

What is an Alliance District?

Alliance Districts are 33 of Connecticut's lowest-performing school districts according to the state's Next Generation Accountability System, which is comprised of 12 indicators intended to show how well a district or school is preparing its students for success in and outside of the classroom.^A Any district designated as an Alliance District will be labeled as such for five years.¹

Alliance Districts are identified through a four-step process and are eligible for additional state education aid and programmatic supports to help improve the district's ability to increase student outcomes and close the opportunity gap.²

Within the 33 Alliance Districts there are 10 Opportunity Districts, which are the lowest-performing districts in the state. These Opportunity Districts receive an intensive level of support and are accountable for continuous improvement under the long-term goal guidelines of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).^{3,B}

What are the Requirements of Alliance Districts?

Every year, each Alliance District must submit a detailed plan to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) describing how the district will use Alliance District funds to improve student performance. These plans are known as Alliance District Plans. Before Alliance District funding is released to a district, a district's Plan must be approved by the commissioner of the CSDE.⁴ Approved Alliance District Plans are posted on the CSDE website.⁵ The CSDE reviews each district's progress toward its goals annually to determine whether the district is making sufficient progress for funding to be continued.⁶

Alliance Districts must also submit an annual expenditure report to the commissioner of the CSDE. If the commissioner determines funds were not spent in compliance with the district's Alliance District Plan, the commissioner may require the district to repay funds or may withhold funding in a subsequent year up to the amount that was not spent in compliance with the statute.⁷

What are the Alliance District Plan Requirements?

In order to qualify for Alliance District funds, a district's Alliance District Plan must include objectives and performance targets that are, in part, based on student academic performance data. The Plan must also include strategies to improve student

^A For a more detailed explanation of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System and the 12 indicators, please visit: https://edsight.ct.gov/relatedreports/nextgenFAQ_revisedDec2018.pdf.

^B For a more detailed explanation of the Alliance District program, please see the following report. School and School Finance Project. (2020). *Alliance District and Priority School District Grants*. New Haven, CT: Author. Retrieved from <https://ctschoolfinance.org/resource-assets/Alliance-District-and-Priority-School-District-Grants.pdf>.

performance. According to statute, a district's Alliance District Plan may include, but is not limited to, the following strategies:⁸

- Tiered interventions for schools within the district, based on the need of the specific school;
- K-3 foundational reading programs;
- Additional learning time, either in the form of an extended day or extended year;
- A talent strategy to attract, retain, promote, and bolster staff performance in the form of performance evaluations or other indicators of success;
- Training for staff, administration, and teachers on different teacher evaluation models;
- Early childhood education provider coordination (such as HeadStart);
- Government and community programming for student support and wraparound services;
- Strategies to attract and recruit minority teachers and administrators;
- Enhancements of bilingual education programming;
- Entering into the model school district responsibilities agreement;⁹ and
- District-specific goals such as improving bilingual education programming.

Additionally, the commissioner of the CSDE, at their discretion, may set any additional goals or include any additional categories, and may require changes to a district's Alliance District Plan prior to approving the application and releasing funding.¹⁰

How are Alliance Districts Funded?

Funding for Alliance Districts is provided as part of the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. However, Alliance District aid is withheld from a district until an Alliance District Plan indicating how the district will spend the dollars has been approved.¹¹ Alliance District grants are calculated by taking a town's current year ECS grant amount and then subtracting the town's fiscal year 2012 ECS grant amount.¹² If a district has funds left over from one fiscal year, those funds can be carried forward by the district for the following fiscal year.¹³

What Do the Governor's Proposed Budget Adjustments Mean for Alliance Districts?

Under Governor Ned Lamont's proposed FY 2023 budget adjustments, the Alliance District program would be reauthorized for an additional five years. As part of the proposed reauthorization, Alliance Districts would have the ability to gain the designation of "Graduated" status.¹⁴ A Graduated Alliance District would be a school district that was previously designated as an Alliance District by the commissioner of the CSDE between FY 2013 and FY 2017, or between FY 2018 and FY 2022, and is no longer among the 33 lowest-performing districts based on the Next Generation Accountability System.

Districts designated as "graduated" would have a portion of their FY 2022 ECS grant withheld until their Alliance District Plan is submitted and approved, and then that amount withheld would be reduced incrementally over the course of three fiscal years

until no aid is withheld in FY 2027. There are currently three districts eligible to be designated as Graduated Alliance Districts: Groton, Norwalk, and Winchester.¹⁵

As seen in Table 1 below, for any Graduated Alliance District, beginning in FY 2023 the State would withhold the portion of funds withheld from the district in FY 2022.¹⁶ In FY 2024, for each Graduated Alliance District, the state comptroller would withhold 75 percent of the portion of the funds withheld from the district's FY 2022 grant amount; in FY 2025, the percentage withheld would decrease to 50 percent;¹⁷ and in FY 2026, the percentage withheld would decrease to 25 percent.¹⁸ Finally, in FY 2027, the state comptroller would not withhold any of the aid granted to Graduated Alliance Districts.¹⁹

It is important to note the state comptroller would award funds to the commissioner of the CSDE, and the commissioner would then award aid to the towns with the Graduated Alliance District designation. The towns would then pass those funds along to their local or regional board of education.²⁰

Table 1: ECS Grant Withholding Between Alliance Districts and Graduated Alliance Districts Under Governor Lamont's Recommended Budget Adjustments

Fiscal Year	Alliance District ECS Funding	Graduated Alliance District ECS Funding
2023	ECS grant funding above FY 2012 grant amount is withheld as Alliance District funding	Amount withheld as Alliance District funding is equal to the amount withheld from the town's FY 2022 ECS grant
2024		75 percent of ECS grant funding withheld in FY 2022 is withheld as Alliance District funding
2025		50 percent of ECS grant funding withheld in FY 2022 is withheld as Alliance District funding
2026		25 percent of ECS grant funding withheld in FY 2022 is withheld as Alliance District funding
2027		No funding is withheld

**Table 2: Alliance Districts Under the Governor's Recommended Adjustments
(Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023)**

Districts entering or exiting Alliance District status in a given fiscal year under the governor's proposal are bolded in the FY 2022 and FY 2023 columns below.

Current Alliance District List, FY 2022	Proposed Alliance District List, FY 2023 (Governor's Adjustments)	New Alliance Districts, FY 2023 (Governor's Adjustments)	Graduated Alliance Districts, FY 2023 (Governor's Adjustments)
Ansonia Bloomfield Bridgeport Bristol Danbury Derby East Hartford East Haven East Windsor Groton Hamden Hartford Killingly Manchester Meriden Middletown Naugatuck New Britain New Haven New London Norwalk Norwich Putnam Stamford Thompson Torrington Vernon Waterbury West Haven Winchester Windham Windsor Windsor Locks	Ansonia Bloomfield Bridgeport Bristol Danbury Derby East Hartford East Haven East Windsor Enfield Hamden Hartford Killingly Manchester Meriden Middletown Naugatuck New Britain New Haven New London Norwich Plainfield Putnam Stamford Stratford Thompson Torrington Vernon Waterbury West Haven Windham Windsor Windsor Locks	Enfield Plainfield Stratford	Groton Norwalk Winchester

Endnotes

¹ Proposed H.B. 5038: An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education. Gen. Assembly. (Ct. 2022). <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/TOB/H/PDF/2022HB-05038-R00-HB.PDF>.

² Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). Alliance Districts: Overview. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Alliance-Districts/Alliance-and-Opportunity-Districts>.

³ Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). Alliance Districts: Laws/Regulations. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Alliance-Districts/Alliance-and-Opportunity-Districts/Regulations>.

⁴ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-262u.

⁵ Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). Alliance District Approved Plans. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Alliance-District-Approved-Plans>.

⁶ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-262u.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 170, § 10-223l.

¹⁰ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-262u.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-262u.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Proposed H.B. 5038: An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education. Gen. Assembly. (Ct. 2022). <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/TOB/H/PDF/2022HB-05038-R00-HB.PDF>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.