



For Immediate Release:

Wednesday, November 07, 2012

Contact: Jim Polites 860.713.6525

STATE BOARD APPROVES RESOLUTIONS APPOINTING CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER AND CHIEF TURNAROUND OFFICER AT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

(Hartford, CT) - The Connecticut State Board of Education unanimously approved resolutions Wednesday appointing Dr. Dianna Roberge-Wentzell as Chief Academic Officer and Ms. Debra Kurshan as Chief Turnaround Officer at the Department of Education. The senior level positions were created as part of the agency's reorganization, which creates the structure and capacity for the Department to lead school and district improvement efforts statewide.

"The State Board of Education approved the Department's reorganization with the intent of attracting high impact education leaders prepared to design and implement comprehensive strategies to improve student outcomes," said Allan Taylor, Chairman of the Connecticut State Board of Education. "Dr. Roberge-Wentzell and Ms. Kurshan have the background and skill sets to help lead initiatives that elevate teaching, learning, and success in every Connecticut classroom."

Commissioner Pryor said: "With these two appointments, we have augmented a leadership team that, in partnership with schools and districts, will implement reforms designed to make Connecticut a national education leader once again. Both Dr. Roberge-Wentzell and Ms. Kurshan will play critical roles in helping Connecticut prepare all students for college and career and close its achievement gap."

Dr. Roberge-Wentzell is currently serving as assistant superintendent with Hartford Public Schools, where she has responsibility for leading the Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools unit and supervises the special education, college- and career-readiness, and school design departments. She previously served as deputy chief academic officer and executive director of professional learning in Hartford, where she led the district's work to align its curriculum and professional learning around the Common Core state standards.

As the Department's Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Roberge-Wentzell's priorities will include providing support to districts in their transition to the Common Core, the design and implementation of formative and summative assessments aligned with the Common Core, and other initiatives designed to improve college- and career-readiness for all Connecticut students.

From 2007 to 2011, Ms. Kurshan worked for the New York City Department of Education as head of school portfolio development, where she implemented strategies to ensure all students had access to high quality schools. As chief operating officer in the Department's Office of Innovation, she was responsible

for technology, curriculum, and human capital strategy implementation to personalize learning and improve student outcomes. Ms. Kurshan has also served as a consultant to the Superintendent of the Louisiana Recovery School District in New Orleans, where she led a transition team overseeing central office reorganization and developed a strategic plan for enrollment and facility needs for the district's 100 schools. Most recently, Ms. Kurshan served as one of 15 White House fellows for leadership and public service, where she assisted in the development of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) strategies related to innovation and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education.

As the Department's Chief Turnaround Officer, Ms. Kurshan will work to improve learning outcomes for children in the state's schools and districts in greatest need. She will oversee the newly created Commissioner's Network and guide execution of transformation strategies developed by Connecticut's 30 Alliance Districts. Ms. Kurshan will also lead school accountability and improvement efforts, the charter schools office, and execute the state's education technology initiatives.

#####