

PERFORMANCE MATTERS

News from the CSDE Performance Office



Volume 5 | Issue 1 | February 2020 www.ct.gov/sde/performanceoffice

Page 2

[High School GPAs and ACT Scores as Predictors of College Completion](#)

[CSCU Pledge to Advance Connecticut \(PACT\)](#)

[Student Letters to Encourage Participation in Rigorous Coursework](#)

Page 3

[Why Equity Has Been a Conservative Force in American Education— And How That Could Change by Jal Mehta — reprinted with permission](#)

Page 5

[FAFSA Completion Report in EdSight Secure](#)

[Smarter Balanced Sample Items Now Includes Released Summative Items](#)

Key Resources

- [Data Acquisition Plan](#)
- [Timely and Accurate Calendar](#)
- [Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#)
- [EdSight](#)

2018-19 Next Gen Accountability Results

These results are now available on [EdSight](#). Connecticut's accountability system takes a comprehensive view of school and district performance based on a broad set of 12 indicators. Pursuant to Connecticut's state plan for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), two important elements were added to the system in 2018-19: (i) results from the new science assessments; and growth achieved by English learners on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (LAS Links).

The [Connecticut Report Cards](#) on EdSight display the most recent available data on all indicators. The PDF versions of the 2018-19 Profile and Performance reports will be released in the coming weeks. Please email any questions to EdSight.SDE@ct.gov.

2018-19 Report on Student Discipline on EdSight

The [2018-2019 Report on Student Discipline](#) was presented to the State Board of Education on February 6, 2020. The report analyzes trends in student disciplinary behaviors and discusses the CSDE's systems approach to "turning the curve".

Get Direct Links to Any Report on EdSight

You can now get direct links to reports and even custom queries on EdSight. In the past, you had to go to the EdSight home page and then navigate to the different sections. Now you can share a direct link to a very specific report or query within EdSight. To access specific datasets, **just hold down the CTRL key before you click the link to run the query**; this may be the SUBMIT button or any other link. This will open the query result in a new tab with the full URL. Here are two examples:

- [Direct link to statewide Smarter Balanced growth trend for mathematics, disaggregated for high needs students](#)
- [Direct link to the list of Approved Private Special Education Programs \(APSEP\) report](#)

Try it out!



Calling All High Schools! Sign up for the "Summer-Melt" Study

The CSDE has partnered with Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) and American Institutes for Research (AIR) to examine and improve college matriculation and persistence through the use of text messaging. The project, [Text4College](#), will address the issue of "summer melt" when qualified high school graduates fail to take the steps necessary to make their way to college in the fall. Contact [David Blumenthal \(dblumenthal@air.org\)](mailto:dblumenthal@air.org) or visit the [Text4College website](#) for more info.



High School GPAs and ACT Scores as Predictors of College Completion: Examining Assumptions About Consistency Across High Schools

In a study published on January 27, 2020, Elaine M. Allensworth and Kallie Clark from the University of Chicago, examine the relationship between high school GPA and ACT scores as predictors of college completion. The study tests those assumptions, examining variation across high schools of both HSGPAs and ACT scores as measures of academic readiness for college. Allensworth and Clark found students with the same HSGPA or the same ACT score graduate at very different rates based on which high school they attended. Yet, the relationship of HSGPAs with college graduation is strong and consistent and larger than school effects. In contrast, the relationship of ACT scores with college graduation is weak and smaller than high school effects, and the slope of the relationship varies by high school. The complete study is available on the [Sage Journal web site](#).

CSCU Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT)

CONNECTICUT'S PROGRAM FOR FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Connecticut community colleges are making it possible for Connecticut residents who qualify to achieve a degree or certificate regardless of their ability to pay, and without taking on debt. CSCU's Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT) is "last-dollar funding, meaning it covers the gap between the federal and state grants you receive (Pell and Roberta Willis grants), and the cost of attending community college (tuition and mandatory fees). PACT will launch in early 2020, to support students entering the fall 2020 semester. Complete the FAFSA by July 15, 2020, to become PACT eligible. Complete eligibility criteria are being finalized. For more information, visit the [CSCU PACT web page](#).

Student Letters to Encourage Participation in Rigorous Coursework

For the seventh straight year, the CSDE is sending letters to over 23,000 Grade 10 and Grade 11 high school students in Connecticut who have demonstrated potential to succeed in advanced, rigorous coursework based on the 2019 October PSAT. Superintendents received a [letter on February 5, 2020](#), regarding this mailing.

The letters instruct these students to meet with their high school counselors to discuss what coursework is right for them. By taking challenging courses such as AP, dual enrollment, and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, students attain important academic and financial benefits such as earning college credit, potentially skipping introductory courses, and experiencing college-level work while in high school.

Please contact Michelle Rosado at michelle.rosado@ct.gov with any questions about this mailing.



The [Connecticut Report Cards](#) provide the most current trend information on key metrics including enrollment, absenteeism, suspension/expulsion, educators, expenditures, academic achievement, academic growth, accountability, graduation, postsecondary entrance, and college readiness. Connecticut Report Cards are available for every district, school, and the state.



Performance Matters Forum
Thursday, October 22, 2020

Why Equity Has Been a Conservative Force in American Education—And How That Could Change

By Jal Mehta, Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This piece was published originally on [February 14, 2019 in EdWeek](#). It has been reprinted here with the author's permission.

Over the past 15 years, at least since the passage of No Child Left Behind, equity has been more of a conservative than a liberating force in American education.

It started with good intentions. The idea was that some students, particularly students of color and poor students, historically had been ill-served by our school system. When Ted Kennedy and George Miller joined their Republican colleagues in supporting No Child Left Behind, they did so out of a belief that it was a continuation of the civil rights movement—a way to use federal power to support an equity agenda.

But that's not how it played out. The consequence of holding everyone accountable to low level tests in reading and math, without building any of the supporting structures, climate, or culture that would enable those results, is that schools serving disadvantaged students [narrowed the curriculum](#) and focused disproportionately on [test prep](#), whereas more advantaged public schools and private schools had flexibility to continue offering a [richer and more holistic educational approach](#).

Even as the legal requirements for NCLB have ended, the mindset has persisted. Urban schools and districts continue to be run in more authoritarian ways than their suburban counterparts, and students in disadvantaged schools continue to be more subject to test-driven pressures. When we run institutes at the Harvard Graduate School of Education on "deeper learning," we tend to attract folks from more privileged public schools and private schools here and abroad. In contrast, when we offer institutes on data-driven instruction or school turnarounds, we tend to attract people serving students of color in high-poverty public schools.

The consequence is that equity has become, more often than not, a conservative force in American public education. The effort to close achievement gaps has in practice doubled down on the century-old industrial model of schooling, leaving in place all of the essential elements of its [grammar](#): teaching as transmission, batch

processing of students, conventional assessments, tracking and leveling, and all of the rest. Anything that moves away from those assumptions—like project-based learning, problem-based learning, interdisciplinary learning, authentic assessment, or constructivist pedagogy—is seen as "risky;" something that is "OK for the privileged kids" but somehow distracts from the real work of closing achievement gaps on state-sponsored tests.

I've come to think that the reality is close to the opposite. The existing system, for all of its warts, works well enough for the privileged kids. They know how to play the "game of school," and thus they learn what they need to learn to get the grades and credentials they need to head to college and beyond. It is the kids who are disaffected from school who are most in need of a new approach. For them, finding a way to make school more relevant, more student-centered, more connected to their purposes and passions, is not a luxury but a requirement. Ironically, the more we double down on closing achievement gaps within the existing grammar of schooling, the more difficult we make it for ourselves to transform schooling into a more purposeful, relevant, and engaging institution.

There is an alternative, well-developed in some circles, but just recently entering broader reform discussions.

Equity as liberation.

This approach has entered the mainstream education space over the past five years from places like the [National Equity Project](#) and [equityXdesign](#). The roots of it are old, drawing on Paulo Freire's ideas of "problem-posing" education and education as a force for liberation, and they run through the writings of folks like Jeff Duncan-Andrade, Pedro Noguera, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Theresa Perry, and many others. The idea here is that equity is a lens, a way of seeing how power is distributed, whose voices are being heard, which ideas are being represented, and whose interests are being served. It relies more heavily on what [Shane Safir calls](#) "street data" (the lived experiences of students in schools) than "satellite data" (test scores).

(Continued on page 4)

Why Equity Has Been a Conservative Force in American Education—And How That Could Change (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

It sees diversity as an asset—where our different lived experiences and funds of knowledge create rich opportunities for mutual learning—which is a profoundly different stance from the deficit approaches that have become standard in these discussions. It takes seriously the idea that education should *liberate*, meaning create ways for students to take agency to transform their lives and the world around them.

Taking this stance also implies a different way of working. Fundamentally, many gap-closing approaches take a fundamentally old-style command and control orientation for granted. What is to be known is determined by the district or the state. Students don't know this knowledge when they start. Teachers don't know how to deliver this knowledge. The solution is tighter implementation chains—from districts into the heads of teachers and then into the heads of students. This prescription is compounded by urgency; we are told that students have no time to lose so vertical hierarchies are the most efficient way to get things done.

A better approach would start with a different set of assumptions. There is lots of knowledge in the system, held by both teachers and students. This knowledge is also more heterogeneous than what is known by the district: Older teachers may have wisdom about teaching practice, younger teachers may have learned non-Western history in college, and students may know things about their neighborhoods and communities that are invisible to teachers and administrators. Good leadership would tap into these centers of knowledge and connect and build upon them in ways that are likely to lead to mutual learning for everyone.

It also would imply a different approach to change. Much of the traditional literature assumes that the leader is the hero, the members of the organization are the resistance, and the central challenge is to achieve "buy-in" via "change management." A liberatory design approach, by contrast, assumes that teachers and students would like to develop engaging, meaningful learning experiences, and that the problem is not them but the institutional structures and culture of schools that constrains them.

Such an approach would foreground the lived experiences of students and teachers and invite them to help redesign schools in ways that are more purposeful and humane. Rather than act *on* students, teachers, and communities, we would work *with* them.

Liberatory design would also create an attractive *symmetry* between adult learning and student learning. If we want classrooms where students are seen as capable meaning-makers and teachers are facilitators of that learning, then districts need to treat teachers as capable meaning-makers and themselves as facilitators of teacher learning. Taking this point seriously would require districts to rethink many of their assumptions, large and small, spurring a shift from a [bureaucratic to a professional mode](#) of social organization.

Engaging with the lived experiences of students would also force us to think harder about whether students' full selves are welcomed into schools. This is relevant for all students, but particularly for students of color. One of my favorite ethnographies of schooling is Angela Valenzuela's [Subtractive Schooling](#), which shows in excruciating detail the ways in which the mostly Mexican-American students in her research have to forego critical parts of themselves to show up in school. Ta-Nehisi Coates' [memoir similarly recounts](#) how his inquisitive stance was not welcome in Baltimore schools that repressed questions and rewarded compliance.

We could create schools that reverse this cycle; many in the sector already have. They start from what should be an uncontroversial idea—that students learn best when they feel affirmed, recognized, and welcomed into the spaces in which they are learning. Diversifying the curriculum does not mean lessening the rigor of that curriculum; rather, it potentially enables more students to do rigorous work by creating subjects worth investing in. And when we do that, ironically, we have a much better chance of closing conventional achievement gaps, because we have created welcoming, inclusive spaces where students can do their best work.

Equity can be either a conservative or a liberating force.

Which one is it in your school?

FAFSA Completion Report



Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) is an important step in the path to postsecondary education and is associated with higher rates of college enrollment. Therefore, the CSDE, in partnership with the Office of Higher Education (OHE), is pleased to provide the FAFSA Completion report through EdSight Secure. This report provides authorized users in districts that have executed a [data use agreement](#) with secure access to the FAFSA Completion Status for currently enrolled Grade 12 students. The CSDE urges all districts that have agreed to receive these

data to use the report and assist students and families to complete the FAFSA in a timely manner, so that we may realize our collective commitment to equity and excellence for all Connecticut students. Further a [recent report by Education Dive](#) indicates that reminders by school counselors increase completion of the FAFSA.

On November 19, 2019, the CSDE held a webinar regarding FAFSA Completion that featured Dr. Chaka Felder-McEntire from Windsor and Michelle Catucci from Cheshire. On the [CSDE website](#) you will find copies of the slides, as well as a recorded version of the webinar and other related resources. Two additional resources for working with families on FAFSA Completion are [Gear Up Family Engagement Toolkit: Strategies and Resources to Communicate with Families](#) and [Tips for Engaging Parents in FAFSA Completion](#). Additionally, there are [financial aid resources for undocumented students](#) available on our web site.

Please note that the data on the FAFSA Completion report in [EdSight Secure](#) are updated each Tuesday morning. Additional documentation about the FAFSA Completion report is available on the *Resources tab* of the report. If you have any questions about the report, please email the EdSight helpdesk at edsight.sde@ct.gov.

Smarter Balanced Sample Items Website Now Includes 104 Newly Released Summative Test Questions

The Smarter Balanced [Sample Items Website](#) now features 104 newly released test questions that previously appeared on the year-end math and English language arts tests in grades 3-8 and high school. Educators can use the sample test questions to better understand how Smarter Balanced measures college and career-ready content.

Additionally, the CSDE Performance Office recently created the [Information/Resources to Help Increase Understanding of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System](#) document that helps to synthesize the many resources and pieces of information that are involved with the administration of the Connecticut Smarter Balanced Assessment. This valuable resource outlines the Professional Learning, Support Materials, and many elements of the assessment.

Welcome!

This site provides examples of test questions used on Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts/literacy and math. Test questions are developed with extensive involvement by educators, including test question writing, reviewing for accuracy, and ensuring questions are fair for all test takers.

See how teachers describe the process of writing and reviewing Smarter Balanced test questions.

[Browse Test Items](#)

[Find Newly Released Items](#)