



For Immediate Release:

January 30, 2015

Contact: Kelly Donnelly 860.713.6525

## New grant highlights proven methods for better performance

Region 5, Monroe, New Haven, Waterford win Schools of Distinction Best Practice grants

(HARTFORD, CT)—The State Department of Education today announced the winners of a new grant designed to help top-performing schools share best strategies for boosting student performance and replicate those practices throughout Connecticut.

The first Schools of Distinction Best Practice grants were awarded to four schools: Amity Regional High School in Woodbridge, Engineering and Science University Magnet School in New Haven, Clark Lane Middle School in Waterford, and Masuk High School in Monroe. They will serve as Spotlight Schools and help lead efforts to replicate their award-winning programs in schools throughout the state.

“With this grant, we want to shine a light on the best practices for improving student performance and make them available to other schools and districts in the state,” said Interim Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell. “These four schools have earned recognition as Schools of Distinction by excelling at high levels of performance. By taking their best ideas and putting them into practice, we will strengthen our efforts to turn around underperforming schools. The winning proposals will serve as models for others to follow, and we will be working with them to help disseminate their ideas and practices.”

The grant required applicants to describe a best practice that the school seeks to share, scale, and replicate. They were asked to summarize the results achieved by the best practice—the impact on students, staff and/or families—and explain how the school would share this strategy with other schools, for example, videos, webinars, toolkits, professional development, and site visits.

Amity Regional High School (Region 5) in Woodbridge was awarded \$43,000 for developing a series of remedial supports in math and science aligned to the Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPT) Science.

“The faculty and administration at Amity Regional High School welcomes the opportunity to share our best practices related to alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment, and intervention and remedial programming with our colleagues across the state,” said Amity Regional School District #5 Superintendent of Schools Charles Dumais. “We hope that insight into our programming will offer other professionals ideas that will help them better meet the needs of their students.”

New Haven’s Engineering and Science University Magnet School (Grades 6-12) received \$40,000 for a school climate and culture program focused on attendance, behavior management, and engaging families in their children’s education.

“In efforts to prepare young people for success in college, career and life, engagement has become one of our top priorities,” said New Haven Superintendent of Schools Garth Harries. “It is an honor to be recognized by the

State Department of Education for the best practices that Engineering and Science University Magnet School has implemented to meet each individual student's needs. We look forward to sharing our successes throughout Connecticut to improve student learning."

Waterford's Clark Lane Middle School won \$20,000 to develop a literacy program focused on deep understanding of complex material.

Waterford Superintendent of Schools Jerry Belair said: "This recognition is well-deserved! The Waterford community is very proud of its middle school and the commitment of its teachers and staff to provide the best learning experience for its young adolescents. We look forward to sharing our best practices with other middle schools across Connecticut."

Finally, Monroe's Masuk High School was awarded \$16,000 to improve student literacy and to use technology for assessing and analyzing literacy data.

"The Monroe school community is proud and honored of the achievement of Masuk High School," said Monroe Superintendent of Schools James Agostine. "Masuk, and all of our schools, have made significant investments in technology integration through Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) initiatives, inquiry based instruction, and flipped classroom development consistent with the Monroe Board of Education's Goals and Action Plan. We feel privileged to have the opportunity to share the insights we have gained over the past four years with other Connecticut schools."

Connecticut recognizes Schools of Distinction as part of its school rating and accountability system. Announced last year during the second annual Schools of Distinction awards in May, 73 schools were invited to submit grant proposals based on their performance that led them to earn the School of Distinction honor. Out of 10 eligible applications, the Department chose four that were best suited to the purpose of this new grant program.

The Department of Education will schedule the four winners to lead a workshop for Alliance District or Commissioner's Network schools. (Alliance Districts are Connecticut's 30 lowest-performing districts; Commissioner's Network schools are the state's most chronically underperforming schools.) A total of \$122,765 in funding was available with individual awards up to \$50,000.

###

CONTACT: Kelly Donnelly  
Director of Communications and Strategic Community Partnerships  
Connecticut State Department of Education  
Phone: 860-713-6525  
Mobile: 860-983-1550  
Email: [Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov](mailto:Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov)