



## Connecticut is Seeking Flexibility from the U.S. Department of Education for School/District Accountability in 2020-21



**What flexibility is Connecticut seeking?**

Connecticut is seeking flexibility to decouple assessment results from accountability determinations. Specifically, Connecticut is asking for federal approval to not issue summative ratings (i.e., the Accountability Index), not categorize schools into 1-5 categories, and not identify new Turnaround or Focus schools (category 4 and 5) in Fall 2021 based on data from the 2020-21 school year.

**When will new Turnaround and Focus schools be identified?**

It is expected the new Turnaround and Focus schools will be identified in Fall 2022.

**Under this flexibility, will state summative assessments need to be administered in 2020-21?**

Yes. All state assessments (i.e., Smarter Balanced, NGSS, CT SAT School Day, Alternate Assessments, LAS Links, Physical Fitness, Kindergarten Inventory) are expected to be administered in the 2020-21 school year.

**If Connecticut is seeking flexibility from formal accountability determinations, why administer the state assessments?**

Since mid-March 2020, students have been attending school and learning in very different ways (fully in-person, hybrid, fully remote). Therefore, it is particularly important that we administer high-quality, uniform, standardized measures this year to monitor long-term trends, evaluate the full impact of the pandemic on student achievement and growth, and target support and resources where they are needed the most. Moreover, having a baseline measurement in 2020-21 will also allow us to restart the academic growth measure with the 2021-22 school year.

**My district is already administering off-the-shelf benchmark assessments. Especially this year, can we use those instead of the state assessments?**

No. Having all districts use the same statewide assessments provides comparable data across the state, rather than using data from a variety of different off-the-shelf assessments, many of which are not well aligned to the state's content standards and often not administered in a standardized way like the state assessments. Moreover, some administer none of these measures. In Grades 3-8, the Smarter Balanced, NGSS, and alternate assessments are the best instruments to measure student learning on the standards, consistently across all students statewide. These results also provide valuable and consistent information to families about their child's performance in school and can be used along with other information to identify the supports necessary to accelerate learning in the next school year.

**Teachers and students complain that there is too much testing. How can we reduce testing time, especially this year?**

To reduce unnecessary testing during the year, the CSDE strongly recommends that districts discontinue off-the-shelf, "mini-summative" benchmark assessments. Eliminating these off-the-shelf assessments will save district resources and more importantly reduce testing time for students and teachers. In their place, please prioritize small-scale, fine-grain assessments during the year like the 149 Smarter Balanced and 54 NGSS interim assessment blocks that are available at no-cost to districts. These shorter, focused



assessments can provide actionable information for classroom teachers to accelerate learning. For further information about this approach, please see the [Sensible Assessment Practices](#) guidance.



### **The state assessments are sometimes a source of anxiety for teachers. What can we do?**

This is undoubtedly an unusual school year. It is important to reassure teachers that state assessment results are never used for teacher ratings in educator evaluation. Moreover, with the flexibilities offered this year by the CSDE, there are no summative educator evaluation ratings, and an academic student learning objective is not required. The primary purpose of the state assessment in any year, but particularly this year, is to have a consistent measure of student learning on the state standards so we can know how our students have learned through this tumultuous year and what students will need to be successful in the next grade.

### **Can state assessments be administered remotely?**

Yes, but as a last resort. The CSDE recommends that all students, including those who are fully remote, take the state assessments in-person to the greatest extent possible. Most state assessments can be administered in a flexible manner (e.g., pause test on one day and continue on another). As of late November, almost 80 percent of students were scheduled for in-person learning on at least one day during 2020-21. If in-person testing is not possible, then the remote testing option is available for Smarter Balanced, NGSS, and LAS Links assessments.

### **Will remote administration yield valid results?**

Likely so in most cases. The CSDE is confident that its remote proctoring platforms will allow for a secure administration of the assessment. As with assessment administration pre-COVID, districts will have the ability to request invalidation of a test through a test appeals system.

### **Can teachers gain experience with administering the tests remotely?**

Yes. The state-provided interim block assessments can currently be administered remotely to students. The interim blocks operate on the same platform as the summative. When teachers integrate these short assessments into the teaching and learning process, they can serve as opportunities for them to gain experience with administering these tests remotely. Additionally, a more advanced remote proctoring platform is currently being piloted and will be available in the near future for all districts to use for their interim blocks and subsequently the state summative assessments.

### **If assessments are administered, will the results be reported publicly?**

Yes, so long as the results can be deemed valid and defensible. As in any year, CSDE will analyze the results of the assessments to ensure that the scores are a valid representation of student achievement on the state standards. This year, a particular set of analyses will focus on ensuring the comparability of scores achieved through remote test administrations. No results will be released until those studies are successfully completed. The precise nature of the public reporting is yet to be determined.

### **How can I give my input on this request?**

You can offer your input by emailing [eseawaiver@ct.gov](mailto:eseawaiver@ct.gov) by Monday, January 11, 2021.