



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Education Stakeholders

FROM: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: September 10, 2013

SUBJECT: ESEA Waiver Amendment

In 2012, Connecticut's request for an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver was approved. This waiver granted the state flexibility regarding specific requirements under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in order to better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction. The ESEA flexibility waiver focuses on four critical areas: 1) transitioning to college-and career-ready standards and assessments; 2) developing systems of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; 3) evaluating and supporting teacher and principal effectiveness, and; 4) reducing duplications and unnecessary burden.

Connecticut is now in the process of amending Principle 3 of the approved waiver, *Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership*. As with our original waiver application, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) must have a notice and comment period for all stakeholders and must submit the comments received to the U.S. Department of Education in the amendment request. As such, the CSDE requests that any feedback or responses to the attached amendment be submitted by September 20, 2013, to eseawaiver@ct.gov. A conference call has been scheduled for Monday, September 16, 2013, at 8:30 a.m. to answer any questions that stakeholders may have on the amendment. The toll free number to dial in for this call is 877-915-7817, and the participant code is 51356609#.

Thank you in advance for your contributions to this important work.

SP:ct

Connecticut State Department of Education
Request for Public Comment
Principle 3 – ESEA Flexibility Waiver Request Amendment

Overview:

This document outlines Connecticut’s request to waive certain provisions of Connecticut’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request, with a focus on Principle 3, which mandates administrator and teacher evaluation and support. This proposal will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education following a period of public comment.

Interested parties may submit comments via e-mail to eseawaiver@ct.gov no later than September 20, 2013. In the subject header of the response, please write “Principle 3: (INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR NAME HERE).” A conference call will be held on Monday, September 16, 2013, at 8:30 a.m. to address any questions that stakeholders may have regarding the amendment. The toll free number to dial in for this call is 877-915-7817, and the participant code is 51356609#.

Summary:

Connecticut recognizes that teacher and administrator evaluation and support systems are a critical part of our comprehensive plan to build an environment that ensures equal opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students. Over the past two years, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has engaged the leadership and expertise of a council of educators, policy makers and advocates — the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) — in the undertaking of a major reform effort to develop new Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012). The Department has also begun taking important steps to plan for and ensure that high-quality evaluation and support systems are implemented in a timely manner by local school districts.

The CSDE has added and/or expanded upon three components within Principle 3 of the ESEA flexibility waiver request. These additions, if approved, will enable local education agencies (LEAs) to:

1. Decide whether to include state test data as part of the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14.
2. Determine how to most appropriately measure growth for teachers of nontested grades and subjects, with an emphasis on teachers of students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
3. Ensure successful implementation of the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14 and in subsequent years.

Component #1: Flexibility on the Use of State Test Data in Connecticut’s Educator Evaluation and Support System for 2013-14

In 2013-14, all Connecticut districts and charter schools, including the Connecticut Technical High School System, (181 in total) are expected to implement Connecticut’s new educator evaluation and support system with at least a third of their certified staff, inclusive of administrators. While the PEAC provided flexibility on the number of participating staff, more than 100 of the 181 LEAs and charter schools statewide have committed to full implementation with 100% of their certified educators in 2013-14. In 2014-15, all districts and charter schools, as well as USD #1, USD #2,

USD #3, adult education and private special education facilities, will fully implement Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system. The CSDE plans to submit a separate waiver which, if approved, would afford districts the option to administer the legacy state tests (CMT/CAPT) and/or the Common Core-aligned assessments produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) during the 2013-14 academic year.

Given this foreseen latitude in 2013-14, the CSDE plans to allow districts to decide whether they will incorporate state test results in measuring student growth and development as required by Connecticut's Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012). If a district elects not to include state test data in 2013-14, the Guidelines provide for the use of other standardized and non-standardized measures to assess the student learning portion of the educator's evaluation and support system.

Should a district choose not to use state test results as part of its educator evaluation and support system in the 2013-14 academic year, educators would be required to measure student growth and development using other appropriate standardized and non-standardized measures. Technical assistance from the CSDE will be provided to districts to support the transition beyond this year's flexibility regarding the use of state test data.

The CSDE is seeking the flexibility for districts to choose between legacy state tests and Common Core/SBAC for 2013-14. Since the 2013-14 academic year is a transition year for testing, the CSDE seeks to support districts as they determine the most appropriate approach to integration of state test data in the educator evaluation and support system. The CSDE is now requesting permission to authorize this approach.

Component #2: Nontested Grades and Subjects

The CSDE has convened a Student and Educator Support Specialist (SESS) workgroup consisting of representatives from many disciplines including school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, literacy coaches, and others. The SESS workgroup considered how the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) state model could be applied in a fair and meaningful way to their respective disciplines. In response to these discussions, the CSDE will release a series of documents to guide the evaluation of SESS in the following disciplines:

- English language learner/world language educators;
- social workers;
- school psychologists;
- library media specialists;
- school counselors;
- speech and language pathologists;
- mathematics and English language arts coaches;
- transition coordinators; and
- teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

All documents are designed to supplement Connecticut's SEED state model. These guides include a description of the varying roles that these educators serve within a district, as well as sample student learning objectives (SLOs) that are rigorous and comparable across learning environments.

To support observation of educator performance and practice, which comprises 40% of an educator's evaluation and support summative rating, the SESS workgroup developed a rubric called

the *Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Student and Educator Support Specialists*. This rubric is tightly-aligned with the *Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Effective Teaching* that is used for observation of practice in the 2013 SEED state model. It was determined that the *CCT Rubric for Educator and Support Specialists* was most applicable to school psychologists, social workers, school counselors, and speech and language pathologists. All other groups agreed that the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* would apply to their practice.

Students with Disabilities

Districts will have several options for measuring the growth of students with disabilities in the 2013-14 year. The preferred option is the standard assessment – either the CMT/CAPT or the Common Core/SBAC field test for districts choosing to pilot those tests. Connecticut has two alternate assessments, the Modified Assessment System (MAS) and the Skills Checklist, available for students with disabilities. Each has its own eligibility requirements and a corresponding guide to help district staff determine the appropriate testing option for students with disabilities.

English Language Learners

All English language learners who are not identified as a student with a disability are expected to take the standard assessment of the CMT/CAPT or Common Core/SBAC. Therefore, growth across grades/years can be measured using Connecticut’s growth model. English language learners who are enrolled for the first time in a U.S. school for ten calendar months or less may be excused from ELA Reading and Writing assessments; however, they must take mathematics in the Year 1 which can form the basis for growth in Year 2 using Connecticut’s growth model.

Component #3: Monitoring Implementation of Educator Evaluation and Support, starting in 2013-14

The CSDE is currently planning an annual process by which to monitor implementation of Connecticut’s new system for educator evaluation and support to ensure that each local education agency (LEA) develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and administrators, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and administrator evaluation and support systems consistent with the state education agency’s adopted Guidelines.

The CSDE proposes to develop a comprehensive system comprised of differentiated levels and types of monitoring. The levels will be designed as follows:

Level I: All Connecticut districts and charter schools will be required to complete a comprehensive progress report aligned to Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012) for both the teacher and administrator models in order to assess implementation progress.

Level II: Upon submission of the progress report to the CSDE and/or appropriate partners, approximately thirty districts, including charter schools, will be randomly selected for more in-depth monitoring. The random selection process will be designed to ensure approximately equal representation from each of the six regional educational service center (RES-C) regions. Additional districts and charter schools may be monitored if the CSDE has questions or concerns regarding the district’s responses during the Level I review process.

Level III: In addition to the districts selected for more in-depth monitoring, between five and ten districts and/or charter schools will be selected for a full site visit. The site review teams will be comprised of representatives from various offices of the CSDE, as well as other stakeholders. At the end of the monitoring process and site visits, those districts observed will receive feedback reports. The tiered system outlined above is intended to serve as the formal monitoring of statewide implementation.

Conclusion:

The CSDE is committed to supporting all LEAs in the implementation of educator evaluation and support. Additionally, the CSDE is committed to moving toward high-quality Common Core implementation and college and career-ready assessments. We believe that the best way to make these transitions is to provide districts with the flexibility to choose whether to integrate state test data into their evaluation for the 2013-14 year. This will ensure that the learning process is not disrupted by districts attempting to quickly implement both new assessments and new educator evaluations simultaneously. We also believe that all types of educators working with all types of students should be supported in their effort to achieve progress on student growth and learning. Finally, we believe that educational stakeholders should be included in all stages of this process and appreciate their input. Please do not hesitate to submit comments as every effort will be made to address them.