

Connecticut Mastery Examination Committee

INTERIM REPORT

February 15, 2016



Connecticut State Department of Education

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Connecticut Mastery Examination Committee Members

Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Chair

Jim Accomando

Mary Anne Butler

Dr. Joseph Cirsuolo

Marcia Ferreira

Patti Fusco

Ajit Gopalakrishnan

Kathy Greider

Dr. Stephen Hegedus

Cathy Hill

Kathleen Kennedy

Abe Krisst

Ed Leavy

Patrice McCarthy

Richard Murray

Dr. Karissa Niehoff

Arthur Poole

Don Romoser

Allan Taylor

Dr. Jeffrey A. Villar

Donald E. Williams, Jr.

Stephen Wright

Connecticut Mastery Examination Committee Meeting Schedule

2015-17

October 27, 2015	1 p.m.
November 23, 2015	9 a.m.
December 14, 2015	1 p.m.
January 11, 2016	1 p.m.
*February 8, 2016	1 p.m.
March 22, 2016	1 p.m.
April 19, 2016	1 p.m.
May 17, 2016	1 p.m.
June 8, 2016	1 p.m.
September 21, 2016	1 p.m.
October 19, 2016	1 p.m.
November 16, 2016	1 p.m.
December 14, 2016	1 p.m.
**January 10, 2017	1 p.m.

All meetings take place in room 307A at the State Department of Education.

*Last meeting before submission of interim report to Education Committee – due February 15, 2016

**Last meeting before submission of final report to Education Committee – due January 15, 2017

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1095**Public Act No. 15-238****AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS ASSESSMENTS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a Mastery Examination Committee within the Department of Education. Membership of the committee shall consist of the following: (1) The Commissioner of Education and the president of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, or their designees, (2) one representative from the State Board of Education, (3) one representative and one practitioner from each of the following associations, designated by the association: The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the Connecticut Education Association, the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, and (4) persons selected by the Commissioner of Education who shall include, but shall not be limited to, teachers, persons with expertise in performance evaluation processes and systems and any other person the commissioner deems appropriate.

(b) The committee shall examine (1) the impact of the state-wide mastery examination on teaching, students and student learning time, (2) the administration of the state-wide mastery examination on computers or other devices, (3) whether the state-wide mastery examination is an appropriate student assessment, (4) whether the state-wide mastery examination (A) responds to student needs, (B) offers accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners, (C) informs teachers of student progress, (D) aligns with curriculum standards adopted by the State Board of Education, and (E) complies with the requirements of federal law, (5) the feasibility of decreasing the amount of time required to complete the state-wide mastery examination by using alternative formats or alternative methods of delivery, and (6) ways to facilitate timely communication between the State Board of Education and local and regional boards of education with regard to the state-wide mastery examination.

(c) On or before February 15, 2016, the committee shall submit an interim report and, on or before January 15, 2017, a final report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(d) The committee shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or January 15, 2017, whichever is later.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2015*) To the extent permitted by federal law or the terms of a federal waiver of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 USC 6301, et seq. , as amended from time to time, as it relates to the grade eleven mastery examination requirement pursuant to section 10-14n of the general statutes, as amended by this act, not later than January 1, 2016, the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Mastery Examination Committee, established pursuant to section 1 of this act, shall enter into an agreement with a provider of a nationally recognized college readiness assessment for the provision and administration of such college readiness assessment as part of such grade eleven mastery examination requirement, provided such college readiness assessment offers accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners.

Sec. 3. Section 10-14n of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage and applicable on and after the effective date of an agreement between the State Board of Education and a provider of a nationally recognized college readiness assessment for the provision and administration of a college readiness assessment as part of the grade eleven mastery examination requirement*):

(a) As used in this section, "mastery examination" means (1) for students enrolled in grades three to eight, inclusive, an examination or examinations, approved by the State Board of Education, that [measure] measures essential and grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing [,] or mathematics, [or science] (2) for students enrolled in grades five, eight and ten, an examination, approved by the State Board of Education, that measures essential and grade-appropriate skills in science, and (3) for students enrolled in grade eleven, a nationally recognized college readiness assessment, approved by the State Board of Education, that measures essential and grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

(b) (1) For the school year commencing July 1, [2013] 2015, and each school year thereafter, each student enrolled in grades three to eight, inclusive, and grade [ten or] eleven in any public school shall, annually, take a mastery examination in reading, writing and mathematics during the regular school day.

(2) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year thereafter, each student enrolled in [grade] grades five, eight [,] and ten [or eleven] in any public school shall, annually, in March or April, take a state-wide mastery examination in science during the regular school day.

(c) (1) Mastery examinations, as defined in subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section, given to students enrolled in grades three to eight, inclusive, pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section, shall be provided by and administered under the supervision of the State Board of Education.

(2) Mastery examinations, as defined in subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section, given to students enrolled in grades five, eight and ten, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section, shall be provided by and administered under the supervision of the State Board of Education.

(3) Mastery examinations, as defined in subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this section, given to students enrolled in grade eleven, pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section, shall be paid for by the State Board of Education and administered by the provider of such nationally recognized college readiness assessment in accordance with the provisions of the agreement between the state board and such provider, pursuant to section 2 of this act.

(d) The scores on each component of the mastery examination, as defined in subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this section, for each [tenth or] eleventh grade student may be included on the permanent record and transcript of each such student who takes such examination. For each [tenth or] eleventh grade student who meets or exceeds the state-wide mastery goal level on any component of the mastery examination, a certification of having met or exceeded such goal level shall be made on the permanent record and the transcript of each such student and such student shall be issued a certificate of mastery for such component. [Each tenth or eleventh grade student who fails to meet the mastery goal level on each component of said mastery examination may annually take or retake each such component at its regular administration until such student scores at or above each such state-wide mastery goal level or such student graduates or reaches age twenty-one.]

(e) No public school may require achievement of a satisfactory score on a mastery examination, or any subsequent retest on a component of such examination as the sole criterion of promotion or graduation.

Approved June 30, 2015

Connecticut Mastery Examination Committee Summary of Charges and Deadlines

- 1) **On or before February 15, 2016** — The committee shall submit an interim report to the Education Committee.
- 2) **On or before January 15, 2017** — The committee shall submit a final report to the Education Committee.
- 3) **January 15, 2017** — The committee shall terminate on this date, or the date that it submits its final report, whichever is later.
- 4) The committee is charged with examining:
 - A. The impact of the statewide mastery examination on teaching, students and student learning time.
 - B. The administration of the statewide mastery examination on computers and other devices.
 - C. Whether the statewide mastery examination is an appropriate student assessment.
 - D. Whether the statewide mastery examination (1) responds to student needs, (2) offers accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are ELLs, (3) informs teachers of student progress, (4) aligns with current standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE), and (5) complies with federal requirements.
 - E. The feasibility of decreasing the amount of time required to complete the statewide mastery examination by using alternative formats or methods of delivery.
 - F. Ways to facilitate timely communication between the SBE and local and regional boards of education regarding the statewide mastery examination.

Current Mastery Examinations in Connecticut

English/Language Arts 2015-16 School Year

Test Name	Grades Administered
Connecticut SAT	11
Smarter Balanced	3-8
CT Alternate Assessment	3-8 & 11

Mathematics 2015-16 School Year

Test Name	Grades Administered
Connecticut SAT	11
Smarter Balanced	3-8
CT Alternate Assessment	3-8 & 11

Science 2015-16 School Year

Test Name	Grades Administered
CMT/CAPT Science including CMT/CAPT Science Skills Checklist	5, 8 & 10

Action Taken Thus Far

The Mastery Examination Committee was created by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly on June 30, 2015, and is charged with studying the impact of statewide assessments on teaching, student learning and learning time; the use of technology with assessments; the appropriateness of a statewide assessment; and whether the statewide assessment responds to student needs, offers accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners, informs teachers of progress, aligns with college and career readiness standards and complies with federal law. The committee also is charged with considering ways to reduce testing time and strategies for strengthening communication between the State Department of Education and local school districts about assessments.

The goal of the committee is to create a deeply collaborative process for examining the purpose of statewide mastery examinations with the collective goal of delivering recommendations to strengthen the way we assess students' progress toward meeting academic standards and ensuring all students in Connecticut have access to a high quality education that prepares them for success in college, careers and life.

The membership of the committee was designed to include a broad range of voices representing all key educational partners and stakeholders, including representation from the State Department of Education, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the Connecticut Education Association, the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association, the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, as well as other important educational partners.

The committee convened its first meeting on September 22, 2015, and began with committee chairperson Dr. Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner of the State Department of Education, giving a brief history of assessments in Connecticut, including a description of Connecticut's Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver as it applies to assessments in the state.

It should be noted that since the formation and launch of the committee, Congress has passed and President Barack Obama has signed a bill reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The new Every Student Succeeds Act maintains the federal requirement that states administer statewide assessments in English Language Arts and Math to students in grades 3 through 8 and in grade 11.

It should further be noted that Governor Dannel P. Malloy announced in the fall that the U.S. Department of Education approved Connecticut's ESEA waiver request and plan to switch to the SAT for 11th-graders, a move that speaks to several key tasks of the committee, namely: the need to reduce over testing, eliminate duplicative testing, and give all public high school students in Connecticut the opportunity to take the SAT for free and use the test for the college admissions process.

Over the first five meetings of the committee, discussions covered a broad range of topics, including the need to establish the purpose of assessment, the merits of the state's decision to switch to the SAT for the 11th-grade mastery examination and the importance of including stakeholder voices in the discussion.

At the October 27 meeting, the committee heard a presentation by Scott Norton of the Council of Chief State School Officers on the purpose of statewide assessments and their role in serving as an indicator of student mastery of academic standards and to provide information about a school's performance. Discussions included the peer review process, the validity and reliability of assessments for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners, reduction of assessments and reduction of test preparation, the seeking and sharing of best practices by other states, and the need for a common vision on assessments at the state and district levels.

Several stakeholder groups surveyed their members over the summer and fall, collecting feedback about assessments and in particular the pilot and first year administration of the Smarter Balanced assessment. Survey results were discussed at the December 14 and January 11 meetings, with committee members noting the value of feedback from stakeholders in the field, as well as the limitations of voluntary nonscientific surveys.

Next Steps

The Mastery Examination Committee will continue its statutory work, as outlined in Public Act 15-238, until January 15, 2017, at which point a final report is due to the General Assembly's Education Committee.

There is still a great deal of information left to gather, perspectives to solicit, and ideas to discuss before the committee will be in a position to make final recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the future of mastery examinations in Connecticut. Until then, this committee will continue to conduct itself in a collaborative manner and will look to students, teachers, parents, administrators, various stakeholders, and both state and national experts in the area of mastery examination to assist with completing our charge.

The following list of questions reflects areas of focus to inform our work under Public Act 15-238 for the committee in the coming year:

- What is the purpose of mastery assessment?
- What impact do mastery examinations have on instructional practices?
- How do we change the mindset around over-testing?
- How can we reduce both teacher and student anxiety?
- How do we address, and help improve, technological disparities among districts?

Appendix: Stakeholder Reports

Presentation by Scott Norton, Council of Chief State School Officers [\[PDF\]](#)

State Department of Education: [Connecticut Smarter Balanced Testing Times](#), [Administrator Survey](#), [Student Survey](#), [Superintendent Survey](#), [Smarter Balanced Accommodations Summary](#)

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education: [Memo to Committee](#), [Feedback for Connecticut Mastery Examination](#), [Must-Know Information for Urban School Board Members](#) (National School Board Association)

Connecticut Association of Schools: [Examination Committee letter](#), [Feedback](#), [Survey](#)

Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents: [Results of Superintendent Survey](#), [Results of Survey of Superintendents of Schools Re Issues Under Consideration by the Mastery Test Committee](#)

Connecticut Education Association: [CEA Report to the Mastery Examination Committee](#), [CEA SBAC Survey](#), [link to CEA video](#), [Washington state Smarter Balanced survey](#), [Oregon educator feedback](#)

Connecticut Parent Teacher Association: [CT PTA Smarter Balanced Survey Raw Data](#), [CT PTA Smarter Balanced Survey Raw Data Responses](#), [CT PTA Smarter Balanced Survey Overview](#)

Connecticut Council for Education Reform: [Field Guide to Survey Design](#)

*All reports can be located on the State Department of Education's Mastery Examination Committee website: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/mec>