




STATE OF CONNECTICUT BOARD OF EDUCATION



To: Superintendents of Schools

From: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell 
Commissioner of Education

Date: October 11, 2016

Subject: Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment Growth Model for
District and School Accountability

In July 2010, Connecticut adopted rigorous academic standards that are aligned to college and career readiness expectations. Since then, educators across the state have worked thoughtfully and methodically to update their local curriculum and instruction so that our students are well prepared for life after high school. Many educators also worked closely with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to develop the Smarter Balanced assessment system; this state-of-the-art system is aligned to those rigorous standards and incorporates technology, computer adaptive testing, a wide array of accommodations/supports, and many different types of test questions.

This assessment system was designed to provide us with results that enable valid interpretations of not only student achievement but also growth over time; educators know that matched student growth results are often a better indicator of the effectiveness of educational interventions than simply comparing achievement scores or proficiency rates from one year to the next. Therefore, after two successful years of implementation, Connecticut will begin implementation of a growth model for the Smarter Balanced assessments.

This model was developed with extensive guidance from the CSDE's technical advisory committee which is comprised of renowned state/national experts on psychometrics and measurement. The CSDE also consulted repeatedly with leaders, educators, and testing experts from many Connecticut districts.

The CSDE website contains a [narrated PowerPoint](#) about the model. After you open it, just start the slide show from the beginning; the presentation will run by itself and include audio narration. The run time is about 20 minutes. Here are some high level points about the model:

- It uses the Smarter Balanced vertical scale.
- The approach is very similar to the one used by CSDE with the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).
- It provides individual student level growth targets for those entering grades 4 through 8.
- The growth targets are achievable because they are based on the actual growth evidenced by Connecticut students from 2014-15 to 2015-16.

- It is criterion referenced, i.e., there is an objective, fixed target for each student. A student's growth in the model does not depend on how other students achieve or grow.
- All growth counts; there are no "golden bands."
- All students are expected to grow, including those performing in levels 3 and 4.
- The results will be transparent; districts will be able to replicate the results.
- The model incentivizes ambitious growth because it rewards growth beyond the established targets.

The results from this growth model will serve as the basis for Indicator #2 of the Next Generation Accountability System starting with the 2015-16 results. The CSDE expects that growth results will be available through [EdSight](#) in November.

In the coming months and years, these growth results will shed light on promising educational practices in different educational contexts for students at all levels of achievement. The CSDE is committed to learning from these "promising practices" and sharing them with educators throughout the state to further accelerate student growth.

If you have any questions about the growth model, please contact Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer via email at ajit.gopalakrishnan@ct.gov.

Thank you.