

VI.B.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

October 7, 2015

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-14n of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended by Sections 2 and 3 of Public Act No. 15-238, approves the SAT as the mastery examination to be administered to Grade 11 public school students in lieu of Smarter Balanced, effective Spring 2016, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this seventh day of October, Two Thousand Fifteen.

Signed: _____
Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: October 7, 2015

SUBJECT: Approval to Administer the SAT to Grade 11 Students in Lieu of Smarter Balanced

Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this summary is to provide background information on and to recommend that the State Board of Education adopt the SAT as the college readiness assessment for Grade 11 student effective in spring 2016, in lieu of the Smarter Balanced assessments, to measure essential and grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

History/Background

In 2010, the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) adopted the Common Core State Standards, now referred to as the Connecticut Core Standards. Soon after, Connecticut became a governing state in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The Smarter Balanced assessments are designed to measure the knowledge and skills defined by the standards and administered in Grades 3-8 and Grade 11, and to serve as a college readiness assessment. Beginning in 2014-15, students, parents, and other stakeholders communicated concerns about administering a state assessments in eleventh grade, given that Grade 11 students were often already participating in other college preparation/readiness exams such as the SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement, and/or SAT Subject Tests.

In recognition of these factors, Governor Malloy wrote to the United States Secretary of Education seeking an open dialogue on ways to reduce the testing burden on Grade 11 students. Further, at the Governor's direction, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) established the Eleventh Grade Assessment Working Group in November 2014. This group was comprised of representatives of superintendents, schools, State Board of Education members, teachers (including both Connecticut teacher unions), higher education members, parent groups, and the state legislature. This group has met several times in 2014-15, considered different assessment options including the SAT, ACT, and Smarter Balanced, and recommended that the CSBE consider substituting the Smarter Balanced assessment in Grade 11 with an alternate college readiness assessment.

During the 2015 legislative session, the Connecticut legislature also showed an interest in reducing the assessment burden for students in Grade 11. The legislative activities culminated in the passage of Public Act No. 15-238 which states that effective in the 2015-16 school year, students enrolled in Grade 11 should be administered a nationally recognized college readiness assessment, that is approved by the State Board of Education, and that measures essential and grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Further, a subcommittee of the State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) of the State Board of Education also looked into this issue. The students' ideal solution would have been to use a

menu-based assessment approach wherein students could demonstrate their college readiness based on one of a variety of approved assessments at various times throughout their high school experience. However, current federal law requires a single uniform statewide assessment, so the SSACE recommended choosing either the SAT or the ACT (their preference was the SAT) as the state assessment in English language arts and mathematics for high school students.

On April 6, 2015, Connecticut submitted its ESEA Flexibility Request to the USDE which included the administration of the SAT in lieu of Smarter Balanced for Grade 11 public school students in Connecticut. On August 6, 2015, Connecticut's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver renewal was approved by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

Recommendation and Justification

I recommend the Board approve the administration of the SAT in lieu of the Smarter Balanced assessments for Grade 11 students. The administration of the SAT will eliminate duplicative testing, expand opportunity, and ensure availability of the test to Grade 11 students. Additionally, the SAT will reduce testing times as compared to other mastery examinations required for Grade 11 students and provide for a quicker timeline for results. The cost of the administration of the SAT will be paid for by the state which will provide all students the opportunity to realize their college dreams, since taking the SAT is an important step on the road to college. The results of the SAT can also provide opportunities for college scholarships for students.

Follow-up Activities

A comprehensive plan has been developed to implement the SAT to Grade 11 students in 2015-16. This plan outlines the state's approach to test development, professional development, administration, scoring, reporting, and research studies with regard to the SAT. The plan includes work with various committees of stakeholders. For example, the Mastery Examination Committee will examine the impact of the state-wide mastery examination on teaching, students and student learning time, as well as other pertinent areas around assessment. 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.

The CSDE has already identified critical areas that must be addressed in relation to the new assessment, such as the adoption of an acceptable accommodations policy, and communications will begin with the College Board to resolve these challenges immediately.

A communication toolkit is also under development for districts/schools to use with educators, local boards of education, parents, students and the broader community.

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