School Reform in Connecticut

Connecticut Department of Education
Dr. Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner
Retaining Our Competitive Edge

**Context**
- ARRA, RttT, ESEA Reauthorization
- Public Act 10-111
- State Funding for Public Schools
- November Elections

**Cumulative Work of past Four Years**
- Accountability
- CALI/SRBI
- Secondary School Reform
- 5-Year Comprehensive Plan
- ARRA, SFSF Requirements
Reflections on Race to the Top

What we achieved:

- Unity
- Clarity of Direction
- New Structures (Partnerships for Change)
- New Legislation (PA 10-111)
- A Long-range Plan for Reform

What we did not do, deliberately:

- Predetermine the strategy and model for teacher, administrator supervision and evaluation
- Dramatically change our position charter school expansion
- Fully embrace DOE’s theory of action on reforming underperforming schools via School Improvement Grants
- Abandon our conviction that *districts*—and not isolated schools—are the proper focus of addressing Connecticut’s achievement gaps.
This We Believe: Our Principles

- The prevailing paradigm for school improvement in Washington is not based on a solid foundation of research or hard evidence (See Ravitch 2010)
- As a matter of public policy, competitive grants like RttT make “winning and losing” a questionable strategy for solving the problems of child poverty
- Connecticut has built its school systems in ways that are uniquely ours, and historically grounded in highly successful approaches in the past. (See Darling-Hammond, 2010)
- What we proposed in RttT is consistent with what we have done well are doing well, and mindful of our shortcomings.
- Our RttT approach was pragmatic, promised no more than we could deliver, and was based on the overriding importance of working together.

Two Observations:
Observations # 1: For the past 25 years, Connecticut has been a leader in educational reform; this work provides a strong foundation for successfully achieving our goals; this work has accelerated in the past five years.

- 1985: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)
- 1986: The Education Enhancement Act
- 1987: The Common Core of Learning and Common Core of Teaching
- 1989: The Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program
- 1993: Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)
- 2004: Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI)
- 2005: State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID)
- 2006: SBE Five-Year Plan; Generation 4 CMT; and Ready by Five & Fine by Nine.
- 2007: Connecticut’s Education Accountability Act
- 2008: Sheff Stipulated Agreement; Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM)
- 2010: Public Act 10-111
Observation #2: Connecticut is already seeing evidence that its hard work has begun to benefit students.

- Between 2007 and 2009, Grade 8 NAEP mathematics (+7) and reading (+5) scores had increased significantly, with no state scoring higher than Connecticut in 8th grade reading.

- In 2007, no state’s Grade 8 students scored higher than Connecticut’s on NAEP writing.

- Since 2006, the percentage of students scoring at the goal level in mathematics and reading on the CMT has increased across all grades.

- Since 2006, the statewide gap in goal-level performance between black/Hispanic students and white students in Grade 8 CMT decreased by 29 percent in mathematics and 20 percent in reading.
And Yet…

As much as we can take satisfaction in moving head:

- Many children are still entering kindergarten ill-prepared to begin school ready to learn, read and thrive.

- While narrowing, Connecticut’s achievement gaps are not closing fast enough.

- CAPT scores remain flat and thousands of students are dropping out of high school or graduating unprepared for college or career success.

We cannot pause or stop. We must accelerate our efforts to increase state and LEA capacity to get this work done through a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to public school education and to sustain improvements within our communities.
**Bottom Line?** We must persevere, collaborate, and draw together to develop an educational system that, again, is the strongest in the nation in preparing students for college and career success. To this end, we must strive to accomplish these few, but essential goals by **2013-14:**

### Goals

**Academic Attainment**
- Increase the percentage of all students scoring at the goal level to 75 to 80 percent on the CMT and to 60 to 65 percent on the CAPT.
- Reduce by half the black/Hispanic and white gaps in student performance on the CMT, CAPT and in the graduation rate.
- Increase CT’s NGA four-year graduation rate from 79 percent to 90 percent.

**Engagement**
- Increase parent and community involvement, as a vital component of strong school cultures that are focused on students and their relationships with adults
- Lower Connecticut’s out-of-school suspension rates by 1% each year

**21st Century Teaching and Learning**
- Develop a fair, appropriate system for mentoring, supporting, supervising and evaluating teachers and principals that is evidence based, and focused on multiple indicators of student growth
- Develop schools as places of joy, hope, safety, and inclusiveness
What **Must** We Do to Reach These Goals?

- Maintain Current and Past Initiatives
  - SBE Comprehensive, Five-Year Plan
  - CALI/SRBI
  - Accountability Statute 10-223
- Implement 2009 ARRA Requirements
  - SFSF Phase 2
- Implement New State Requirements
  - PA 10-111
P.A. 10-111 legislates many of the requirements in our Plan and State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) requirements enacted with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

The initiatives listed below are included in PA 10-111, and are incorporated in the specified sections of our SFSF Phase 2 funding:

- Increases the rigor and requirements for high school graduation in Connecticut
- Allows districts to participate in a pilot “Board Examination” system
- Requires expansion of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System
- Requires all districts to have an advanced placement program and a policy for earning credits through online courses
- Implements a teacher evaluation system linking student and teacher performance, including multiple measures of student growth
- Creates a new alternative certification route for school administrators
- Requires LEAs to create Student Success Plans and provide adequate student support and remedial services
Calling the Question: How, with all of these requirements, past commitments, and limited resources will we focus, plan, and implement aspects of this work over the next two years?

Statewide Focus 2010-2012

Priority Initiatives:
- TEAM
- Common Standards and Assessments
- Completion of SFSF Longitudinal Data Collections
- CALI Expansion to 71 districts and 202 schools
- Essential Elements of Secondary School Reform
  - Building Student Support Systems
  - Implementing Student Success Plans
  - Board Examination and Innovation School Pilots
  - On-line Learning, Credit Recovery

What will this mean specifically?
Six Areas of Focus

1. T.E.A.M.
2. Common Standards and Assessments
3. Early Childhood Education (PreK-3)
4. SFSF Data Collection
5. CALI/SRBI
6. Aspects of Secondary School Reform

Comments will center on 3, 4, # 5 above
Focus Area 3: SFSF Data Collection

Connecticut’s Data System will:

- Link students, courses, and grades to teachers and produce individual student transcripts.
- Link teachers and administrators to their preparation programs.
- Permit LEAs to integrate local data with state data.
- Provide analysis and reporting tools to improve the utility of the data for educators, parents and the public.
- Improve educator use of data through targeted professional development programs and CALI.

P-20 Data Subcommittee and Interoperability Council, including DHE and Labor, are collaborating with us to guide this work. This work will be predominantly the responsibility of the SDE.
Focus Area 4: CALI Expansion

- CALI will continue to focus accountability work in 71 districts and 202 schools
- CALI training cannot be taken to scale, but will be grown modestly, voluntarily, where resources will allow, and via cooperative purchasing through the RESC Alliance and SERC
- CALI modules linked to SRBI and diversity training will be emphasized
What we are learning about CALI’s Impact:

- Data from 15 Partner districts from 2007-2010 shows the districts’ as a group are, increasing their achievement at rates faster than the state as a whole.

- This rate is reflected increases of Black, Hispanic, and White Students in Partner districts, showing the narrowing of our achievement gaps, most notably in mathematics.

- In 2010, Partner districts increased the number of schools making AYP—up dramatically from 2008 and 2009.
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Connecticut Technical High Schools are one clear example of CALI’s importance as a factor of change, particularly as CAPT achievement statewide has remained flat since 2005:

- Between 2007 and 2010, the performance of students achieving goal on CAPT Mathematics rose by 7.3 percentage points.
- During this same period, the performance of students achieving goal on CAPT Science rose by 5.1 points; on CAPT Writing, by 13 points.
- Only in CAPT Reading did scores remain flat, with 2010 showing a slight downturn.

CALI has been fully implemented in all of our Technical high schools.
CTHSS CAPT Score Growth 2007 to 2010

% of Students Reaching Goal

- % at Math Goal
- % at Science Goal
- % at Reading Goal
- % at Writing Goal

2007 CTHSS
2010 CTHSS
Focus Area 5: Secondary School Reform--Student Success Plans and Support Systems

Student “success” plans--and the creation of student support systems to help middle school and 9th graders anticipate the increased expectations of the core program of study--will form a single initiative focused on:

- Early warning signs of potential drop-outs
- Expanded learning time for middle school students
- Boosting adolescent literacy attainment
- Parental involvement in monitoring students course selections
- Comprehensive support systems including nutrition, health, school climate and academic interventions
- Clarifying expectations over secondary school reform requirements through guidance documents and statewide work teams already meeting
With resources made available through Title IID, we will provide professional development opportunities on using the Internet to enhance and personalize learning; and to enable students to undertake remedial and advanced coursework on line.

Credit Recovery Programs started this summer!
Focus Area 5: Regional, National Consortia

- New England Secondary School Consortium
  - League of Innovation Schools
  - Regional Policy Forums

- NCEE’s Board Examination Pilot vis-à-vis
  - Category B: High School Assessment Project
  - 3 Districts to receive $3M over three years
Focus Area 5: Policy

- As required by PA 10-111: We must study the implications of full implementation by 2018 and report back to the General Assembly in 2012 with recommendations and or policy modifications.
- Staffing, final course requirements, model curriculum and end-of-course assessments will *not* be the focus of the first two years of SSR roll out.
- This work *must* wait until our standards and longitudinal data system is well underway.
Our Capacity to Act: With these key pieces of work ahead of us, how can the SDE marshal its resources and capacity to lead this work?

- The SDE cannot do this work alone, as we once did in the 80s and 90s.
- We have lost over 30 full-time positions 2009, due to retirements, rescissions, and resignations in the Central Staff alone.
- Conclusion: Lacking essential infrastructure SDE must:
  - Reexamine its organizational structure to achieve greater efficiencies
  - Collaborate, share power, knowledge, and expertise to succeed
  - Engage the Six Partnership Committees organized envisioned in RttT, and use these committees to implement the essential initiatives
  - Work closely with higher education to build P20 data systems and services linking high schools, community college and the workforce
  - Lead and help facilitate public discussion of the funding mechanisms needed to sustain high-quality public education in Connecticut
  - Increase the Commissioner’s visibility in districts via planned, biweekly visits
Race to the Top Management Structure

The Six Levers of Change

Partnerships
- Families and Communities
- Pre-Service Training & Prof. Dev
- Teacher, Principal Effectiveness & Accountability
- Curriculum Innovation & Technology
- High School, College & Workforce Alignment
- Financing Sustainable Change

Governor

State Board of Education

Board of Governors of Higher Education

Commissioner of Education

Commissioner of Higher Education

RTTT Office

P-20 Shared Leadership Council

Knowledge Network
- Research
- Communication

Partnership Structure
- Administrative Support Centers
- Leadership Teams
- Partnership Members
- Communication Liaisons

Associate Commissioner Team

Deputy Commissioner of Education

Partnership Structure

Partnership Structure

Partnership Structure
Financial Resources: How can we do this work without RttT funding?

- Much of this work is already underway in most districts.
- Entitlement funds, Title I, II, IID, etc., must be channeled into activities organized and sponsored by the Six Partnership Committees.
- State categorical grants must be consolidated to match the limited aims of our plan, and directed to the Partnerships.
- New models for funding must be developed through our Ad Hoc Committee for Finance.
- We must continue to seek foundation support through such groups as Gates, GE, Nellie Mae, Graustein and others.
- Collectively, we must continue to win other federal grants.
- We must economize and use technology to facilitate communication.
What will our timetable be to complete this work?

- The dates, initiatives and completion dates of tasks, and the responsible parties for each initiative will soon be posted on our website.
- Key conferences and workshops helping to focus and sustain the conversation will soon be posted on the SDE website.
- We will waste no time in getting started!
Final Observations

- We are in the midst of massive shift in how we conceptualize and operate public schools in our state and in our country.
- We are seeing new, previously underrepresented constituent groups demanding to lead our schools, especially within the African-American and Hispanic communities.
- Connecticut has historically shown itself to be highly skilled at collaboration and collective leadership.
- We know how to work together and must do so now with even greater certainty that we are the hope of those who look to us for a better future for themselves and their children.
- Let us begin, let us continue.
Question-and-Answer Period

Thank you!