



# Commissioner's Network Newsletter

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## II. Calendar of Upcoming Events

### April 2014

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

April 1: IAWC Midyear Meeting

April 7: Stanton Midyear Meeting

April 8: Windham Midyear Meeting

April 9: DiLoreto and Briggs Midyear Meetings

**April 25: Plan Amendment Deadline**

## I. Midyear Review Process and 2014-15 Plan Amendments

On behalf of the Network support team, thank you for welcoming us into your schools for the midyear review process. We hope this process created an opportunity to reflect and begin planning for next school year. School teams are now developing 2014-15 plan amendments. Annual plan amendments will guide implementation of each school's turnaround plan each year. Accordingly, the plan amendment should capture the school's growth areas, strategic priorities, and aligned budget proposal for the 2014-15 school year.

The plan amendment is an extension of the original turnaround plan; where there are updates and revisions, these amendments supersede the original turnaround plan. In these instances, the Commissioner or his designee may convene the Turnaround Committee to approve the plan amendment by consensus. If the Turnaround Committee does not approve the plan amendment, the Commissioner may take appropriate actions to ensure sufficient progress at the school, including, but not limited to, finding the turnaround plan deficient and developing a revised turnaround plan.

Please reach out to your CSDE point of contact with any additional questions and/or to set up time to brainstorm strategies for next year. **Please submit your 2014-15 plan amendments and budget proposals to your point of contact by Friday, April 25, 2014.**

## III. LEAD Connecticut Opportunities

In collaboration with LEAD Connecticut and the CSDE's Talent Office, we are pleased to announce several leadership development opportunities. LEAD CT will be offering a new Spring Leadership Fellowship between May 5, 2014 and June 27, 2014. This is a full-time fellowship designed to prepare principals to lead school turnaround efforts beginning in the fall of 2014. **Please email Pete Cummings ([pcummings@ctschoolorchange.org](mailto:pcummings@ctschoolorchange.org)) and Morgan Barth ([morgan.barth@ct.gov](mailto:morgan.barth@ct.gov)) for more information.**

In addition, LEAD CT is now accepting applications for the Turnaround Principal Community of Practice beginning this summer. Through this program, principals join a powerful network of practitioners and receive targeted trainings and embedded coaching throughout the school year. **Applications are due by May 15, 2014 and can be found on LEAD CT's website.** Please see attachment for more details on LEAD CT's offerings.

#### IV. Spotlight on Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner: Wraparound Supports

This year, Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner (JAH-Milner) has a renewed focus on providing students and their families with access to high-quality nonacademic supports and wraparound services. Working in collaboration with Milner's Community Schools Partner, Catholic Charities, the school provides enhanced supports for students and families through afterschool programming, on-site clinical staff, and additional supports for families of the school.



Approximately 125 students are eligible to participate in afterschool programming offered daily between 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM. During that time, students receive dinner and academic tutoring and interventions. The on-site clinical support team includes: one full-time social worker and a part-time psychologist employed by Hartford Public Schools (HPS); and a full-time social worker and a part-time social worker who provide targeted case management and counseling services for identified students. Additionally, the Scholar Development Specialist supports students and teachers by reinforcing behavioral expectations and developing behavior plans. Milner added many of these positions midyear as it became evident that additional social-emotional supports were necessary. Catholic Charities has successfully added Milner as a satellite location to its child guidance clinic license and will begin providing full-time mental health services at Milner this month.

As a supplement to the supports provided to students at the school, Catholic Charities also offers wraparound services for families and adults. These supports include referrals to food banks, medical services, and vouchers for uniforms. The organization serves as a liaison at the school, referring students and their families to a wide range of services.

Milner and the surrounding community are working hard to address the needs of students and their families through robust wraparound supports.

Well done, JAH-Milner and partners!



#### V. Spotlight on Stanton: The Literacy Workshop Model



*Submitted by: Billie Shea, Principal, and Jane Cook, Literacy Specialist*

Last spring, the Norwich Public Schools (NPS) Language Arts Curriculum Committee reviewed reading programs to determine which program would best meet the needs of all students district-wide. This is a large undertaking and investment for any school district, so the decision was hotly debated. By late spring, three choices emerged: two commercial anthology reading programs and the Literacy Workshop Model.

Noting the early successes Stanton Network School was experiencing through the implementation of Writing Workshop as part of its original Network Plan, combined with the fact that NPS did not have tremendous results with commercial anthology reading programs used in the past, ultimately the decision became clear.

What is the Literacy Workshop Model? Simply put, the Literacy Workshop Model is a research-based approach to teaching both reading and writing as processes. Teachers apply best practices in reading and writing instruction developed by renowned educational researchers, teachers, and writers, such as: Donald Graves, Don Murray, Lucy Calkins, Richard Allington, Robert Marzano, Doug Reeves, and more. The Literacy Workshop puts real books in the hands of students and teaches them to read for a purpose; it puts journals in the hands of students and teaches them to write for an authentic audience. Students learn how to give feedback to one another during the reading and the writing process and serve as the authentic audience students need to truly engage with text.



NPS prepared to launch the Literacy Workshop Model in Grades K through 8 at the start of the 2013-14 school year by purchasing leveled books from a variety of publishers. This resulted in classroom libraries filled with informational text and literature across a broad range of genres and content areas to match the levels and interests of the readers and writers in the room. NPS convened a Curriculum Design Team to revise the English language arts curriculum to align with the Common Core State Standards, the Literacy Workshop Model, and all new materials purchased to support the Workshop Model. The district continues to deliver embedded professional development with literacy experts throughout the school year with workshops and demonstration lessons for all grade levels.

Since the original launch, Stanton Network School has kicked the Literacy Workshop Model “up a notch” by incorporating blended learning. Software, including Lexia Reading Core5, Benchmark Universe, MY Access Online Writing Tools, Calendar Math, Discovery Education Science Techbook, and IXL Math, are combined with other technology tools, such as interactive whiteboards, data projectors, and document cameras in every classroom, so that teachers can support the literacy and numeracy development of their students.

Stanton monitors student progress through a variety of tools. Teachers evaluate foundational skills using weekly online reports from Lexia and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2) benchmarks in the fall, winter, and spring. Teachers also assess fluency using the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessment on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and use running records to determine which reading cueing systems students are using to evaluate whether the text level is correct for instruction. With the help of a great team of interventionists supported by the Network grant, Stanton provides a double dose of small group guided reading to struggling readers, as well as push-in support for students at all grade levels to help teachers integrate literacy across the curriculum.



At Stanton, the Literacy Workshop Model has changed reading and writing from drudgery to passion. Students look forward to their daily reading and writing routines and take the initiative to write about topics of their choice. Students are empowered as peer editors and work to craft feedback that is meaningful for their peers.

The adoption of the Literacy Workshop Model has also served as a springboard to build on community connections with local organizations. For example, Stanton Network School teamed up with three local financial institutions this year to display students’ written work on community bulletin boards.

Displaying student work in the community provides students with an even wider audience and gives students opportunities to earn awards for their work. At Stanton’s March Awards Ceremony, 10 students received special recognitions for their writing and had the opportunity to read their work aloud to an audience of Stanton families. In addition, one Stanton 3rd grade student received Honorable Mention from the Connecticut Writing Project and will be honored at the Connecticut Student Writers recognition ceremony at the University of Connecticut in May. Check out our Stanton Writes Wikispace by clicking [here](#) to see what our Stanton students are writing.

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This story is inspirational for a number of reasons. First, it highlights the importance of identifying a need, indicating a strategic approach, and relentlessly driving implementation and results. Second, it exemplifies what we all hope to accomplish through the Commissioner’s Network. Not only is Stanton changing the odds for its students, the transformational work underway at Stanton is serving as a catalyst for change, informing district-wide improvements.

Way to go, Stanton! Keep up the good work.

