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## CommPACT Schools Overview Year 2, AY 09-10

*An overview of the CommPACT School Initiative is described at the end of Year 2 of the five-year process. Activities that the CommPACT schools engaged in, inquiry projects, successes to date, and ongoing challenges for the schools as a whole are discussed.*

### What is CommPACT?

The Neag School of Education in partnership with the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, Connecticut Education Association, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents, and Connecticut Federation of School Administrators collaboratively designed an organic reform process called the CommPACT Schools Initiative (CSI). The name *CommPACT* stands for Community, Parents, Administrators, Children, and Teachers, which symbolizes that all stakeholders are engaged in the school reform process.

The Neag School provides on-site school reform facilitators, professional development in evidence-based practice, management

of data gathering and analysis, priority setting assistance, and dissemination of best practices across the state. Each school has autonomy in governance, budgeting, and curriculum decisions. Teachers and building level leaders are empowered to make decisions and held accountable for those decisions.

The first cohort of CommPACT was a diverse collection of elementary and middle schools from five Connecticut districts: Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, and Waterbury. The current CommPACT schools are Barnum School (K-8, Bridgeport), Hill Central (K-8, New Haven), Longfellow School (6-8, Bridgeport), M.D. Fox Elementary School (K-6, Hartford), Washington

Elementary (K-5, Waterbury), and West Side Middle School (6-8, Waterbury). See Table 1 for a comparison of the schools and their characteristics.

### **What was the Reform Process in Year 1 and Year 2?**

During Year 1 of the CSI, site facilitators from Neag School's Institute for Urban School Improvement (IUSI) worked with schools to introduce the reform process. For each school, they developed working relationships with the principal and other key leaders in the school; engaged the faculty, staff, students, and representatives of the community in identifying a school vision; developed a participatory school leadership team to steward the school-wide improvement efforts; and worked with teachers and staff to identify high quality learning and teaching strategies.

Year 2 of the CSI was largely a planning year that relied upon collaborative and data driven decision-making. Schools worked to establish their main challenges and identify evidence-based practices to implement during Year 3. Specifically, during Year 2, site facilitators worked with their respective schools to: implement a self-analysis process through gathering multiple forms of data about the current status of the school and analyzing those data to develop improvement priorities; engage faculty, staff, students, and community to identify evidence-based practices for addressing their improvement priorities; develop a more targeted instructional improvement effort; foster new working relationships that enable implementation of identified evidenced-based practices and the new instructional improvement efforts with schools, districts, and unions; continue to develop the capacity of the school-wide leadership team, including the principal, to effectively implement, execute, and supervise the school-wide improvement efforts.

Each school developed inquiry teams specific to their self-identified main challenges. At the end of Year 2, each inquiry team had developed an action plan to implement school-wide in Year 3. (See Table 2 for matrix of the CommPACT schools inquiry team priorities.)

### **What were the Accomplishments in Year 2?**

Following is a summary of accomplishments for Year 2:

- 1) Longfellow School made Safe Harbor for AY 08-09.
- 2) Fox, West Side, Barnum, and Longfellow adopted *Renzulli Learning*, a tool of differentiating instruction and increasing student engagement.
- 3) Barnum, West Side, Washington, and Fox implemented new reading curriculums with positive results (SEM-R, Mondo, Rigby).
- 4) All schools have been implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- 5) All schools witnessed an increase in parental and community involvement (e.g., higher attendance at meetings and events, higher participation in parent surveys, the initiation of the *Watchdog Dads* program, and parents volunteering in the schools and serving on steering committees.
- 6) All schools transformed their leadership teams into steering committees to guide the reform process and govern the school.
- 7) Teachers successfully engaged in an inquiry process, which helps develop teacher leadership and ownership over the reform process.

## What are Some of the Ongoing Challenges?

We know from research that it is important to keep the momentum moving forward as many reform models struggle during the third and fourth years. It will be important for

CommPACT schools to implement their action plans in Year 3. Most of the schools are still contending with district mandates, which can bump up against and limit the time needed for CommPACT-related initiatives.

Table 1. Characteristics of CommPACT Schools

	<b>Grade Span</b>	<b>Enroll.</b>	<b>% Minority Students</b>	<b>% ESL</b>	<b>% Title 1</b>	<b>No. Teachers</b>	<b>% Minority Staff</b>
Hill Central School New Haven	K-8	417	99.8	42.7	78.0	57	19.6
M.D. Fox School Hartford	K-6	824	94.5	30.7	>95.0	84	26.7
Washington School Waterbury	K-5	313	88.8	18.1	88.2	29	24.0
West Side Middle Waterbury	6-8	1,221	72.6	12.9	79.1	119	13.7
Longfellow School Bridgeport	K-8	423	96.6	15.0	>95.0	55	50.0
Barnum School Bridgeport	K-8	631	98.6	10.3	>95.0	27	33.3

Table 2. CommPACT Schools Inquiry Team Priorities (Year 2, AY 09-10)

	<b>PBIS/ School Climate</b>	<b>Student Achievement</b>	<b>Teaching &amp; Learning/ Instructional Strategies</b>	<b>Family &amp; Community/ School Culture</b>	<b>Physical Environment</b>	<b>Social &amp; Emotional Student Support</b>
Barnum School Bridgeport, K-8	●	●	●			●
Longfellow School Bridgeport, K-8	●	●	●		●	
Washington School Waterbury, K-5	●		●	●		
West Side Middle Waterbury, 6-8	●		●	●		
Hill Central School New Haven, K-8	●		●	●		
M.D. Fox School Hartford, K-6	●		●	●		●