OUR RACE
TO THE TOP

THE
STATE
OF CONNECTICUT
PUBLIC
EDUCATION
2009–2010

THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT PUBLIC EDUCATION

A 2009–2010 REPORT CARD FOR CONNECTICUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

FOREWORD BY **ALEX JOHNSTON**
INTRODUCTION BY **TORI TRUSCHEIT**

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Foreword

ALEX JOHNSTON
CONNCAN CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As we release the fourth annual *State of Connecticut Public Education* report, education reformers are perched at a historic moment. This year, states will compete head-to-head for $4 billion in federal money through the U.S. Department of Education's *Race to the Top*. This competition is the largest amount of discretionary funding ever allocated for education reform—and the states that most effectively revamp their public education systems to put kids first will win.

In addition to our traditional look at the state of Connecticut public schools, this year's report takes a look at Connecticut's policy environment: namely, where we stand in the *Race to the Top*. The *2009–2010 State of Connecticut Public Education* report gives us the facts about how our districts are performing, how well our teachers are being trained, and how our educational standards measure up to other states.

At ConnCAN, we have spent the last five years making noise about Connecticut's public school crisis. We have the largest achievement gap in the entire country, and this report shows that this year, Connecticut retains that shameful mantle.

This Race—our race—is a chance to bring up to $200 million of federal funds in Connecticut schools. And it's our best opportunity yet to make concrete progress for Connecticut kids. As the *Race to the Top* competition gets underway, momentum is building to help Connecticut make the kind of changes our schools need. States like California, Massachusetts and New York have a head start. They're already passing laws to reform education policies. We have no time to waste in Connecticut.

At ConnCAN, we believe that the public deserves a voice in our public schools. That's why we're billing the Race, *Our Race to the Top*. I invite you to visit *www.ourracetothetop.org* for information on our campaign, targeted opportunities to contact your elected representatives and updates on how Connecticut is faring in the Race. Please feel free to contact me with your thoughts on this report as well as your ideas about how to win our *Race to the Top*, and to join the movement so that every child in Connecticut has access to a great public school.

Introduction

TORI TRUSCHEIT
CONNCAN RESEARCH & POLICY MANAGER

ConnCAN's fourth annual State of Connecticut Public Education report is an update on the state of our public schools and our public policies. Where do they stand in relation to each other, to other states, and to other nations? Public schools are our state's biggest investment, so parents, educators, and policymakers want and deserve to know: how well are they serving our children?

Among our findings this year:

• Reforms in four areas—Measuring Effectiveness, World-Class Standards, Superstar Principals and Money Follows the Child—will make Connecticut competitive in the *Race to the Top*.

• Connecticut still has the nation's worst achievement gap between poor students and their wealthier peers, according to the Nation's Report Card.

• Connecticut earns mostly Ds and Fs as a state for our failures in educating our neediest students and for the severity of our achievement gaps.

• For the first time, we are able to stack teacher preparation programs against each other and the results—gleaned from the state's new Foundations of Early Reading test given to teachers preparing for placement in early elementary grades—reveal huge disparities in how well Connecticut's institutions of higher education are preparing new teachers.

• New research that connects state and national test results shows a discrepancy in how Connecticut measures student performance and shows that even our highest-performing students trail their peers in other states, including Massachusetts.

Connecticut's economic woes will likely last beyond the next budget cycle, but education is not a luxury we can afford to ignore in tough economic times: a recent McKinsey report showed that our national achievement gap has created a permanent recession.[1] And Connecticut is far from immune to these problems. A Connecticut high school dropout, on average, costs the state more than $103,000 over the course of a lifetime in lower tax revenues and incarceration costs, while a college graduate will make a net contribution of $1.09 million in tax payments over that same amount of time.[2]

We are in the midst of a fierce state-by-state competition for new federal education dollars through the *Race to the Top*. Action on a few

1 *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools*, McKinsey and Company, Social Sector Office, 2009, available at *http://www.mckinsey.com/App_Media/Images/Page_Images/Offices/SocialSector/PDF/achievement_gap_report.pdf*.
2 *The Economic, Social, Civic and Fiscal Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Findings for Connecticut Adults in the 21st Century*, Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University and *Our Piece of the Pie*, Andrew Sum, October 2009, available at *http://www.opp.org/docs/DropoutReport09.pdf*.

key reforms can make a critical difference in our prospects for securing a federal grant of historic proportions, making *Race to the Top* Connecticut's most exciting opportunity for education reform in years.

Our Race to the Top

In a year when federal *Race to the Top* grants will be awarded only to states that are aggressively advancing education reforms, where does Connecticut stand?

Leaders and Laggards, a Nov. 2009 joint report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Center for American Progress, grades Connecticut's chances in the competition. Following up on a 2007 report of the same name that graded states on school effectiveness, the new report measures how well states encourage educational innovation. States with high levels of innovation encourage entrepreneurial ways of solving educational problems and move beyond tired practices. A strong state policy environment can help proven innovators like high-performing charter schools grow, but rigid bureaucracy, barriers to alternative certification, and inefficient school finance systems can hinder new, gap-busting ideas.

Connecticut scored near the bottom on the report's scale of educational innovation, receiving an F for its school management system, a D for use of technology, a C for data transparency, and a C overall for school finance. These findings align with ConnCAN's most recent report about school finance, which details our state's opaque, inefficient school finance system and our lack of easily accessible financial data.[3] Compared to states like Colorado, where the user-friendly Growth Model earned the state an A for data transparency, Connecticut has work to do to support innovation—a major theme in the *Race to the Top* criteria.[4]

Reform in four particular areas will increase Connecticut's chances to contend for the funds:

Measuring Effectiveness

Connecticut needs an excellent teacher in every classroom and an excellent principal in every corner office. To get there, we must first accurately measure the progress students are making in our schools. Right now we have a lot of snapshots of how students are doing at any one time, but we don't have a trusted system to benchmark their progress against clear expectations. Connecticut needs a better data system that both measures this growth and links it to teachers and principals. This new system will allow us to begin to both measure the effectiveness of teachers and principals and the programs that train them.

A student achievement growth model that assigns unique identifiers to teachers and principals would allow districts to identify those that are

3 *The Tab: How Connecticut Can Fix its Dysfunctional Education Spending System to Reward Success, Incentivize Choice and Boost Student Achievement*, Public Impact and ConnCAN, November 2009, available at *http://www.conncan.org/sites/default/files/research/TheTab.pdf*.
4 For more information on the Colorado Growth Model, see *https://cdeapps.cde.state.co.us/growth_model_public/*.

most and least effective. After establishing a growth model, Connecticut would need to fully assign unique teacher identifiers, gather and upload student course assignment and schedule information, and link teachers to students by classroom and course assignments. This kind of information would provide insight about how well the state's teacher and principal preparation programs are training their graduates, improving accountability for these institutions just as the Foundations of Reading Test has begun to do this year. A state-of-the-art growth model would give Connecticut a shot at the 83 points under this criterion, and using this growth model to improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs would earn the state another 14 points.

World-Class Standards

Once we measure effectiveness, we need goals to strive towards in our public schools. Connecticut needs to take our academic standards for students to the next level, such as the ability to develop a thesis in English or prove a theorem in math. These goals must be internationally benchmarked to prepare Connecticut students to compete in the global economy.

Connecticut must plan to develop and adopt standards that are internationally benchmarked and shared by multiple states—and we need to do it by August 2010, if we want to be eligible for the 50 points in this section of the criteria. Our state has signed on to the Common Core Standards agreement, an initiative started by the National Governors Association that 47 other states have also signed. Connecticut has also participated in a New England regional collaborative around state standards, but this regional agreement will not be enough to earn Connecticut full points in the *Race to the Top* criteria. For the full points, the state must have a very specific plan to adopt standards shared with a majority of other states—and we must implement it quickly, because judges will award us no points if we miss *Race to the Top* deadlines.

Superstar Principals

Connecticut needs outstanding leadership in our public schools. That means creating alternative pathways for our most talented classroom teachers to become principals. Just like Teach for America created an alternative pathway for some of our most promising college graduates to teach in urban schools, programs like New Leaders for New Schools will do the same for Connecticut's principal corps.

States with strong alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals are eligible for 21 points in the competition. Connecticut does have alternate routes to certification for teachers but not yet for school leaders, although there is statutory language in place that would allow for a school leader alternate route program. Unfortunately, Connecticut could be at risk to receive no points at all for this criterion, despite our alternative routes for teacher certification, because we do

not have a program for school leaders. Further legislative and/or administrative action is urgently needed to make this type of program a reality by June 1st at the latest.

Money Follows the Child

Connecticut's antiquated school finance system has become fiscally unsustainable. It is high time that we begin the transition to a common sense, transparent, funding system where money follows children based on their learning needs. This year we have an important opportunity to begin these financial reforms—and an urgent need to start with our state's high-performing charter schools because of *Race to the Top*'s special emphasis on leveraging the growth of these schools as part of statewide strategies for education reform.

Indeed, the *Race to the Top* guidelines allot a full 40 points for states that ensure "successful conditions for high-performing charters and other innovative schools."[5] Currently, charter schools in Connecticut receive only about 70% as much per-pupil funding as traditional public schools, and enrollment caps limit access to these free schools, which serve mostly low-income children.

When a student leaves a traditional district school to attend a public charter school, the funding should follow them to that charter school. This system would meet *Race to the Top*'s requirements by funding charter school students equally and by removing the effective cap on charter school students due to a uniquely restrictive funding system in which Connecticut remains one of just a handful of states where charter schools rely on a separate line-item appropriation in the state budget every year. Recognizing the extraordinarily challenging financial circumstances facing both school districts and the state, this transition could be deferred until the state's next two-year budget cycle, and would be phased in with transitional aid to districts over multiple years.

These four areas make up a significant number of points in the *Race to the Top*. Connecticut has no time to lose in fulfilling these goals.

From Public Policy to Public Schools

Our failure to get state education policy right has real consequences for Connecticut kids. While overall state test scores increased this year for many groups of students, Connecticut's worst-in-the-nation achievement gap persists.

5 *Federal Race to the Top Guidelines*, available at *http://www .ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/ executive-summary.pdf*.

FIGURE 1 How Quickly are Connecticut's Urban Districts Closing the Achievement Gap?

CONNECTICUT AVERAGE

3.6

AVERAGE CHANGE IN % OF STUDENTS AT STATE GOALS ON CMT

DISTRICT

HARTFORD

NEW HAVEN

STAMFORD

WATERBURY

BRIDGEPORT
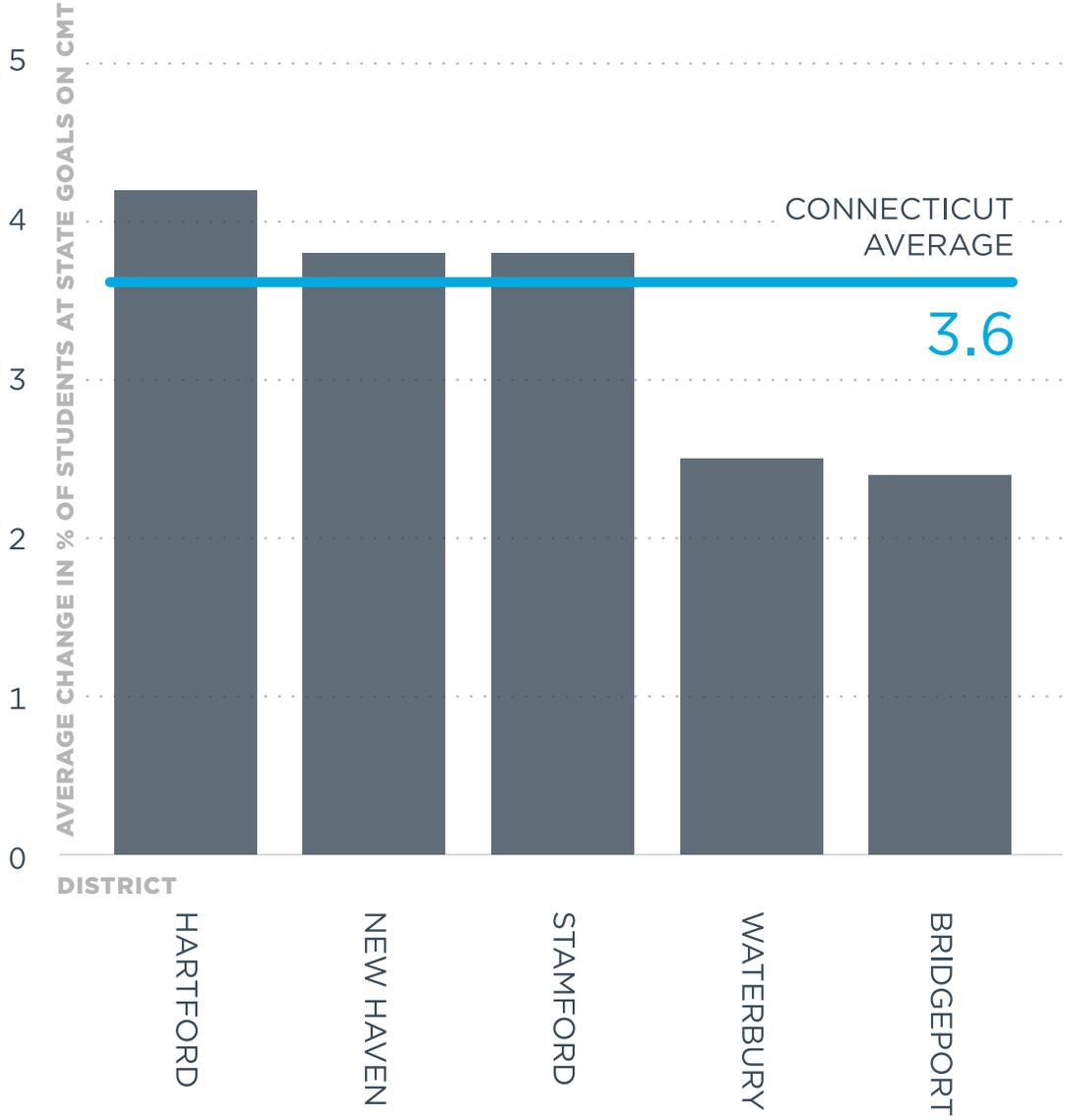
TABLE 1 ACHIEVEMENT GAPS
Percentage Point Gap of Students
Meeting State Goals

SCHOOL LEVEL	2008	2009	% POINT CHANGE
African-American/White Achievement Gap			
Elementary	37.7	37.3	−0.03
Middle	39.8	38.7	−1.10
High	44.1	43.0	−1.10
Hispanic/White Achievement Gap			
Elementary	37.3	37.1	−0.20
Middle	40.1	39.7	−0.40
High	41.9	40.5	−1.40
Poor/Non-Poor Achievement Gap			
Elementary	38.8	37.7	−1.10
Middle	40.4	39.4	−1.00
High	40.9	39.8	−1.00

TABLE 2 STATE REPORT CARD
Elementary Schools

GROUP / SUBGROUP	METRIC	GRADE
Performance Gains		
Connecticut	4.7	B
Students Within Goal Range		
Connecticut	65.0	C+
Subgroups Within Goal Range		
African-American	38.1	D
Hispanic	38.7	D
Low-Income	39.2	D
Gap Between Subgroups		
African-American/White	38.5	F
Hispanic/White	37.9	F
Low-/Non-Low Income	37.8	F

TABLE 3 STATE REPORT CARD
Middle Schools

GROUP / SUBGROUP	METRIC	GRADE
Performance Gains		
Connecticut	2.5	C+
Students Within Goal Range		
Connecticut	65.2	C+
Subgroups Within Goal Range		
African-American	34.9	D–
Hispanic	35.0	D–
Low-Income	35.8	D–
Gap Between Subgroups		
African-American/White	42.5	F
Hispanic/White	42.4	F
Low-/Non-Low Income	41.4	F

TABLE 4 STATE REPORT CARD
High Schools

GROUP / SUBGROUP	METRIC	GRADE
Students Within Goal Range		
Connecticut	48.4	C–
Subgroups Within Goal Range		
African-American	16.9	F
Hispanic	19.5	F
Low-Income	18.7	F
Gap Between Subgroups		
African-American/White	43.1	F
Hispanic/White	40.5	F
Low-/Non-Low Income	39.8	F

The Connecticut Mastery Test, given to public school students in grades three through eight, and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, given to students in grade 10, provide a snapshot of how well our schools are doing.

In elementary and middle school, scores on the CMT increased by a few percentage points overall. On average, 65 percent of fifth graders scored at or above goal in 2009, while 65.2 percent of eighth graders scored at or above goal on average. In comparison to 2008, three percent more elementary students and 3.2 percent more middle school students performed at or above goal. If we examine performance gains—a measure of how last year's third graders did this year in fourth grade and how last year's fourth graders did this year in fifth grade– we find an elementary increase of 4.7 percentage points. In middle school, performance gains were slightly lower, at 2.5 percentage points.

In high school, performance on the CAPT, given to tenth graders, decreased slightly. In a comparison of scores from 2008, tenth graders scored 1.6 points lower in 2009, on average, far below a statewide 4.1 percentage point *increase* in 2008.

Connecticut's achievement gaps decreased minimally in 2009 on both the CMT and CAPT. African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students increased their scores slightly more than the state average increase in the elementary and middle grades. In elementary school, the achievement gap between African-American and white students is 38.5 percentage points, meaning that on average, the percentage of white students scoring at or above goal is 38.5 points higher than for African-American elementary school students. The gap between Hispanic and white elementary students is slightly smaller, shrinking .2 points from 2008 to 37.1 points. For poor and non-poor elementary students, the gap is 37.8 points.

In middle school, achievement gaps are even larger than in elementary school, and the gap between Hispanic students and white students, at 42.4 points, is almost exactly as wide as the gap between African-American and white students, at 42.5 points. Low-income middle school students performed an average of 41.4 percentage points below their higher-income counterparts.

In high school, scores for these subgroups declined a little less than the average decline across the state, but achievement gaps are alarming. The gap between African-American and white students in high school increased from middle school to 43.1 points, and the gap between Hispanic students and their white peers was 40.5 points. Low-income students scored 39.8 percentage points behind their higher-income peers on the 2009 CAPT. African-American scores declined one point, from 17.9 to 16.9 percent at or above goal, while Hispanic scores declined .6 points on average, from 20.1 to 19.5 percent at or above goal.

Drilling Down to Districts

On the 2009 CMT and CAPT tests, Connecticut's large cities improved at a similar rate to the rest of the state. With the state's highest concen-

tration of students in poverty, cities are central to statewide efforts to close the achievement gap. Hartford is entering its third year of sweeping reform and New Haven has embarked on a new strategy for change in recent months to ensure that its students make rapid progress.

Hartford's results from the CMT and CAPT showed strong momentum. Students in Hartford improved at a faster rate than any of Connecticut's other large cities, matching 2008's improvement rate with a 4.2 point performance gain increase in 2009. Three of the five largest cities outperformed the state average of 2.5 points in performance gains: behind Hartford were New Haven and Stamford with 3.8-point performance gains each. Waterbury and Bridgeport gained 2.5 and 2.4 points, respectively. In high school, Waterbury, Bridgeport and Hartford outperformed the state average for improvement."

Still 50 out of 50

On the National Assessment of Education Progress, Connecticut's achievement gap between poor students and their wealthier peers remained the largest in the country, continuing a trend from 2007 for both fourth and eighth grade students. Although the gap decreased slightly between 2007 and 2009, Connecticut ranks 50 out of 50 states for the poor/non-poor achievement gap in both fourth and eighth grade math.

The National Assessment of Education Progress is a test given every two years to a random selection of students in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades in math and reading, and every six years in other subjects. Created in 1969 and overseen by the U.S. Department of Education, the test allows for state-to-state comparisons across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Because the test operates outside the No Child Left Behind accountability framework, it carries no direct consequences for individual schools or states. The results from the 2009 test were released in October for math and will be released in the spring for reading. Twelfth grade results are released only on the national level.

When the Nation's Report Card was released in 2007, Connecticut was dead last in achievement gap rankings. Poor Connecticut students scored further behind their wealthier peers than in any other state in the nation. Results for the 2009 math test show little improvement. In fourth grade, the gap between poor and non-poor students is 2.79 grade levels, down slightly from 2.95 grade levels in 2007 but still the nation's worst. In eighth grade, the gap between poor and non-poor students is 3.41 grade levels in math, down slightly from 3.61 grade levels in 2007.

Other achievement gaps also remained near the worst in the nation. In fourth grade math, the gap between African-American students and white students was 40th of 44 states, at 3.08 grade levels. Hispanic fourth graders are 2.61 grade levels behind white students, ranking 42nd out

FIGURE 2 Connecticut's Achievement Gap,
Worst in the Nation, Again: 4th Grade Math,
Poor/Non-Poor Gap, 2009
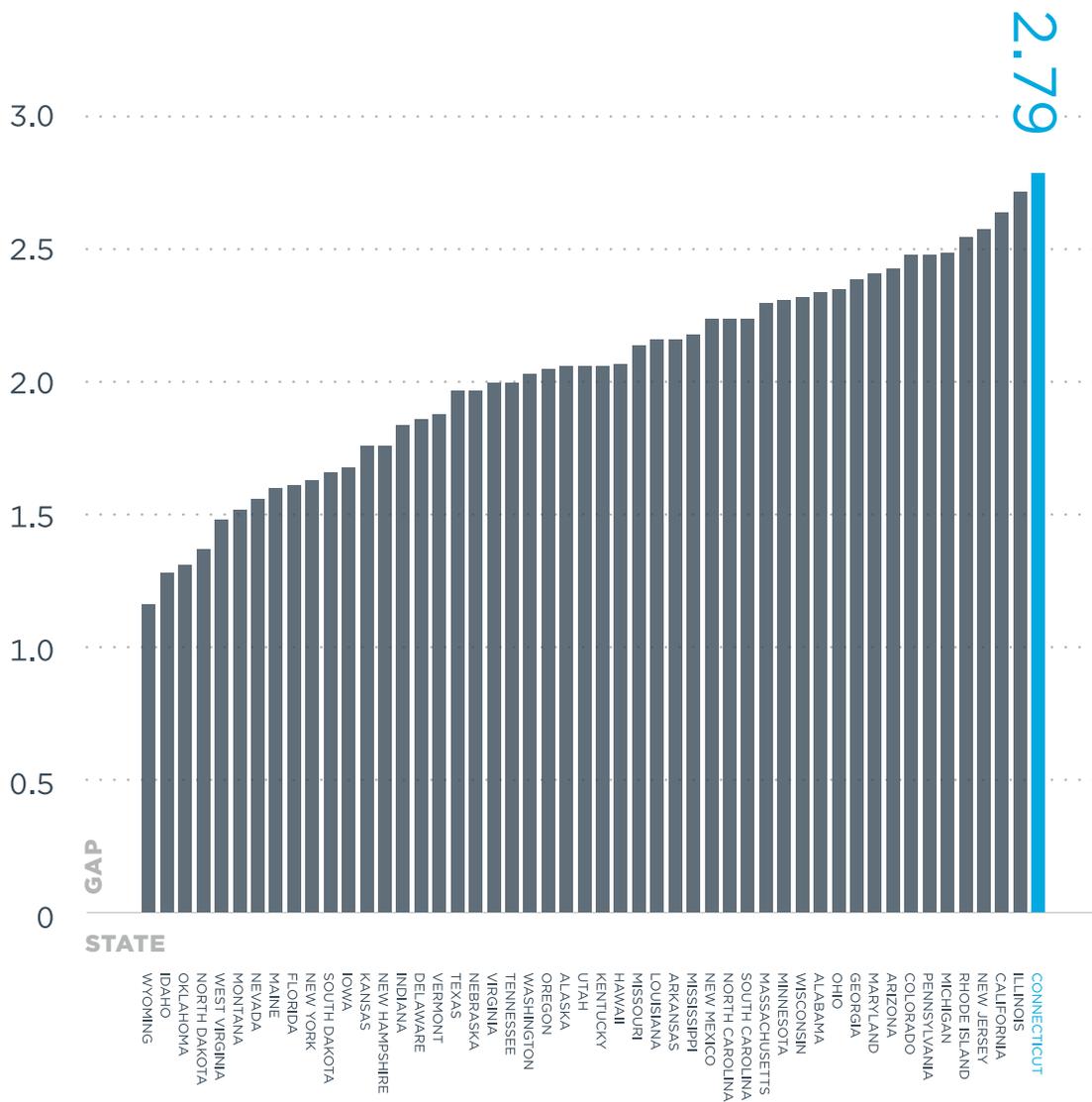
FIGURE 3 Connecticut's Achievement Gap,
Worst in the Nation, Again: 8th Grade Math,
Poor/Non-Poor Gap, 2009
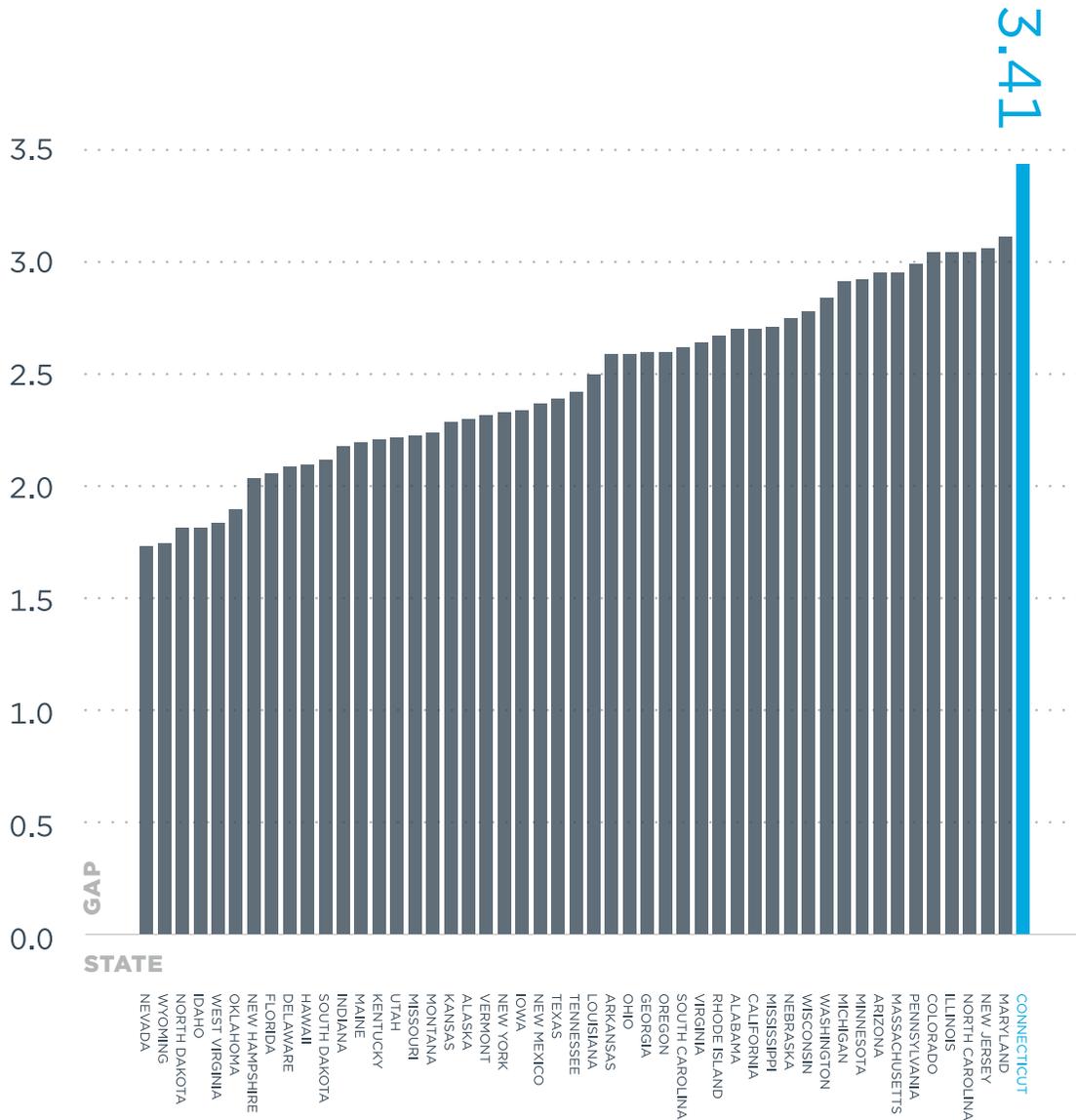
of 45 states for the worst Hispanic-white achievement gap. In middle school, Connecticut's African-American eighth graders score 3.67 grade levels below their white peers, and the gap between Hispanic and white eighth graders in math is the worst in the nation, at 3.43 grade levels.

Although Connecticut's achievement gaps on the Nation's Report Card are extreme, overall scores were relatively high. In fourth grade, Connecticut ranked 8th out of 50 states in math, an increase from 16th place in 2007. In eighth grade, Connecticut moved up from 29th place in 2007 to 10th in 2009.

Overall rankings for student subgroups remained dismal, however. Connecticut's poor students ranked 39th out of 50 states for fourth grade math, while low-income eighth graders ranked 38th out of 50 states. African-American fourth graders ranked 26th out of 44 in math, while African-American eighth graders ranked 22nd out of 42 states. Hispanic fourth graders ranked 33rd out of 46 states in math and eighth graders ranked 35th out of 44 states.[6]

Who's Teaching the Teachers?

The results of Connecticut's first test of new elementary teachers' early reading skills were released in October, revealing that some Connecticut universities are preparing their teachers much better than others. For the first time in 2009, students graduating from teacher preparation programs in elementary education were required to take a test of their knowledge of teaching reading skills as part of their certification process. The State Department of Education took the lead in establishing the new requirement in an effort to increase accountability for early reading teacher training programs across the state.

Test results were mixed among programs. In some, such as Teach for America and the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut, more than 90 percent of teachers passed the test. At schools like Eastern Connecticut State University, however, nearly 50 percent of teachers failed the test. What does this say about Connecticut's early reading training programs? Unfortunately, we know what happens to students who depend on unprepared teachers to learn to read. Almost 45 percent of third graders scored below goal on the 2009 CMT, and eight percent fewer third graders scored at or above goal in reading than in math. In Hartford, only 23 percent of fifth graders read at goal or above, and reading scores trail math scores by almost nine points. In New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and Meriden, reading scores lag math scores. Indeed, the State Education Commissioner highlighted early elementary reading skills as one of the biggest challenges facing our state in 2007: "We are very concerned with the state of our students' comprehension skills, particularly in their ability to read by third grade."[7]

6 Some states do not have enough African-American or Hispanic students to be counted in the Nation's Report Card assessments. Therefore, rankings are not out of 50 states in these categories.
7 http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/CMT2007_final.pdf.

TABLE 5 How Well do Training Programs Prepare Teachers for Early Reading?

TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM	TOTAL TEST TAKERS	TOTAL PASSED TO DATE	PERCENT PASSED TO DATE
Teach for America	31	29	94
University of Connecticut	27	25	93
Fairfield University	12	10	83
University of Bridgeport	68	55	81
Sacred Heart University	83	64	77
University of New Haven	66	47	71
Southern Connecticut State University	96	57	59
St. Joseph College	37	21	57
CCSU	83	46	55
Eastern Connecticut State University	85	46	54
Western Connecticut State University	10	5	50
Mitchell College	13	4	31
Quinnipiac University	1	0	0
University of Hartford	3	0	0
Charter Oak State College	0	0	0
Connecticut College	0	0	0
Yale University	0	0	0
Total	584	380	65%

Parents should feel confident that their child will learn to read in a Connecticut public school. If some Connecticut universities are not adequately preparing teachers in evidence-based reading instruction techniques, they need to change their programs. In the meantime, the public should know whether teachers have the skills to teach children to read. One way of making this information publicly accessible is to link student achievement with teacher identifiers and then link those teacher identifiers back to the education schools that prepared each teacher, holding both teachers and universities accountable for student success. Making the pass rates public for the first time is a positive step towards creating that accountability—and will be helpful in Connecticut's *Race to the Top* application.

Is Proficient Proficient?

For years, Connecticut set high standards for student achievement, but new research suggests that the bar we have set for scoring "proficient" on our state tests is one of the country's lowest. Additionally, new data from the Nation's Report Card suggests that even our highest-performing students are performing below their peers in other states.

Since 2002 and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind, every state has been required to administer state achievement tests for grades three through eight and once in high school. Because of variation in state standards and because many states, including Connecticut, had already developed state tests when the law was passed, we have no federal test that all students take to determine their achievement levels. Fifty different state tests and fifty different sets of state standards make it difficult, therefore, to compare student performance between states. Indeed, one state's definition of Adequate Yearly Progress, or the amount of progress each school must make each year to be considered successful, can be miles away from another state's definition. In a study of different state standards called The Accountability Illusion (2009), the Thomas B. Fordham Institute highlighted the difficulties with this system: "Schools that make AYP in one state fail to make AYP in another. Those that are considered failures in one part of the country are deemed to be doing fine in another."[8]

The Nation's Report Card (also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP), released every two years, can give us a better idea of how states compare. Because a sampling of students in every state takes the same no-stakes test, we can measure student performance with the national test more accurately. But the NAEP data also shows us that the same students who do well on a given state's test might do much worse on another state's test, depending on the strength of each state's standards.

8 *Executive Summary: The Accountability Illusion*, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, February 2009, available at *http://edexcellence. net/accountability_illusion/ Executive%20Summary.pdf.*

FIGURE 4 Connecticut's Low Standards for High-Performing Students: 90th Percentile Score for 8th Grade Math, 2009 NAEP
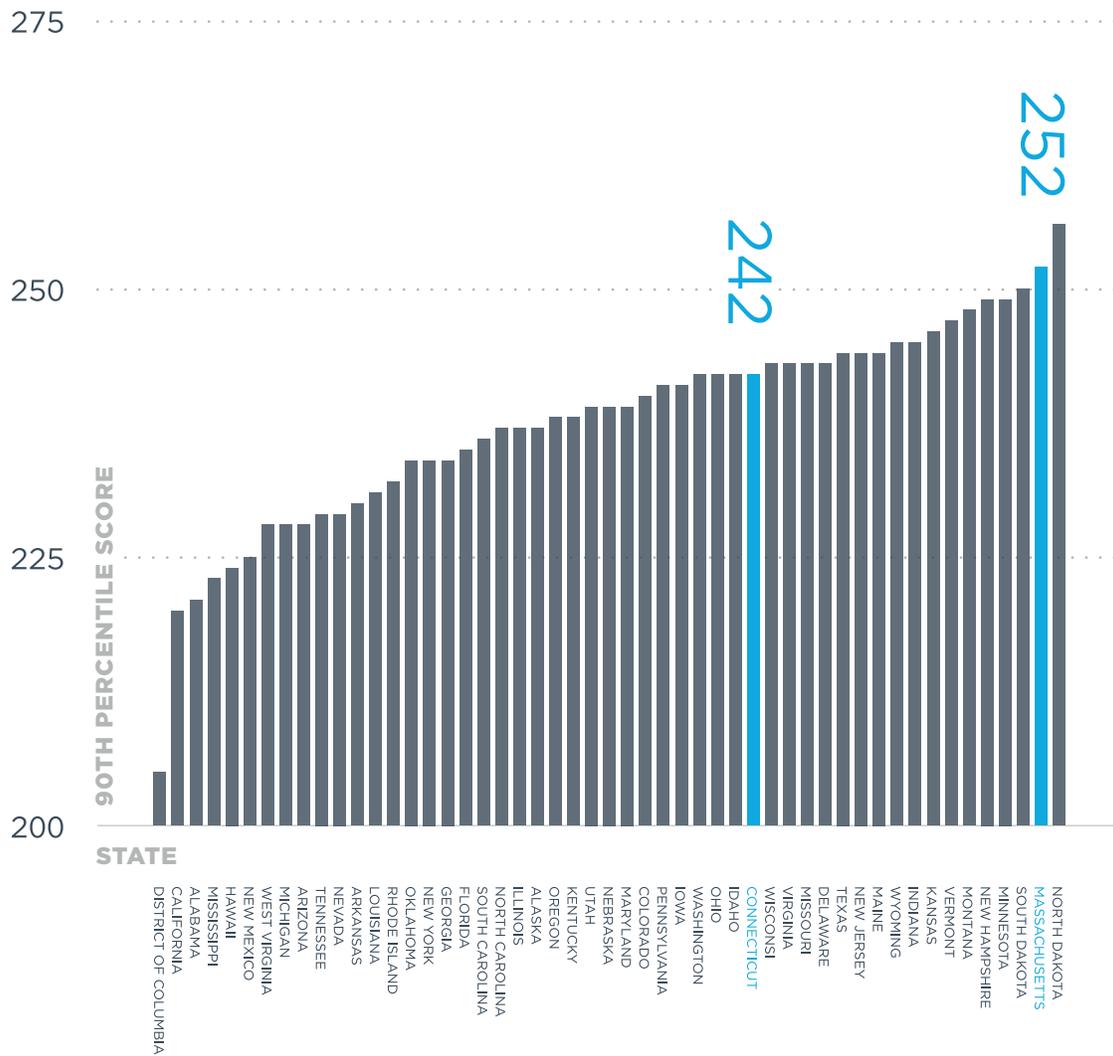
New data that maps each state's NAEP scores onto the different state tests shows us how difficult it is to pass each state test—and some states, including Connecticut, have set the bar for passing far too low. In other words, students can score worse on a Connecticut state test and still be considered "proficient" than they can in most other states. In fact, Connecticut ranks close to the bottom of the 50 states in terms of how high we set the bar for proficiency.[9]

The implications of these low standards are devastating. When students leave high school, they are unprepared for college or the work force, despite passing state tests every year they went to public school. Nationwide, low standards for proficiency mean that almost 60 percent of students in community colleges must take remedial classes each year. For low-income students and students of color, that number is as high as 90 percent.[10] These standards do not affect our lowest-performing students alone. When it comes to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the top 10 percent of Massachusetts public school students score 11 points higher, on average, than the top 10 percent of Connecticut students. Connecticut's top performing students are effectively performing a grade level behind their peers in Massachusetts.

Historically, Connecticut has had strong academic standards. Strong standards mean little, however, if the bar for passing state tests is set too low. One explanation for this problem might be in the language we use to measure success. Connecticut implemented state tests long before No Child Left Behind required them, using the word "goal" to describe the level each student should achieve to be considered "on level." The state used the word "proficient" to describe the level below goal. In a linguistic coincidence, the No Child Left Behind law uses the word "proficient" to describe the standard for success that students must reach if a school is to make Adequate Yearly Progress. Because the federal law called "proficiency" an acceptable aim, Connecticut began to treat its pre-existing "proficient" level as an acceptable achievement standard, despite having established "goal" as the baseline for student achievement years earlier.

Best of the Best

ConnCAN's newest crop of "Top 10 Schools" includes both repeat successes and first-time schools. Some schools have only recently emerged as models of high performance, but others are proven sustained successes. For example, in the three years that ConnCAN has named "Success Story" schools, five schools have made the list at least two years: Amistad Academy in New Haven, Elm City College Prep in New Haven, High Horizons Magnet in Bridgeport, Multicultural Magnet in Bridgeport, and Rogers International School in Stamford. A combination of strong leadership, high expectations, data-driven decision making, innovative ways

9 *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales: 2005–2007*, National Center for Education Statistics, Victor Bandeira de Mello et al, October 2009, available at *http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2010456.pdf*.

10 *Setting up Success in Developmental Education: How State Policy Can Help Community Colleges Improve Student Outcomes*, Jobs for the Future, June 2009. Available at *http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/AtD_brief_success_082609.pdf*.

of engaging parents, and a strong school culture have led these schools to years of repeated successes. With a population of at least 75 percent combined low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students, these schools are proving that demographics do not have to equal destiny.

Several additional schools showed continued success, appearing in the "Top 10 Lists" for the third or fourth time since 2006. Of the four years ConnCAN has produced Top 10 public school lists, 15 schools made the lists three or more times: High Horizons, Multicultural Magnet, Park City Magnet, and Winthrop School in Bridgeport; Amistad Academy and Elm City College Prep in New Haven; Rogers School and Westover School in Stamford; Jumoke Academy in Hartford; Second Hill Lane School in Stratford; JP Vincent in Bloomfield; Nathan Hale Middle in Norwalk; Irving Robbins in Farmington; Broadview Middle in Danbury; and Bethel Middle in Bethel.

This year, for the first time, three high schools qualified as Success Story schools. On the whole, our high schools with large concentrations of low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students are still not making the kind of progress that many similar elementary and middle schools are making. High schools on this year's Top 10 Lists tend to be suburban, with lower concentrations of our neediest students, with a few exceptions. At University High School of Science and Engineering in Hartford, for example, 47.1 percent of Hispanic students scored at or above goal, outperforming Hispanic students in all but one other school.

In middle school, African-American students have fared much better in public charter and magnet schools than in traditional schools. Of the 10 schools on the middle school African-American achievement list, eight are either public charter or magnet schools. Overall, in elementary and middle school, public charter schools fared well, making up 10 percent of the elementary and middle school Top 10 Lists despite comprising scarcely one percent of schools statewide.[11] This year the Achievement First network of charter schools performed particularly well: three of Achievement First's middle schools were in the top 10 for African-American performance, and Achievement First Bridgeport Academy was number one for middle school performance gains.

Waterbury schools had a notable presence in the Top 10s for the first time this year, with 7 different schools making the 14 elementary, middle, and high school lists. Six different Bridgeport schools made the lists, though no high schools made the cut.

11 Of the 1,075 public schools that ConnCAN assigns report card grades, 16 are public charter schools.

TABLE 6 TOP 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
Performance Gains

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% POINT CHANGE
1	Enfield Street School	Enfield	Traditional	25.5
2	Nathan Hale School	New London	Traditional	21.4
3	Eli Whitney School	Enfield	Traditional	20.0
4	Elm City College Prep	New Haven	Public Charter	19.9
5	Forbes School	Torrington	Traditional	19.8
6	Gilmartin School	Waterbury	Traditional	19.0
7	Dwight School	Hartford	Traditional	18.5
8	Lincoln School	New Britain	Traditional	18.0
9	Second Hill Lane School	Stratford	Traditional	17.6
10	Vogel-Wetmore School	Torrington	Traditional	16.7

TABLE 7 TOP 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
Low-Income Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Multicultural Magnet School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	77.2
2	Jack Jackter Intermediate	Colchester	Traditional	72.0
3	High Horizons School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	71.5
4	Hopeville School	Waterbury	Traditional	70.8
5	Eli Whitney School	Stratford	Traditional	70.0
6	Westover School	Stamford	Intradistrict Magnet	69.0
7	University of Hartford Magnet	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	68.7
8	Stafford School	Bristol	Traditional	66.4
9	Winthrop School	Bridgeport	Traditional	66.0
10	Anna V. Molloy School	West Haven	Traditional	65.5

TABLE 8 TOP 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
African-American Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Elm City College Prep	New Haven	Public Charter	68.1
2	University of Hartford Magnet	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	64.8
3	Rogers School	Stamford	Intradistrict Magnet	63.0
4	Davis Street 21st Century	New Haven	Interdistrict Magnet	62.6
5	Regan School	Waterbury	Traditional	59.9
6	Winthrop School	Bridgeport	Traditional	59.3
7	J. P. Vincent School	Bloomfield	Traditional	57.1
8	Maloney Magnet Elementary	Waterbury	Interdistrict Magnet	56.0
9	Poquonock Elementary School	Windsor	Traditional	55.5
10	Park City Magnet School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	52.2

TABLE 9 TOP 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
Hispanic Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Ralph M. T. Johnson School	Bethel	Traditional	72.0
2	Multicultural Magnet School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	71.4
3	Rogers School	Stamford	Intradistrict Magnet	70.8
4	Winthrop School	Bridgeport	Traditional	69.8
5	High Horizons School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	68.0
6	Hopeville School	Waterbury	Traditional	64.4
7	Toquam Magnet School	Stamford	Intradistrict Magnet	63.9
8	B. W. Tinker School	Waterbury	Traditional	62.2
9	Jefferson Elementary School	Norwalk	Intradistrict Magnet	61.2
10	Second Hill Lane School	Stratford	Traditional	60.6

TABLE 10 TOP 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
Improvement

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% POINT CHANGE
1	Hall School	Bridgeport	Traditional	21.6
2	Lincoln School	New Britain	Traditional	17.8
3	Jefferson Elementary	Norwalk	Intradistrict Magnet	17.6
4	Andrew Avenue School	Naugatuck	Traditional	16.6
5	Hill And Plain School	New Milford	Traditional	14.8
6	Kathleen E. Goodwin	Old Saybrook	Traditional	14.6
7	Burr District Elementary	Regional 17	Traditional	14.1
8	Dwight School	Hartford	Traditional	14.0
9	Noah Wallace School	Farmington	Traditional	13.8
10	Forbes School	Torrington	Traditional	12.9

TABLE 11 TOP 10 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
Performance Gains

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% POINT CHANGE
1	AF Bridgeport Academy	Bridgeport	Public Charter	21.2
2	Hop Brook Intermediate	Naugatuck	Traditional	14.0
3	Bethany Community	Bethany	Traditional	13.3
4	Elm City College Prep	New Haven	Public Charter	12.3
5	Sayles Elementary School	Sprague	Traditional	12.2
6	Cross Street Intermediate	Naugatuck	Traditional	11.9
7	Sheridan Communications & Technology Magnet	New Haven	Interdistrict Magnet	11.4
8	Waltersville School	Bridgeport	Traditional	11.2
9	Ashford School	Ashford	Traditional	10.7
10	Longfellow School	Bridgeport	Traditional	10.5

TABLE 12 TOP 10 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
Low-Income Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Multicultural Magnet	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	81.2
2	Tyrrell Middle School	Wolcott	Traditional	80.6
3	Reed Intermediate School	Newtown	Traditional	79.1
4	Jared Eliot School	Clinton	Traditional	77.1
5	Bethel Middle School	Bethel	Traditional	74.9
6	Newtown Middle School	Newtown	Traditional	73.5
7	Harborside Middle School	Milford	Traditional	73.1
8	Irving A. Robbins Middle	Farmington	Traditional	70.4
9	Amistad Academy	New Haven	Public Charter	68.8
10	Chalk Hill School	Monroe	Traditional	68.8

TABLE 13 TOP 10 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
African-American Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Multicultural Magnet School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	77.4
2	Amistad Academy	New Haven	Public Charter	73.6
3	Elm City College Prep	New Haven	Public Charter	65.9
4	Metropolitan Learning Center	Bloomfield	Interdistrict Magnet	61.2
5	Sedgwick Middle School	West Hartford	Traditional	60.8
6	Two Rivers Magnet	East Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	59.3
7	Achievement First Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Public Charter	58.2
8	Scofield Magnet Middle School	Stamford	Intradistrict Magnet	58.0
9	Broadview Middle School	Danbury	Traditional/ Regular	56.3
10	Capitol Preparatory Magnet	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	54.3

TABLE 14 TOP 10 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
Hispanic Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Multicultural Magnet School	Bridgeport	Intradistrict Magnet	85.0
2	Bethel Middle School	Bethel	Traditional	74.5
3	Gideon Welles School	Glastonbury	Traditional	65.6
4	Silas Deane Middle School	Wethersfield	Traditional	65.2
5	James H. Moran Middle	Wallingford	Traditional	61.3
6	Nathan Hale Middle School	Norwalk	Traditional	60.7
7	Martin Kellogg Middle School	Newington	Traditional	60.5
8	Western Middle School	Greenwich	Traditional	59.6
9	Scofield Magnet Middle School	Stamford	Intradistrict Magnet	58.0
10	Park City Prep Charter School	Bridgeport	Public Charter	56.8

TABLE 15 TOP 10 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
Improvement

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% POINT CHANGE
1	Thomaston Center School	Thomaston	Traditional	15.7
2	MicroSociety Magnet School	New Haven	Interdistrict Magnet	15.4
3	Noah Webster MicroSociety	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	11.0
4	Longfellow School	Bridgeport	Traditional	10.6
5	Annie-Fisher Multiple Intelligence	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	10.4
6	Winthrop School	Bridgeport	Traditional	10.4
7	North Canaan Elementary	North Canaan	Traditional	10.3
8	Sheridan Communications & Technology Magnet	New Haven	Interdistrict Magnet	10.0
9	Jumoke Academy	Hartford	Public Charter	9.7
10	Kennelly School	Hartford	Traditional	9.0

TABLE 16 TOP 10 HIGH SCHOOLS
Low-Income Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Newington High School	Newington	Traditional	50.2
2	Farmington High School	Farmington	Traditional	48.2
3	Glastonbury High School	Glastonbury	Traditional	48.2
4	Bethel High School	Bethel	Traditional	47.3
5	New Milford High School	New Milford	Traditional	47.0
6	Simsbury High School	Simsbury	Traditional	44.8
7	Bristol Central High School	Bristol	Traditional	41.2
8	Trumbull High School	Trumbull	Traditional	40.2
9	Joseph A. Foran High School	Milford	Traditional	39.6
10	Fairfield Warde High School	Fairfield	Traditional	38.5

TABLE 17 TOP 10 HIGH SCHOOLS
African-American Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Farmington High School	Farmington	Traditional	53.3
2	Trumbull High School	Trumbull	Traditional	43.5
3	South Windsor High School	South Windsor	Traditional	40.9
4	Metropolitan Learning Center	Bloomfield	Interdistrict Magnet	38.7
5	Newington High School	Newington	Traditional	36.9
6	Hall High School	West Hartford	Traditional	36.4
7	W. F. Kaynor Technical High	Waterbury	Technical School	35.7
8	Fairfield Warde High School	Fairfield	Traditional	32.5
9	Glastonbury High School	Glastonbury	Traditional	32.5
10	Conard High School	West Hartford	Traditional	32.0

TABLE 18 TOP 10 HIGH SCHOOLS
Hispanic Student Performance

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% AT OR ABOVE GOAL
1	Newington High School	Newington	Traditional	47.4
2	University High School of Science & Engineering	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	47.1
3	Hall High School	West Hartford	Traditional	44.6
4	Trumbull High School	Trumbull	Traditional	43.7
5	Platt Technical High School	Milford	Technical School	41.9
6	Bristol Central High School	Bristol	Traditional	40.7
7	Bristol Eastern High School	Bristol	Traditional	39.6
8	Greenwich High School	Greenwich	Traditional	36.5
9	Conard High School	West Hartford	Traditional	35.4
10	Naugatuck High School	Naugatuck	Traditional	34.1

TABLE 19 TOP 10 HIGH SCHOOLS
Improvement

RANK	NAME	DISTRICT	TYPE OF SCHOOL	% POINT CHANGE
1	The Gilbert School	Winchester	Traditional	12.4
2	Metropolitan Business High	New Haven	Interdistrict Magnet	11.9
3	Cooperative Arts & Humanities	New Haven	Interdistrict Magnet	10.7
4	Oxford High School	Oxford	Traditional	8.9
5	Shepaug Valley High School	Regional 12	Traditional	8.8
6	University High School of Science & Engineering	Hartford	Interdistrict Magnet	8.4
7	J. M. Wright Technical High	Stamford	Technical School	6.8
8	Eli Whitney Technical High	Hamden	Technical School	6.7
9	Tourtellotte Memorial High	Thompson	Traditional	6.5
10	Waterbury Arts Magnet High	Waterbury	Interdistrict Magnet	5.7

Appendix:
Methodology of ConnCAN's
School & District Report Cards

Student performance data is based on the 2009 Connecticut Mastery Test for grades three through eight and the 2009 Connecticut Academic Performance Test for grade ten. Each student's achievement is compared to a set of established standards for their grade in each subject area.

The CMT is a statewide exam designed by the State Department of Education. It is administered each spring to all public school students in grades three through eight. The CMT measures student achievement in mathematics, reading and writing compared to the expectations for their grade level. The test takes approximately seven hours over a one- to four-week period. In 2009, for the second year, fifth and eighth grade students took a science test as part of the CMT.

The CMT reading section is based on the *Degrees of Reading Power* test and the *Reading Comprehension* test. It assesses students' understanding of what they have read through multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions that require written responses. The writing section tests students through multiple-choice questions on composition, revision, and editing of passages as well as a writing sample in response to a specific topic. The mathematics section uses multiple-choice and open-ended questions to assess students' mastery of basic skills, understanding of key concepts, and ability to solve problems. The science section tests factual knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skill application. It uses multiple choice and short answer questions on either scientific content, in the case of grade five, or the scientific inquiry process, in the case of grade eight.

The CAPT assesses competency in mathematics, reading, writing and science in grade ten. The mathematics test assesses algebraic reasoning, numerical and proportional reasoning, geometry and measurement, and statistics. It uses both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The "Reading Across the Disciplines" section is split into a "Response to Literature" section and a "Reading for Information" section, which use open-ended written responses and multiple choice questions to assess reading comprehension. The "Writing Across the Disciplines" section includes an "Interdisciplinary Writing" section, in which students are asked to write a persuasive essay, and an "Editing and Revising" section, which includes multiple-choice questions about editing, composing, and revising skills. The science test assesses both content knowledge of science and scientific inquiry, literacy and numeracy, along with five scientific performance tasks.

While there is no passing grade on the CMT or the CAPT, the State of Department of Education does set state goals for each subject area in each grade tested. The department defines state goals as the knowledge,

skills and critical thinking abilities that are "reasonable to expect of students" within their grade level.

On both the CMT and the CAPT, students' raw scores (the total number of correct responses) are translated into scale scores from 100 to 400 points. Cut-off points are assigned to each test for state goal. The department reports the percentage of students scoring above "goal," using the term "advanced." The department also reports the percentage of students scoring below goal using the terms "proficient," "basic," and "below basic." ConnCAN, however, uses the goal standard to rate schools at the level of performance "reasonable to expect of students" within their grade level.

Data Analysis

The performance data provided in this report is based on the percentage of students within each school or district who scored at or above goal on the CMT and CAPT. The State Department of Education makes this percentage score publicly available for schools or districts with at least 20 students in a given grade who completed the CMT or CAPT. The percentage scores are reported for each content area: math, reading, writing, and science.

To compare schools and districts, ConnCAN calculated a single student achievement score for each school. The score takes the average percentage of students scoring at or above goal across the four tests on the CMT and CAPT. Elementary schools are assessed using the results from the fifth-grade test. Third- or fourth-grade results are used when an elementary school does not have a fifth grade. ConnCAN assessed middle schools and districts using the results from the eighth-grade test (with the seventh-grade results used when a middle school does not have an eighth grade). We assessed high schools using the results from the CAPT, which tests only tenth-grade students. This score provides a straightforward, easy-to-use yardstick to measure how well the school, on average, is meeting the needs of its students in these key subject areas.

To better understand how well a school is meeting the needs of those students traditionally underserved in Connecticut, ConnCAN also calculates a student achievement score for African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students.

To measure the overall change in student performance within a school or district, the change in the average percentage of students scoring at or above goal in all subjects between 2008 and 2009 is calculated. For example, the change in the average percentage of 3rd graders scoring at or above goal in 2008 is compared to the average percentage of 3rd graders scoring at or above goal in 2009. Improvement is measured as the average change in all grade levels.

Finally, to determine the relative effectiveness of schools in increasing the percentage of students scoring at or above goal, the change in the average percentage of a student cohort scoring at or above goal is

calculated for elementary and middle schools. Because the CAPT tests students in only one grade, performance gains cannot be calculated in high school.

For elementary schools, the performance gains score is the average change between the 2008 third grade and the 2009 fourth grade, and the 2008 fourth grade and the 2009 fifth grade. For middle schools, the performance gains score is the average change between the 2008 fifth grade and the 2009 sixth grade, the 2008 sixth grade and the 2009 seventh grade, and the 2008 seventh grade and the 2009 eighth grade. A positive score means that the average percentage of students scoring at or above goal increased during their year in school. A negative score means the average percentage of students scoring at or above goal decreased. Performance gains were calculated for more than 95 percent of schools and districts.

It is important to note that this indicator's ability to represent a school or district's impact on student achievement is determined in part by the stability of the student body. Changes in the composition of the student body within a school lessen its efficacy. Similarly, while the goal standard is designed to measure the level of performance "reasonable to expect of students" within their grade level, small differences in the way the cut-off score is determined between years may affect increases and decreases in the percentage of students that cross the threshold.

Grading

While the scores across the four major sections of the report card—Performance Gains, Students within Goal Range, Subgroups within Goal Range, and Gaps between Subgroups—are presented with district and state averages to provide a comparison point, it is also helpful for parents to have an absolute benchmark for how their child's school is performing. To meet this need, each elementary and middle school is also assigned a letter grade from A to F in each section for which data is available.

Schools with an average percentage of students within goal range in 2009 of 85 or greater receive an N/A since the grade scale begins to approach the ceiling of 100 above this level, which diminishes its meaningfulness as a measure of improvement.

About ConnCAN

The Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now is building a new movement of concerned citizens advocating to fundamentally reform our public schools through smart public policies.

In the tradition of Connecticut's great advocacy movements—from the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association to Harriet Beecher Stowe and the abolitionists—ConnCAN was founded in January 2005 on the fundamental belief that closing the achievement gap requires not only innovative educational models, but also issue-based advocacy that secures systemic change.

Today, ConnCAN has a staff of 11 employees working in offices in New Haven and Hartford and is hailed as one of the nation's leading state-level education reform organizations.

We will not rest until every Connecticut child, regardless of race or class, has access to a great public school.

www.conncan.org
www.ourracetothetop.org

OUR RACE
TO THE TOP

GREAT SCHOOLS FOR ALL
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