PERFORMANCE MATTERS FORUM 2025

Friday, November 7, 2025 | 8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Blvd., Hartford, CT 06103

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Check-in	7:45 - 8:15 a.m.
Track One	8:30 - 9:30 a.m.
Track Two	9:40 - 10:40 a.m.
Track Three	10:50 - 11:50 a.m.
Track Four	12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

- Parking is available in the Convention Center Garage. Bring your ticket to the conference check-in table for validation.
- Please plan to arrive between 7:45 and 8:15 a.m. to pick up your nametag.
- There will be no breakfast or general session this year. Once you check in, you will go directly to your first breakout session.
- All breakout session rooms are located on floor 6 on the side of the convention center facing the river. There will be signs to direct you.

- There are no sign-ups for break-out sessions. However, please review the list of available sessions prior to the conference so you are prepared.
- The conference will conclude at 1:00 p.m.
- Free Wi-Fi will be available for attendees. **Wi-Fi Name**: CSDE **Password:** PMF2025!
- A small number of paper agendas are available upon request.

# CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

Room #	Track 1 8:30—9:30 a.m.	Track 2 9:40—10:40 a.m.	Track 3 10:50—11:50 a.m.	Track 4 12:00—1:00 p.m.
Session A 12	**Co-Teaching for Multilingual Learners: A High-Impact Strategy for Engagement and Growth** CREC	**Digging into Seal of Biliteracy Data: How to use the EdSight Seal of Biliteracy Dashboard** CSDE	**Targeted Teaching: Decodable Texts in Action** Wallingford School District	**Advancing English Language Arts Curriculum: Development, Implementation, and Future Directions at CTECS** CSDE/CTECS
Session B 13	**Experiences with the CT-SEDS MTSS Module** Stratford School District	**A Fireside Chat on MTSS Implementation Strategies: Leadership, Resources, and Results from Connecticut Districts** CSDE & District Partners	**Creating a Buzz: Transforming Learning Through WIN** New Britain School District	**Beyond the Basics: Innovative Strategies and Proven Structures to Reduce Chronic Absence** CSDE
Session C 14	**Curriculum Design Lab: Hands-On Tools for Rigorous and Relevant Learning** CSDE	**Supporting New Superintendents in Fostering Trust, High-Leverage Engagement Practices, and Improved School Culture and Climate** EASTCONN & District Partners	**Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC): Supporting Connecticut Schools through Research** CSDE/CCERC	**One Percent Monitoring and Assessment Supports Updates** CSDE
Session D 15	**Attendee Collaboration Space**	**Instructional Coaching: Impacting Student Performance** Thompson School District	**Bridging the Gap: Innovative Internships and Credentials for Career Success** CSDE & District Partners	**From Grade 9 On-Track to Postsecondary Access** Meriden School District & the RISE Network
Session E 16	**The Epidemic We Can't Ignore: Digital Wellness for Students, Families, and Communities** CREC	**Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) in K-12 Education: Lessons Learned from the CT AI in K-12 Pilot** CSDE/CCERC	**See, Reflect, Grow: Empowering K-5 Teachers and Students in Lab Classroom Settings** New Milford School District	**Attendee Collaboration Space**
Session F 17	**Checking our Biases Before Working with the Data: Root Cause Analysis that Gets to the Truth** CREC	**Making Meaning of Metrics to Move Mountains** Canton School District	**Strengthening School Climate: A Data-Driven, Systemic Approach** CSDE & District Partners	**Collaboration to Improve Outcomes for High-Risk High School Students** Seymour School District & CT Behavioral Health

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CONFERENCE MAP
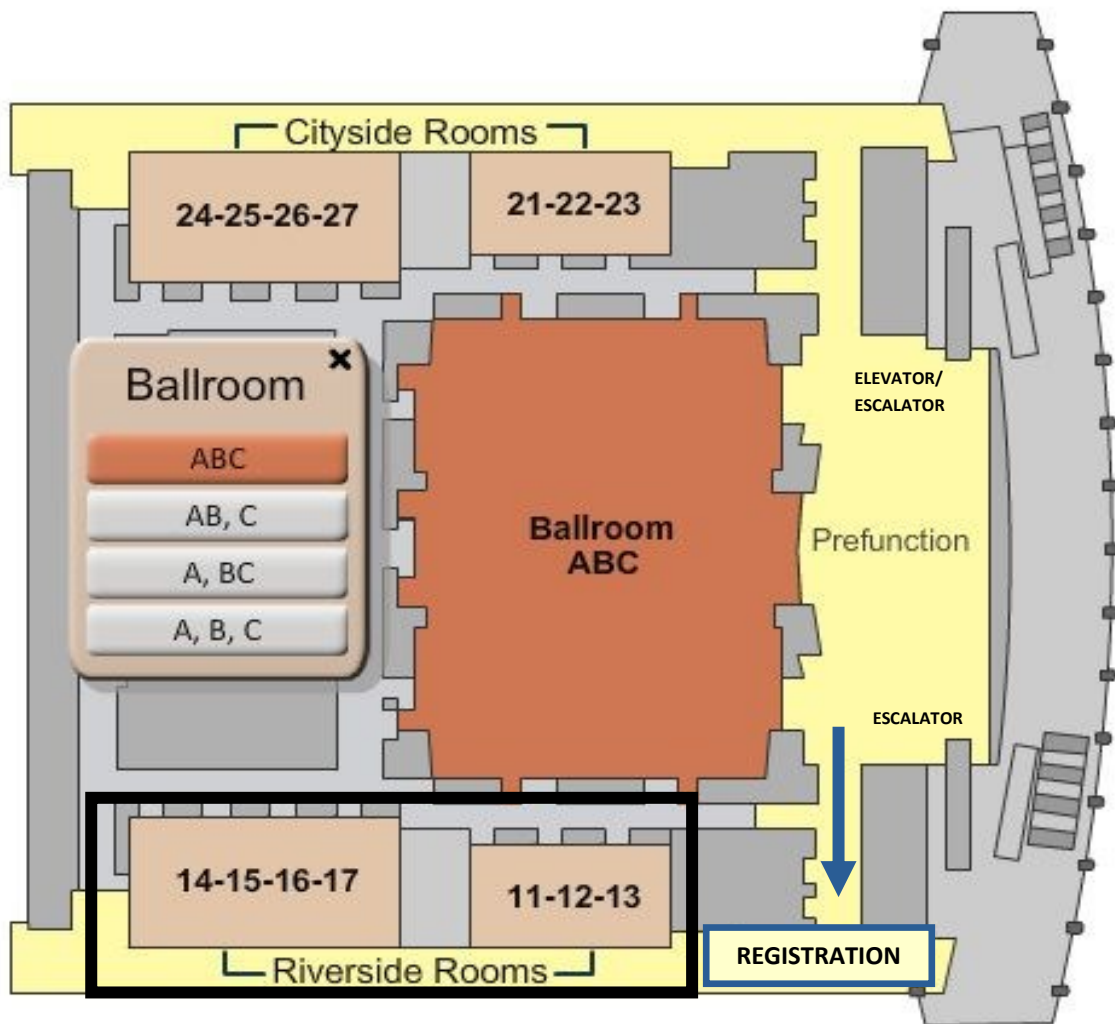
All sessions will be held in the Riverside Rooms located on the 6th floor. Please refer to page 2 for session times and locations or pages 4-11 for full session descriptions.

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TRACK 1

Session & Room #	8:30 - 9:30 a.m.
Session A **Room 12**	**Co-Teaching for Multilingual Learners: A High-Impact Strategy for Engagement and Growth** What happens when co-teaching is implemented with intentionality, coaching, and a focus on multilingual learners (MLs)? In this session, two educational specialists and a fifth-grade teacher team share how one elementary school strengthened and formalized a co-teaching model that improved both student outcomes and teacher practice. Grounded in a research-based Phases of Co-Teaching framework, this project paired general education and ML teachers to co-plan and co-deliver language arts instruction. With professional development, coaching, and leadership support, teams progressed from parallel instruction to collaborative ownership. Teachers reported increased confidence, stronger instructional alignment, and higher student engagement. Assessment data, including LAS Links, student satisfaction surveys, DIBELS, and iReady, showed measurable student growth. Participants will gain insight into what made this model successful and walk away with tools and strategies to implement co-teaching as a high-impact strategy for ML engagement and achievement. **Chrissy Bowman, Lisa Fiano, Vanessa Lenha and Maria Rivera - CREC**
Session B **Room 13**	**Experiences with the CT-SEDS MTSS Module** This session will open with an overview of the CT-SEDS MTSS Module, providing context for its role in supporting tiered intervention systems. Stratford Public Schools' leadership team will then present the district's SRBI/MTSS strategic framework, highlighting alignment with state guidance and local priorities. Administrators and educators will share their implementation journey with the CT-SEDS MTSS module, including onboarding processes, system integration, user experience, and data-informed practices. Key takeaways will include effective implementation strategies, lessons learned, and leadership recommendations. The session will conclude with a forward-looking discussion on Stratford's next steps to strengthen and sustain SRBI/MTSS across the district. **Diana DiIorio, Erin Dunn and Philip Piazza - Stratford School District**
Session C **Room 14**	**Curriculum Design Lab: Hands-On Tools for Rigorous and Relevant Learning** Participants will gain knowledge and resources to transform the curriculum development process with Connecticut's research-based framework for creating rigorous, equitable, and culturally responsive learning experiences. This interactive workshop unpacks the CSDE's four-phase curriculum development model—from Analysis & Planning through Evaluating—and demonstrates how to use the Universal Curriculum Template to design instruction that meets all learners where they are. Through collaborative protocol work and real-time template application, participants will gain practical strategies for building coherent K-12 learning progressions aligned with the district's portrait of a graduate/learner while ensuring accessibility and engagement for diverse student populations. **Paul Castiglione and Irene Parisi - CSDE**

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TRACK 1 (continued)

Session & Room #	8:30 - 9:30 a.m.
Session D **Room 15**	**Attendee Collaboration Space** (Attendees may use this room to connect, collaborate, or reflect during this hour.)
Session E **Room 16**	**The Epidemic We Can't Ignore: Digital Wellness for Students, Families, and Communities** This breakout session reframes digital health and wellness as a non-negotiable pillar of school climate and culture, embedded into daily practice, family engagement, and community connection. Participants will explore an innovative framework that positions digital wellness alongside literacy and math as a foundational life skill. Through real examples and strategies, we'll demonstrate how schools can: • Integrate digital health & wellness into curricula and climate initiatives; • Equip families with practical, judgment-free tools to guide their children; • Use AI responsibly as both a teaching partner and a context for building critical, ethical, • human-centered skills; • Mobilize students, staff, and communities around digital wellness as a shared movement, not a one-time intervention. This is a call to action to stop treating digital health and wellness as optional and start recognizing it as essential to academic engagement, social-emotional growth, and future readiness. Together, we can shift from fragmented efforts to a cultural transformation, one that treats digital wellness not as an afterthought, but as the work that must be done. **Ratosha McBride - CREC**
Session F **Room 17**	**Checking our Biases Before Working with the Data: Root Cause Analysis That Gets to the Truth** Too often, we begin the work of school or district improvement with a set narrative already in mind, one that may unintentionally reflect assumptions about the students we serve. These assumptions can shape the questions we ask, the data we prioritize, and ultimately the decisions we make. This session will lead us to move from asking, "What's wrong with these students?" to "What's happening in the system that produces these outcomes?" We will explore how to conduct a root cause analysis process that surfaces the actual contributors to low student performance, without bias clouding our decisions and practices. Participants will be introduced to a protocol that helps administrative teams interrogate their thinking before they open a spreadsheet. We will model a reflective protocol to identify and name implicit assumptions that can derail equity-centered inquiry. We will then guide participants through a step-by-step root cause analysis that builds from multiple data sources and perspectives, including student voice. By the end of this session, participants will walk away with a practical process they can use with school, or district-based teams to interrupt bias, deepen understanding of systemic contributors to performance challenges, and develop targeted strategies for improvement. This session is ideal for data teams, school improvement facilitators, district leaders, and equity-focused educators seeking to ensure that their accountability work leads to meaningful, sustainable change, not just reactive solutions. **Nicholas Chanese and Elsie Gonzalez - CREC**

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TRACK 2

Session & Room #	9:40 - 10:40 a.m.
Session A **Room 12**	**Digging into Seal of Biliteracy Data: How to use the EdSight Seal of Biliteracy Dashboard** The Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy was established to recognize public high school graduates who have attained a level of proficiency in English and one or more other languages. The new public EdSight dashboard shows the number of high school graduates eligible to receive the Seal of Biliteracy at the state and district levels. It highlights the many languages of biliteracy as well as the number of students with proficiency in more than two languages! Users can investigate patterns of seal eligibility among different student groups including English learner/multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and race/ethnicity. Join us for an interactive demonstration on how to access and engage with the report. We will also briefly discuss and answer questions on the companion report, available for authorized district and school EdSight Secure users. Bring your questions! **Dr. Megan Alubicki, Briana Hennessy, Stephanie O'Day and Dr. Maribel Olivero - CSDE**
Session B **Room 13**	**A Fireside Chat on MTSS Implementation Strategies: Leadership, Resources, and Results from Connecticut Districts** This session will provide district leadership with strategic insights drawn from the collective knowledge and practical experiences of districts that have already implemented the CT-SEDS Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Module. Presented in a discussion-based format, MTSS district and school leaders will share lessons learned, effective practices, and practical tools for implementing tiered interventions. The conversation will also address key contextual factors—such as leadership alignment, resource allocation, and staff capacity—that influence successful system-wide implementation. **Catherine Colavecchio, Windham; Dr. Diana DiIorio, Stratford; Dr. Erin K. Dunn, EASTCONN; Dr. Michael Harten, Woodstock; Karin Hughes, Woodstock; Jennifer Michalek, CSDE; Keith Murphy, Windham; Dr. Phil Piazza, Stratford; Annette Pietro, Watertown; Dr. Kimberly S. Traverso, CSDE; and Dr. Joanne R. White, CSDE**
Session C **Room 14**	**Supporting New Superintendents in Fostering Trust, High-Leverage Engagement Practices, and Improved School Culture and Climate in Their First Three Years via Systematic, Sustained, Non-Evaluative Classroom Drop-Ins** The purpose of this discussion will be to share the unique perspectives and insights of early career superintendents (from five diverse CT districts; Stonington, Griswold, Killingly, Suffield, Canterbury) who have uniquely and creatively adopted classroom drop-ins as a way of getting to know their new communities and cultures, build trust with their staff, and foster district-wide high leverage engagement practices. Following a brief overview of the classroom drop-in framework, as developed in partnership with educational consultants at EASTCONN Regional Education Service Center, administrators will share how they have utilized this non-evaluative, culture and climate centered practice, in their districts and with their boards to reflect upon and progress monitor school and district improvement efforts. **Dr. Christopher Bitgood, Canterbury; Dr. Mary Anne Butler, Stonington; Matthew Dunbar, Suffield; Dr. Sean McKenna, Griswold; Dr. Susan Nash-Ditzel, Killingly; and Dr. Ravit Stein, EASTCONN**

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TRACK 2 (continued)

Session & Room #	9:40 - 10:40 a.m.
Session D **Room 15**	**Instructional Coaching: Impacting Student Performance** In this presentation Thompson School District will share their journey toward improved student outcomes. The work has been guided by a clear vision: creating a sustainable, equitable system where every student thrives. This presentation highlights how we moved from isolated initiatives to a cohesive, data-informed approach that strengthens teaching, learning, and school culture. **Lindsey Calarco, Patricia Chenail, Courtney Sobanski, Laura Stefanski and Lucinda Trudeau - Thompson School District**
Session E **Room 16**	**Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) in K-12 Education: Lessons Learned from the Connecticut AI in K-12 Education Pilot** Amid the hype and worry around AI in education, State agencies have been developing resources for schools to put powerful, emerging technologies to use in the classroom. In 2024, the Commission for Educational Technology released Guidance on the Use of AI. And over the past few months, the Department of Education has been leading a pilot program in selected representative districts to explore AI's promise to deepen and scale learning, critical thinking, and provide efficiencies. Following the call for an "AI pilot" in last year's legislative session, the program includes a small number of districts applying AI to teaching and learning, backed by powerful tools and context-driven professional development. Join CSDE leaders, district participants and the research team from the CCERC as they share the program design, evaluation process, and overall impact on students and teachers participants can consider for implementation in their own schools and classrooms. **Dr. Alexandra Lamb, CCERC and Irene Parisi, CSDE**
Session F **Room 17**	**Making Meaning of Metrics to Move Mountains** Learn to access and analyze school accountability and assessment information to extrapolate meaningful information and utilize insights to accurately inform school improvement efforts. When Canton Middle School received notice of having an area of focus on the state Accountability Index, they accepted the invitation to join the Commissioner's Network and embrace the work of school improvement. Join school staff as they share their learning journey and insights in to the Accountability Index and state assessments, how they cracked "the code" of the metrics and used that information to drive growth through strategic practices. Join them to learn necessary change processes to support any school in learning to serve each and every student even better. **Jon Bishop, Kris Cimini, Anthony Geraci and Jeffrey Moore - Canton School District**

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TRACK 3

Session & Room #	10:50 - 11:50 a.m.
Session A **Room 12**	**Targeted Teaching: Decodable Texts in Action** This session will focus on maximizing the impact of small group reading instruction using decodable texts. Together, we'll explore effective strategies for organizing groups based upon data, establishing efficient routines, and implementing supportive systems for both teachers and administrators. **Angela Buccheri and Jenna Velardi - Wallingford School District**
Session B **Room 13**	**Creating a Buzz: Transforming Learning Through WIN** Discover how a schoolwide WIN (What I Need) block can transform learning by ensuring every student receives targeted support or enrichment based on data. This session will highlight how structured small-group intervention time can be implemented for all students, creating opportunities to reinforce essential skills, build confidence, and extend learning. Participants will learn practical strategies for organizing a WIN block, using data to drive instruction, and fostering a culture where every learner gets the right support at the right time. **Andrea Foligno, Jessica Kamens and Suzanne Lincoln - New Britain School District**
Session C **Room 14**	**Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC): Supporting Connecticut Schools through Research** In these uncertain times, CCERC continues to conduct high quality research that helps evaluate innovative programming and investigate the most pressing issues for Connecticut schools. In this session, we will discuss current projects and new findings that can help schools use their resources for high quality and effective initiatives. **Dr. Morgaen Donaldson, Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Dr. Alexandra Lamb - CSDE/CCERC**

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TRACK 3 (continued)

Session & Room #	10:50 - 11:50 a.m.
Session D **Room 15**	**Bridging the Gap: Innovative Internships and Credentials for Career Success** Join us for an engaging session focused on workforce development initiatives that emphasize the importance of internships and the attainment of industry-recognized credentials. Panelists from Norwalk and Waterbury Public School districts will discuss their innovative strategies for creating meaningful internship and credentialing opportunities that empower students to gain practical experience. They will also highlight the importance of industry and higher education partnerships in helping students enhance their skills and readiness for the workforce. **Dr. Vira Boatright, Waterbury; Jon DeBenedictis, CT State Community College; Dina Natalino, New Haven; and Carol Wiltshire-Toth, Norwalk**
Session E **Room 16**	**See, Reflect, Grow: Empowering K-5 Teachers and Students in Lab Classroom Settings** This session invites K-5 teachers into a dynamic lab classroom experience, where collaboration with content instructional coaches sparks curiosity and deep reflection on teaching practices. Lab classroom teachers work alongside coaches to identify effective strategies and refine instructional approaches. We will explore how this collaborative model empowers teachers to make data-driven decisions that directly impact and accelerate student growth and engagement. **Carrie Allen, Karen Bosco, Holly Hollander and Michelle Klee - New Milford School District**
Session F **Room 17**	**Strengthening School Climate: A Data-Driven, Systemic Approach** During this professional learning session, we will explore key components of a systemic approach to school climate, with a focus on using data to drive decision-making and continuous improvement. Participants will engage in discussions on aligning current efforts and will receive valuable resources to strengthen positive environments in their schools. District representatives will also participate in a panel discussion to share insights on implementation and lessons learned from their own school communities. You will leave with practical strategies, data-informed practices, and actionable insights to enhance the climate at your school. **Cheryl Gustafson, East Windsor; Dr. Gerald Hairston, Newington; Tasonn Haynes, Avon; and Amanda Pickett, CSDE**

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TRACK 4

Session & Room #	12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Session A **Room 12**	**Advancing English Language Arts Curriculum: Development, Implementation, and Future Directions at CTECS** This presentation offers a detailed overview of the CSDE Curriculum Design and Development Toolkit, a unified and comprehensive collection of resources that guides the curriculum renewal process through every stage, from initial planning to professional development. Participants will gain insights into how these materials can be effectively utilized to enhance teaching and learning. The session will examine the specific need for an English language arts (ELA) curriculum within the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), supported by an analysis of student achievement data and emerging educational trends. An in-depth discussion of the curriculum development process within CTECS will follow, highlighting the use of elements of the CSDE Curriculum Design and Development Toolkit, collaborative team efforts, protocols, and strategies for curriculum integration. Attendees will explore CTEC's professional learning initiatives, implementation approaches, and methods for using the ELA curriculum to inform courses, lessons, and instructional practices. The presentation will conclude with a summary of the next steps for CTECS, providing a strategic framework for ongoing curriculum advancement and support. **Dr. Darcy A. Fiano, CTECS and Dr. Joanne R. White, CSDE**
Session B **Room 13**	**Beyond the Basics: Innovative Strategies and Proven Structures to Reduce Chronic Absence** Reducing chronic absence requires more than isolated initiatives—it takes intentional structures, consistent monitoring, and creative strategies that inspire students and families to prioritize daily attendance. This session will explore key elements that support sustainable improvement in attendance, from establishing effective attendance teams and integrating multi-tiered systems of support to leveraging data dashboards and attendance reports to monitor and evaluate success. Participants will gain practical tools for building strong systems, setting measurable goals, and aligning interventions to meet the needs of students most at risk for chronic absence. The session will also showcase innovative district-level strategies, including approaches like "gamifying" attendance to create fun, engaging, and rewarding school cultures that motivate students to come to class every day. A featured Connecticut district will join the conversation to share how these strategies have been applied in real time, highlighting lessons learned, key challenges, and the impact on attendance rates. Participants will leave with a framework for action—grounded in research, supported by data, and enhanced by fresh ideas—that can be adapted to their own schools and districts. Whether you are just beginning to focus on attendance or looking to accelerate your results, this session will offer practical insights, proven tools, and creative solutions to improve attendance and support student engagement. **Caroline Calhoun, CSDE; Kari Sullivan Custer, CSDE and Dr. Latasha Easterling-Turnquest, Manchester**

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TRACK 4 (continued)

Session & Room #	12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Session C **Room 14**	**One Percent Monitoring and Assessment Supports Updates** This presentation will provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of the appropriate selection process for state assessments based on the student's learning profile. Educators will learn about the eligibility process for determining student participation in Connecticut Alternate Assessments (CTAA, CTAS, and CAAELP) and the accessibility features, including accommodations and Assistive Technology, that are available to promote student access to all state assessments. **Ashley DiGangi, Deirdre Ducharme and Katie Seifert - CSDE**
Session D **Room 15**	**From Grade 9 On-Track to Postsecondary Access** Learn how Maloney High School and the RISE Network are using a coherent framework and continuous improvement approach — not separate Grade 9 and postsecondary efforts — to help all students experience success as they transition to, through, and beyond high school. This session will illustrate how early warning systems and coaching in Grade 9 flow into postsecondary access work through shared routines (e.g., improvement teams, data protocols), actionable data (e.g., RISE Data Hub, student-voice surveys), and relationship-centered support (e.g., on-track coaching, student conferences). We will share what this looks like in practice (e.g., intentional recruitment for Summer Bridge and Summer Academy programs, postsecondary nudge campaigns) at Maloney and demonstrate how this approach has supported double-digit gains across multiple measures, while also closing equity gaps. Attendees will leave with replicable structures and tools to braid on-track and postsecondary work so that every student graduates with a plan and the skills and confidence to achieve college and career success. **James Donewald, Jennifer Straub, and Melane Thomas - Meriden School District** **Emily Pallin and Sam Purdy - RISE Network**
Session E **Room 16**	**Attendee Collaboration Space** (Attendees may use this room to connect, collaborate, or reflect during this hour.)
Session F **Room 17**	**Collaboration to Improve Outcomes for High-Risk High School Students** At Seymour High School, the CATS alternative learning program is designed to reengage students who struggle in a conventional high school environment by offering flexible, competency-based coursework, small class sizes, and ongoing mentorship. Students are referred from guidance with input from school counselors and administrators and participate in designing individualized learning plans with staff, incorporating self-paced technology modules, project-based experiences, vocational or credit-by-experience options, and enriched engagement in their school program. The program emphasizes daily structure, clear behavioral expectations, and integrated social-emotional supports to build resilience, responsibility, and academic momentum in a supportive, low-stress environment. Early implementation data and qualitative feedback suggest improved persistence, credit recovery, and student sense of belonging, particularly among students at risk of dropping out. With targeted monitoring and regular goal-review cycles, CATS aims to reduce dropout rates while enabling students to complete state graduation requirements in a context more attuned to their needs. At the Performance Matters Summit, this presentation will highlight the program design, key implementation challenges and lessons learned, and preliminary outcomes, offering insights for other districts seeking evidence-based alternative pathways that improve student retention and success. **Chris Brown, Seymour and Dr. Ryan Loss, Connecticut Behavioral Health**

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