



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: District Test Coordinators

FROM: Janet Stuck, Education Consultant

DATE: October 30, 2013

SUBJECT: National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) Phase 1 Pilot

Similar to the Smarter Balanced Assessments that will replace our legacy assessments, the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist will also be replaced by a new assessment aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Our state and your schools have the opportunity to participate in an alternate assessment item tryout as members of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) consortium.

NCSC is a project funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and is led by five centers and 26 states to construct an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS), aligned to the CCSS, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3-8 and 11. The operational NCSC AA-AAS will be administered in the 2014-2015 school year. The goal of the NCSC project is to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options.

A critical component of the operational test development process is pilot testing. In spring 2014, NCSC will be administering a pilot test in English language arts and mathematics (the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot Test) to students with significant cognitive disabilities. The purpose of the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot Test is to (a) understand how the items are functioning, (b) investigate administration conditions, and (c) investigate the proposed item scoring processes and procedures. Data collected from the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot Test will be used to inform further development of the NCSC AA-AAS. Phase 2 of the pilot test will be administered in fall 2014. The purpose of the NCSC Phase 2 Pilot Test is to (a) try out adaptive test forms, and (b) continue investigating administrative and scoring conditions. Data collected from both phases of the pilot will inform the test forms and administration procedures for the operational NCSC AA-AAS which will be administered in spring 2015 to every eligible student in partner states. The pilot tests are not designed to provide individual student performance information, therefore districts will not receive any results from the NCSC pilot test. Participation in the NCSC pilot test also serves as an important component of Connecticut's transition to assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

How can your district participate in the NCSC Pilot Phase 1 Test?

- Determine which schools have students that are eligible to participate in the NCSC Phase 1 pilot. The [NCSC Participation Guidelines](#) generally reflect students with significant cognitive disabilities who may have participated in the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)/Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) Skills Checklist.
- Beginning October 15, 2013, states began registering schools for the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot. **Upon receiving this letter and identifying appropriate schools (#1 above) please contact principals to confirm school participation in NCSC Phase 1 Pilot test.**
- Inform and discuss participation in the pilot test with principals/teachers who have students who are eligible to participate in the NCSC pilot test. Make available to principals/teachers the Frequently Asked Questions (see attached document titled, “NCSC Pilot Phase 1 FAQ”). This Pilot will also include required test administrator training and support.
 - NCSC Professional Development (anticipate approximately 3 hours of online, self-directed training modules or face to face training provided by the state)
 - Pilot test administration (anticipate 1.5 to 2 hours administration time for each student during the pilot window)
- Register schools in your district with eligible students who meet the NCSC eligibility criteria at [NCSC Pilot](#).
- Ensure teachers and students have the technology (computers) needed to complete the pilot test in the NCSC comprehensive assessment system. (attach tech guidelines)

Which students and teachers are eligible to participate in the NCSC Pilot Phase 1 Test?

- Educators who teach a student who meets the NCSC eligibility criteria to participate in the NCSC AA-AAS, these are students who qualify for CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist.
- Students who meet the NCSC eligibility criteria to participate in the NCSC AA-AAS.
- [NCSC Participation Guidelines](#)

Why should your school participate in the NCSC Pilot Phase 1 Test?

- Teachers will gain experience with types of items, item presentation, and administration procedures that will be used in the 2015 NCSC operational assessment. Teachers will have an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience administering items to students.
- Schools will have the opportunity to confirm that teachers and students have the technology (computer hardware, software and internet capabilities) needed to complete the NCSC AA-AAS online.
- Students will provide valuable information about the items to inform test development for the 2015 test and administration. They will also have the opportunity to try out related accommodations and test features.

What's next?

- October 15, 2013: Open registration for your school to participate in the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot Test
- November 2013: Principal or their designee will be contacted to register eligible students.
- Early 2014: Test administrator training for the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot Test.
- February through April 2014: Administration of the NCSC Phase 1 Pilot Test for either mathematics or ELA.

These are exciting times for educators, students, special education, and for alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards. Your assistance and participation in this important NCSC Pilot test is very much appreciated.

Thank you, on behalf of Connecticut and the students who will benefit from participating in the NCSC alternate assessment.