

# Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

As part of Connecticut's ongoing school improvement efforts, the *Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative* was designed to build a statewide network of schools highlighting evidence-based practices and strategies. This is a collaborative project among the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the State Education Resource Center (SERC), and Connecticut's Business and Industry Association (CBIA), as well as various business partners.

*The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative* focuses on school reform efforts that have demonstrated success in light of challenges associated with raising student achievement scores. Successful schools are identified that serve as model school improvement sites. The focus is on specific effective school improvement strategies, the steps and choices that result in success, and practical, useful tools and services for school and district leadership teams.

## **MISSION :**

The mission of the *Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative* is to identify and recognize schools where student performance is high, and/or significantly improving, and to share their evidence-based best practices with other schools to help them with their own efforts to replicate and produce effective practices.

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS:**

- All students need to master a comprehensive, balanced, sequential curriculum based on state and national standards.
- All students should be engaged in rigorous, challenging learning.
- All students deserve effective teachers.
- In addition to mandated state assessments, multiple measures of student achievement should be used to demonstrate student performance across the curriculum.
- Schools should ensure that graduates are prepared for success in post-secondary education and the workplace.
- Successful schools continuously reduce the achievement gaps.
- Schools should be inclusive and should honor the diversity of their students.
- School improvement strategies that *enhance student performance* should be sustainable and replicable.
- On-going, high quality professional development and support for educators is essential for effective instruction and student learning.
- Effective leadership is essential to improve student achievement.
- Successful schools promote engagement and shared leadership in all adults who are critical to student learning: educators, parents, and community.
- Effective schools have a climate that is inviting, safe, respectful, and promotes the joy of learning.
- The culture of exemplary schools reflects and cultivates students', teachers', and parents' motivation and engagement in lifelong learning.



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

***The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Rubric was developed by the Connecticut Vanguard Schools Advisory Committee under the leadership of Tomorrow's Schools Today, LLC and in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education. The rubric format was adapted from the Tri-State Consortium.***

# Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

## Why Apply?

### What is a Vanguard School?

There are two ways in which a school might be considered a CT Vanguard School:

First, as a *High Performing School*. A *High Performing School* has at least 80% of its students at or above goal in all three areas on state assessments for two or more years.

Second, as a *Significantly Improving School*. A *Significantly Improving School* has a consistent trend toward increasing the percentage (%) of students at or above goal/proficiency in all three areas of state assessments for two or more consecutive years.

### Why Apply?

Selection as a Connecticut Vanguard School is a prestigious honor that will be recognized publicly: locally, regionally, and state-wide. Research clearly indicates that improved student performance is always linked to very specific and sustained strategies that have been put into practice with broad-based planning, thorough implementation, on-going monitoring, evaluation and revision.

### Benefits: Vanguard Schools will receive:

- \$15,000 award for discretionary use to continue implementing best practices
- \$5,000 to share best practices with schools in need of improvement
- Public recognition via state, regional and local media
- Formal recognition at a State Board of Education meeting
- Opportunity to present at a state-wide best-practice conference in Spring 2007



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

# Connecticut Vanguard Schools Selection Process

All Connecticut public schools that meet the Vanguard criteria will be eligible to apply. The State Department of Education (SDE) will also encourage schools to apply that have shown significant improvement over time in student performance directly related to specific school improvement strategies.

- **November 9, 2006 - 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Statewide Vanguard Conference & Celebration**
- **November 9, 2006 – Information meeting (option 1), Connecticut Grand Hotel, Waterbury, CT, from 2:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**
- **December 5, 2006 – Information meeting (option 2), Four Points Sheraton, Research Parkway, Meriden, CT from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**
- **December 20, 2006 - Intent to Apply forms are due to SERC**
- **~~January 16, 2007~~ EXTENDED – January 23, 2007- Completed Vanguard School Applications are due to SERC**
- **January 30, 2007 – Application Packets Scored**
- **February/March, 2007 - Validation Site Visits to Selected Finalists**
- **End of March, 2007 – 2007-2008 Vanguard Schools Identified**
- **April/May, 2007 - Vanguard Mentoring Partnerships Established**
- **October, 2007 – State Board of Education Recognition**
- **November, 2007 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Statewide Vanguard Conference & Celebration**



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

# Connecticut Vanguard Schools Application Intent to Apply

As the Principal of \_\_\_\_\_, I have read the enclosed materials and would like to express an interest in applying to become a Vanguard School.

**Submission of this “Intent to Apply” will provide our school time to thoroughly review the materials, receive technical support if needed, and complete the full application by ~~January 16, 2007~~ EXTENDED – January 23, 2007.**

**Send completed application form by December 20, 2006 to:**

**SERC: Vanguard Schools  
25 Industrial Park Road  
Middletown, CT 06457**

Direct questions to: David R. Cormier, Consultant, (860) 632-1485, ext. 320, [cormier@ctserc.org](mailto:cormier@ctserc.org).

If, as a school, we decide to make final application and are selected as a Connecticut Vanguard School, I understand that along with the recognition and monetary award comes an obligation to share our best practices with a partner school for up to three years, as outlined in the application materials.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Name (please print)

Principal's Signature

Date



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

## Connecticut Vanguard Schools Application

|  |                    |               |
|--|--------------------|---------------|
| <b>Name of School:</b>   |                    | <b>Phone:</b> |
| <b>District Name:</b>  |                    |               |
| <b>Address:</b>  |                    | <b>FAX:</b>   |
| <b>City:</b>   | <b>Connecticut</b> | <b>Zip:</b>   |
| <b>Contact Person:</b>   |                    | <b>Title:</b> |
| <b>E-mail:</b>   |                    | <b>Phone:</b> |
| <b>Names of School Improvement Team Members (Attach additional names as needed):</b> |                    |               |
|  |                    |               |
|  |                    |               |
|  |                    |               |

Applications must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 16, 2007. Please submit an original application and one copy to David R. Cormier, Consultant, SERC. Mailing Address: 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

# Connecticut Vanguard Schools Application Superintendent and Board Support

As the Superintendent of \_\_\_\_\_ Public Schools, I have read the enclosed application.

I support the involvement of \_\_\_\_\_ School in the Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative.

I understand that along with the recognition and \$15,000 school building monetary award, there is an obligation for a Vanguard School to share their effective practices with other schools through strategies they will help develop under the Vanguard School Initiative.

I further understand that the Connecticut State Department of Education will provide each Vanguard School with an additional \$5,000 to be used for sharing of best practices with schools in need of improvement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative

## Directions for Completing the Self Assessment Connecticut Vanguard Rubric Summary Sheet

1. Please read carefully the nine research-based standards for becoming a Connecticut Vanguard School, the related indicators, and the entire rubric. All three components will assist you in completing this process.
2. There are two ways in which a school might be considered for selection as a Vanguard School:  
  
First, as a *High Performing School*. A *High Performing School* has at least 80% of its students at/above goal in all three areas on state assessments for two or more years.  
  
Second, as a *Significantly Improving School*. A *Significantly Improving School* has a consistent trend toward increasing the percentage (%) of students at/above goal/proficiency in all three areas of state assessments for two or more years.
3. On the *Standards, Indicators, and Rubric Worksheet*, circle the appropriate number on the four (4) point rubric to evaluate your school on each of three parts of the rubric:
  - The Plan
  - Implementation
  - Student Outcomes
4. Use the related indicators preceding the rubric to help you evaluate your school. (Note: the related *Standards, Indicators, and Rubric Worksheet* pages will be reviewed by the site validation/visitation team if your school is selected as a potential Vanguard School.)
5. Complete the summary sheet and school improvement narrative and attach them to your final application. (Note: Do not send the worksheet pages)



# Self Assessment

## Connecticut Vanguard Rubric Summary Sheet

| <b>Standard</b><br>(4 = Planning, Implementation, and Results to the greatest degree; 1= minimally)   | <b>The Plan</b> | <b>Implement-<br/>ation</b> | <b>Results<br/>Regarding<br/>Student<br/>Performance</b> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Rate each standard based on the rubric that is attached</b>  | <b>4 3 2 1</b>  | <b>4 3 2 1</b>              | <b>4 3 2 1</b>   |
| <b>Standard 1 <u>A Clear and Common Focus:</u></b> In high-performing schools, administrators, teachers, students, and parents share and commit to clearly articulated and understood common goals based on the fundamental belief that all students can learn and improve their performance. There is clear evidence of school practices to support this belief.   |                 |                             |  |
| <b>Standard 2 <u>High Standards and Expectations:</u></b> High-performing schools show evidence that teachers believe “all students can learn and I can teach them.” Staff members are dedicated to helping every student achieve challenging state and local standards. All students are engaged in an appropriately ambitious and rigorous course of study in which high standards of performance are clear and consistent and conditions for learning are modified and differentiated. This results in all students being prepared for success in the workplace, post secondary education, and civic responsibilities. |                 |                             |  |
| <b>Standard 3 <u>Strong Leadership:</u></b> School leadership is focused on enhancing the skills, knowledge and motivation of the people in the organization and creating a common culture of high expectations based on the use of skills and knowledge to improve the performance of all students. Leadership fosters a collaborative atmosphere between the school and the community while establishing positive systems to improve leadership, teaching, and student performance.   |                 |                             |  |
| <b>Standard 4 <u>Supportive, Personalized, and Relevant Learning Environment:</u></b> In high-performing schools, supportive learning environments provide positive personalized relationships for every student while engaging them in rigorous and relevant learning.   |                 |                             |  |



|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Standard 5 <u>Parent/Community Involvement and Collaboration:</u></b> In high-performing schools, parents and community members help develop, understand, and support a clear and common focus on core academic, social, and personal goals contributing to improved student performance and have a meaningful and authentic role in achieving these goals. The school community works together to actively solve problems and create win-win solutions. Mentoring and outreach programs provide for two-way learning between students and community/business members.</p> |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Standard 6 <u>Frequent Monitoring, Accountability, and Assessment:</u></b> In high-performing schools, teaching and learning are continually adjusted on the basis of the data collected through a variety of valid and reliable methods that indicate student progress and needs. The assessment results are interpreted and applied appropriately to improve individual student performance and the instructional program.</p>   |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Standard 7 <u>Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:</u></b> High-performing schools have aligned curriculum with core learning expectations to improve the performance of all students. Students achieve high standards through rigorous, challenging learning. Staff delivers an aligned curriculum and implements research-based teaching and learning strategies. Students are actively involved in their learning through inquiry, in-depth learning, and performance assessments.</p>  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Standard 8 <u>Professional Development:</u></b> Ongoing professional development which is aligned with the school's common focus and high expectations to improve the performance of all students is critical in high-performing schools. These professional development offerings are focused and informed by research and school/classroom based assessments. Appropriate instructional support and resources are provided to implement approaches and techniques learned through professional development.</p>  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Standard 9 <u>Time and Structure:</u></b> High-performing schools are flexibly structured to maximize the use of time and accommodate the varied lives of their students, staff, and community in order to improve the performance of all students. The structure of programs extends beyond the traditional school day and year as well as beyond the school building. The program draws on the entire community's resources to foster student achievement.</p>   |  |  |  |



# Connecticut Vanguard Schools School Improvement Narrative

**Describe how your school improvement plan addresses each of the nine standards described above. Include how the integration of the nine standards has impacted the culture and climate of your Professional Learning Community (students, staff, and families).** (All responses should be no more than five typed pages, single spaced, with one-inch margins on the right, left, top, and bottom. Print size must not be reduced smaller than 11-point Times New Roman or Arial font.)

**Please indicate the criteria for which you are submitting an application:**

- High Performing School** - A *High Performing School* has at least 80% of its students at/above goal in all three areas on state assessments for two or more years.
- or-**
- Significantly Improving School** - A *Significantly Improving School* has a consistent trend toward increasing the percentage (%) of students at/above goal/proficiency in all three areas of state assessments for two or more years

**In addition to the School Improvement Narrative, please provide the last four years of student achievement data (CMT/CAPT).**



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative



The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative