these invitations.

A final selection of districts and their eligible schools will be made by late July or early August on the basis of the strength and feasibility of the turnaround plan that is submitted. In the event that a school turnaround plan is unlikely to result in transformative improvement, CSDE reserves the right to not select the plan, to modify it, or to develop an alternative plan.

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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