



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Common Core District Leads
FROM: Ellen E. Cohn, Interim Chief Academic Officer, *EEC*
DATE: February 23, 2015
RE: February 2015 Newsletter

ACADEMIC NEWSLETTER

This is the February 2015 installment of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Academic Office monthly newsletter. We hope you will find helpful information within the newsletter that will support your district's implementation efforts of the Common Core State Standards as well as other important standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment work.

SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

- **Assessment News:** Spring 2015 will be the first operational year for the Smarter Balanced Assessments in English language arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics. Our 2015 Assessment Calendar and other information about all of the operational assessments are available on the [Student Assessment page](#) of the CSDE Web site. Additionally, District Test Coordinators receive a weekly newsletter, [Student Assessment News](#) that supports administration of the state assessments. These newsletters are also archived on the Student Assessment page.
- **Summative Assessment Achievement Level Descriptors:** Formerly known as performance levels, new assessment results will be reported as achievement levels. Levels will no longer be named as they were for CMT/CAPT (advanced, goal, proficient, etc.), but will be numbered. **Please see the attachment titled Achievement Level Descriptors accompanying this newsletter.**
- **Summative Assessment Report for Parents/ Guardians (Under Development):** The design of summative assessment reports, while authored by and specific to Connecticut, will remain true to the constructs the assessment addresses and is consistent with Smarter Balanced specifications. Parents will receive scores for each subject area, and scores for each student will be reported within bands called "achievement levels." Our goal is to design the new assessment reports to be very similar to the CMT/CAPT assessment reports we have used for years.
- **Assessment Resources for Parents:**
 - English <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/parents-students/>
 - Spanish <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/parents-students/como-ayudar-a-todos-los-estudiantes-a-que-tengan-exito/>
 - *Coming soon!* New Standards, New Test, New Results – An Interpretive Guide And Resources For Parents
- **Assessment Participation:** By federal and state law, universal student assessment is required in ELA and Math in Grades 3-8 and once in high school annually. Also by federal and state law, assessment is required in science once in each school level (elementary, middle, and high school). In Connecticut, students participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessments in ELA/literacy and mathematics. These assessments are

given in Grades 3-8 and 11. In science, students participate in the Science CMT in Grades 5 and 8 and the Science CAPT in Grade 10. Some students with disabilities participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment and the CMT Science Skills Checklist or CAPT Science Skills Checklist. Both the CSDE and each LEA are legally responsible to administer these assessments to all students.

- **Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA):** Connecticut has partnered with the National Center and State Collaborative to develop our new Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA). This assessment is designed for eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3-8 and 11 and will be administered beginning in March 2015. This new assessment is aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics. It replaces the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist. Eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities will continue to be assessed with the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist in science. **Attached please find a chart that illustrates key changes in this assessment system.** Questions may be directed to Janet.Stuck@ct.gov

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Social Studies: At their regular meeting on February 4, 2014, the State Board of Education adopted the Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework. The CSDE is now planning significant professional learning opportunities for Connecticut teachers and leaders in implementing the standards.

NEXT STEPS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORKS

- A session for Connecticut social studies curriculum leaders on implementing the Framework at the districtwide level;
- The creation and distribution of a companion document, which outlines content, inquiry activities, and assessments in greater detail than is included in the Framework;
- A series of 10-12 workshops, to be held across the state, where teachers and curriculum leaders will be introduced to the Framework;
- A webinar series on the Framework;
- Two summer workshops for social studies educators on the new Framework and teaching social studies through inquiry;
- The creation of a Center of Inquiry in Connecticut History to be located at Central Connecticut State University;
- The identification of eight model social studies districts, that will create units and lessons, inquiry activities, and assessments that will be shared statewide; and
- Professional development activities for individual schools and districts.

Click [here](#) to access the Frameworks or contact Stephen Armstrong, Education Consultant, at Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov.

Next Generation Science Standards: At their regular meeting on February 4, 2014, the State Board of Education was introduced to the Next Generation Science Standards. The CSDE is planning significant public outreach for families, educators, administrators and local Boards of Education.

Mastery-Based Learning Update

See the attachment accompanying this newsletter.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- **Principal Webinar #6: CT Core Standards - Meeting the Needs of All Learners**
Participants will:
 - Learn about the components of Universal Design for Learning
 - See examples of how instruction can be designed in various subject areas to meet a variety of student needs

To register for the February 25th Webinar, click [here](#)

Next Week! February 25th
1:00-2:00 PM

- **Meeting the Challenge: CT Core Standards Success for English Learners and Students with Disabilities** Seats are still available in a three-module series now underway. The series is for school teams who support inclusive environments and standard-focused instruction for English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities. Our goal is to empower educators to implement CT Core Standards aligned curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments to meet the needs of a wide variety of learners. National experts in special education and English as a second language have designed a series of three professional learning modules for school teams. Register your school team [here](#) or contact Jennifer.Michalek@ct.gov
- **Upcoming CT Core Standards Workshops and Online Free-of-Charge Courses for CT Educators:** The CSDE is committed to providing Connecticut districts and LEAs with ongoing support and resources for implementing CT Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments. **See the attachment accompanying this newsletter.**

STUDENT RESOURCES

Student Motivation and Growth Mindset Resources: PERTS is an applied research center at Stanford University that works with leading experts on academic motivation to raise student achievement on a large scale. They develop, test, and disseminate evidence-based online programs and tools that are designed to shift how students think about school and their own abilities. Previous PERTS growth mindset programs have improved students' grade point averages and raised course pass rates. They are currently recruiting 9th grade students to participate in an online growth mindset program evaluation for the spring 2015 semester. Links to more information:

- High School Transition Program sign up page <http://info.perts.net/teaching-a-growth-mindset>
- Blog Post announcing the spring 2015 Mindset Program <http://blog.perts.net/all>
- Past Results - Highlights of findings from past studies <https://www.perts.net/about#results>
- General Video – To see a short video on the project, [click here](#)

NEW MATERIALS AT CT STANDARDS WEBSITE

Our Academic Office website is dedicated to materials, resources, and professional learning opportunities in support of standards implementation in your district. This Web site is refreshed three times each week and there is always **NEW** material. Please consider submitting a unit that your teachers have created. Our team will provide feedback to you and possibly feature the work of your teachers on our site! We are happy that our resource list includes work developed by our teachers. Questions about the Web site should be directed to Jennifer.Webb@ct.gov the Web site is found at: <http://ctcorestandards.org/>

