



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



Members:

### Mastery Examination Committee

Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Chair

Jim Accomando

January 15, 2016

Dr. Joseph Cirusuolo

Patti Fusco

Ted Goerner

The Honorable Andrew Fleischmann, Co-Chair

Ajit Gopalakrishnan

The Honorable Gayle Slossberg, Co-Chair

Kathy Greider

The Honorable Toni Boucher, Co-Chair

Dr. Stephen Hegedus

Education Committee

Cathy Hill

LOB Room 3100

Hartford, CT 06106

Kathleen Kennedy

Dear Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, and Senator Boucher:

Abe Krisst

Ed Leavy

Pursuant to Public Act 15-238, enclosed please find the final report of the Mastery Examination Committee which has been meeting monthly since September 2015. The 21-member committee, representing a diverse group of educational stakeholders from across the state, was charged with studying several aspects of the statewide mastery examination.

Patrice McCarthy

Richard Murray

Dr. Karissa Niehoff

I am pleased to report that we found a great deal of common ground through a series of spirited, thoughtful, and productive conversations that were informed by state and national experts. There was consensus among committee members that:

Arthur Poole

Don Romoser

Allan Taylor

Jeffrey Villar

Donald E. Williams, Jr.

Stephen Wright

- all assessments including the statewide mastery examination must be conducted for clear and stated purposes;
- the primary purpose of the statewide mastery examination is to provide an efficient and reliable estimate of a student’s overall performance in a subject area relative to grade appropriate standards;
- the statewide mastery examination is an important component for ensuring that we – the state, districts and schools – are delivering on the promise of a high-quality education for all students that prepares them for college, careers and life;
- the statewide mastery examination is an important indicator of student achievement and progress, but it is not the only one;
- the state standards and local curriculum should drive instruction and the statewide mastery examinations should be used for broader purposes like accountability, reporting, and program evaluation; and
- the CSDE should continue its own periodic reviews and psychometric evaluations of the mastery examinations.

Despite these and many additional areas of unanimous agreement, the final report did not receive the full approval of all 21 members of the committee. As such, also enclosed please find a Minority Report submitted to you by the four (4) representatives of our teachers’ unions.

We hope you will take the time to review the Committee's Final Report and avail yourselves of the many documents, articles and presentations posted online and linked directly from appendix B of the report. We hope that these resources will be as helpful to you as they were to us.

Lastly, the Department is also very pleased to report that since the conclusion of the Mastery Examination Committee meetings, we received notice from the United States Department of Education that the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments for all grades "substantially meets" the federal standards for high-quality state assessment systems. This is the highest level of approval received by any state to date for their ELA and Mathematics assessments and appears to have been conferred mostly upon states using assessments developed by either of the two national consortia (i.e., Smarter Balanced or PAARC).

If you have any questions, please contact Laura J. Stefon at (860) 713-6493.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Chair  
Mastery Examination Committee