

Series: 2009-10

Circular Letter: C-5

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Directors, Regional Educational Service Centers

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education

DATE: October 6, 2009

SUBJECT: Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS)

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) began work on the articulation of a balanced comprehensive assessment system in 2005. This effort focused on creating a continuum of assessment activities that ranged from formative assessment to assist with instructional planning to summative assessment to evaluate student competencies. At the heart of this effort was the development of interim assessments that could be used to complement the established summative tests, for example, the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), and Advance Placement (AP) Tests. Following a series of discussions with representatives from local education agencies (LEAs), regional organizations and national experts, the CSDE launched its initial attempt at implementing interim assessments in 2006, the Connecticut Grade 3-5 Mathematics Formative Assessment Pilot Project. Over the next few years, the Connecticut Grade 3-5 Mathematics Formative Assessment Pilot evolved into the Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS) for mathematics and reading comprehension in grades 3-8.

Interim testing is an important part of a balanced, comprehensive assessment program. CBAS was designed to provide more frequent assessment information in an online, low-stakes environment with rapid scoring and reporting to aid in instructional planning. During the 2008-09 school year, the CSDE in cooperation with 10 local school districts pilot tested online benchmark assessments in reading comprehension and mathematics. Three forms in each content area were developed for administration three times a year (fall, winter and spring).

Connecticut's benchmark assessments are based on the grade-level expectations (GLE) for mathematics and the assessment strands for reading which are defined in the CSDE's Sequenced Mathematics grade-level expectations for Grades 3-5, the Mathematics Curriculum Pacing Guides for Grades 6-8, and the Grades 3-8 Reading Comprehension GLEs and Pacing Guide. Whereas the CMT and CAPT are based on mastery of material that has been supported through instruction for the entire school year, these benchmark assessments focus on material that was taught within a short window of time according to the GLEs and pacing guides.

CBAS is administered in Grades 3-8 corresponding with three testing windows, fall (October), winter (February), and spring (May). Each test was designed to require approximately one hour to complete and results are available to students and teachers immediately upon completion.

Additional information including test blueprints can be found on the CBAS page on the CSDE's Website:

<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/cbas/index.htm>

CBAS is a new opportunity that is available for use by any LEA free of charge. LEAs may start at any point during the school year with whatever test is current at that time. LEAs wishing to use the CBAS must:

- 1) Ensure that **Public School Information System (PSIS)** data are current.
- 2) Send the name, phone number, and e-mail address of the following persons to CBAS@ct.gov:
 - a. LEA CBAS contact person
 - b. LEA technology contact person

For general information regarding CBAS development, contact Gil Andrada at gilbert.andrada@ct.gov or (860) 713-6883.

MKM:gna

cc: CSDE Associate Commissioners
Robert Lucco, Chief, Bureau of Student Assessment
Deborah Richards, Chief, Bureau of Accountability and Improvement
Anne Louise Thompson, Chief, Bureau of Special Education
Gilbert Andrada, Education Consultant, Bureau of Student Assessment
District Test Coordinators