



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Superintendents of Schools

**FROM:** Stefan Pryor, Commissioner

**DATE:** October 7, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Student Assessment, Accountability, and Educator Evaluation Flexibilities

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is deeply supportive of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and committed to preparing all students to be ready for college and careers. As we and other state departments of education across the nation transition to the CCSS, the CSDE is working to provide student assessments that align with the CCSS.

The CSDE also recognizes that local educational agencies (LEAs) are in a process of transition to these standards. To this end, the CSDE will be seeking a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) on provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act regarding:

1. Student Assessment Options; and
2. District and School Accountability.

In addition, the CSDE is submitting an amendment to ESEA Flexibility Principle 3, which seeks additional flexibility with respect to the use of state assessment data in Connecticut's Educator Evaluation and Support system in 2013-14.

Though we are optimistic that Connecticut will be granted the flexibility needed to administer state assessments as delineated within this memorandum that are in the best interests of students and teachers, we are working in advance of the approval of such flexibility, to prepare for the implementation of the 2014 assessment program. Therefore, we are asking LEAs to inform the CSDE of their choices, conditional upon federal approval, as to:

- (i) which assessment(s) your LEA aims to administer in the 2013-2014 school year; and
- (ii) whether your LEA will utilize state assessment data in the educator evaluation and support system in 2013-14.

Please submit your choices using the District Choice Form at the end of this memorandum by **October 18, 2013**. The flexibilities sought in the three areas of student assessment options, district and school accountability, and educator evaluation and support are explained in greater detail on the following pages.

1. Student Assessment Options: The following options are available for 2013-14.

<b>Assessment Options: Grades 3-8</b>	<b>Assessment Options: High School</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students in grades 5 and 8 will take the Science Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)</li> </ul> <p><i>AND:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students in grade 10 will take the Science Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)</li> </ul> <p><i>AND:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMT in grades 3-8 for English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics, <i>OR</i></li> <li>• the Smarter Balanced Field Test (SB-FT) in grades 3-8 for ELA and Math, <i>OR</i></li> <li>• both the CMT and the SB-FT*.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the CAPT in grade 10 for ELA and Mathematics <i>OR</i></li> <li>• the SB-FT in grade 11 for ELA and Mathematics <i>OR</i></li> <li>• both the CAPT and SB-FT*.</li> </ul>

\*The choice to administer both assessments indicates that the district will test all students in the respective grades with both assessments.

Districts indicating assessment options that include the SB-FT should consider that student performance data may be limited and available later than usual – in fall 2014 (Smarter Balanced currently estimates November 2014, though this timing is subject to revision).

Additionally, the SB-FT administered in 2014 will not include a paper-pencil option. As such, LEAs must have the necessary computer devices and network requirements and specifications in order to select this option. The CMT/CAPT and Skills Checklist will continue to be paper-pencil tests and the Modified Assessment System (MAS) will continue to be administered via the online portal. Additional information on Skills Checklist and MAS administration will be forthcoming.

The CMT/CAPT administration window will continue to be during March in 2014. The SB-FT administration window will be assigned, district by district, and will occur between February and June 2014. The length of a district’s field testing window may vary based on district size.

Regardless of district assessment choice, students with disabilities must be provided with all required accommodations and modifications, as per their Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Guidance regarding any planning and placement team (PPT) actions and/or IEP modifications, as required for compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), will be forthcoming.

The CSDE is also aware that performance on the CMT/CAPT is an integral component of the criteria used to determine exit from English language instruction programs for English

Language Learners (ELLs). Guidance on determining exit of ELLs for districts that may choose the SB-FT will be forthcoming.

For questions regarding the student assessment options, please contact Dianna Roberge-Wentzell at 860-713-6775 or [Dianna.Roberge-Wentzell@ct.gov](mailto:Dianna.Roberge-Wentzell@ct.gov).

## 2. District and School Accountability

Currently, per federal requirements, Connecticut must evaluate the performance of districts and schools annually on results from standardized assessments to determine their attainment of annual measureable objective targets.

In May 2012, the USED approved Connecticut's flexibility request (or waiver), allowing the State to establish a new accountability system. Per this flexibility, Connecticut uses the results from CMT/CAPT assessments to calculate a School Performance Index (SPI). The SPI recognizes and values improvement in student achievement at all performance levels; the old system only recognized movement of students from "not proficient" to "proficient." SPI performance targets are also set based on the expectation that all students will perform at the higher state "goal" level on the majority of tests.

The CSDE is currently evaluating 2012-13 data to compare the performance of schools against their customized annual performance targets (i.e., SPI targets) and to determine whether all students as well as those from traditionally underperforming subgroups (e.g., English Language Learners, students with disabilities, Black students, and Hispanic students) are meeting established targets. In 2013-14, however, the CSDE will only be able to calculate an SPI and evaluate progress against performance targets for those districts that administer the CMT/CAPT; for districts that administer the SB-FT, the CSDE will be unable to calculate an SPI.

Therefore, as permitted in the flexibility guidance, the CSDE will seek approval from the USED to carry forward the 2012-13 federal accountability determinations for an additional year (to 2013-14) for schools and districts that administer the SB-FT. In addition, the CSDE is in dialogue with federal colleagues regarding the possibility of carrying forward the 2012-13 accountability determinations even for those schools and districts that choose to administer the CMT/CAPT in 2013-14. However, until the CSDE receives a final federal response on this point, districts and schools that administer the CMT/CAPT in 2013-14 should operate under the assumption that results from those assessments will be used to evaluate the attainment of annual measureable objective targets, as this assumption is likely to be confirmed by the USED. Also, regardless of test choice, the CSDE is required to continue reporting CMT/CAPT Science achievement results in 2013-14 for all schools and districts.

Please note that this waiver does not affect Connecticut's ability to classify all schools this fall 2013, after SPIs are calculated for 2012-13, into one of the following five categories: Excelling, Progressing, Transitioning, Review (including Focus), and Turnaround. These

classifications will remain in effect until all schools are reclassified after the SB operational test in 2014-15.

For questions regarding district and school accountability, please contact Ajit Gopalakrishnan at 860-713-6888 or [ajit.gopalakrishnan@ct.gov](mailto:ajit.gopalakrishnan@ct.gov).

### 3. Educator Evaluation and Support

As a result of Connecticut's education reform legislation (Public Act 12-116), passed in 2012, Connecticut LEAs are expected to incorporate student assessment data in Connecticut's educator evaluation and support system. As outlined in the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012), 45% of a teacher's annual summative evaluation is based on student outcomes as measured by standardized and non-standardized assessments, as available and appropriate. For teachers in tested grades and subjects, half of the 45% (22.5%) must incorporate state assessment data.

Connecticut's new administrator evaluation and support system requires that 45% of the annual summative evaluation be based on multiple student learning indicators. Half of this component (22.5%) is determined using a district's or school's progress from year to year and progress on subgroups through the District or School Performance Index (DPI or SPI), which is calculated using state assessment data.

To support LEAs that are prepared to transition to the CCSS-aligned assessments, the CSDE offers a new element of choice: LEAs have the option of whether or not to incorporate state standardized student assessment data for educator evaluation and support purposes in the 2013-14 school year. It is expected that districts will be required to incorporate state test data, where appropriate, in educator evaluation in the 2014-15 academic year.

Please note that in the 2013-14 transition year, the Guidelines provide for other assessments to be used in the absence of state assessment data. For instance, if a district doesn't require the use of state assessment data in the 2013-14 year, then the 45% would be composed of 22.5% locally-available assessments (standardized assessments for those grades and subjects where available and appropriate) and the other 22.5% based on a minimum of one non-standardized indicator and a maximum of one additional standardized indicator (in accordance with the Guidelines). If there are no standardized assessments available and/or appropriate, then the educator's 45% would be based fully on non-standardized indicators in the 2013-14 year.

The Guidelines provide for similar flexibility with respect to the administrator evaluation and support model. For districts that administer the SB-FT only, it will not be possible to calculate an overall SPI or DPI for 2013-14. In this instance, the Guidelines state that, "...the entire 45% of an administrator's rating on student learning indicators shall be based on the locally-determined indicators [as] described in subsection [3.3(1)(b)]." These locally-determined indicators would also comprise the 5% Whole-School Student Learning Indicator

rating for teachers, unless they have chosen to incorporate Student Feedback for the teacher's 5% component.

For questions regarding educator evaluation and support, please contact Shannon Marimon at 860-713-6816 or [Shannon.Marimon@ct.gov](mailto:Shannon.Marimon@ct.gov).

The CSDE remains committed to supporting LEAs as they move to the CCSS and college and career ready assessments. We believe that local decision-making coupled with state support is the best way to serve our students during this time of transition. Please submit your choices using the District Choice Form at the end of this memorandum by **October 18, 2013**.

Thank you.



## District Choice Form for 2013-14

### **Instructions:**

- Please complete, sign, scan and email this form to Jeanne Newton at [Jeanne.Newton@ct.gov](mailto:Jeanne.Newton@ct.gov) by October 18, 2013.

District Name:

### **Student Assessment Choice** (pending approval by USED)

<b>Assessment Options: Grades 3-8</b>	<b>Assessment Options: High School</b>
Please choose one: <input type="radio"/> CMT ELA and Math in grades 3-8 <input type="radio"/> SB-FT ELA and Math in grades 3-8 <input type="radio"/> Both SB-FT and CMT in grades 3-8	Please choose one: <input type="radio"/> CAPT ELA and Math in Grade 10 <input type="radio"/> SB-FT ELA and Math in Grade 11 <input type="radio"/> Both CAPT and SB-FT
Required: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CMT Science in Grades 5 and 8	Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAPT Science in Grade 10

### **Evaluation Choice** (pending approval by USED)

My LEA chooses to include the 2014 state assessment results within our educator evaluation and support plan for the 2013-14 school year. (*Note: A selection of "No" constitutes a request to amend the district's state approved educator evaluation and support plan for 2013-14. Please be advised that plan amendments must appropriately involve the local or regional board of education and the professional development and evaluation committee for the school district as described in Section 10-151b of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended by Public Act 13-245, and must be adopted by the local or regional Board of Education.*)

Yes       No

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Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

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Print Name (please print legibly)

Title