

News from Stamford Public Schools

For immediate release

July 29, 2009

Contact: Dr. Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools, jstarr@ci.stamford.ct.us

**STAMFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CONTINUE TEST SCORE GAINS
ACROSS CONTENT AREAS, GRADES, AND STUDENT SUBGROUPS**

Greatest improvements on CMT seen in grades 5, 6, and 8

Percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic students at/above GOAL surpasses state averages in many cases

Results of the spring 2009 Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) indicate strong student improvement in many areas by students in Stamford Public Schools (SPS), most notably in grades 6 and 8 in math, grades 5 and 8 in reading, and grade 8 in writing.

In particular, math scores in grades 6 and 8 showed strong improvement from last year among nearly all No Child Left Behind (NCLB) student subgroups: White, Black, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities. Marked gains in grade 5 reading scores were achieved by the White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities subgroups. Similar improvement in grade 8 reading scores also was noted in most student subgroups. Additionally, SPS students in the White, Black, and Hispanic subgroups demonstrated higher overall achievement in the percentage of students scoring at/above GOAL compared to students statewide. (See Attachment 1: Highlights.)

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joshua P. Starr credited SPS staff for the most recent student gains on the CMTs. “Teachers and administrators have worked incredibly hard to increase standards, create more instructional time, and take advantage of multiple opportunities to collaborate around student achievement,” he said. Board of Education President Susan Nabel agreed adding, “The Board of Education applauds the hard work of Stamford's staff, students, and parents and is proud to recognize the academic gains our school community continues to achieve with the help of its partners, the GE Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation and the Connecticut Center for School Change.”

Dr. Starr stated that these partnerships, along with the infusion of the GE Foundation's \$15.3 million Developing Futures™ in Education grant to improve math and science instruction, play a large role in increasing student achievement. The grant, which is the largest single private donation to any school district in the country, supports Stamford's key strategy of providing district-wide, standards-based, high-level curriculum and instruction for all SPS students. In addition to recent gains on the math and science CMTs, the Developing Futures™ program allows every Stamford public school to implement a solid foundation of teaching and learning upon which all students can excel. According to Bob Corcoran, GE's Vice President of Corporate Citizenship, “Our goal with Developing Futures is to have our districts invest in systems and practices that produce significant and sustained gains in

achievement for ALL students. Obviously we're pleased with the evidence of progress in Stamford; we hope to see a lot more of it. Clearly, the district is moving in the right direction.”

When viewing CMT scores by grade level, content area, and student subgroups over the past four years (2006 to 2009), the percentage of students achieving at/above GOAL (Levels 4 and 5) has increased steadily, in many cases by more than ten points. (See Attachment 2: Percentage of Students Achieving At/Above GOAL.) Especially noteworthy are gains among student subgroups in grades 5, 6, and 7 in math (as high as 21 points), grades 6 and 7 in reading (as high as 23 points), and grade 8 writing (as high as 17 points).

Dr. Starr attributed Stamford’s long-term gains to the widespread educational reforms that began when he arrived in Stamford in 2005. “We are beginning to see the results of our reform strategy, which is leading to sustained improvement,” he said. Stamford’s emphasis on measuring student achievement at/above GOAL (Levels 4 and 5) rather than at/above PROFICIENT (Levels 3, 4, and 5), the benchmark used by the State and the federal NCLB Act, is evidence of the power of high expectations when combined with the strategic targeting of resources for students and staff.

Students in grades 3-8 take the CMTs annually in math, reading, and writing. Students in grades 5 and 8 are also tested in science. Scores are categorized in five levels: 1 (Below Basic); 2 (Basic); 3 (Proficient); 4 (Goal); 5 (Advanced).

Grade 10 students in Stamford Public Schools posted modest gains in the percentage of students scoring at/above GOAL in reading (one point) and writing (two points) on the Connecticut Academic Proficiency Test (CAPT). By comparison, students statewide increased only in the percentage of at/above GOAL in reading (two points).

The CMTs and CAPT are two of many tools SPS use to measure student achievement. The district’s Annual Report, due in Fall 2009, will include a vertical scale analysis of individual student progress over time and will highlight student progress in areas such as earning college credit in high school, taking four years of high school math and science and increase enrollment in AP courses. “The best measure of our success as a district is our collective ability to help all students be ready for higher education upon graduation,” said Dr. Starr.