

The 6 Principles of the Education Reform Package & the Final Legislation

Principle #1: Enhances families' access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities.

- The final bill provides increased access to high quality pre-school with the creation of 1000 new pre-K School Readiness seats, focused in high need, low performing communities.

Principle #2: Authorizes the intensive interventions and enables the supports necessary to turn around Connecticut's lowest-performing schools and districts.

- The final legislation establishes the Commissioner's Network, enabling the State to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools in Connecticut.
- It provides for the possibility that a subset of Commissioner's Network schools can partner with any of the State's Regional Education Service Centers (RESA), universities, or non-profit entities including charter management organizations to raise student achievement.
- The legislation calls for each turnaround school to convene a Turnaround Committee made up of teachers, parents, and administrators to develop and submit a consensus plan for consideration by the Commissioner of Education.
- Under the legislation, the Education Commissioner has the authority to develop or modify plans with teachers and parents at the turnaround school.
- The bill also creates an ambitious pilot program to enhance literacy for students in kindergarten through third grade.
- Over the 2012-13 school year, the State Department of Education will build its Turnaround Team and begin the planning process for the next group of schools.

Principle #3: Expands the availability of high-quality school models, including traditional schools, magnets, charters, and others.

- State Charters: The final bill provides significant new funding for the state's underfunded state charter schools, while requiring enhanced accountability. Only the state's lowest-performing districts will be eligible to launch of new charter schools.
 - State Charter funding will rise from the current \$9,400 per pupil to \$10,500 per pupil in 2012-13; \$11,000 per pupil in 2013-14; and \$11,500 per pupil in 2014-15.
 - State charters will be required to submit a recruitment and retention plan detailing efforts to serve priority student populations. The State Board will hold schools accountable for adherence to these plans.
 - The bill requires the State Department of Education to endeavor to launch two charter schools focused on English Language Learners in the coming years.
- Local charters: The final bill strengthens the currently underutilized local charter school law in low-performing districts, and thus, encourages a local district to open a local charter school, and increase local parent choice.
 - Local boards of education that reach agreement with their bargaining unit on the implementation of staffing flexibility models, and which submit high-quality turnaround plans, will be eligible for \$500,000 startup grants and \$3000 per pupil operating grants.
- Agricultural Science Schools: It provides significant new funding for agricultural science schools (\$1,425,000 increase).
- Magnet Schools & Technical High Schools: Additional funding is provided for both magnet schools and technical high schools.

Principle #4: Unleashes innovation by removing red tape and other barriers to success, especially in high-performing schools and districts.

- As a preliminary step, the State Department of Education will reduce the number of data forms it requires school districts to complete by one-third.
- The Governor will soon announce the formation of a Red Tape Review Task Force that will propose ways for the State to reduce the regulatory burden on districts.
- In Connecticut's ESEA waiver application, high-performing and high-progress schools are granted greater flexibility.

Principle #5: Ensures that our schools are home to the very best teachers and principals – working within a fair system that values skill and effectiveness over seniority and tenure.

- The final bill requires annual performance evaluations of principals, administrators, and teachers, based upon the consensus framework developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council.
- The bill strengthens professional development for educators, requiring job-embedded coaching as the predominant form of training.
- Excellent teachers will now be eligible for a "distinguished educator" designation.
- Over the coming year, the bill provides that the evaluation and support system will be piloted in a diverse group of 8-10 school districts, followed by state-wide implementation.
- The bill improves and reforms the state's tenure statute. These changes will ensure that (1) tenure is earned by effective teachers, (2) ineffectiveness -- not merely incompetence -- is the standard of dismissal, and (3) that dismissal proceedings will be fair, speedy, and manageable. Specifically:
 - Tenure will be awarded on the basis of effective practice as informed by the new system of evaluation.
 - Ineffective teachers may be terminated.
 - Termination hearings will focus on whether the evaluation ratings are in accordance with the new evaluation program and are reasonable.
 - Termination hearings must occur within tighter timeframes and, for the first time places limits on the hours of evidence and testimony.

Principle #6: Delivers more resources, targeted to districts with the greatest need – provided that they embrace key reforms that position our students for success.

- The final bill and budget provides significant new funding to the Alliance Districts -- the 30 lowest-performing districts in the state.
- Of \$50M in proposed increased ECS funding, \$39.5M is channeled to these 30 districts.
- The bill introduces a new level of accountability into funding for low-performing districts. To receive augmented ECS aid, the low-performing or Alliance Districts must embrace reform strategies, such as implementation of tiered interventions in their schools, extended learning time, strengthened reading programs for elementary school students, coordinated wraparound services for students, and the implementation of strategies to attract top teaching and principal talent. The State Department of Education will review and approve district plans before the new funding is disbursed.
- The bill provides a common and public budgetary template for all districts and schools (common charts of accounts), which will enhance transparency for state & local education spending.