

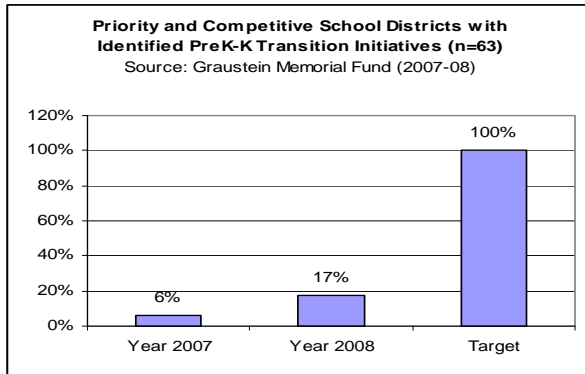
Connecticut Appropriations Committee RBA Template
Part II, Program/Agency/System Accountability Summary

System: Early Childhood Investment System/Early Childhood Cabinet

Quality of Life Result: All Children Healthy and Achieving School Success by Age 9

System Purpose: Improve coordination within and across agencies serving children over the kindergarten through third grade years, expand interagency access to essential information, and increase public accountability for existing expenditures and new investment.

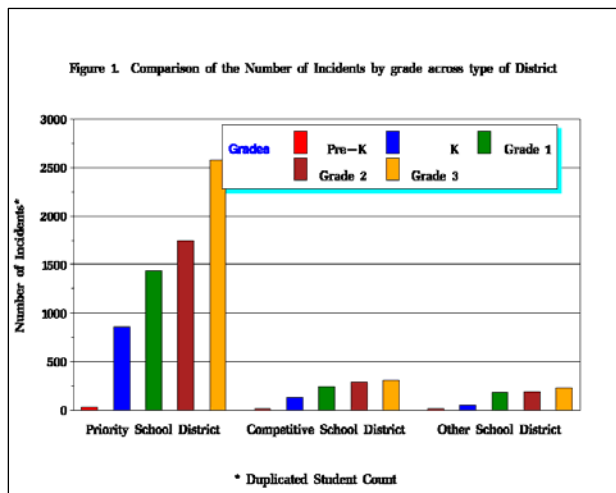
Performance Measure 1: PreK-3rd Grade Transitions and Alignment



Story Behind Measure 1

The desired performance measure is the number of preschools and elementary schools in Priority and Competitive Districts with formal PreK to 3 transition activities. Data on local PreK-K transition policies, programs and activities are not collected at a statewide level by any agency. Community resources are, however, documented online as part of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund's Discovery Initiative.

Performance Measure 2: School Climate

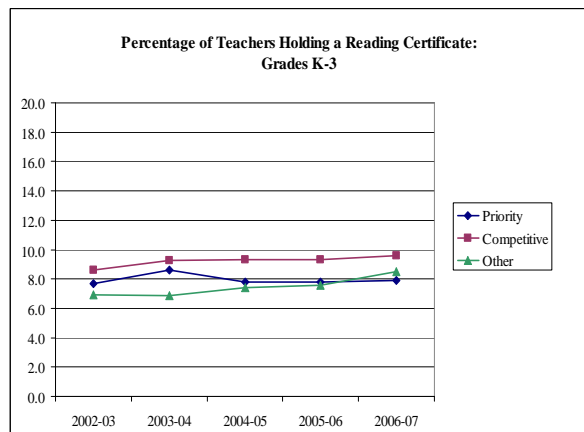


Story Behind Measure 2

Young children must be connected to and engaged in their initial years of schooling as a precondition for any level of academic and social success. We cannot yet report a meaningful measure for school climate. The best proxy measure is the number of disciplinary incidents committed among kindergarteners and 3rd graders.

In the 2005-06 school year, 43,936 kindergartners were enrolled in Connecticut's public schools. SDE data on disciplinary offenses reveal 1,032 instances of inappropriate behavior by kindergarten students during this time. Because one student could have multiple instances of inappropriate behavior, it is likely that there are fewer than 1,032 students involved.

Performance Measure 3: Teacher Competence



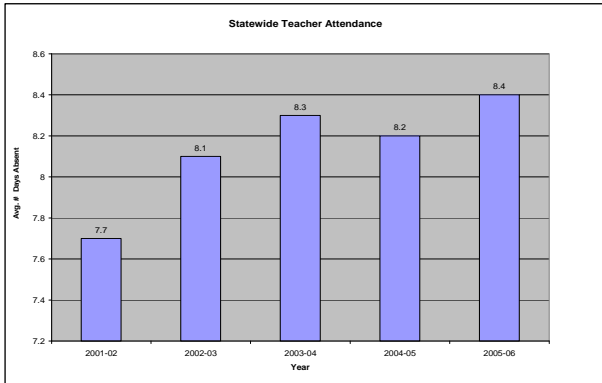
Story Behind Measure 3

The data reflect all teachers in K-3 elementary classrooms and reading specialists who hold a reading certificate. This certificate indicates that the individual has acquired additional skills to teach reading. In Connecticut, fewer than 10% of

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teachers in kindergarten through the 3rd grade hold a reading certificate.

The graph above shows that the percentage of teachers holding a reading certificate has been fairly constant across districts and over time. However, the percentage of teachers with a reading certificate in the 44 Competitive School Districts, is slightly higher than in the 19 Priority School Districts and the rest of Connecticut's LEAs.



Performance Measure 4: Principal Leadership

Story Behind Measure 4

The best single measure of leadership in creating a professional learning community is whether principals have the autonomy they need in a variety of areas that have been proven to enhance student performance, including hiring and assignment of staff and control over resources. The best proxy measure we can currently report is the average number of days absent per teacher. Leadership creates empowered, engaged teachers who are rarely absent.

Ensuring academic success for all students by the 4th grade will require schools to embrace a new and powerful role as professional learning communities that can deliver results for all children, regardless of the challenges they bring with them to school.

Turning the Curves: What do you propose to do over the next two years and why?

1. Implement a comprehensive test of content knowledge and pedagogy in the science of

reading for all new elementary school teachers as a condition of certification.

2. Create a statewide advisory council regarding positive school climate to examine and make recommendations related to school climate improvement.*

3. Ensure that evidence-based practices for raising student achievement are fully incorporated into teacher training programs and ongoing professional development.

4. Create a performance based assessment system for use in evaluating teacher preparation programs - one that links the state approval to the performance of graduates.

5. Institute a consortium consisting of university faculty, professional development providers, SDE, DHE to provide oversight and support for teacher preparation programs in an effort to coordinate preparation standards, licensure, and accreditation.*

6. Create new routes for principal and superintendent certification that functions in conjunction with a State-sponsored School Leadership Institute to facilitate the recruitment and training of highly talented and motivated professionals from a variety of fields.

*Indicates, low-cost, no-cost steps, including reallocation of existing resources.

Key Funding Information	
Total Current Funding	Data not Yet Available
Funding Distribution	
Total Federal Funds	
Total State Funds	
Capital Projects Subtotal	
Other Funding	
Percent of Total Funding Contracted to Third Parties	

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System: Kindergarten-Grade 3 Service Delivery System/Early Childhood Cabinet

System Purpose

Improve coordination within and across agencies serving children during the kindergarten through third grade years, expand interagency access to essential information, and increase public accountability for existing expenditures and new investment.

Contribution to Population Result

Fine by Nine: All Connecticut Children Healthy and Successful in School by Age 9. The K-3 service delivery system will ensure early school success by enlisting the critical partners to provide:

- *highly effective staff* teaching
- *healthy children* to be
- *fluent readers*, with
- *family and community support*, in a
- *safe and welcoming school environment* guided by
- *dynamic school leaders*

Key Funding Information (<i>Dollars reported in millions</i>)	Data Not Yet Available
Total Current Funding	
Funding Distribution:	
Federal	
State	
Capital Projects Subtotal	
Other Funds (Not Federal or State)	
Percent of Total Current Funding Contracted to Third Parties	

Basic System Facts

The Goal II (Fine by Nine) Working Group of the Early Childhood Cabinet was called upon to create a framework for the result “All Children Healthy, Safe and Successful in School by Age 9,” as outlined in the Cabinet’s Year Two RBA template. A group of experts representing Connecticut state agencies and many stakeholders was convened to create this first-ever K-3 population and system framework.

The group has worked over many months during a time a time of increasing attention to flagging test scores for Connecticut’s students in reading and the persistence of Connecticut’s "achievement gap," the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The term “achievement gap” is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students and their non-Hispanic white peers, as well as the similar academic disparities between linguistically diverse students, students with disabilities, and students who qualify for free or reduced lunch and those who do not. The achievement gap shows up in class

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grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates. It has become a focal point of many education reform efforts within the state and for the nation as a whole.

The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show that Connecticut's achievement gaps in reading and mathematics for all disadvantaged groups are among the largest in the nation. On the fourth grade reading and mathematics tests, for example, Connecticut has the largest difference in academic achievement between poor and non-poor students of all the fifty states.

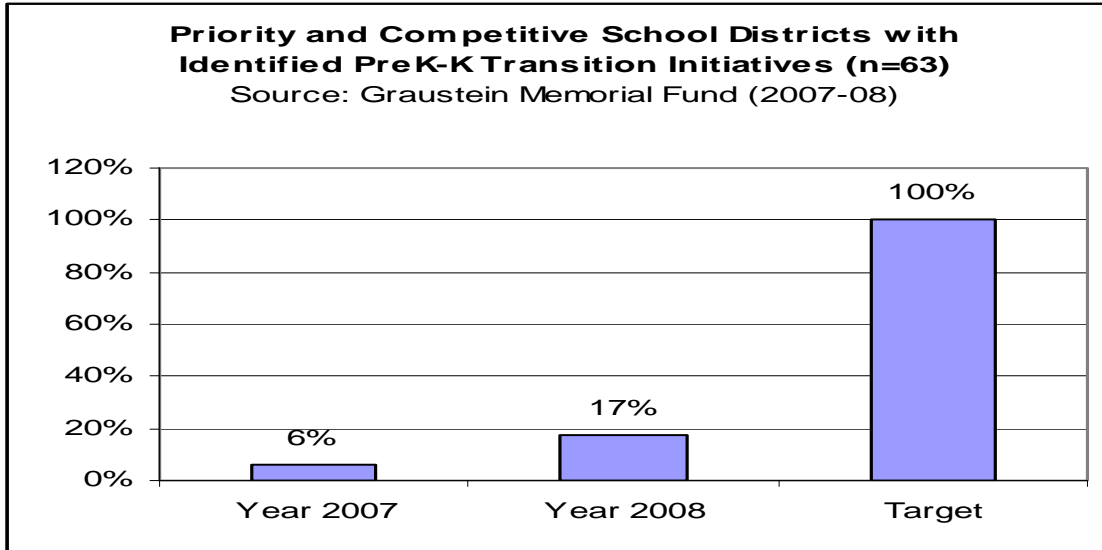
The causes of poor school performance are complex. Children who come to school from communities with a high incidence of poverty have a higher risk of learning difficulties in school. More children are entering school with English as their second language. Some have had no experience in preschool. Still others have parents or guardians who are not literate themselves. Many schools have had difficulty responding to the academic and social needs of poor students. Similarly, many schools have been unable to appropriately respond to the diverse linguistic abilities of children and the physical or cognitive disabilities of all learners. Socio-economic factors, when not addressed appropriately, may contribute to the early academic difficulties that are reflected in state reading scores.

These factors define the context in which the education of our young children must take place. Daunting as some of these socio-economic challenges may be, however, they do not mean that educational failure for these students is inevitable or acceptable. Rather, they make it all the more urgent that we look critically at what we have yet to do in our communities and in our public institutions.

The Goal II "Fine by Nine" working group approached its charge with a sense of urgency about the persistence of Connecticut's achievement gap. Having identified reading as the key to the academic success of all young children, it established a set of bold solutions in six key and interrelated strategic areas that, when pursued in concert, will "turn the curve" on early school success: *highly effective staff teaching healthy children to be fluent readers, with family and community support, in a safe and welcoming school environment guided by dynamic school leaders.*

Performance Measures and Story Behind the Baselines

Performance Measure 1: PreK-3rd Grade Transitions and Alignment



Story Behind Measure 1

The desired performance measure is the number of preschools and elementary schools in School Readiness Program Districts with formal pre-kindergarten to kindergarten (PreK-K) transition activities. Since this is not available, the proxy measure presented here is communities with formal publications/ activities to aid parents in the transition of their children from preschool to kindergarten.

The transition between preschool and kindergarten requires specific and careful attention of educators and families. For the purpose of curriculum alignment and the inclusion of parents in the school lives of their children, each district needs a PreK-K transition plan and program.

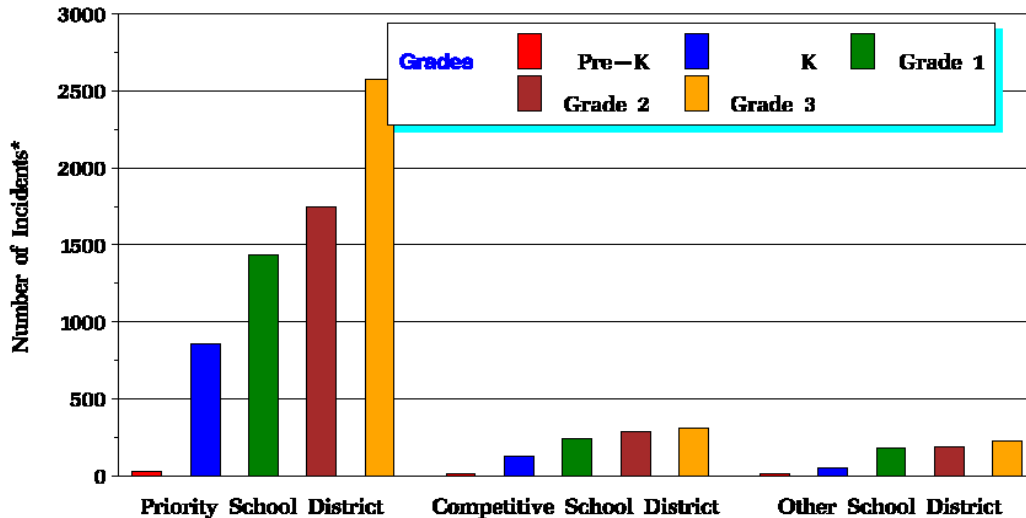
Data on local PreK-K transition policies, programs and activities are not collected at a statewide level by any agency. Community resources are, however, documented online as part of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund's Discovery Initiative.

Over this past year, four communities – Derby, Greenwich, Middletown, and West Hartford – have produced over 20 resources for parents (in English and Spanish) to aid them in understanding and supporting the transition of their children from PreK to K. In 2008, the Discovery Kindergarten Transition Institute will provide 7 additional community K transition teams with a model for planning, implementing, evaluating and sustaining an effective K transition process. This work is privately funded by the Memorial Fund.

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Performance Measure 2. Welcoming School Climate

Figure 1. Comparison of the Number of Incidents by grade across type of District



* Duplicated Student Count

Story Behind Measure 2

The desired measure is the number of young children who identify a caring adult in their school. Because such data are not currently collected, the proxy measure presented here is the number of disciplinary incidents for children in K-3.

Young children must be connected to and engaged in their initial years of schooling as a precondition for any level of academic and social success. The climate in which they go to school determines their level of attention and participation. Children who are not physically or emotionally present cannot learn. When children perceive they are part of the school and feel physically, emotionally and intellectually safe, they are happy to be there. When they feel they are treated fairly by adults in school and feel that the adults care about them, they are ready to learn. A positive climate is an indispensable precondition for realizing high achievement and social success. We cannot yet report a meaningful measure for school climate.

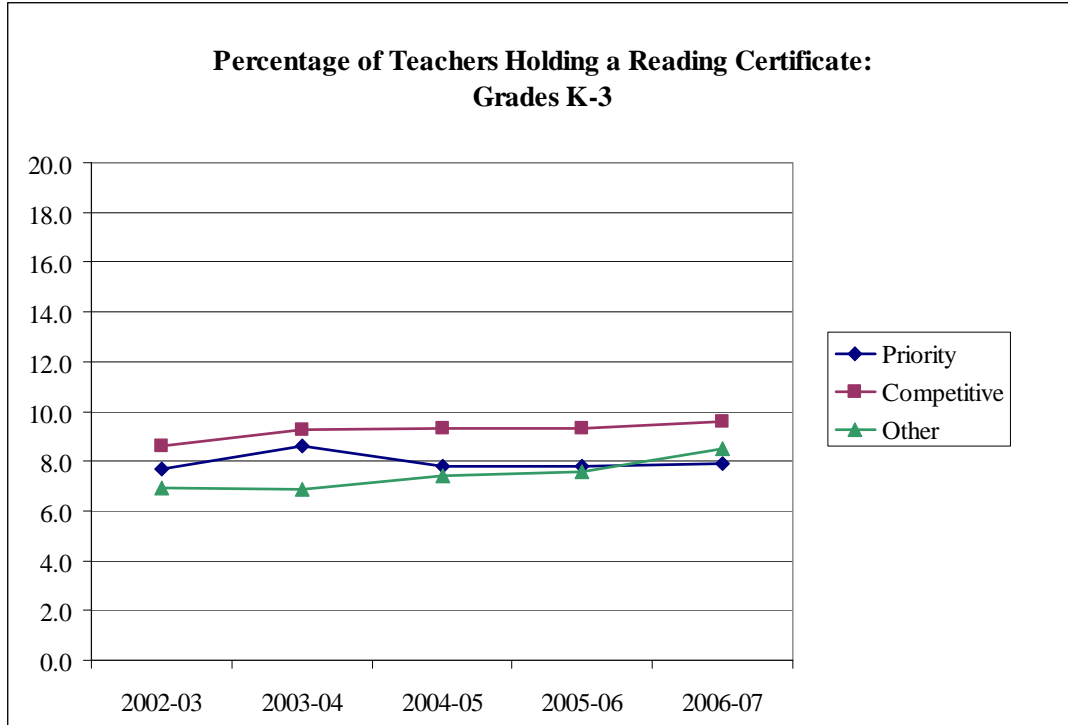
Teaching and learning cannot successfully occur in classrooms where student behavioral incidents disrupt the learning environment. In the 2005-06 school year, 43,936 kindergartners were enrolled in Connecticut’s public schools. SDE data on disciplinary offenses reveal that 1,032 instances of inappropriate behavior for kindergarten students during this time. (It is important to note that one student could have multiple instances of inappropriate behavior so that fewer than 1,032 students are likely to be involved.)

It is evident from the chart that there are significantly more reports of disciplinary problems in the priority school districts compared to districts receiving competitive grants for preschool programs and other districts in the state. The difference is dramatic in kindergarten and continues to grow. There are approximately 2500 incidents in third

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grade in the priority districts while the number of incidents in all other districts remains relatively constant at well below 500 throughout grades 1-3.

Performance Measure 3. Teacher Competence in the Science of Teaching Reading



Story Behind Measure 3

The data reflect all teachers in K-3 elementary classrooms and reading specialists who hold a reading certificate. This certificate indicates that the individual has acquired additional skills to teach reading. In Connecticut, fewer than 10% of teachers in kindergarten through the 3rd grade hold a reading certificate. Recent work by the Haskins Laboratories at Yale has suggested that the average classroom teacher is not knowledgeable in the modern science of reading instruction.

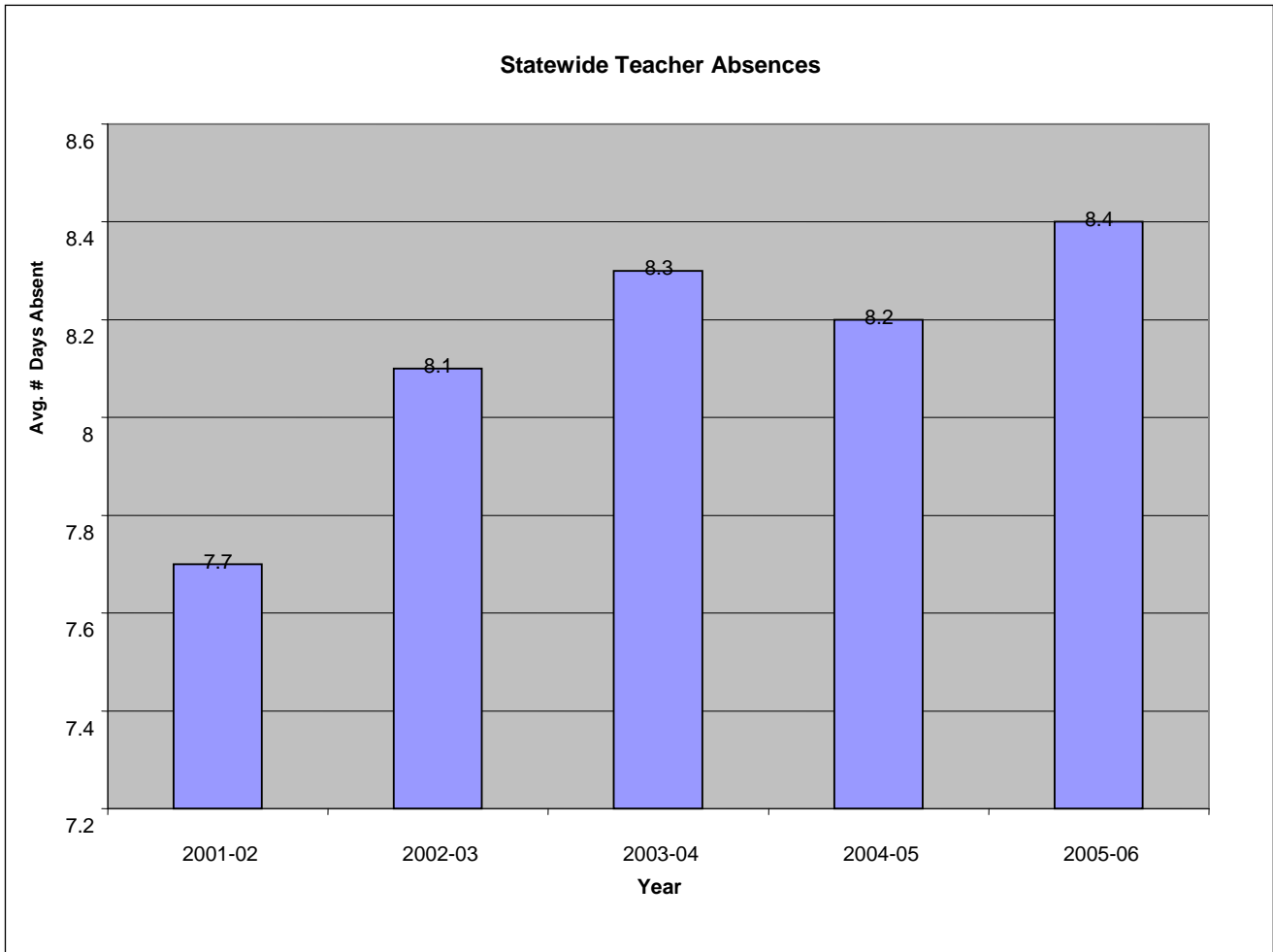
The graph above shows that the percentage of teachers holding a reading certificate has been fairly constant across districts and over time. However, the percentage of teachers with a reading certificate in the 44 Competitive School Districts is slightly higher than in the 19 Priority School Districts and the rest of Connecticut’s LEAs.

While content knowledge in the elementary content areas, pedagogy, and methodology are all foundational components that a highly skilled teacher must possess, these skill sets are not the only components of quality. The ability of the teacher to develop a positive classroom climate that is conducive to learning for all students, to use differentiated teaching strategies for students with various learning styles and needs, and to assess and determine areas in need of improvement for each individual child are also critical to the determination of high quality.

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Lack of fidelity in applying proven methods of reading instruction is one issue that may account for the continuing achievement gap in reading in Connecticut. The Connecticut State Department of Education is addressing this problem through its accountability plan. Details are presented in SDE's RBA template for the Early Reading Success program.

Performance Measure 4: Leadership in Creating a Professional Learning Community



Story Behind Measure 4

The best single measure of leadership in creating a professional learning community is whether principals have the autonomy they need in a variety of areas that have been proven to enhance student performance, including hiring and assignment of staff and control over resources. The best proxy measure we can currently report is the average number of days absent per teacher. Leadership creates empowered, engaged teachers who are rarely absent.

Delivering on the goal of ensuring that all students in the state are “fine by nine” will require schools to embrace a new and powerful role as professional learning communities that can deliver results for all children, regardless of the challenges they bring with them to school. Extensive research over the past decade has definitively documented the existence of such schools all around the country – outstanding “high performing, high poverty”

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schools that are dramatically closing the achievement gap. Beyond simply identifying their existence, research has gone further by detailing the common elements of these schools as “professional learning communities” in which all the adults are aligned around a common vision of dramatically raising student achievement (Richard DuFour 2005, Michael Fullan 2005).

Attributes of strong school leaders: (1) Entrepreneurial visionaries with a commitment to transforming the system in which they operate into a community that delivers results for all children; (2) Knowledgeable instructional leaders conversant in the growing body of evidence-based instructional practices for raising student achievement; and (3) Gifted coaches and facilitators.

Partners and Their Roles

- State Agencies such as Education, Children and Families, Public Health, and Environmental Protection to align program and services in the implementation of recommended strategies. Specifically, the Department of Education will implement the statewide education accountability plan (PA-07 Sec 32) to ensure that all schools are teaching all students to read.
- Institutes of Higher Education to ensure that teachers, principals and other educators have skills and expertise to teach reading effectively to all children.
- School Districts to implement with fidelity the strategies/researched-based approaches needed to improved student outcomes.
- Family and Community organizations, including the business community, to build effective partnerships that support improved literacy outcome for children and families.
- Engage professional education related associations and teachers unions around issues of highly effective staff.
- Philanthropic community to assist in providing resources around issues that align with their mission and goals.

What do you propose to do to improve performance in the next two years and why?

- Create a statewide advisory council regarding positive school climate. The membership reflecting education, social service agencies, non-profit organizations, and family and community members must be diverse. The charge of this council will include making recommendations to key policy makers and legislators regarding effective legislation, monitoring, compliance, promising and best practices, and other relevant activities related to school climate improvement. (low-cost)
- Ensure that evidence-based practices for raising student achievement are fully incorporated into teacher training programs and ongoing professional development by establishing a framework of performance based accountability for teachers and teacher training institutions that is validated by longitudinal student performance gains disaggregated by teacher and by training institution.
- Create a performance-based assessment system for the state to use in evaluating teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions that explicitly links the state’s program approval to:

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1. The performance of the graduates of each higher education institution on assessment of their mastery of evidence based teaching techniques; and
 2. The ability of program graduates to demonstrate longitudinal performance gains on state mastery tests for the students they teach (will require use of unique teacher ID's linked to unique student ID's or SASIDs).
- Implement a comprehensive test of content knowledge and pedagogy in the science of reading for all new elementary teachers as a condition of certification.
 - Institute a consortium consisting of university faculty, professional development providers, SDE, DHE to provide oversight and support for teacher preparation programs in an effort to coordinate preparation standards, licensure, and accreditation. (low-cost)
 - Create new routes for principal and superintendent certification that functions in conjunction with a State-sponsored School Leadership Institute to facilitate the recruitment and training of highly talented and motivated professionals from a variety of fields. For principal candidates, establish admission criteria of career experience including at least three years of classroom teaching. Establish graduation requirements for both principals and superintendents to include demonstrating mastery-level knowledge on an assessment of evidence based instruction techniques.

Appendix A, Data Development Agenda

1. Develop capacity to collect data on School Readiness Communities with formal activities to aid parents in the transition from preschool to kindergarten.
2. Develop state-level survey data on principals who report having sufficient autonomy to implement the promising and proven practices that have been shown to close gaps between socio-economic groups and dramatically raise achievement levels for all students.
3. Develop statewide survey instrument for measuring percentage of children matched with a specific caring adult.
4. Begin to undertake a comprehensive financial scan to include state and federal resources of the complete K-3 delivery system.
5. Collect consistent K-3 attendance data across all districts as well as expand the attendance data collection to report standardized identification of reasons for absenteeism.