



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: CT Core Standards District Leads
FROM: Ellen E. Cohn, Deputy Commissioner
DATE: September 8, 2015
RE: September Academic Office Newsletter

This is the September 2015 installment of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Academic Office monthly newsletter. We hope you will find helpful information within the newsletter that will support your district's implementation efforts of the Common Core State Standards as well as other important standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment work.

ASSESSMENT NEWS

Smarter Balanced and CMT/CAPT Science Results

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) released statewide scores for the 2015 Smarter Balanced assessments for English language arts/literacy and mathematics, CMT Science, and CAPT Science (including Skills Checklist Science) on August 28, 2015.

1. The **Smarter Balanced Individual Student Reports** will be arriving at schools throughout Connecticut in the coming days. A friendly reminder that the results must be communicated confidentially to parents and guardians. Typically, reports are mailed or shared at parent conferences. Please avoid sending the reports home directly with students.
 - To help parents understand the new standards, the CSDE created guides that explain what the student should have learned last year, what the student should learn in the year ahead, and how the parent can help the student learn at home. These brochures will be mailed in bulk to the central office of each district. The brochures, in English, and translated into the top six other languages spoken by Connecticut students and their families will be also be made accessible online.
 - A sample letter to parents and an electronic link to the translated brochures will be sent to Superintendents and district Common Core leads within the next two weeks.
2. The **Smarter Balanced summative assessment results are available electronically** on the [Online Reporting System](#) (ORS). Access to the ORS is available to district personnel who have a Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) username and password. Accounts identified with the role of District Administrator (DA) and District Coordinator (DC) have first access to the results and may give additional permissions to others. [Smarter Balanced Reporting Information](#) is available on the CSDE Web site. The [ORS User Guide](#) and the [ORS Log In Quick Start Guide](#) provides information on using the web-based system that displays student results. Contact the American Institutes for Research (AIR) Help Desk at 844-202-7583 for login assistance.
3. **State, district, and school results can be found online** at www.ct.gov/sde/SettingtheBaseline2015.
4. **CMT Science and CAPT Science (including Skills Checklist Science) results can be found online** at www.ctreports.com. District personnel can log into the secure Individual Student Performance Reports site

using a username and password. Contact the Student Assessment Office at 860-713-6860 for login assistance with this platform.

5. A **State Assessment Communications Toolkit** has been created for district use. Materials can be customized when presenting results to educators, boards of education, families, and community members.

Smarter Balanced Results Toolkit and Supports	
Online Reporting System Login Quick Start	<i>This Quick Start provides steps to access the Smarter Balanced assessment results Web site.</i>
PowerPoint Template for District or School Results	<i>This slide deck is fillable and editable. It provides the basic steps of presenting district or school level assessment results.</i>
Back to School Smarter Balanced Presentation	<i>A presentation and a FAQ to assist in explaining the Smarter Balanced assessments.</i>
Back to School Smarter Balanced Frequently Asked Questions	
Connecticut Achievement Level Descriptions for the Smarter Balanced Assessments	<i>This document provides Connecticut Achievement Level Descriptors for Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy and Mathematics assessments.</i>
Smarter Balanced Scale Scores and Achievement Levels	<i>This document provides the Scale Score Ranges for Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy and Mathematics assessments.</i>
Smarter Balanced Sample Individual Student Report Grade 5 Grade 8 Grade 11	<i>Sample Smarter Balanced Individual Student Reports that will be shipped to districts at the beginning of the school year.</i>
Connecticut Smarter Balanced Interpretive Guide 2015	<i>This guide is designed to help educators, parents, students, the public, and members of the media understand and explain the results of the Smarter Balanced summative assessments.</i>
Smarter Balanced Parent Guides	<i>A parent resource for understanding what your child should learn and be able to do this year, and helpful suggestions for supporting your child's learning at home.</i>

Questions? Contact the Student Assessment Office at 860-713-6860 or CTStudentAssessment@ct.gov.

Governor Malloy Announces Approval to Reduce Standardized Testing for Grade 11 Students

In a [press release](#) on August 6, 2015, Governor Dannel P. Malloy announced that the U.S. Department of Education has approved a waiver request he submitted on behalf of the State of Connecticut to reduce the amount of standardized testing required for public high school students. In an effort to eliminate duplicative testing, reduce over-testing, mitigate student stress, and address parental concerns, the Governor [last fall](#) sought federal approval to replace the Smarter Balanced Assessments in Grade 11 with the SAT. The CSDE will provide more information soon. Additional questions can be directed to Michelle Rosado at 860-713-6748 or Michelle.Rosado@ct.gov.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Connecticut English Language Proficiency Standards

A statewide committee was convened in the Fall of 2014 with a goal of selecting or developing new English language proficiency standards (CELP). The draft CELP standards have been reviewed by the Academic Standards Subcommittee and will be going to the State Board of Education for approval this fall. These standards involve the language necessary to engage in content-specific practices in ELA and literacy, math, social studies and science, and linguistic features that enable students to use the language of those content areas. To access a wide variety of supporting documents such as grade-level matrices, progressions, content correspondences and linguistic supports on the CSDE Web site, please click [here](#). This summer the CSDE offered a variety of informational sessions throughout the state. Please stay tuned for additional offerings for educators and for parents and families coming this fall. For questions or additional information, contact Megan.alubicki@ct.gov.

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)

At its February 4, 2015 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) was introduced to the enhancements to science teaching and learning envisioned in NGSS. As a next step in its deliberation process, the Board prioritized expanded outreach to diverse stakeholders to build statewide awareness and collect feedback. From May through July, an extensive stakeholder engagement effort was undertaken, reaching out specifically to local school boards, superintendents, principals, families, and professional scientists and engineers. Through partnerships with CABE, CAS and the CT PTA, SDE science education consultants hosted webinars (archived at [elementary and secondary principals](#) and [local school board members](#)) and regional focus groups. Additionally, district science leaders representing more than 50 districts have collaborated with SDE to develop and lead presentations and survey discussions for their local policymakers. Stakeholders consistently expressed strong support for the potential benefits of NGSS for CT students and for our state. Highlights of the stakeholder survey will be presented at a Fall 2015 SBE meeting together with a proposed transition plan that could be adopted by the SBE by year-end.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Annual Fall Conference

The Connecticut Council for the Social Studies and the Connecticut State Department of Education will be co-sponsoring a conference for social studies teachers on October 27th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cromwell. The themes of the conference will be utilizing the new state frameworks in the classroom and how social studies teachers and museum educators can partner to create meaningful educational experiences for students. A large number of Connecticut's museums will be present at the conference. There will be nearly 40 workshop sessions during the day: specific sessions will focus on social studies in the elementary school; numerous sessions will be centered on social studies instruction at the secondary level. For registration information go to the homepage of Connecticut Council for the Social Studies: www.ctsocialstudies.org. This fall there will also be an eight-part webinar series on the new social studies frameworks. Details and dates will be announced shortly. For questions or additional information, contact Stephen.armstrong@ct.gov.

The What, the How and the Why of Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments

The CSDE is offering one-day workshops designed to support Grade 3-8 classroom teachers, instructional specialists, coaches, ELA and mathematics department chairs, and interested administrators as they become familiar with the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments. Participants will learn about the purposes and uses for

the Interim Comprehensive Assessments and the Interim Assessment Blocks for English language arts/literacy and mathematics, scoring student responses using the hand-scoring training materials, and using student scores and responses to support instruction.

Location	Dates	Location	Dates	Location	Dates
ITBD 185 Main St New Britain, CT	September 8	Trumbull Marriott	September 30	Norwich Holiday Inn 10 Laura Blvd. Norwich, CT	October 8
	October 5	Merritt Parkway	October 9		November 17
	November 18	180 Hawley Lane	November 16		December 15
	December 14	Trumbull, CT	December 11		January 20
	January 14		January 11		February 2

For more information, contact Deirdre.Ducharme@ct.gov.

Connecticut Core Standards Online Learning Modules



The modules are now available on PCG’s professional learning platform Pepper! Pepper provides an online learning community where educators have on-demand access to engaging, high-quality professional learning content. The interactive contents for educators can be applied immediately in the classroom including instructional resources, teaching videos, and opportunities to share resources while networking with others. As teachers participate in the activities, they will build a portfolio of work that can be shared with coaches and other teachers. To register your entire district or school, contact ctcorestandards@pcgus.com or to sign up individually visit <http://surveys.pcgus.com/s3/Connecticut-Core-Standards-Online-Course-Registration>

Meeting the Challenge: CT Core Standards Success for English Learners and Students with Disabilities

The series consists of professional learning modules for school teams. By attending as teams, educators are empowered to align efforts resulting in an inclusive environment for all students, and increase their capability to foster change in their school systems. Each team includes five members: a building leader, Special Education teacher, EL teacher, and two general education teachers. Teams are committed to attending the entire series of professional learning. Sessions are designed to provide educators with engaging learning experiences that embrace practical knowledge and application of newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Module 1 sessions begin in September. Module 1 is for the full school team and focuses on Academic Optimism and Universal Design for Learning. Modules 2 and 3 are specific focus workshops. Teams will break into small groups to focus on the specific needs of English Learners and Students with Disabilities.

Focus Area	Module 2 Topics	Module 3 Topics
English Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for English Learners using the Connecticut Core Standards Speaking and Listening to Work Collaboratively Reading to Engage with Complex Texts Using Evidence in Writing and Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Language of Mathematics Digging Deeper – Language Scaffolds Collaboration is Key
Students with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding Learner Variability Aligning the Connecticut Core Standards, IEP Goals, Learning Targets, and UDL Maintaining High Expectations for All Learners through Meaningful Adaption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four Components of Curriculum Design in the UDL Classroom Attributes, Examples, and Applications of Formative Assessment Making Effective Instructional Decisions

Plans are underway to add an optional fourth module for full teams to come back together and synthesize what they have learned in order to take action in their schools. You can register your school team for the Meeting the Challenge series here: <http://surveys.pcgus.com/s3/CT-Team-Reg>

Mathematics and Science Partnership (MSP) Grant Program

A [Request for Proposals](#) has been posted opening a competition for Math Science Partnership (MSP) grant-funded professional development projects. MSP grants support partnerships between IHEs and LEAs to improve student achievement, as well as increase student interest and aspiration in mathematics and science through *sustained professional development institutes* that enhance teachers' content knowledge and teaching practices. Funded projects will offer K-12 teachers opportunities for in-depth study of math and science concepts and practices in CT Core Standards as well as Next Generation Science Standards (currently under adoption consideration by the State Board of Education).

School districts can participate in MSP projects in either of 2 ways:

1. As a Lead Partner and Fiscal Agent that designs and manages the PD project in conjunction with university partners; or
2. As a participating district that commits teams of teachers to take part in the professional learning program managed by others.

Questions may be directed to Jennifer.Michalek@ct.gov or Elizabeth.Buttner@ct.gov.

Computer Science Opportunity

Code.org provides a complete K-12 package of computer science opportunities consisting of four K-5 courses: computer science integration into 6-8 math and science courses and two nationally recognized 9-12 courses. All costs associated with the professional development, including half the cost of teacher stipends (except K-5 teachers), are covered by Code.org. Code.org maintains a high-quality K-12 professional development pathway which includes teacher supports, learning platform, and course marketing materials. In exchange, Code.org wants districts to commit to the goal of access to computer science education for all students, and to continuing and sustaining the work. Commitment from 30 teachers is needed to develop a partnership with Code.org and the State of Connecticut is willing to assist in finding partner districts that will meet this requirement. Interested districts should contact Jennifer.michalek@ct.gov for more information or to express interest in the partnership.