



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents, Boards of Education

FROM: Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education, *Dianna R. Wentzell*

DATE: January 5, 2016

SUBJECT: Participation Rate Accountability Plan on State Assessments

In August, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) publicly released preliminary participation rates for the 2014-15 administration of the statewide assessment. Based on these preliminary rates, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued a letter to the CSDE providing feedback on our statewide and individual district participation rates and requesting Connecticut's accountability plan regarding participation rate compliance. All states received a general letter from the federal government regarding participation on state assessments.

It is important to note that Connecticut met the required Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) overall participation rate of 95 percent in English Language Arts and Math for all students and all subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities. According to near-final participation rates, Connecticut is less than one percent away from the 95 percent threshold for students with disabilities. Though some individual districts did not reach the 95 percent participation rate, Connecticut did not experience significant non-participation as a state.

Participation in state assessments is a matter of educational equity. Full participation is an important means to ensure that the public education system is delivering on the promise of high academic expectations and college and career readiness for all students.

As a state, Connecticut is held accountable for meeting or exceeding the 95 percent participation threshold for each tested grade and subject and for all identified subgroups. Should the state fail to meet the participation rate requirement, ED has a range of enforcement actions at its disposal to ensure compliance. One of the most severe consequences for failure to comply with the statewide participation rate thresholds would be the withholding of all or a portion of Connecticut's Title I Part A grant funding.

Similarly, the state is obligated to ensure that local school districts are complying with the terms of the Title I Part A grant. Connecticut's participation rate accountability plan for local educational agencies is a differentiated system of escalating consequences for districts based on their participation rate on state assessments. Attached, please find CSDE's response to the U.S. Department of Education outlining our proposed system, which

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includes more details about the tiered systems of enforcement actions for Connecticut districts, including letters of commendation for districts that succeed in meeting participation expectations and a tiered set of consequences ranging from a requirement for districts to submit a corrective action plan to potential withholding of funds.

In addition, please find attached the letter from ED to the CSDE which includes the federal government's feedback on our preliminary participation rate data. We are sharing these letters with you in advance of receiving final approval by ED and will follow up with another communication once we have received it.

As we gear up for a busy second half to the school year, I wish you and your teams a successful season of learning and growth for your students. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the CSDE for support in addressing challenges or answering questions related to assessments. I look forward to continued collaboration in the new year as we all work together to give all students an education that will prepare them for success in the future.

Best wishes,

*Dianna R. Wentzell*

Dianna R. Wentzell  
Commissioner of Education

Attachments

cc: CUBE  
CAPSS  
CAS