



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Common Core District Leads

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Interim Commissioner of Education, *DRW*
Ellen E. Cohn, Interim Chief Academic Officer, *EEC*

DATE: January 14, 2015

RE: January Newsletter

ACADEMIC NEWSLETTER

This is the January 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 key standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment topics.

Leadership Appointments

At their regular meeting on January 7, the State Board of Education appointed Dianna R. Wentzell to the position of Interim Commissioner of Education and Ellen E. Cohn to the position of Interim Chief Academic Officer. They will serve in these interim roles until the position of Commissioner of Education is filled.

Meeting the Challenge: CT Core Standards Success for English Learners and Students with Disabilities

The CSDE is pleased to present a three-module series for school teams supporting 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. Please see the attached flyer for more information and contact Jennifer.Michalek@ct.gov

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.

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

Interim Assessments (Smarter Balanced)

Introductory information about the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments is now available. The Interim Assessments will be released in late January 2015. We have compiled a user-friendly ***Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*** document. Questions are paired with concise “jargon-free” answers, as well as considerations and cautions for Connecticut’s district and school leaders. More information about the Interim Assessments is available on the [Interim Assessments page](#) of the [Smarter Balanced Web site](#)

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/>



Webinar Series for Principals

The Academic Office will continue to host a webinar series for principals to support Common Core implementation in schools. The webinars are live the last Wednesday of each month. If you miss the live webinar, you can access the webinars at our Web site: <http://ctcorestandards.org/>