

## **Plainville Citizen Op Ed, January, 2015**

The new Connecticut Core State Standards have brought with them a new standardized assessment that will replace the state's Mastery Test (CMT) and Academic Performance Test (CAPT). The new *Smarter Balanced Assessment* covers mathematics, reading, and writing, but not science. A consortium of 22 states, including Connecticut, created the new assessment and conducted a field test of the Smarter Balanced tests last spring. The successful field test enabled the consortium to establish initial performance levels and to ensure that the individual test questions were valid. Between April and June of 2015, all students in Connecticut in grades three through eight, along with grade eleven, will take the new Smarter Balanced Assessments. Connecticut's fifth, eighth, and tenth grade students will continue to take the CMT and CAPT science assessment in March.

The Smarter Balanced Assessments in mathematics and English/language arts will be administered entirely on the computer and will use several different response types.

In math, students will see multiple-choice questions with one correct response and constructed response questions where they will be asked to show their work and explain their thinking (similar to what students have done on CMT). In addition to these types of responses, students will be asked to respond to multiple-choice questions that have more than one correct response with the expectation that they will select all of the correct answers. They will have two-

part problems, and may be asked to fill in tables, drag and drop numbers into tables or graphs, and create graphs.

In reading, students will be asked to read and respond to literary texts (such as short stories or poetry) as well as informational texts (such as speeches, historical documents, or science articles). They will be expected to answer multiple choice questions with a single correct response, multiple choice questions with more than one correct response, and open-ended questions that require them to support their answers with evidence from the text.

In writing, students will be asked to do one “brief write” consisting of one to three paragraphs in response to a prompt that may be either narrative, informative, or opinion/argumentative in nature. The form of the writing will vary from student to student, so we have made sure that our students have exposure to and practice with all forms of writing. Also included in the writing assessment will be items involving revision and editing skills. Revising includes adding, deleting, substituting, or rearranging material within a piece of writing. Editing involves an understanding of the conventions of writing – spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.

To demonstrate listening skills, students will be asked to listen to a short passage (about one or two minutes in length) and respond to three questions. Students can view the questions first and have the ability to stop the recording and replay all or part of it. The question types are similar to those for math and reading.

A performance task will be used to measure students' research skills. For this portion of the assessment, students will participate in a short whole class activity to build background knowledge and engagement. The next day students will read several informational articles or excerpts. Students will be asked to analyze the sources and evaluate them for reliability and validity. Ultimately, the students will be asked to produce a longer piece of writing in which they will support their opinions or make a strong argument using the best evidence from their research. This piece will be evaluated on the strength of the evidence, the organization of the writing, and on the student's use of appropriate grammar and mechanics.

We anticipate receiving district and school data about student performance mid-summer, and reports should be available to mail home to parents/guardians shortly after the start of the 2015-2016 school year.

Should you wish to experience the new assessments, you may take the practice test online at the following website: <http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/>