PARENT OVERVIEW OF CONNECTICUT'S ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

This overview is designed to explain Connecticut's alternate assessments available in English language arts/literacy, math, and science. Suggestions and resources are provided to support families and teachers in their combined work.

Alternate Assessments

Alternate assessments are designed to measure the knowledge and skills of students with significant cognitive disabilities as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This assessment system is based on the same Connecticut state standards established for all Connecticut public school students. Alternate assessments support student independence to the greatest extent possible by making academic content accessible and the expected achievement levels appropriate.

Connecticut's Alternate Assessment System

CONTENT AREA	ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT	GRADES
English language arts/literacy	Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA)	3-8 and 11
Math	Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA)	3-8 and 11
Science	CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist Science	5, 8, or 10

CONNECTICUT ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT (CTAA)

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment is an assessment of English language arts/literacy and mathematics aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards for eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3-8 and 11. It is a secure test presented individually to students via computer by teachers trained by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Student responses are entered into the computer by the teacher or by the student if appropriate. Students may have the items presented on paper if necessary.

The CTAA is designed to work with your child's methods for communication. Teachers provide the assistive technology, communication supports, and accommodations included in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), that are consistent with the CTAA assessment policies.

This alternate assessment is designed with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The entire test, including passages, items, and response options, is read to the student. Additional built-in supports include:

- reduced passage length in reading;
- pictures and graphics included to help students understand test content;

◆ models in reading, writing, and mathematics; and

◆ common geometric shapes and smaller numbers on the mathematics test.

The CTAA is given during the multiweek testing window the CSDE establishes each year. Teachers administer the assessment based on the needs of each student over multiple days, while providing breaks as needed. The English language arts/literacy test is composed of three sessions: two reading and one writing. The mathematics test is composed of two sessions. The majority of the CTAA items are multiple choice. Teachers are encouraged to access the practice test with students to assist them in becoming familiar with the online test, format, and accessibility features.

Your child's teacher can select and use appropriate curriculum and instructional resources located at https://wiki.ncscpartners.org. These resources explain the skills taught at each grade, curriculum materials, and examples of lesson plans and systematic instruction.

CMT/CAPT SKILLS CHECKLIST SCIENCE

The CMT Skills Checklist Science is the alternate assessment designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 5 and 8. The CAPT Skills Checklist Science is the alternate assessment designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grade 10. The Skills Checklist Science is a working document that trained teachers use throughout the school year to assess selected grade-level science skills derived from the Science Curriculum Framework. The teacher creates lessons and activities to represent each item, and the student's demonstration of the skill is rated more than once during the year with final ratings submitted online during the science testing window. The CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist Science may be used for planning, instruction, monitoring student growth, and progress, as well as documenting achievement on grade-level science content.

Alternate assessment test results are reported in the Individual Student Report and are provided to parents and guardians by your child's school. These results may be used to identify areas needed for improvement, as well as areas of strength, so that everyone can work together to help your child. Teachers may use the results as one source of information to guide their teaching so your child continues to learn the knowledge and skills of the grade-level academic content with appropriate supports.

The Importance of Academic Instruction

Changes in culture, technology, and our work are happening rapidly. There are recognized college, career, and community skills that prepare our children for the world they will live in as adults. This preparation requires instruction that is individualized to meet your child's unique needs, focused on skills to communicate, read, write, use mathematics, and develop work skills.

Teachers have many tools and techniques to teach academic content. Teachers will provide the supports identified in your child's IEP. These methods should help your

child learn the content and improve his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as demonstrate them on the test.

The principles of Universal Design for Learning provide flexible approaches for

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND COMMUNITY SKILLS

▶ **Reading and writing** are important skills to develop to understand books, gather and learn new information, make notes, share thoughts and stories, compare information, read schedules, etc.

▶ **Mathematics** is important to understand numbers, solve problems, use schedules, arrange transportation, manage money, etc.

▶ **Communication skills** are important to advocate for self, participate in social and educational conversations, express wants and needs, access information, make requests, shop, prepare a meal, etc.

▶ **Age-appropriate social skills** are important to build knowledge and shared experiences with peers in school, the community, and work.

▶ **Independence and teamwork** are important skills to develop to build problem-solving skills, understand and follow directions, complete new tasks, use supports that are provided, and to work well with others.

▶ **Skills to access support systems** are important to academic instruction, collaborative work with peers, developing independence, requesting assistance, and using appropriate tools (e.g., calculator) to complete a task.

curriculum and are used in the assessment system to provide support and accessibility as needed for all children, including your child. Teachers can use these same strategies to support your child in learning. For example, in reading, your child may listen to the story read by someone else and answer questions using a communication system. In mathematics, your child might use counters to help solve problems and follow steps that are provided for calculations instead of having to memorize the steps. Supports are important as your child is introduced to new content.

Additional examples of supports include providing:

◆ information presented in different ways (e.g., with pictures, manipulatives, and simplified text);

◆ access to learning materials in different ways (e.g., listening to a story while using a screen reader or a version enhanced with textures, providing word or picture choices);

◆ different ways to show what your child has learned (e.g., answering using a switch-activated recording, presenting using technology, using an eye-gaze system to respond to select words or pictures to write a story); and

◆ multiple options to engage your child (e.g., providing choices, using topics of personal interest).

You can find more about UDL at http://www.udlcenter.org.

Families Working with Teachers

Children learn well when teachers and families work together. You can help your child learn when you and your child's teachers share information with each other. You can share how your child learns best and what his or her interests are. It is also important to provide your child with learning activities suggested by the teachers. To do this, you should find out what your child's instruction looks like and what your child is expected to learn and do. For example, a teacher might say that the most important part of reading for your child is to answer the questions, which he or she can do after listening to the story instead of reading it alone. Likewise, writing might include the way your child communicates his or her thoughts and ideas by using the computer, assistive technology, dictation, or a communication system instead of using a pencil and paper.

To see examples of what these supports look like and how teachers may use these supports, go to NCSC Resources at https://wiki.ncscpartners.org. Parents can use the resources on this site to help increase their child's knowledge and skills. The site includes a "Parent Tips and Tools" section that can help parents use the resource materials. These resources help teachers and parents know what content to teach in each grade, suggestions and models for how to teach specific content, and how the content relates to the real world. Working closely with your child's teacher and using these resources helps your child to develop college, career, and community skills.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- ▶ Content Modules (explanation of grade-level content)
- ▶ Instructional Families (skills for each grade)
- ▶ Curriculum Resource Guides (examples for teaching grade-level content)
- ▶ Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Units (model universally designed lesson plans)
- ▶ Instructional Resource Guides (instructional strategies)
- ▶ Language Arts Sample Systematic Instruction Script (LASSIS) and Mathematics Activities for Scripted Systematic Instruction (MASSI)

Summary

As everyone works together to support your child's learning of college, career, and community skills, Connecticut's Alternate Assessment System, as well as the Bureau of Student Assessment and your child's teacher, provide guidance on appropriate content and supports. Teachers and families working together will make individualized instruction meaningful and will help your child develop these necessary skills.

Additional Resources

NAME	WEBSITE
CSDE Bureau of Student Assessment	http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/studentassessment
CSDE Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal	http://ct.portal.airast.org/
National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC)	http://www.ncscpartners.org/
National Center and State Collaborative Wiki	https://wiki.ncscpartners.org/index.php/Main_Page
Universal Design for Learning	http://www.udlcenter.org