



Parent Overview of Connecticut's Alternate Assessment System

This overview is designed to explain the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System to parents. These tests are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. At the end of this document, parents will find a list of resources to help families work with their children to better prepare them for these tests.

Alternate Assessments

Alternate assessments measure the knowledge and skills of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This assessment system is based on the same state standards set 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	Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA)	3–8 and 11
Mathematics	Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA)	3–8 and 11
Science	Connecticut Alternate Science (CTAS)	5, 8, and 11
English Language Proficiency	Collaborative for the Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP) for students who are dually identified as English learners/multilingual learners (ELs/MLs) and have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).	K-12

THE CONNECTICUT ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT (CTAA)

The CTAA tests your child's English language arts and mathematics skills based on the expectations of Connecticut Core Standards (CCS). This test is only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3–8 and 11. It is a secure test given to your child in a one-on-one setting via computer by a specially trained teacher. Your child's answers are entered into the computer by the teacher or, if appropriate, they can enter their answers by themselves. Some students may have the test on paper if necessary.

The CTAA is designed to work with your child's modes of communication. Teachers provide the assistive technology, communication supports, and accommodations included in your child's IEP if they are consistent with the testing policies.

This test is made using the principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL). The entire test—including passages, items, and response options—is read aloud to your child.

Other built-in supports include:

- ◇ Shorter reading passages;
- ◇ More pictures and graphics to help your child understand test content; and
- ◇ Common shapes and smaller numbers on the math test.

The CTAA is given during the testing window set by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Your child’s teacher will give this test over several days, based on the needs of your child, including giving breaks as necessary.

The English language arts test has three sessions: two reading and one writing. The math has two sessions. Most of the test questions are multiple-choice. Ask your child’s teacher to use the practice test to let your child feel more comfortable and familiar with the online test format and accessibility features.

You will receive an Individual Student Report from your school in the fall with the scores from this test. These results may be used to identify areas where improvement is needed 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 that your child continues to learn the knowledge and skills of the grade-level academic content with appropriate supports.

THE CONNECTICUT ALTERNATE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT (CTAS)

The CTAS tests your child’s understanding of science concepts based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). This test is only for students in Grades 5, 8, and 11 with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The CTAS is meant to be given throughout the school year, giving your child multiple opportunities to engage with the grade-level science content and materials. A trained teacher works with your child to test their performance on several activities that represent important skills and knowledge involving real-world scenarios across Life, Earth, and Physical Sciences. All students eligible for this alternate assessment in Grades 5, 8, and 11 must participate. You will receive an Individual Student Report from your school in the fall with the scores from this test.

THE COLLABORATIVE FOR THE ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (CAAELP)

The CAAELP is a test created for students identified as EL/ML with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Grades K –12. The CAAELP is based on the English Language Proficiency Standards for English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. If your child is eligible for this test, a trained teacher will give them the test in a one-on-one setting to be sure that supports and accommodations are provided as included in your child’s IEP if they are consistent with the testing policies. You will receive an Individual Student Report from your school in the fall with the scores from this test.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

CSDE Bureau of Student Assessment <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Student-Assessment/Main-Assessment/Student-Assessment>

CTAA Practice Test <https://ctpt.cambiumtds.com/student>

National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) <http://www.ncscpartners.org/>

Universal Design for Learning <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

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 their interests are. It is also important to provide your child with learning activities suggested by the teachers. To do this, 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 they can do after listening to the story instead of reading it alone. Likewise, writing might include the way your child communicates their 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 them, 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, offer suggestions and models for how to teach specific content, and show 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.

Summary

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

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 and science** are important to understand numbers, solve problems, understand the environment, 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, or refusals, 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 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 for academic instruction, collaborating with peers, developing independence, requesting assistance, and using appropriate tools (e.g., calculator) to complete a task.