Report on Commissioner's Network Schools

February 2020

Connecticut State Department of Education

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INTRODUCTION

The Commissioner's Network is a commitment between local stakeholders and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to improve student achievement in up to 25 schools. It offers new resources and authorities to empower teachers and school leaders to implement research-based strategies. Schools are selected by the Commissioner of Education to participate in the network for a period of three to five years. Network schools remain part of their local school districts, but the districts and the CSDE secure school-level flexibility and autonomy for the schools in exchange for heightened accountability. The network began in the fall of 2012. At present, there are 8 schools participating in the network.

Subsections (j)(1) and (j)(2) of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-223h require the CSDE to submit an annual report on the academic performance of schools in the network to the Connecticut General Assembly. Subsection (j)(3) of Connecticut General Statues Section 10-223h requires the CSDE to submit a final report that evaluates turnaround plan and the academic performance of exiting schools and make recommendations for the operation of such school. Subsection (j)(4) requires the commissioner to submit a report (A) evaluating the commissioner's network of schools and its effect on improving student academic achievement in participating schools, and (B) making any recommendations for the continued operation of the commissioner's network of schools. This report fulfills these requirements.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The primary data source for this report are the results from Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System. This system is a broad set of 12 indicators that help tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, careers and life. A brief overview of the system is contained in this FAQ and introductory video. The system began in 2014-15 and was fully implemented in 2015-16.

For purposes of comparing and analyzing the academic performance of the network schools, this report will focus on the following indicators from the accountability system:

> Accountability Index
> Performance Index
> Academic Growth

Chronic absenteeism
Four Year Graduation Rate for All Students
Six Year Graduation Rate for High Needs Students[1]

In addition to these accountability indicators, the report will also analyze student suspension/expulsion rates because they are an important measure of school climate and student engagement.

For many of these indicators, disaggregated data by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, special education status, and English learner status are available on the CSDE's interactive data portal, EdSight, at http://edsight.ct.gov. EdSight also includes the complete accountability report for each school along with a visual report card for each school. Click the school name below to access their report card directly.

District Name	School Name	When Entered Network
Bridgeport School District	Columbus School	Fall 2016
	Luis Munoz Marin School	Fall 2014
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	Fall 2013
East Hartford School District	East Hartford Middle School	Fall 2015
	Robert J. O'Brien School	Fall 2014
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	Fall 2017
New Haven School District	Clinton Avenue School	Fall 2016
	Lincoln-Bassett School	Fall 2014
	Wilbur Cross High School	Fall 2013
	Wexler/Grant Community School	Fall 2018
Norwich School District	Uncas Elementary School	Fall 2014
Waterbury School District	Crosby High School	Fall 2013
	Walsh School	Fall 2013
Winchester School District	Batcheller Early Education Center	Fall 2016
	Pearson School	Fall 2016
Windham School District	Windham Middle School	Fall 2013
	Windham High School	Fall 2018

Also included in this report are the aggregate performance evaluation results for educators.

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[1] These are students who are English learners, students with disabilities, and/or those eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Results

Overall Performance: The Accountability Index

The accountability index is the total percentage of possible points earned by the school on all applicable indicators in the system. Each indicator is allotted a maximum possible points. Based on the results achieved on an indicator, the school earns points on a sliding scale toward that indicator. The total points earned divided by the total possible points that could have been earned on all applicable indicators is the accountability index. The maximum possible points allotted for each indicator is visually represented as proportional weights below (Figure 1). Based on school grade configurations, around 40 to 50 percent of all points are allotted toward the achievement, growth, chronic absenteeism, and six-year high school graduation rate of high needs students and the English language growth of English learners.

Figure 1: Indicator Weights by School Type for 2018-19
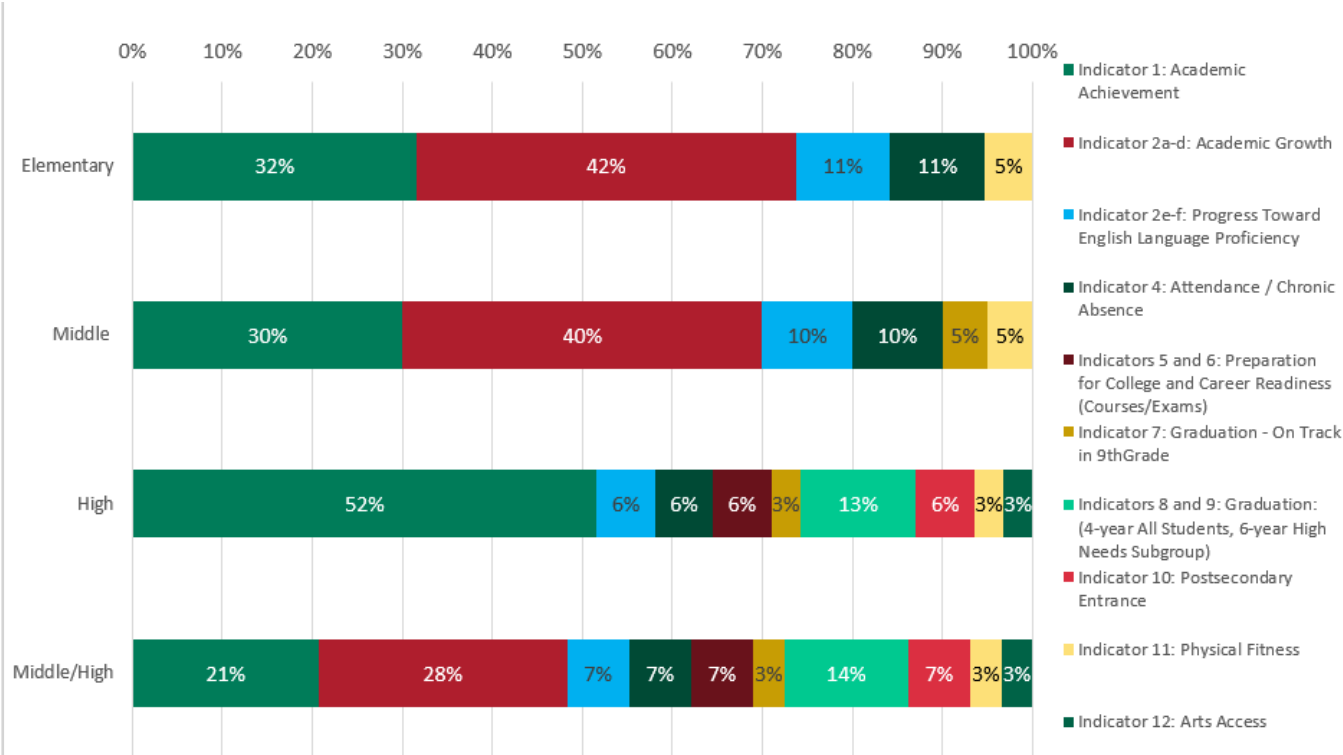
The Accountability Index trend for the Commissioner's Network Schools is presented below (Table 1). Pursuant to Connecticut's state plan for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), two important changes were introduced to the system in 2018-19:

- The accountability system now includes the results from the new science assessments.
- The accountability system now also incorporates the growth achieved by English learners on the English language proficiency assessment (LAS Links).

Table 1: Accountability Index Trend for Commissioner's Network Schools

District Name	School Name	When Entered Network	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Bridgeport School District	**Columbus School**	**Fall 2016**	**58.0**	**49.1**	**53.8**	**46.9**
	Luis Munoz Marin School	**Fall 2014**	**43.7**	**46.9**	**44.4**	**48.8**
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	**Fall 2013**	**41.3**	**44.8**	**47.1**	**52.5**
East Hartford School District	**East Hartford Middle School**	**Fall 2015**	**58.0**	**56.2**	**61.6**	**57.7**
	Robert J. O'Brien School	**Fall 2014**	**61.3**	**66.7**	**61.3**	**63.3**
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	Fall 2017	55.1	56.3	57.8	56.0
New Haven School District	**Clinton Avenue School**	**Fall 2016**	**61.2**	**58.0**	**66.0**	**66.2**
	Lincoln-Bassett School	**Fall 2014**	**72.4**	**59.2**	**55.1**	**33.7**
	Wilbur Cross High School	**Fall 2013**	**55.3**	**57.3**	**57.5**	**54.6**
	Wexler/Grant Community School	Fall 2018	57.1	48.7	52.8	58.9
Norwich School District	*Uncas Elementary School*	**Fall 2014**	**56.3**	**64.8**	**68.1**	**62.0**
Waterbury School District	*Crosby High School*	**Fall 2013**	**50.0**	**51.3**	**52.3**	**53.1**
	Walsh School	**Fall 2013**	**64.5**	**58.0**	**61.5**	**56.0**
Winchester School District	**Batcheller Early Education Center**	**Fall 2016**	**65.2**	**88.8**	**79.8**	**91.4**
	Pearson School	**Fall 2016**	**71.2**	**65.3**	**75.3**	**80.5**
Windham School District	*Windham Middle School*	**Fall 2013**	**55.3**	**53.4**	**53.5**	**50.1**
	Windham High School	Fall 2018	**58.0**	**58.6**	**57.2**	**56.8**
	Statewide Accountability Index		**73.1**	**73.2**	**74.9**	**74.2**

*Note: Schools in **bold** have been in the network for more than two years. Italicized schools have exited the network.*

Almost all network schools perform substantially below the state accountability index. However, eight of the fourteen schools that have been in the network for more than two years (i.e., entered in either fall 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016) demonstrated improvement in their accountability indexes from 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Academic Achievement: The Performance Index

The performance index, which is commonly referred to as the DPI (for districts) and the SPI (for schools), is an aggregate measure of student achievement. It tells us how well students are doing academically in a given school year. The simplest way to think of the DPI or SPI is that it is the average score of students in a subject area (e.g., English language arts, mathematics). A 7-minute video produced by the CSDE provides a simple overview of the performance index. The primary advantage of an index approach is that it encourages educators to help improve all students, and not just those on the cusp of the "proficiency" level. The performance index trend for the network schools is presented below (Table 2).

Table 2: School Performance Index Trend for Commissioner's Network Schools

District Name	School Name	English Language Arts			Mathematics		
		2016-17	**2017-18**	**2018-19**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**	**2018-19**
Bridgeport School District	*Columbus School*	**45.7**	**48.3**	**45.6**	**37.5**	**36.1**	**36.9**
	Luis Munoz Marin School	**40.2**	**43.9**	**45.1**	**34.4**	**33.8**	**36.2**
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	**41.7**	**48.4**	**50.7**	**35.6**	**38.6**	**41.9**
East Hartford School District	**East Hartford Middle School**	**54.8**	**57.1**	**56.4**	**44.1**	**48.4**	**45.2**
	Robert J. O'Brien School	**56.7**	**56.7**	**55.8**	**47.7**	**46.7**	**46.9**
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	44.4	45.3	43.7	41.7	41.9	40.3
New Haven School District	**Clinton Avenue School**	**57.5**	**61.1**	**62.5**	**46.4**	**51.6**	**51.6**
	Lincoln-Bassett School	**56.0**	**52.8**	**47.5**	**53.8**	**44.5**	**43.2**
	Wilbur Cross High School	**45.1**	**47.4**	**42.8**	**40.3**	**43.3**	**38.5**
	Wexler/Grant Community School	53.0	54.0	57.1	39.9	41.2	46.7
Norwich School District	*Uncas Elementary School*	**54.8**	**62.5**	**57.6**	**52.2**	**57.4**	**58.6**
Waterbury School District	*Crosby High School*	**41.5**	**38.5**	**39.7**	**36.6**	**35.8**	**33.9**
	Walsh School	**50.5**	**52.2**	**52.3**	**48.3**	**48.0**	**47.3**
Winchester School District	**Pearson School**	**63.8**	**65.8**	**68.4**	**57.8**	**66.1**	**69.8**
Windham School District	*Windham Middle School*	**54.5**	**51.1**	**52.5**	**45.7**	**45.9**	**46.7**
	Windham High School	46.6	44.0	45.9	42.9	40.5	41.9
	Statewide Performance Index	**67.1**	**67.6**	**67.7**	**62.2**	**62.7**	**63.1**

Note: Schools in **bold** have been in the network for more than two years. Italicized schools have exited the network.

Student achievement in most network schools substantially lags the state average. Of the thirteen schools with performance data that have been in the network for over two years, seven improved achievement in both ELA and mathematics from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Academic Growth

While achievement is a one-time snapshot measurement of a student's academic performance, growth is the *change* in that achievement score for the same student between two or more points in time. Connecticut's growth model is a matched student cohort growth model. It evaluates the achievement of the same student from one grade in year 1 to the next higher grade in year 2. This is generally considered the gold standard for growth because there are no mismatched students; only those students who are matched across years are included in this calculation.

Connecticut's growth model is based on the Smarter Balanced ELA and Mathematics assessments and applies to students in Grades 4 through 8. Each student's growth is evaluated against an individualized growth target amount on the Smarter Balanced vertical scale. The growth targets, if achieved, are designed to get students to higher levels of achievement in future years. A 20-minute video produced by the CSDE provides an introduction to this growth model. For those who have a working knowledge of Connecticut's growth model, an 8-minute video provides a brief explanation of the two different ways that Connecticut reports academic growth in English language arts and mathematics.

The growth indicator used for accountability purposes is the Average Percentage of Target Achieved; this is the *percentage of the growth target* that is achieved on average by all students. The accountability expectation is that this average will be 100% for all students and subgroups. Since this growth measure applies only to students enrolled in Grades 4 through 8, high schools are excluded from the growth results below (Table 3).

Table 3: Average Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – Trend for Commissioner's Network Schools

District Name	School Name	English Language Arts			Mathematics		
		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Bridgeport School District	*Columbus School*	37.9	61.2	42.4	42.5	51.1	51.1
	Luis Munoz Marin School	51.6	50.5	51.8	52.0	39.5	48.9
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	36.3	55.2	59.8	42.3	48.3	52.4
East Hartford School District	**East Hartford Middle School**	49.5	58.8	51.5	47.8	59.0	43.2
	Robert J. O'Brien School	65.6	62.7	60.6	56.5	50.5	54.8
New Haven School District	**Clinton Avenue School**	60.3	62.1	63.1	39.1	66.6	57.0
	Lincoln-Bassett School	49.6	44.7	45.1	63.7	33.9	50.3
	Wexler/Grant Community School	56.7	51.5	67.0	31.0	48.9	65.0
Norwich School District	*Uncas Elementary School*	64.9	63.6	32.9	56.7	50.7	57.6
Waterbury School District	*Walsh School*	37.3	55.9	52.3	61.2	58.7	52.9
Winchester School District	**Pearson School**	56.2	61.9	62.1	54.9	79.7	74.7
Windham School District	*Windham Middle School*	46.4	38.6	46.1	40.7	40.7	39.5
	State Average	55.4	60.7	59.9	61.7	61.9	62.5

*Note: Schools in **bold** have been in the network for more than two years. Italicized schools have exited the network.*

With respect to academic growth, the results have been mixed. There are promising results in some schools like Pearson School in Winchester and Wexler/Grant Community School and Clinton Avenue School in New Haven. The state and the Network schools have a lot of work to improve the instructional core (i.e., rigorous curriculum, supported/skilled educator, engaged student) so as to attain greater rates of academic growth on an annual basis.

Chronic Absenteeism

Indicator 4 of the accountability system is chronic absenteeism. It represents the percentage of students missing at least 10 percent of the days enrolled for any reason. Chronic absence has been shown to be related to academic achievement, high school graduation, drop-out, and juvenile delinquency. Absences occur due to many factors, e.g., health, unstable housing, lack of transportation, student disengagement from school, and safety/school climate. By removing barriers to attendance, districts, schools and community partners can improve school attendance. The trend in chronic absenteeism for the commissioner's network schools is presented here (Table 4).

Table 4: Chronic Absenteeism Trend for Commissioner's Network Schools

District Name	School Name	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Bridgeport School District	*Columbus School*	24.3	24.3	20.3	26.6	25.0
	Luis Munoz Marin School	25.8	24.5	22.2	26.7	22.6
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	28.7	26.6	21.9	33.6	30.3
East Hartford School District	**East Hartford Middle School**	11.9	9.5	12.4	15.3	10.8
	Robert J. O'Brien School	16.5	7.7	10.0	14.4	11.0
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	39.3	33.3	34.0	37.5	39.6
New Haven School District	**Clinton Avenue School**	23.2	18.7	14.9	18.2	15.8
	Lincoln-Bassett School	30.0	19.5	13.7	10.5	11.8
	Wilbur Cross High School	50.5	41.6	37.4	38.6	41.3
	Wexler Grant Community School	32.5	20.0	30.8	25.2	32.8
Norwich School District	*Uncas Elementary School*	12.3	8.8	7.7	3.1	4.2
Waterbury School District	*Crosby High School*	34.6	32.0	30.6	31.9	31.9
	Walsh School	21.4	12.9	12.6	17.1	21.3
Winchester School District	**Batcheller Early Education Center**	12.1	12.2	6.8	8.7	5.9
	Pearson School	5.7	4.1	4.8	5.2	3.4
Windham School District	*Windham Middle School*	19.9	16.4	15.0	11.4	23.2
	Windham High School	23.8	31.8	31.6	29.2	31.6
	State Average	10.6	9.6	9.9	10.7	10.4

*Note: Schools in **bold** have been in the network for more than two years. Italicized schools have exited the network.*

Of the fourteen schools that have been in the network for over two years, eleven show lower chronic absenteeism rates in 2018-19 as compared to 2014-15. In general, students in higher grades (i.e., Grade 7 and up) tend to have the greater rates of chronic absenteeism than those in the lower grades. Therefore, middle schools and high schools reflect higher rates of chronic absenteeism than elementary schools.

Suspension/Expulsion Rate

The suspension/expulsion rate is the percentage of students in a school year receiving at least one suspension (in-school or out-of-school) or expulsion. Studies suggest a correlation between exclusionary discipline policies and practices and an array of serious educational, economic, and social problems. These include: school avoidance and diminished educational engagement; decreased academic achievement; increased behavior problems; increased likelihood of dropping out; substance abuse; and involvement with juvenile justice systems. The trend in suspension rate for the commissioner's network school is presented here (Table 5).

Table 5: Suspension/Expulsion Rate Trend for Commissioner's Network Schools

District Name	School Name	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Bridgeport School District	**Columbus School**	9.7	8.0	13.2	10.9	13.9
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	23.3	16.1	14.6	14.1	13.1
	Luis Munoz Marin School	16.2	13.0	7.8	12.3	6.9
East Hartford School District	**East Hartford Middle School**	23.1	18.6	20.5	22.4	27.8
	Robert J. O'Brien School	6.9	3.6	1.8	*	*
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	29.2	30.6	24.1	26.8	23.3
New Haven School District	**Clinton Avenue School**	5.5	*	*	3.5	7.5
	Lincoln-Bassett School	11.2	8.8	8.9	12.4	9.0
	Wilbur Cross High School	9.3	8.6	9.0	10.5	13.9
	Wexler/Grant Community School	29.5	21.0	25.7	8.1	5.2
Norwich School District	***Uncas Elementary School***	5.9	3.5	2.8	3.4	2.3
Waterbury School District	***Crosby High School***	36.0	41.8	37.3	37.8	32.9
	Walsh School	16.9	10.6	5.5	5.3	6.0
Winchester School District	**Batcheller Early Education Center**	*	*	*	4.7	*
	Pearson School	3.8	6.5	8.8	3.8	5.1
Windham School District	***Windham Middle School***	32.1	30.0	23.5	26.3	26.1
	Windham High School	28.5	30.8	30.1	28.2	23.8
	State average	7.2	7.0	6.7	6.8	6.7

*Note: Schools in **bold** have been in the network for more than two years. Italicized schools have exited the network.*

* Counts are small and data have been suppressed to protect student confidentiality

Of the fourteen schools that have been in the network for over two years, eight show lower suspension rates in 2018-19 as compared to 2014-15. Paul Laurence Dunbar School in Bridgeport, Clinton Avenue School in New Haven, Uncas Elementary School in Norwich, and Walsh School in Waterbury evidence substantial reductions and generally low suspension rates.

High School Graduation Rate

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the percentage of 9th graders who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less. Some students benefit from having an extra year or two to complete high school. Therefore, in addition to the four-year rate, Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System incorporates the six-year rate in the accountability system to serve as an important additional measure of high school success. Separate points are awarded for the six-year graduation rate of high need students. The trend of four- and six-year graduation rates for the commissioner's network high schools is presented here (table 6).

Table 6: High School Graduation Rate Trend for Commissioner's Network Schools

District Name	School Name	Four-Year Rate (All Students)			Six-Year Rate (High Needs Students)		
		2015-16 Cohort	2016-17 Cohort	2017-18 Cohort	2013-14 Cohort	2014-15 Cohort	2015-16 Cohort
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	75.5	77.6	80.5	72.5	74.7	77.6
New Haven School District	*Wilbur Cross High School*	**77.0**	**81.3**	**82.2**	**69.5**	**69.6**	**79.7**
Waterbury School District	*Crosby High School*	**74.1**	**66.3**	**70.7**	**74.7**	**70.7**	**77.0**
Windham School District	Windham High School	87.2	83.7	86.8	80.3	81.8	88.1
	State Average	**87.4**	**87.9**	**88.3**	**82.0**	**81.8**	**83.3**

*Note: The cohort year is the year of on-time (four-year) graduation. Schools in **bold** have been in the network for more than two years. Italicized schools have exited the network.*

The four-year graduation rate of all students in three of the four schools exceeds 80 percent but is still below the state average and the ultimate graduation rate target of 94 percent. The six-year high needs graduation rate is at the highest level in all four schools.

Performance Evaluation Ratings

Over 97 percent of educators in the Commissioner's Network schools were rated as Proficient or Exemplary.

Number of Educators by Rating in Commissioner's Network Schools, 2018-19

District Name	School Name	Below Standard	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
Bridgeport School District	*Columbus School*	0	0	24	*
	Luis Munoz Marin School	0	0	27	*
	Paul Laurence Dunbar School	0	*	37	17
East Hartford School District	*Robert J. O'Brien School*	0	0	74	24
	East Hartford Middle School	0	0	23	11
New Britain School District	New Britain High School	*	*	153	6
New Haven School District	Clinton Avenue School	0	*	38	*
	Lincoln-Bassett School	0	*	24	*
	Wilbur Cross High School	*	0	88	10
	Wexler/Grant Community School	0	*	27	*
Norwich School District	*Uncas Elementary School*	0	*	14	*
Waterbury School District	*Walsh School*	0	*	57	32
	Crosby High School	0	0	33	8
Winchester School District	Batcheller Early Education Center	0	0	22	*
	Pearson School	0	0	11	16
Windham School District	*Windham Middle School*	0	8	38	9

*Represents fewer than six educators. Italicized schools have exited the network.

SCHOOLS EXITING THE NETWORK

Schools that exited the Commissioner's Network in spring 2019 include four Cohort 3 schools which entered the Commissioner's Network in fall 2014 and one Cohort 5 school which entered the Commissioner's Network in fall 2016. As outlined in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-223h, schools may participate in the Network for up to an additional two years based upon approval from the State Board of Education. The following schools were in the Network for the full extent of the permissible five years.

- Luis Munoz Marin School, Bridgeport Public Schools;
- Robert J. O'Brien School, East Hartford Public Schools;
- Lincoln-Bassett School, New Haven Public Schools; and
- Uncas Elementary School, Norwich Public Schools.

During spring 2019, a CSDE Turnaround Office consultant worked directly with school and district administration to compose the Network School Exit Audit Report including school data trends, successful initiatives and remaining challenges in the areas of Talent, Academics, Climate/Culture and Operations, as well as recommendation from the Department to the District. Using the Turnaround Office's School Turnaround Rubric, schools were rated on sub-indicators of Talent, Academics, Climate/Culture and Operations, and a summary of strengths and growth areas were provided to the schools in order to build a stronger understanding of the Network Operations and Instructional Exit Audit findings. In addition, the reports indicate the districts' commitment to sustaining the successful initiatives that the schools have implemented since entering the Network, as well as supporting the schools with remaining challenges.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Among schools that have been in the network for more than two years, many have improved including Luis Munoz Marin School and Paul Laurence Dunbar School in Bridgeport, Clinton Avenue School in New Haven, Uncas Elementary School in Norwich, and Pearson School in Winchester. Pearson School in particular evidences strong academic growth, and low rates of chronic absenteeism and suspension, and was even named a School of Distinction in 2017-18. The high schools have shown improvements with respect to both the four-year and six-year graduation rates; however, similar improvements are not evidenced in the academic and engagement measures. The remaining schools in the network have shown some promise in one or more indicators in one or two years, but have been unable to sustain it. Overall, the state-local

partnerships established through the Commissioner's Network School and the Alliance District programs has the potential to lead to greater levels of student engagement, growth, and achievement in the network schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon completion of the duration of time involved in the Commissioner's Network program and the finalization of the Network Operations and Instructional Exit Audit report findings, the CSDE Turnaround Office Consultant collaborates with district and school leadership to review the audit indicators, reviewing areas of strengths and areas for continued growth. Through this engagement, the district identifies how it plans to support successful school initiatives, while also identifying additional sustainability indicators to ensure the school will continue to improve. The CSDE Turnaround Consultant works with the district and school leadership teams through ongoing collaborative planning discussions, to pinpoint action steps that will be taken to address these indicators. By completing this process, the Commissioner's Network exiting schools leave the Network with a strategic plan for sustainability and improvement.