STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

September 7, 2018

Dr. Matthew Conway, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
Derby Public Schools
35 Fifth Street
Derby, CT 06418

Dear Superintendent Conway:

Thank you for submitting an *Expression of Interest Form* for Derby High School to be considered for a possible planning year in the Commissioner's Network. The purpose of this letter is to invite Derby High School to initiate the planning process during the 2018-19 school year, preparing for possible full implementation in fall 2019. During this planning year, Derby High School will work with a CSDE Turnaround Office Consultant who will create a plan designed to support and accelerate school performance and student achievement. This will allow Derby High School the opportunity and time to engage in a rigorous and locally driven planning year.

I invite you to begin the planning process by developing a Turnaround Plan application for Derby High School for consideration by the Commissioner for possible selection into the Commissioner's Network. Please note that selection of the school will not be considered final until the Commissioner and/or the State Board of Education approve the Turnaround Plan.

Turnaround Committee:

By notice of this letter, your district should take immediate steps to establish a Turnaround Committee for Derby High School in accordance with C.G.S. § 10-223h(b). The Turnaround Committee must consist of the following seven members: (1) two appointed by the Derby Board of Education, at least one of whom shall be an administrator and at least one of whom shall be the parent or guardian of a student enrolled in your district; (2) three appointed by the exclusive bargaining unit for teachers, at least two of whom shall be teachers and at least one of whom shall be the parent or guardian of a student enrolled in your district; (3) the Commissioner or her designee; and (4) you or your designee. As Superintendent, you or your designee shall be a nonvoting ex-officio member and serve as the Chairperson of the Turnaround Committee.

The Turnaround Committee, in consultation with the School Governance Council, shall: (1) assist the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) in conducting an operations and instructional audit of the school; (2) develop a Turnaround Plan application for the school; and (3) monitor the Turnaround Plan's implementation, pending State Board of Education approval of the plan. Therefore, in selecting members, please note that participants must have sufficient and relevant expertise and experience to

ensure that the Turnaround Plan is likely to be effective in improving student performance. Please submit the names of the members and resumes for each member to Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez at Shakira.jacobs-vazquez@ct.gov by September 25th.

Operations and Instructional Audit:

Your district should also take immediate steps to prepare for an operations and instructional audit of Derby High School. Pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-223h(c), the audit will be conducted by the CSDE in conjunction with the Derby Board of Education, the School Governance Council, and the Turnaround Committee.

The purpose of the audit is to identify school strengths and growth areas in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. The audit should be used to inform the planning process. The audit will be conducted by impartial and experienced educators who will produce an unbiased and objective report to support Derby High School planning and transformation efforts. This audit will take place in early October.

The audit involves four phases of data collection and review:

I. **Pre-Audit Data and Document Collection:** The CSDE requests data and artifacts to analyze school and district systems, performance trends, and past improvement efforts (see Attachments).

II. **Pre-Audit Teacher Survey:** By September 25th, Derby High School must survey its certified teaching staff using the electronic survey provided by the CSDE. School and district leaders must work to achieve a high and representative response rate. At your earliest convenience, please e-mail the following survey link to the school's teachers: https://sdect.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6J1DKYcjBmHnmqp. Please communicate to them that the survey is optional and anonymous; participation is strongly encouraged and will inform school planning efforts. The survey will close on September 25th. Therefore, it is imperative to remind staff to complete the survey before the deadline.

III. **One-Day Site Visit:** A team of auditors will conduct a site visit to observe the school and meet with members of the school community. During the site visit, auditors conduct interviews and focus groups with a representative group of school and community stakeholders, including school administrators, staff members, students, family members, community partners, members of the School Governance Council and the Turnaround Committee, and district central office staff. Auditors also conduct school walkthroughs and observe classrooms.

    IV.   **Completion of Audit Report:** The auditors synthesize and use all available data to generate the operations and instructional audit report, which identifies strengths and growth areas surrounding talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

As part of the audit process, please submit the data requested in Attachments A, B, and C by September 25th. Attachment A provides a list of artifacts requested. Please submit all relevant materials electronically, organized in the four categories indicated in Attachment A. The CSDE understands and anticipates that some of these materials may be outdated and/or may not exist; please simply indicate that in your response where necessary. Please return the checklist with notations when you submit the data request. Attachment B identifies quantitative data needed prior to the site visit. Please complete Attachment B to provide these critical data points. Attachment C requests a schedule for the audit site visit. Please ensure the schedule includes the elements listed; please feel welcome to adjust the order.

Please e-mail the documents identified in Attachment A, along with the completed checklist, and completed Attachments B and C to Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez by September 25th.

Timeline:

Please note that the planning process will be locally-driven. The Superintendent or your designee must facilitate the planning process, including Turnaround Committee meetings. The Superintendent and your designee, if applicable, must participate in, at minimum, meeting with the Chief Turnaround Officer to provide updates on elements of the draft Turnaround Plan as it evolves and receive formative feedback. The following timeline details the immediate next steps in the process:

Activity:	Deadline:
1. Submit data and documentation for the audit to Shakira.jacobs-vazquez@ct.gov.	September 25, 2018
2. Identify Turnaround Committee members and submit the names of members.	September 25, 2018
3. Complete administration of electronic teacher surveys.	September 25, 2018
4. Participate in the audit site visit.	Early October
5. District leadership participates in meeting with the Chief Turnaround Officer.	January 2019
6. Districts submit final draft Turnaround Plans.	March 2019
7. Draft plans reviewed and approved by Commissioner and Chief Turnaround Officer.	April 2019
8. Plans presented to the State Board of Education for approval.	May 2019

In addition to the required milestones outlined above, the CSDE recommends the district conduct a minimum of four Turnaround Committee meetings.

Recommended Meeting:	Recommended Purpose:
Turnaround Committee Meeting #1	Introductions, process overview, and needs analysis
Turnaround Committee Meeting #2	Climate and talent strategies brainstorm
Turnaround Committee Meeting #3	Academics and operations strategies brainstorm
Turnaround Committee Meeting #4	Final review and consensus vote

Shared Expectations and Conditions for Success:

The Commissioner's Network is designed to dramatically accelerate and improve student achievement in a subset of chronically underperforming schools. The Network offers new resources and authorities to empower teachers and leaders to implement evidence-based strategies. Network school and district leaders and the CSDE commit to a set of shared expectations, securing school-level flexibility and autonomy in exchange for heightened accountability (see Appendix D). These shared expectations establish clear principles regarding how the district, CSDE, and Network school will work collaboratively to drive results. The district and CSDE must commit to working together to secure and maintain optimal conditions and systems in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

Sincerely,

Desi D. Nesmith

Desi D. Nesmith
Chief Turnaround Officer
Connecticut State Department of Education

DDN:iwg
cc: Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez
Attachments

ATTACHMENT A: ARTIFACT REQUEST CHECKLIST

Domain:	Data/Document/Artifacts:	Notes:
Talent	❑ School organizational chart ❑ Educator evaluation plan/calendar ❑ Professional learning calendar ❑ Staff evaluation data ❑ Procedures and tools for informal walkthroughs and observations ❑ Staff policy manual/handbook ❑ Current School Improvement Plan	
Academics	❑ SRBI protocols and tools ❑ List of curricula by grade level/content area (e.g., purchased, homegrown) ❑ Assessment calendar and list of assessments by grade level/content area ❑ School lesson/unit plan template ❑ Sample curricular materials (e.g., lesson/unit plan, pacing guide) ❑ Sample data team meeting agendas	
Culture and Climate	❑ Behavior/Discipline policy ❑ Parent handbook ❑ Family/Community engagement event calendar ❑ PTA meeting schedule and participation rate ❑ Safe School Climate Plan ❑ Membership list for School Planning and Management Team (SPMT) ❑ SPMT meeting calendar and agendas for this school year	
Operations	❑ School calendar and daily bell schedule ❑ Sample common planning time/PLC and sample staff meeting agendas ❑ Description of current extended day program (if applicable) ❑ School audits/reviews performed in past five years ❑ School operating budget for current and prior year ❑ Awarded school grant applications ❑ School map	

ATTACHMENT B: SCHOOL DATA PROFILE

Enrollment Data (2018-19):			
Grades:		5-Yr Enrollment Trend:	
Student Enrollment:		Mobility Rate:	
Personnel Data (2018-19):			
# of Administrators:		% of Teachers "Below Standard":	
# of Teachers:		% of Teachers "Developing":	
# of Support Staff:		% of Teachers "Proficient":	
# of Psychologists:		% of Teachers "Exemplary":	
# of Social Workers:		3-yr Teacher Retention Rate:	
School Day Per Year (2018-19):			
Total # of Student Days Per Year:		Instructional Minutes/Day:	
Total # of Teacher Days Per Year:		Extended Day Program:	Yes No
Student Demographic Breakdown (2018-19):			
% Black:		% Male:	
% Hispanic:		% Female:	
% White:		% EL:	
% Other:		% Special Education:	
% F/R Meals:		% Eligible for HUSKY Plan, Part A:	

School Climate Data:	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Student Attendance Rate:				
Chronic Absenteeism Rate:				
Total # of ISS/OSS/Expulsions:				
Teacher Attendance Rate:				

School Performance Index:	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
SPI:				

Smarter Balanced Assessment Level 3 and 4 Data:	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Grade 3 – Reading				
Grade 4 – Reading				
Grade 5 – Reading				
Grade 6 – Reading				
Grade 7 – Reading				
Grade 8 – Reading				
Grade 3 – Math				
Grade 4 – Math				
Grade 5 – Math				
Grade 6 – Math				
Grade 7 – Math				

Grade 8 – Math				
SAT Grade 11 (HS only):	**2014-15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**
Percent meeting or exceeding achievement level				
Graduation Rate (HS only):	**2014-15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**
4-year Cohort Graduation Rate				
6-year Cohort Graduation Rate				
Dual Enrollment/AP Enrollment (HS only):	**2014-15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**
Number of students in Dual Enrollment/AP courses				

ATTACHMENT C: AUDIT SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

Site Visit Components:	Length:	Actual Time:	Location:
Observations of morning arrival and school tour	30 minutes		
Principal interview	60 minutes		
Teacher focus group #1	45 minutes		
Student focus group	30 minutes		
Lunchtime/Cafeteria observations	15 minutes		
Auditor lunch break	30 minutes		
4-5 classroom observations	60 minutes		N/A - Unannounced
Teacher focus group #2	45 minutes		
Leadership team/AP interview	45 minutes		
Parent/Community/Turnaround Committee/SGC focus group	45 minutes		
District supervisor interview	45 minutes		

The Commissioner's Network is designed to dramatically accelerate and improve student achievement in a subset of chronically underperforming schools. The Network offers new resources and authorities to empower teachers and leaders to implement evidence-based strategies. Network schools remain part of their local school districts, but the districts and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) secure school-level flexibility and autonomy for schools in exchange for heightened accountability. The purpose of this document is to establish clear expectations regarding how the district, CSDE, and Network school will work collaboratively to drive results. Accordingly, this document outlines essential conditions and shared understandings to advance student achievement. In signing this document, the district and CSDE commit to working together to secure and maintain optimal conditions and systems in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. While this document is not a legally-binding agreement, the district recognizes and understands that Network funding is conditioned on meeting the expectations defined herein, as well as successfully implementing the conditions and systems described herein.

Section 1: Network Expectations

Network participation requires schools and districts to actively engage in the following:

1.1. **Biweekly School Visits:** Each Network school will have a CSDE Turnaround Office liaison. He/She will visit the school, at minimum, once every two weeks. The purpose of these visits is to support plan implementation and provide formative feedback and observations. The Turnaround Office will use a consistent school and classroom observation tool to benchmark school progress and performance over time.

1.2. **School Reporting:** Three times annually, schools must submit data to the Turnaround Office. At the beginning of the year, the CSDE will provide a monitoring tracker for the entire school year. Three times annually, schools must report on leading and lagging performance indicators, plan implementation, and year-to-date grant spending. Network schools will be accountable for reporting data and progress in the following areas:

- **Talent:** Educator evaluation data, staff attendance, and vacancy and recruitment data.
- **Academics:** Math and reading proficiency rates and student growth rates as measured by assessment data, course passage rates, and graduation rates. The CSDE understands that Network schools use different assessments and will work with school and district teams to identify necessary reports based on the assessment(s) used.
- **Culture and Climate:** Student attendance, student tardiness, and student behavior.
- **Operations:** Year-to-date grant spending, time dedicated to instruction and intervention, and time used for collaborative planning and professional development.

1.3. **NetStat Sessions:** Network school teams will convene, at minimum, three times annually to discuss school data, receive targeted professional learning, and share best practices within and across the Network. NetStat sessions provide an opportunity for reflection, supporting data-driven decision-making at the school, district, and Network levels. NetStat sessions also allow school teams to come together as a powerful network of schools to discuss promising practices and shared challenges.

1.4. **Annual Audits and Plan Amendments:** On an annual basis, Network schools participate in a midyear audit facilitated by the CSDE. Midyear audits may consist of school and classroom observations, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups. Using the Turnaround Office's School Turnaround Rubric, these comprehensive school audits provide a formal assessment of school

systems and performance over time. The audit process is designed to pinpoint school accomplishments and areas for continued growth. Following the audit, school teams develop a plan amendment and budget request in collaboration with the CSDE. The plan amendment is an extension of the Turnaround Plan and may amend and supersede the Turnaround Plan. In instances where the plan amendment includes proposals changing the hours and schedules of teachers and administrators at the school, the length and schedule of the school day, the length and calendar of the school year, the amount of time teachers shall be present in the school beyond the regular school day, the hiring or reassignment of teachers or administrators at the school, and/or other conditions of employment at the school, the Commissioner or her/his designee will convene the Turnaround Committee to approve the plan amendment by consensus. If the Turnaround Committee does not approve the plan amendment, then the Commissioner may take appropriate actions to ensure sufficient progress at the school, including, but not limited to, finding the Turnaround Plan deficient and developing a revised Turnaround Plan and/or exercising any and all authorities described in C.G.S. § 10-223h.

1.5. **Network School Budgets:** Network school budgets will be reviewed, revised, and considered for approval on an annual basis, so as to reflect the greatest needs and strategic priorities of each school. School budgets will leverage all available funding streams (e.g., state, local, federal, public, and private) to maximize impact and student outcomes. The district shall maintain a substantial local investment in each Network school and evaluate and repurpose existing funding streams, in part to ensure the sustainability of reform strategies. Funding for Network schools is contingent upon the availability of funds and will be based, in part, on the transformative potential of the Turnaround Plan, as well as the size of the school. In addition, Network funding is conditioned on successful implementation of the conditions and systems described herein. The district should expect a reduction in its Commissioner's Network funding level during each of the three initial years of participation. During the third year of implementation, a recommendation will be made by the Turnaround Office regarding the school's continuation in the Network. Should the school be recommended for additional years of participation in the Network, the State Board will then consider approval of additional years of funding. The CSDE reserves the right to withhold Network funding at any point, if in the opinion of the Commissioner or her/his designee: (a) the district and school fail to implement the Turnaround Plan with fidelity; (b) the school fails to make reasonable progress toward annual performance benchmarks; or (c) the district fails to meet the expectations defined herein.

1.6. **Essential School Systems:** Network schools will create and maintain systems to develop and attract top talent, provide excellent academics, foster a positive school culture and climate, and ensure seamless operations. Success in each of these areas necessitates thoughtful planning and sophisticated procedures and routines. Schools must commit to creating, implementing, refining, and maintaining the following essential school systems:

- **Talent:** Professional learning plan, evaluation and coaching system, recruitment and retention strategy, and staffing structure.
- **Academics:** Comprehensive assessment strategy, including a benchmark assessment system, coherent academic program, instructional framework, and SRBI strategy.
- **Culture and Climate:** Attendance plan, behavior management strategy, family engagement plan, and wraparound strategy.
- **Operations:** School calendar and daily schedule, communications plan, budget, and technology and facilities plan.

Section 2: Talent Expectations

2.1. **Flexible Work Rules:** Network schools must operate within work rules that allow for flexibility and creativity around staffing, scheduling, programming, and pedagogy aligned to student needs and school goals. In collaboration with the CSDE and local collective bargaining representatives, the district will make every effort to ensure flexible work rules for the school's leadership, instructional staff, and non-instructional staff. Flexible work rules shall be consistent with the expectations, conditions, and systems defined herein and/or included in the Turnaround Plan.

2.2. **Annual Staffing and Teacher Evaluation:** The district will ensure that teacher evaluations are objective, timely, and consequential.

2.3. **Recruitment and Hiring:** The district will employ a competency-based hiring process, requiring mutual consent, to fill vacancies with top talent, recruiting both internally and externally. The district will ensure that student and programmatic needs exclusively drive all staffing and staff placement decisions. School leadership will have jurisdiction over teacher placement at the school based on performance and a determination of the teacher's overall fit and alignment with the school's vision, model, and goals. As a low-performing school, the district will prioritize the staffing needs of the school.

2.4. **Non-Instructional Staff:** The school leader shall have the authority to select, supervise, and evaluate school-based non-instructional personnel.

2.5. **Annual School Leader Evaluation and Renewal:** The district will ensure that administrator evaluations are objective, timely, and consequential.

2.6. **Professional Learning:** The district will secure site-based autonomy around the design and delivery of professional learning aligned to school goals and staff development needs. Site-based professional learning may be in lieu of required district-led professional learning.

Section 3: Academic Expectations

3.1. **Site-Based Academic Programming Autonomy:** The district will provide autonomy around academic programming decisions by granting the school leader the ability to modify or eliminate existing programs, and/or pursue new programs based on student needs and school goals.

3.2. **Access to Data:** The district and school will provide teachers, leaders, families, and the CSDE with timely access to aggregate and disaggregated school climate and student performance data to inform instruction and decision-making.

3.3. **Access to Resources and Materials:** The district will ensure that the school has the curricular materials and supplies necessary to successfully deliver the school's academic program (e.g., textbooks, paper, supplies).

Section 4: Culture and Climate Expectations

4.1. **Site-Based Nonacademic Programming Autonomy:** The district will provide autonomy around nonacademic programming decisions by granting the school leader the ability to modify or eliminate existing programs, and/or pursue new programs based on student needs and school goals.
4.2. **Communication:** The CSDE, district, and school will maintain regular communication to promote maximum levels of transparency and collaboration.

Section 5: Operations Expectations

5.1. **Site-Based Budgeting Autonomy:** The district shall make every effort to maximize site-based budget autonomy as pertaining to local, state, federal, and grant funds. In particular, the school leader shall have decision-making authority with respect to the school's Title I allocation and other supplemental funds. Over time, the district will seek to increase school-level discretionary authority in a manner that is most responsive to student needs and school goals. The district shall collaborate with school leadership and the CSDE to ensure the sustainability of grant-funded positions and reform initiatives. To that end, the district will provide school leaders with monthly budget reconciliation reports, including year-to-date spending analyses.
5.2. **School Calendar and Schedule:** The district will provide school-level flexibility around the design of the school's calendar and schedule. School leadership shall make every effort to extend instructional time and teacher collaborative planning time within the boundaries established by the Turnaround Plan and any associated agreements.
5.3. **Student Enrollment:** On an annual basis, the district will ensure that the school does not receive a disproportionate share of new students beyond October 1st.
5.4. **Contracts:** All contracts specific to Network schools are subject to approval by the Commissioner prior to their execution.

Signatures

In signing this document, the district and CSDE commit to working together to secure and maintain optimal conditions and systems in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. While this document is not a legally-binding agreement, the district recognizes and understands that Network funding is conditioned on meeting the expectations defined herein, as well as successfully implementing the conditions and systems described herein.

Superintendent of Schools	*CSDE Chief Turnaround Officer*

Signature	*Date*	*Signature*	*Date*