



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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Contact: Abbe Smith 860.713.6525

Education Commissioner Releases Math Council Report and Recommendations for Strengthening Math Instruction

(HARTFORD, CT) — Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell today announced the release of the Commissioner’s Council on Mathematics report outlining recommendations for educators, policy leaders, and community members to improve K-12 mathematics education in the state. Commissioner Wentzell released the report at a public event at the Connecticut Science Center that included a roundtable discussion about the importance of having a strong math foundation to ensure future success in college and the workplace.

The event was part of Commissioner Wentzell’s Equity and Excellence tour, which will stop at schools throughout the state this fall to highlight major priorities laid out in the State Board of Education’s new five-year plan. Last week, the Commissioner visited a school in New Britain to discuss chronic absenteeism and strategies to increase daily school attendance.

On Thursday, Commissioner Wentzell was joined by educators, advocates, parents, and business leaders who served on the math council for the roundtable discussion. The event also recognized two district leaders — Superintendent Patricia Garcia of Windham and Superintendent Mark Benigni of Meriden — for big gains in mathematics on the Smarter Balanced assessment.

“Every student deserves the opportunity to receive a math education that is rich and rigorous, and equips them with the skills needed to graduate from high school prepared to be successful in both college and career,” said Commissioner Wentzell. “These recommendations by the Council on Mathematics have created a clear path that will help the State Department of Education take the steps needed to ensure that every student in our state receives a high-quality mathematics education.”

The Commissioner’s Council on Mathematics was initiated by Commissioner Wentzell in 2015 in response to the Smarter Balanced test results in mathematics. The council was convened to spearhead the state’s efforts to improve supports in mathematics by identifying best practices and exploring promising innovations in mathematics instruction.

Council members met monthly from February 2016 to June 2016, and the recommendations were developed with the input of local school districts, higher education, and experts in family and community relations.

The report enumerates several recommendations that are grounded in the lessons learned regarding strong leadership, quality professional development, dedicated time, and effective collaboration within, among, and beyond school districts.

“Student performance in mathematics increased significantly during the last administration of the Smarter Balanced exams, which shows that Connecticut is moving in the right direction,” said Commissioner Wentzell. “These new recommendations will help us to improve the system of supports available to local school districts, strengthen our collaboration with higher education and the community, maintain our upward trajectory, and accelerate increases in student performance.”

The council outlines several specific actions for the State Department of Education, individual school districts, higher education, and the community in the report that are distilled into four broad recommendations. Each recommendation is evidence-based, actionable, inclusive of all stakeholders, and measurable.

The four broad recommendations are:

- develop a clear and consistent understanding of the Connecticut Core Standards-Mathematics at the classroom, school, district, and state levels;
- provide the support and training necessary to effectively implement the mathematics standards with fidelity in all classrooms, schools, and districts;
- implement appropriate interventions and acceleration to support the needs of a diverse group of learners; and
- engage all stakeholders in the process of putting the Connecticut Core Standards-Mathematics into practice through effective communication that keeps teachers, parents and community members informed and participating in the process.

In 2014, Connecticut switched to more challenging Connecticut Core-aligned exams that were designed to test critical thinking ability and real-world skills. The change was part of a broader effort to align curriculum, standards, and exams to higher-level thinking required for success in college and career. Additionally, students in 11th grade began taking the SAT as their Connecticut Core-aligned state exam this past spring.

The council’s report may be read in its entirety here: [Report of the Commissioner’s Council on Mathematics](#)

Information about the Connecticut Core Standards—Mathematics may be accessed here: [SDE: Mathematics](#)

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CONTACT: Abbe Smith, Director of Communications
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-381-7096
Email: Abbe.Smith@ct.gov