

PERFORMANCE MATTERS

News from the CSDE Performance Office



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Thank you Vince (1952—2016)

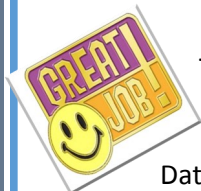
It was the fifth meeting of the CSDE's accountability advisory group in November 2014. Vince Agostine was one of the principals on this group that was advising the CSDE in the development of what would later become the Next Generation Accountability System.



During that meeting and in subsequent email exchanges with the CSDE, Vince made passionate arguments as to why the CSDE should not calculate a performance index for the state assessment that was based on the achievement levels as was the case with the first iteration of the DPI/SPI.

Vince felt that his school (A.W. Cox in Guilford) was not very different from another school in town but somehow the performance index based on achievement levels was exaggerating the differences. He felt that if scale scores were used instead of achievement levels to develop the index, then perhaps the index would be a more accurate reflection of his school's performance. There's got to be a way to do this, he pressed us in his kind but firm manner. After multiple conversations internally and with our technical advisory committee, the CSDE ultimately established a performance index that transformed the underlying scale scores of an assessment into an index that ranged from 0 to 100.

Though Vince is no longer with us, we will remember his contribution to the performance index and to the accountability system as a whole. Thank you Vince!



Data Collection **STALWART**

The K-3 Reading Initiative requires four data collections during a calendar year from Priority School Districts. Stalwart among the data managers for this initiative is **JoAnne Guerraz** who works in Assessment, Data & Accountability at Windham Public Schools.

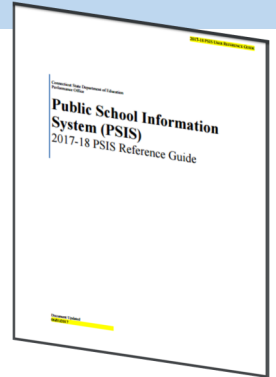
This data collection has been implementing changes over the past few years to accommodate changes in the regulations associated with the initiative. Through these changes, Joanne proves herself to be among the most proactive and responsive. This data collection requires exacting submission specifications and returns comprehensive error reports. Early in the submission window Windham is either in contact with the Performance Office for early resolutions to irregularities or fully submitted.

The Performance Office Team appreciates your efforts to provide timely and accurate data. Congratulations, JoAnne. You are a Data Collection Stalwart!

PSIS 2017-18 Reference Guide Released

The Public School Information System (PSIS) is the CSDE's core data collection for student information. It collects data about students including:

- demographics (e.g., name, date of birth, race/ethnicity, gender);
- enrollment (e.g., district, school/program, grade);
- entry/exit dates and exit codes (e.g., transfer to another school, graduation); and
- special characteristics/program participation (e.g., special education, English learner, free/reduced price meals, 504 status, recently arrived EL, military family, homeless, gifted/talented, open choice, attendance).



One data element that has drawn greater scrutiny in recent years is the reporting of student attendance and chronic absenteeism. Districts are looking more closely at their data and surfacing unique scenarios where they need further guidance for reporting attendance data through PSIS. These scenarios include disciplinary absences, early dismissal days, and extended family vacations/travel. To assist districts with ensuring that such situations are handled consistently by all districts and in a manner that conforms to the requirements in state and federal law, the CSDE Performance Office staff worked closely with colleagues throughout the CSDE and sought input from many districts to expand the requisite guidance. Appendix G on pages 49-52 of the [PSIS Reference Guide for 2017-18](#) contains this guidance. If after reviewing the guidance, there are additional questions regarding reporting attendance through PSIS, please contact Marquelle Middleton at Marquelle.Middleton@ct.gov

In addition to these special circumstances, the CSDE has also received many questions from districts on how to handle the registration in PSIS of students who are disengaged from school. Here again, the CSDE consulted extensively to create new guidance which is included in Appendix N on pages 61 and 62 of the [PSIS Reference Guide for 2017-18](#). If after reviewing this guidance, there are additional questions, please contact Kendra Shakir at Kendra.Shakir@ct.gov.

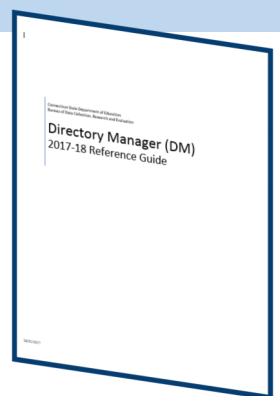
Do You Know the “LEA Directory Certifier” for your District?

An LEA Directory Certifier is the person in a district who is authorized to manage changes to the attributes of your district's schools and programs. For example, this person can make requests to create new schools, change a school's name, modify the grades offered by a school or change the school/program type (e.g., alternative program, dropout diversion). These types of requests are made through the CSDE data collection referred to as Directory Manager (DM).

The attributes about schools and programs that are specified in DM are used by all CSDE data collections. For example, a student cannot be reported through PSIS as being enrolled in a particular school if that school is closed in DM; also a student's grade is validated against the school's grade range as specified in DM. Errors in school/program characteristics greatly impact data collection, EdSight reporting as well as Next Generation Accountability System results.

For these reasons, the CSDE expects that the individuals designated by districts to certify a data collection, including LEA Directory Certifiers, should be certified administrators. This expectation is designed to ensure that important changes to data are made with the full knowledge of district leadership.

To find out who the LEA Directory Certifier is in your district, please check this [statewide list](#). A comprehensive [Directory Manager Guide](#) contains critical information about accurately managing organizations, schools, and programs. For questions about managing organizations through DM, please contact [Angela Gambaccini-May](#).



Exit Criteria for Focus Schools

In March 2016, the CSDE identified schools as Focus schools if the school performance index (SPI) for the High Needs subgroup in a subject area was in the bottom 10 percent of all schools statewide. This was done using the 2014-15 assessment results. Once the 2016-17 results are received and analyzed, the following criteria will be used to determine if previously identified Focus schools can be exited.

Criteria for Exiting Focus “High” Schools

For high schools, initial identification was based on the Smarter Balanced assessments. To exit Focus school status, the school was expected to substantially improve High Needs index scores. However, the assessment administered in high school has changed to the SAT. Therefore, to determine whether the Focus high school can be exited based on the improvement of their high needs group, the CSDE will utilize the following criteria:

- The school’s high needs index cannot be in the bottom 10% statewide for any subject in 2015-16 and 2016-17; **and**
- The school’s high needs participation rate in 2016-17 cannot be less than 95% for any subject; **and**
- The school’s high needs six-year graduation rate is not consistently underperforming i.e., is not less than 70 percent in all three of the most recent cohorts (i.e., 2013-14, 2012-13, 2011-12).

Criteria for Exiting Focus “Elementary/Middle” Schools

In March 2016, the CSDE identified schools as Focus schools if the school performance index (SPI) for the High Needs subgroup in a subject area was in the bottom 10 percent of all schools statewide. This was done using the 2014-15 assessment results. To exit focus school status, the school was expected to substantially improve High Needs index scores (or) achieve above average student growth for the high needs group in the subject area that was the basis for identification. To determine whether the Focus school can be exited based, the CSDE will utilize the following criteria:

- The school’s high needs index is not in the bottom 10% statewide for any subject in 2015-16 and 2016-17; **and**
 - The school’s high needs participation rate in 2016-17 is not less than 95% for any subject
- or**
- The school’s high needs average percentage of growth target achieved in the subject area that was the basis for identification, exceeds the state average for all students in that subject area in 2015-16 and 2016-17; **and**
 - The school’s high needs participation rate in 2016-17 is not less than 95% for any subject.

We expect to make these exit determinations when 2016-17 accountability reports are issued (around January 2018).

Smarter Balanced “Substantially Meets Requirements”



An independent peer review of state assessments that was conducted by the U.S. Department of Education deemed that the Smarter Balanced assessments “substantially meets” the [rigorous expectations for high quality state assessments](#). This is the highest level of approval received by any state to date. This level of approval has been conferred mostly upon states using assessments developed by either of the two national consortia (Smarter Balanced or PARCC).

The critical peer review elements include academic standards, test design, item development, test administration, test security, validity, reliability, fairness and accessibility, scoring, technical analyses, ongoing maintenance, inclusion of students with disabilities and English learners, standard setting, and reporting. This rating is a testament to the high quality that is exhibited in all aspects of the Smarter Balanced assessment system.

Connecticut Teachers Participate in the Development of State Assessments

Large scale, standardized assessments go through a series of rigorous steps over multiple years (see box on top right) to ensure that the resulting tool enables us to make valid assertions about student performance and provides reliable information with repeated use. Drs. Swaminathan and Rogers, faculty from UCONN who have long supported Connecticut's mastery examination, outlined these steps in a [presentation last year](#) to a statewide committee.

Over the past three decades, teachers from Connecticut have participated in many of these steps. They've made their voices heard on standards committees, written actual test items, piloted/field-tested items with their students and provided feedback on the experience, conducted reviews of items before and after pilot testing, engaged in committees to set achievement level cut scores, and offered recommendations for reporting results.

Participation by students and teachers in all aspects of the assessment development process is vital. It ensures that the assessment most effectively measures what Connecticut students know and can do relative to the performance expectations of the standards. It also provides teachers with greater insight into what the standards are expecting from students and how they can support students to develop the requisite knowledge, skills, and practices.

More recently, teachers from a wide variety of Connecticut districts including urban, Alliance, regional, RESC, charters, etc. are involving themselves in some of the following ways:

- Smarter Balanced
 - * ELA Item Authoring/Review
 - * ELA Scoring Annotations Review
 - * Mathematics Item Authoring/Review
- NGSS Assessment
 - * Item Authoring/Review
 - * Pilot Testing Clusters/Items (118 districts, 254 schools and 23,901 students)

Drs. Swaminathan and Rogers will be presenting a session on the critical steps for developing a large scale assessment at the [Performance Matters Forum on September 12, 2017](#). Look for it when registration opens soon!

Developing a Large Scale Assessment: The Critical Steps

- Determine the purposes of the tests and intended uses of the scores
- Specify the test content and target populations
- Develop test items
- Perform pilot and field testing of items
- Conduct item analyses
- Assemble tests
- Administer tests
- Perform further psychometric analyses
- Set achievement levels if desired
- Score tests, create reporting scales, and equate across forms or grades
- Gather reliability and validity evidence related to intended uses of scores
- Develop and distribute score reports
- Document procedures and results in a technical report

Teachers Say Smarter Balanced is More Rigorous, Demanding, and Grade-Level Appropriate

A panel composed of State and National Teachers of the Year (TOY) and Finalists for State TOY was assembled to compare the Smarter Balanced assessments to legacy state tests. After a [rigorous study](#), these experts concluded that as compared to the prior state tests, Smarter Balanced better:

- reflects the range of reading and math knowledge that students should master;
- reflects the full range of cognitive complexity in a balanced way; and
- aligns with strong instructional practices that should be used in the classroom.

All teachers agreed or strongly agreed that "preparing students for this test would require meaningful lessons and learning, beyond skill and drill practice." These excellent teachers viewed Smarter Balanced as rigorous and demanding, but grade-level appropriate, even more so than prior state tests. Overall, they saw Smarter Balanced as an improvement on the former tests and a movement in the right direction for students and for education.