

Manchester Public Schools



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August 31, 2015

Dear Members of the Manchester Community,

As you are aware, our students in grades 3 - 8 and 11 participated in the new Smarter Balanced (SB) assessments in the spring of this year. These new Common Core-aligned assessments presented students with significantly more rigorous questions intended to test real-world skills. On Friday, August 28, 2015, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) released the SB scores to the public. The results of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in Science were also released.

The SB results show that 55.4 percent of Grades 3 - 8 and 11 students in Connecticut are meeting or exceeding the achievement level in English language arts (ELA), and 39.1 percent of students in Connecticut are meeting or exceeding the achievement level in mathematics. In Manchester, 38.9 percent of Grades 3 - 8 and 11 students are meeting or exceeding the achievement level in English language arts (ELA) and 27.8 percent of students are meeting or exceeding the achievement level in mathematics. Statewide results for the CMT/CAPT Science assessment show that 77.9 % of students were at Proficient or above, and 53.7% of students were at Goal or above. In Manchester, 67.5% of students were at Proficient or above, and 37.8% were at Goal or above. In addition to our scores in Manchester being below those in the state, we also continue to see an achievement gap across our ethnicity and socio-economic bands. These scores are another indicator that we have significant work to do to improve student performance in our schools.

As you know, Manchester is an Alliance district which means our scores put us among the lowest performing schools in the state. We have utilized the Alliance grant funding provided to us from the CSDE to support necessary reforms to our system and I am confident that we will begin to see results in the next 3 - 5 years. Improving student achievement takes time, energy, and a relentless focus on student growth. Our hope would be to first exit Alliance status, then meet the state average on these assessments, before eventually exceeding the state average in both reading and mathematics while simultaneously eliminating the achievement gap that exists. I am confident that the work we are doing in reading, writing and mathematics, along with our efforts to promote creativity, inquiry, and passion for learning, will lead to better results over time. One core strategy in this area is the addition of 2 Science - Technology - Engineering - Math (STEM) specialists to each elementary school to promote creativity, inquiry-based learning, and interdisciplinary connections.

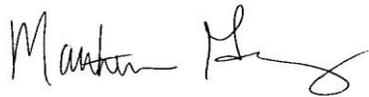
I must also point out that these assessments represents one piece of data in a complex puzzle. Over the next few months we will share a new data dashboard with the community. The new dashboard will certainly include SB results but will also examine locally created assessments including final exams in

select courses at Manchester High School as well as Advanced Placement participation, participation rate in personalized learning experiences along with attendance and behavioral data. This data dashboard will be utilized to measure progress toward our goal that all students will be prepared for learning and work beyond school.

Parents can expect to receive their child's individual assessment scores by the end of September. The results should assist parents and teachers to better understand how students are progressing, reveal where students are excelling, and identify where students need support.

Attached is a one page summary of our scores. A complete presentation of overall student performance in Manchester will be shared with the community at our Board of Education meeting on Monday, September 14, 2015. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Geary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Geary".

Matthew Geary
Superintendent of Schools
Former Principal, Manchester High School

SMARTER BALANCED & CMT/CAPT SCIENCE RESULTS

In 2014-15, the Smarter Balanced assessments replaced our old state tests, the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) for Grades 3-8 and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) for Grade 11, in English language arts and math.

The Connecticut Core Standards (Common Core State 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 are 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. It is important to note that, given that the new exams test different content and skills than the state’s old exams tested, the scores cannot be compared. With the new tests, students will receive new scores. As such, these results reflect that the bar was set higher.

The State of Connecticut released the results of the 2014-2015 administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the CAPT Science Assessment on Friday August 28th, 2015. Statewide results on the Smarter Balanced assessment show that 55.4% of all students met or exceeded expectations for ELA/Literacy and 39.1% met or exceeded expectations for Mathematics. In Manchester, 38.9% of students met or exceeded expectations in ELA/Literacy and 27.8% met or exceeded expectations in Mathematics. Statewide results for the CMT/CAPT Science assessment show that 77.9 % of students were at Proficient or above, and 53.7% of students were at Goal or above. In Manchester, 67.5% of students were at Proficient or above, and 37.8% were at Goal or above.

Further analysis indicates an achievement gap that needs to be addressed in order to increase achievement for all students (see Table 1).

Table 1

Smarter Balanced Assessment	% Meets/Exceeds		CMT/CAPT	% Prof/Above	% Goal/Above
	ELA/Literacy	Mathematics		Science	Science
Manchester	38.9%	27.8%	Manchester	67.5%	37.8%
Male	31.6%	26.6%	Male	61.2%	34.0%
Female	46.1%	28.7%	Female	73.3%	41.3%
Black	25.0%	13.8%	Black	54.8%	20.8%
Hispanic	26.0%	15.4%	Hispanic	52.9%	25.9%
White	41.5%	41.4%	White	86.2%	52.2%
Asian	53.8%	46.1%	Asian	80.9%	51.7%
F/R Meals	26.5%	16.5%	F/R Meals	57.5%	25.5%
Full Price	54.1%	41.9%	Full Price	81.2%	54.6%
Special Ed	3.7%	2.3%	Special Ed	20.6%	5.0%
Not Special Ed	43.6%	31.2%	Not Special Ed	74.1%	42.4%
ELL	10.7%	9.8%	ELL	30.3%	12.1%
Not ELL	40.3%	28.8%	Not ELL	69.5%	39.1%

