

**Electronic Draft FY08 Report November 30, 2008  
Evaluation of Federal and State Program  
Goals and Objectives  
Included in the Consolidated Application  
Fiscal Year 2007-2008**

**Christina School District**



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## **Section I: Executive Summary**

**Purpose of Evaluation:** Each year, the Christina School District (CSD) applies for supplementary funds from federal and State grants that augment local offerings by providing more intensive programs and services for educating its children. Some of the programs help children to read and write better. Other programs help children in mathematics, science and social studies or teach them about the hazards of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Some grants allow the District to pay for after-school, summer school tutoring and professional development -- still others make possible the purchase of materials and extra supplies. To obtain these funds, the District submits a consolidated application to the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) for approval. This application includes a district-level improvement plan based on school-level improvement plans. The district plan explains what is to be done with the funds, how it is to be done and what is expected to happen as a result of these programs and services. This report presents the evaluation of the Christina School District's progress in carrying out its 2007-2008-improvement plan.

**Description of "What was Evaluated":** The information (data) utilized to evaluate the District's plan came from many sources and was analyzed as group data only (grade levels and districtwide averages). No individual student records are shown and each student's privacy was protected. In most cases, outcomes were examined from different student populations that are part of the Christina student body including: racial/ethnic groups, genders, students with/without disabilities, students with and without English proficiency and income level. This type of review helps to identify gaps and to eliminate them so that 'no child or group is ever left behind.' Also examined was progress in academic performance, student behavior, staff professional improvement, Career/Technical Education (CTE) preparation for participation in society and home-school partnerships.

**Data Collection Methods and Sources:** The data needed to evaluate the programs funded through the 2007-2008 Consolidated Application came from a variety of sources: (1) district-level State mandated reports, (2) *School and District Profiles 2008*, (3) Delaware Student Testing Programs, (4) individual site-based data, (5) district committee reports, (6) Board of Education presentations, (7) reports supplied by consultants, (8) information and data reports provided by the Districts Technology Service Department and (9) staff interviews. Most of the information is based on a combination of State achievement testing, district records, parent focus group information, interviews with central staff, program and service managers, schedules, and the *Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Abuse Among Delaware Students 2007* (University of Delaware, May 2008) report.

The information in this report is outcome based and descriptive in nature. Differences were examined between the District's level of expectation (sometimes referred to as the standard of acceptable performance or criteria of success) and the actual outcome. This helped to conclude whether objectives had been completely attained, partially attained or not attained. Attaining an objective was defined as follows: (1) Completely Attained -- outcome meets or exceeds annual target, (2) Partially Attained -- outcome exceeds the FY07 outcome but is less than the FY08 target, and (3) Not Attained -- FY08 outcome is less than the FY07 outcome. Determining progress within goals resulted from examining the collective outcomes of each goal's component objectives.

### **Major Findings Conclusions and Recommendations**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) guidelines and regulations accelerate the necessity of academic achievement among all student populations. The data and information in this report stress the importance of addressing disaggregated populations to assure the success of all students and to accelerate the success of the District.

This report addresses six district goals:

**Goal 1:** Provide effective academic supports for the full range of students.

**Goal 2:** Cultivate leaders to create a culture of high performance.

**Goal 3:** Support the success of students who need special education services.

**Goal 4:** Develop strong school and family partnerships to support positive school environments.

**Goal 5:** Improve school climates and student/staff relationships.

**Goal 6:** Utilize facilities to efficiently improve academics and access..

The data enables the Christina School District to gain more knowledge and insight about student academic progress and other important processes. Developing, examining and using data to make decisions has enabled program managers, administrators, and classroom teachers to know what is working and how to help students learn more. The data also helps to determine the extent to which different subgroups are succeeding (data disaggregation). Doing this, helps to determine where to concentrate new efforts as well as continue the success of programs and activities that are already in place.

Based on historical data and current trends, the District's goals and objectives were strongly focused on increasing academic achievement among secondary school students and closing the achievement gap at all grade levels. Based on the new strategic plan and many new staffing considerations, most of the FY08 initiatives were new or in the planning stages during the school year. The earliest many of the outcomes can be seen will be in FY09. Major district initiatives were aimed at providing staff development for increasing the academic achievement of the students who were most in need of academic improvement.

**Goals 1 and 2. Provide effective academic supports for the full range of students; Cultivate leaders to create a culture of high performance.**

The district recognized that the mathematics performance of its secondary students needed considerable attention. In grade 10 among the disaggregated populations, the White and Asian American students exceeded the FY08 State proficiency target of 50%, with 59.8 and 73.5 percent of the students meeting or exceeding proficiency standards, respectively. For each of the other populations, it was 25% or less. The total district outcome was 59.4% for grades 3-10. The total grade 10 outcome was 38.0%. Based on FY07 district assessments, 62% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 59% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders began the school year unprepared to do high school level math. The FY08 outcomes were 61.8% and 59% respectively – virtually the same as FY07.

Among middle school students in reading, the percentage of students reading below the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level in FY07 ranged from 20% in grade 10 to 47% in grade 6. In FY08 the percentage was virtually the same with the exception of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade which improve from 30% below 5<sup>th</sup> grade level to 27% below 5<sup>th</sup> grade level.

The FY08 ELL ACCESS test results showed that 92% made progress and 97.4% met or exceeded their required proficiency level. These results were virtually the same as the FY07 results. The FY08 State target was 84%.

Recognizing the need for targeted intervention, the district incorporated Bridges to Algebra for middle school mathematics and READ 180 for secondary reading. The READ 180 was introduced in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the school year. It is expected be used in FY09.

The district is adopting the RtI (Response to Intervention) approach to academic intervention. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners. A student's progress is closely monitored at each stage of intervention to determine the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention. Professional development for secondary schools is expected be implemented in FY09.

In its special schools, the district exceeded its goals for Highly Qualified Teachers (87.5%). The target was 70%. The high schools virtually met their target of 94% with 93.5% HQT. The elementary and middle schools were 2-3% below their targets.

### Strengths

*Bridges to Algebra* was implemented in the middle schools. Interestingly, the DSTP mathematics outcomes for 8<sup>th</sup> grade African American, Hispanic and Low-Income students all increased in FY08. Although the increases were small for African American and Low-Income students, it will be useful to establish outcome data from *Bridges to Algebra* in areas of performance and growth.

HQT Support: The district continues to improve support to its teachers for becoming highly qualified and staying highly qualified.

- Multiple meeting times/locations to assist with survey process
- Meeting at every school with a sixth grade population. (All sixth grades in our district became part of the middle school structure in FY09, requiring a change in HQ status for those who worked in elementary schools.)
- Reimbursement offered for passing appropriate Praxis II tests (registration, test fees, practice and support materials)
- Teachers needing to become HQ were offered tutoring support via district personnel as well as the University of Delaware (partnership program).

### Areas that Require Strengthening

The district recognizes the need for a sense of urgency in addressing the mathematics performance of its student population, especially at the secondary level. Possible unintended consequences concerning *Bridges to Algebra* are that these students require 4 years of high school level math and some may need to be provided mathematics on a daily basis rather than every other day. The former may limit participation and the latter schedule is the result of the current practice of block scheduling. Both aspects require examination to ensure that the potential programmatic benefits are available to students.

For ELL students at the secondary level, para-educators work with math teachers on ways to support ELL students in the math classes. For most paraprofessionals, this meant working on assignments ahead of students, getting help and feedback from the math teachers, and going back to then support ELL students as they encountered the lessons. In most schools this worked effectively as this was the second or third year of para's working with students in this curriculum. In two schools, para's struggled with their own understanding of mathematics.

The literacy work at the secondary level was not put into place until the third marking period. READ 180 was delayed due to technology alignment delays and district budget restrictions. It is scheduled for the district middle schools in FY09. The secondary schools were open to having a literacy intervention program and look forward to its first full year in 2008-09.

DSTP achievement gaps continue to fluctuate. The clearest measure of progress occurs when each year, the achievement gap goes down and both the Low Income and Not Low Income percentages of students who meet/exceed standards go up. The DSTP achievement gap is an outcome measure of success. Comparing 'Not Low Income' to Low Income students covers the entire DSTP population.

Recommendations for Goals 1 and 2 include:

- Include *Bridges to Algebra* courses as a part of the High School freshman curriculum. For students that require further preparation for high school mathematics, the district will provide intervention in conjunction with their freshman level class in order to keep them on track for graduation.
- With the onset of RtI, the district will work with ELL and other support staff to flush out how RtI will support ELL students with a variety of educational background levels and English proficiency skills. Hire an outside evaluator to assess the level of rigor and alignment among the ESL programs at the secondary schools. Provide support to teachers in implementing innovative instructional strategies that will allow ESL students to transition to the mainstream ESL curriculum.
- Develop Response to Intervention (RtI) Delivery Model for all CSD schools by: (a) Establishing clear entry and exit criteria for both academic and behavioral interventions, including the assessments and criteria, (b) Utilizing industry expertise to design and deliver appropriate professional development to support the RtI model, (c) Providing appropriate instructional coaches to support learning and implementation of RtI in the schools, (d) Providing supplemental support for students as defined by the RtI model either during the school day, after school, or during the summer, (e) Improving curriculum as needed to assure alignment with the State standards and Grade Level Expectations (GLE's), and (f) Improving implementation and effectiveness of school-wide enrichment models, particularly in Middle Schools.
- Identify appropriate *measurable* targets for each initiative for each school. The district emphasis on mathematics is essential. The district should ensure that such emphasis is at the inclusion of literacy rather than at the expense of literacy and vice versa.

### **Goal 3: Support the success of students who need special education services.**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA) provided funds that were used to supplement State and local resources to ensure that all school-age individuals with disabilities in the district were identified and provided a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that met their needs. The funding source provided educational services, instructional para-educators, instructional and screening materials, assistive technology, contractive therapeutic and evaluative services, personnel development, designed to ensure effective and appropriate delivery of services as well as compliance with federal and State mandates throughout Christina; and, administrative supervision to coordinate screening, evaluation, identification, service planning and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) , placement and transitions.

Grade 3 students with disabilities made impressive gain in mathematics. In reading, the FY08 percent proficient held steady - 65.28% compared to 64.06% in FY07. In mathematics, the percent proficient was 58.54% compared to 47.92% in FY07.

#### **Strengths**

The special education initiatives provided students with disabilities opportunities to be educated in the least restrictive environment. The activities focused special education as a service not a place. Strategies for providing more inclusive educational opportunities were provided to both regular and special education teachers sending the message that everyone is responsible for ALL students. Many of activities will continue throughout the 2008-09 school year to expand professional development to assist teacher knowledge and skills to accommodate students in the general education classroom.

All schools participated in the 3 day Inclusive Educational Practices and in addition had individual school technical assistance (TA) visits. The group professional development followed by the individual school TA provided the support to transfer the knowledge and skills to the school level.

## Areas that Require Strengthening

Regarding the inclusive education training, those who took the knowledge and skills back to their respective schools delivered them with different levels of effectiveness. Administrators, teachers and specialists agreed students should have access to the general population and the curriculum. Additional building technical assistance has been requested by the schools for the 2008-09 school year.

Recommendations for Goal 3 include:

Continue to expand the knowledge, skills and comfort levels of all teachers for assisting students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting.

**Goal 4:** Develop strong school and family partnerships to support positive school environments.

Communication is a core issue for home and school partnerships. In FY08, the eSchool Home Access Center was piloted at Kirk Middle School and Newark High School, giving parents web access to their children's grades, assignments and attendance. Over 40% of families used the Home Access Center in the first year. Requests have come to implement this at additional secondary schools.

### Strengths

The district School Climate Survey is an effective means to understand current home-school relations and to identify where improvement is needed. Annual administration of the survey helps the district and parents to continuously improve relationships.

Home Access usage (40%) may be an indicator that parents are most interested in the performance of their children. It provides a clear focus of attention: grades, assignments and attendance, each of which drives toward academic achievement.

The district has an increasing emphasis on helping ELL parents to stay informed about what is happening with the schooling of their children. In addition to a mutual strong interest in the outcomes of the ACCESS test, active steps are taken to involve ELL parents in ways to communicate with their schools better and frequently. It is important to facilitate the access of ELL parents to Home Access Center.

Recommendations for Goal 4 include:

- Provide professional development for teachers and administrators that helps them to help parents keep academic achievement and academic improvement as the center of focus.
- One of the main improvements needed is how to get more parents informed of school activities and thereby have them participate in more school events. Although great strides have been made at the elementary level, especially in schools that house an ELL program, much work needs to continue at the secondary level. Build parenting programs to include not only access to ESL classes for adults, but also knowledge on the school calendar, who to call for academic related questions, etc. The District also needs to improve its tracking system of ELL parent participation in school events.
- Implement Home Access Center in the secondary schools in FY09. Ensure that the promotion of the effort includes a central focus. The recommended focus is academic achievement and improvement.
- Examine whether Home Access Center is used by parents of the students who are most in need of academic improvement. Explore the potential barriers to access and use by parents.
- Use a subset of questions from the Delaware School Climate Survey as one source of data concerning parental involvement.

**Goal 5:** Improve school climates and student/staff relationships.

The Delaware School Climate Survey shows that middle and high school parents and teachers have a higher satisfaction with school safety than students by at least 12 percentage points. It also shows a higher satisfaction with middle school safety than high school safety. Only 52.9% of high school students feel safe in their schools.

In addition, the Delaware School Climate Survey puts more emphasis on student-teacher relationships in ways that help teachers to expand their capabilities for positive engagement with students. Professional development and implementation efforts include: (a) Continue to support and expand PBS, (b) Investigate and potentially implement other complementary classroom management programs, (c) Provide coaching for teachers on classroom management techniques, (d) Implement student success plans, (e) Provide resource books on potential intervention strategies to support students, and (f) Continue to focus coaching on adult behaviors to de-escalate issues. These efforts started in FY08 and should continue in FY09. Part of the intent is to develop an intensive support system for students who exhibit severe behavioral issues.

AVID is designed to increase school-wide learning and performance. The mission of AVID is to insure that all students - particularly the least served students in the middle:

- are capable of completing a college path
- will succeed in rigorous curriculum
- will enter mainstream activities of the school
- will increase their enrollment in four-year colleges
- will become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society

**Strengths**

The AVID program provides the district with an inherent broad focus on accelerating the academic achievement of students at all performance levels. Because AVID is for middle performing students from historically underrepresented groups, it increases the assurance that improvement efforts will be at their inclusion rather than at their expense. AVID is a program that touches Goals 1-5. It also requires a high level of encouragement to students from teachers.

The district currently has an in-house Non-violent Crisis Management instructor. This is an opportunity to prioritize professional development for de-escalation where it is needed most – in the secondary schools. In the secondary schools, it may be useful to conduct the training with content teams rather than grade level teams.

**Areas that Require Strengthening**

In FY08, for the second consecutive year, the number of suspensions increased as well as the number of suspensions per student based on the total enrollment. There are multiple initiatives and strategies that can contribute to improvement of student discipline within a school:

- Academically oriented alternative programs within the district
- Proactive decision-making choices within the schools
- The use of technology for the academic improvement of low achieving students, providing them with more interactive ways to learn and including more frequent productive adult contact with teachers – e.g. *Bridges to Algebra* and READ 180.

With improved discipline reporting procedures, it may be important to examine how much the increase in the number of suspensions was impacted by 'easier to use' reporting processes, enabling input that may have been missed in the past.

There seems to be a correlation between academic performance and behavior. This is most evident in suspension data. Populations with the lowest percentage of suspensions per student have the higher academic performance. It may be important to examine the cause of these relationships.

The Delaware School Climate Survey indicates that the Satisfaction with School Safety is lower with students than it is with parents and teachers. For the high schools it is just above 54%. It may be necessary to examine the factors that may improve school safety among high school students and how it impacts academic achievement.

Recommendations for Goal 5 include:

- Continue implementation of the AVID program in all Secondary Schools.
- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers on de-escalating anger and conflict resolution. Make secondary schools the highest and first priority.
- Conduct action research in secondary schools to determine which current services or strategies are most successful in reducing suspensions *and* accelerating the academic achievement of the lowest performing students.
- Identify and use proactive approaches to discipline, in the secondary schools. Differentiated instruction, inquiry-based instruction and cooperative learning are possible methods that help to engage students more in the academic process. They are conducive to a positive school climate.

### **Accountability**

The overall FY08 district rating is: Below Target. The district AYP status is 'Below Target'. The district State Progress Determination Composite Score was 70.40, showing a 0.76 percentage point improvement compared to FY07 (69.64), thus attaining a 'Below Target' status. The Christina grade level cluster ratings show the AYP outcomes for the NCLB populations of each grade level cluster with accountability components as follows:

- Elementary School AYP Status (Grades K-5): This Group is Below (B) the AYP Target
- Middle School AYP Status (Grades 6-8): This Group is Below (B) the AYP Target
- High School AYP Status (Grade 9-12): This Group is Below (B) the AYP Target

The District Rating Status is Academic Watch, Under District Improvement.

In elementary school **English/language arts (ELA)**, ELL students and students with disabilities were Below Standard, African American and Low Income students met the standard using confidence intervals. All other groups met the standards. **In mathematics**, Students with disabilities met Performance Level standards using the confidence interval in mathematics. All other groups met/exceeded the standards.

In middle school **ELA**, African American, students with disabilities and Low Income students did not meet the standard, Hispanic students met the standards using the confidence interval, ELL students qualified for Safe Harbor after applying a confidence interval and all other groups met the standard. **In mathematics**, African American and low-income students met the standards using the confidence interval, students with disabilities were below the standard and all other groups met/exceeded the standard. All eligible groups met participation standards.

In high school **ELA**, Hispanic students qualified for Safe Harbor after applying a confidence interval, White students exceeded the target and other eligible groups including the total population, were below target. **In mathematics**, White students met/exceeded the standards and all other eligible groups were below the standards. In both ELA and mathematics, only White students, students with disabilities and the total population met participation standards. African American, Hispanic and low-income students were below participation standards.

## **Additional Recommendations**

During times when austere budgetary limitations constrain provision of services, allocation of resources takes on greater urgency. Given the district's primary focus on student achievement, there are steps that may ensure that program evaluation promotes this main concern and assists the Christina School District in accomplishing its mission. Within this context the following recommendations for linking effective program evaluation and school improvement planning are suggested for consideration:

- Continue to refine, test and expand the district's internal student information system. It has powerful potential. Develop or refine user friendly school based reports that focus on SIP plans. Ensure that mandated data elements are consistently posted to the system by rewarding schools for accurately entering data elements in a timely fashion.
- Examine the district Annual Data Collection Plan at mid-year. Ensure that the data requirements are in place that will enable the evaluation of the approved Consolidated Grant. Concurrently, review the required data specification needed for producing information that directly addresses the intended evaluation. Review and revise the Application as needed to ensure that the required data will be available to evaluate each approved objective.
- Continue the practice of reporting the context for the annual evaluation. This will help to ensure that new reporting formats continue to be understood and used effectively. Context defines the relevant environment, desired and actual conditions, identifies unmet needs and unused opportunities, and diagnosis of problems. It gives meaning to the outcomes and provides an essential basis for developing objectives whose achievement results in programmatic improvement.

This report describes the impact of programs and services funded through the Consolidated Grant upon the Christina School District's improvement plan during the FY08 (2007-2008) school year. Like previous annual evaluations, it suggests what can be done to assist progress, achieve the district's mission and realize Christina's vision. Knowing the current status and the processes that bring about outcomes are critical components for making improvement and for meeting or exceeding State standards. The FY08 context and outcomes provides information that will make possible a united effort that will help the Christina School District move forward with steadily increasing effectiveness.

## **Path Forward**

The Christina School District concentrated Fy08 on staff development for a number of different initiatives designed to assure that students that are most in need of academic improvement are more effectively educated. FY09 is an implementation year. It is important to ensure that multiple programs are synchronized to work together. The Balanced Scorecard is a central tool to help connect District stakeholders to the strategies, goals and objectives for successful academic achievement in safe, orderly learning environments.