

PARENT / GUARDIAN LETTER FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

August 22, 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We aim to ensure that your child—and all Tolland students—receive an education that prepares them to thrive in a global economy and civic life. That's why Connecticut raised the bar and issued a new instructional roadmap. This new roadmap, the Connecticut Core Standards, sets learning expectations for what students should learn and be able to do at each grade level so that so that by the time they graduate from high school, they are ready to succeed in college and the workplace.

With these new learning goals, Connecticut needs new ways to measure student progress. Assessments are like academic checkups. They help teachers and parents see where students are compared to where they need to be. The results can reveal subject areas where a student is excelling and subject areas where a student needs extra help. **This year, the Smarter Balanced assessments will replace our old statewide tests, the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), in reading, writing and math.**

The Connecticut Core Standards focus on critical thinking and problem-solving—the real-world skills students need to be successful in college and careers. The Smarter Balanced assessments will be administered on computers and are designed to measure these skills through reading comprehension, writing, and math questions that require students to demonstrate that they truly understand the content. Additional supports are available for some students with special needs, as determined by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

With the new tests, students will receive new scores. Results will be different and scores will likely look lower on the Smarter Balanced tests than what many are used to seeing on the CMT/CAPT exams. This means that, in the beginning, fewer students may score at higher levels. This does not mean that students are learning less. Rather, it reflects that we are setting a new baseline from which our students will continue to grow.

States that made the transition early did see a drop in scores, but they are also seeing improvements year-to-year. For example, in Kentucky, the percentage of high school graduates ready for college and careers has increased from 38 percent to 62 percent in just four years. As students and teachers gain more classroom experience with the standards, we anticipate that scores will steadily improve in the coming years.

To find more resources specifically for parents and guardians, including ways to help your child with the new standards at home, please visit CTCoreStandards.org. For more information about the Smarter Balanced tests in our district, please visit <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>

This is certainly a big shift for our students and teachers—but one that holds great promise for our children. By making this transition, we are better preparing our kids to meet the demands of college and the 21st century workforce. Our teachers and administrators are committed to working together to support students with great instruction and resources to meet these new expectations.