



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

September 23, 2026

The Honorable Charlene Russell-Tucker
Commissioner of Education
Connecticut State Department of Education
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103

Dear Commissioner Russell-Tucker:

Thank you for your participation in the U.S. Department of Education's (Department's) assessment peer review process under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). I appreciate the efforts of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to prepare for the most recent peer reviews which occurred in March and August 2026 and your patience as we worked to provide you this response.

State assessment systems provide essential information that States, districts, schools, educators, and parents can use to identify the academic needs of students; strategically target resources and supports to meet students' unique needs; evaluate school and program effectiveness; and bolster academic achievement. A high-quality assessment system also provides critical information to parents about their children's advancement against and achievement of grade-level standards. The Department's peer review of State assessment systems is designed to provide feedback to States to support the development and administration of high-quality assessments.

External peer reviewers and Department staff carefully evaluated Connecticut's submission, and the Department found, based on evidence received, that the following components of Connecticut's assessment system have met all statutory and regulatory requirements of the ESEA:

- General assessments in high school in reading/language arts (R/LA) and mathematics (SAT): **Meets all requirements of the ESEA.**
- Alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) in grades 3-8 and high school in science (Connecticut Alternate Science (CTAS)): **Meets all requirements of the ESEA.**

Congratulations on this significant accomplishment. Assessments that produce valid and reliable results are fundamental to a State's accountability system. Please be aware that approval of CSDE's assessments is not a determination that the system complies with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Title IX of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The full peer review notes from the review are enclosed. These recommendations to the Department formed the basis of our determination. Please note that the peers' recommendations may differ from the Department's feedback; we encourage you to read the full peer notes for additional suggestions and

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

recommendations for improving your assessment system beyond what is noted in the Department's feedback. Department staff will reach out to your assessment director in the next few days to discuss the peer notes and the Department's determination and to answer any questions you have.

I also want to take this opportunity to review the peer review status of the other ESEA-required assessments administered by the State, based upon our current records:¹

- General assessments in R/LA and mathematics in grades 3-8 (Smarter Balanced): Meets requirements of the ESEA.
- General assessments in science in grades 5, 8, and 11 (Cambium Science Assessments): Meets requirements of the ESEA.
- AA-AAAS in R/LA and mathematics in grades 3-8 and high school (CTAA): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.
- General English language proficiency (ELP) assessment (LAS Links): Meets all requirements of the ESEA.
- Alternate ELP assessment (Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP or Alternate ELPA21): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for your students. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kirsten Baesler".

Kirsten Baesler
Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosures

cc: Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer

¹ See: <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/connecticut-10-assessment-peer-review-november-17-2025-112636.pdf>, <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2024/02/ct-9.pdf>, and <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/04/Connecticut-7.pdf>.