Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test

Understanding the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test

Connecticut uses a comprehensive assessment system that is aligned both to federal expectations under the No Child Left Behind Act and to the state's own curriculum frameworks for teaching and learning known as the Common Core State Standards. Students in grades 3-8 and again in high school are required to take the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). There is also a modified assessment, the CMT/CAPT Modified Assessment System (MAS) available for students with disabilities or for students who require it as part of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

These assessments have many purposes; areas of students' academic strength and weaknesses can be seen, they allow parents and teachers to monitor a student's progress over the years, they establish high expectations for teaching and learning, and they show how schools are doing with their adequate yearly progress. One goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is to see that all schools are educating 100% of their students to a level of proficiency by the year 2014. These tests being closely tied to the established curriculum allows for the progress toward this goal to be monitored.

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) is for students in grades 3-8; it is given in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. The Science assessment is given only in grades 5 and 8. These assessments are given in March and account for about 7 hours of total time a student is participating in statewide-testing. In Connecticut, there is a move from the current "Third Generation" test to a "Fourth Generation" test indicating that the test is being modified as learning standards are being increased.

For 10th graders in Connecticut, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) is administered in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. These tests establish a high performance standard for students and students must pass them. In the event that they need to retake any portion of the assessment, that opportunity is available. The test results will indicate areas where a student requires additional help. These tests are administered in March and account for about 8 hours of test-taking time. These tests alone do not mean that a student will or will not receive a diploma, they do factor into the decision in close calls.

Format of the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test

For students in grades 3-8 who take the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) there are a number of ways in which the test is designed to provide a snapshot of the proficiency level of students at the skills and knowledge required in a subject. Students are tested in Reading and Mathematics on a yearly basis, and in Science in 5th and 8th grade. For most students, they will take these assessments on a computer; however certain situations may require a paper-and-pencil based administration of the test.

The reading assessment has multiple sections: The Degrees of Reading Power ® subtest helps show how a child understands what he has read. The Reading Comprehension subtest assesses a student's comprehension of fiction and non-fiction through a variety of multiple-choice and open-ended response questions. There is a Direct Assessment of Writing subtest that gives a child the opportunity to show their abilities in written communication. And there is an Editing & Revising subtest that presents a child with a piece of writing and asks multiple-choice questions about it.

The Mathematics assessment measures skills that students should have gained through being taught to the curricular standards. The Mathematics assessment asks questions in multiple-choice, open-ended and grid-in (for students in grades 5-8) response formats. The Science Assessment that is given to students in grades 5 and 8 asks questions in multiple-choice and open-ended formats.

For students in 10th grade, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) assesses student's proficiency levels in Mathematics, Science, Reading Across the Disciplines and Writing Across the Disciplines. On the Writing Across the Disciplines, or Interdisciplinary Writing (IW), Assessment students are given two different opinions on a topic and asked to construct a persuasive essay about it. The Writing assessment has an Editing & Revising subtest as well that asks multiple-choice questions about language usage in a provided essay.

For the Reading Across the Discipline Assessment students take two subtests: the Response to Literature provides a story and asks students to respond to essay questions. The Reading for Information tests gives three non-fiction articles and multiple-choice and short-answer format questions on the reading.

The Mathematics test asks questions in multiple-choice, grid-in and short-answer formats. The content on the test represents material from all the learning objectives laid out in the curricular framework for mathematics. On the Science Assessment students must answer multiple-choice and short-answer questions that may require students to create graphs. The questions on this test also draw from the curriculum laid out in the Sciences.

Taking the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test

For high school students taking Mathematics, the content standards that the curriculum calls for lays out a plan for students to acquire proficiency in Algebraic Reasoning, Patterns and Functions, Numerical and Proportional Reasoning, Geometry and Measurement, and Working with Data: Probability and Statistics. In order to understand all these areas on a practical level, the curriculum highlights the processes of problem solving, reasoning, communicating, computing and estimating as foundational to acquiring skills and knowledge in mathematics.

In Science, the curriculum framework sets out that students should become proficient in: Energy Transformations, Chemical Structures and Properties, Global Interdependence, Cell Chemistry and Biotechnology, and Genetics, Evolution and Biodiversity. The assessments at the high school level also given scores for the areas of conceptual understanding and scientific inquiry, literacy and numeracy.

For students in the earlier grades, the learning expectations in mathematics cover numerical and proportional reasoning, geometry and measurement, working with data: probability and statistics, and algebraic reasoning: patterns and functions. In Science, students are expected to gain knowledge in life, physical and earth science.

In Reading and Writing, students are expected to gain grade-level proficiency in Reading for Literature, Reading Informational Texts, Writing, Speaking & Listening, and Language Use. There are a variety of strategies that support these areas and they are laid out in the curriculum.