A SUMMARY OF CONNECTICUT PRINCIPALS' REACTIONS TO CURRENT LEGISLATIVE AND CSDE DEPARTMENTAL REGULATIONS

During a January 20, 2012 meeting with Commissioner of Education, Stefan Pryor, a request was made to have the Connecticut Association of Schools survey its member principals concerning current legislative and state department of education regulations which impeded their work as instructional leaders. The Association developed and promulgated an electronic survey of all members around this theme. While a variety of responses were received, the most prevalent number could be grouped around the following three main themes. **The themes are ordered in terms of frequency of similar responses.** A brief explanatory description amplifies upon each theme.

1. **PA 11-232 An Act Concerning School Bullying Laws**
   While school leaders recognize and embrace the need for positive school climate, the expanded scope in the definition of bullying has required significant amounts of time to investigate numerous allegations and this use of time detracts from available time during the principals' work day to focus on instructional issues. The need for a school climate plan, along with identified personnel with specialized titles, has had similar results with respect to time usage as well as requiring principals to reallocate critical resources to meet this mandate. An ancillary issue is the lack of differentiation in the legislation recognizing those schools with demonstrated positive school climate, thus relieving them of the need to comply with the legislation.

2. **PA 10-111 An Act Concerning Educational Reform in Connecticut**
   School leaders' concerns with this legislative mandate fall into two broad areas: (1) Confusion over the status of the secondary school reform initiative given the delay in implementation enacted in the last legislative session and the appearance of the CAPSS school reform platform which calls for an end to the Carnegie unit measure of high school graduation standards, and (2) the

specific provision for Student Success Plans. Essentially, the principals' dilemma in the first point is that of "What do we do plan for?" Will the CSDE continue with plans to develop end-of-course assessments and will student be required to meet additional Carnegie standards as projected in the current legislation? If so, secondary administrators want to begin planning now. If not, they do not want to plan for naught. Clarity is needed on this issue.

The issues around the **Student Success Plans** primarily include a concern over the lack of human and technological resources to meet the mandate in a number of schools. Also, some confusion exists regarding the need for special needs students with IEPs to have Student Success Plans well. Could not the two be merged into the IEP document? Again, clarity on this point would be helpful.

3. **Numerous Unfunded mandates and Frequency of Reporting**
   Of equal weight were the dual, yet somewhat related, issues of unfunded mandates and reports required by the CSDE which often appear to ask for duplicate information. Greater coordination is needed to ensure that requirements are not so numerous as to prevent a deep and rich response. Principals report that they often feel as if they simply are "putting out fires" and giving superficial treatment to the numerous disjointed mandates coming from the legislature and CSDE. One practitioner noted that he was attempting to lead his school in meeting the requirements of legislation concerning SRBI, School Governance Councils, Safe School Climate, Special Education, and No Child Left Behind while responding to numerous state reporting forms. Given the dearth of administrative resources, little time was left for instructional leadership.