

Testing opt-out/Refusal guide for: CONNECTICUT

Form completed by United Opt Out Administrator (CS)

Contact information cerestas@yahoo.com

List of Assessments

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) is the standard assessment administered to students in **Grades 3 through 8**. Students are assessed in the content areas of **reading, mathematics, and writing**. **Grades 5 and 8** take **science** as well.

The Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) is the standard assessment administered to students in **Grade 10**. Students are assessed in the content areas of reading, mathematics, writing and science. Students in **Grades 11 and 12** may **retest in any subtest of the CAPT** in which they did not meet the Goal level.

The CMT/CAPT MAS is a test that is appropriate for those **special education students whose disability would preclude them from achieving grade-level proficiency on the standard test**, even when provided accommodations. The **CMT/CAPT MAS** measures grade-level academic content standards with modifications, such as more accessible presentation of text and graphics, embedded graphic organizers, and scaffolding of items. The **CMT/CAPT MAS** is only available in the content areas of mathematics and reading.

Special considerations for the above assessments

- Tests are administered using a computer based program called Measurement Incorporated Secure Testing (MIST) System.
- CMT test scores do not determine if a student will be promoted to the next grade or held back.
- By law, a student's performance on the CAPT cannot be used as the sole criterion for determining whether he or she graduates from high school.
- Any student who reaches the state goal on any part of the CAPT test receives a certificate of mastery in that subject.
- Certificates of mastery must be included in official high school transcripts and become part of a student's permanent record.
- Students who fail to reach the mastery goal on any part of the CAPT may retake those parts annually until they turn age 21 (CGS § 10-14n).
- School districts must include CAPT results as a factor in determining whether students have the basic skill and knowledge needed for high school graduation (CGS § 10-223a).
- In addition to assessing individual students' performance, the state also uses the CAPT to meet school and school district accountability requirements under the

federal No Child Left Behind Act and state educational accountability law (CGS § 10-223e).

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Testing is being implemented as follows:

2013 - 2014

- Statewide implementation of CCSS and CCSS-aligned Assessment
- Pilot Technology Plan
- Collect information from select districts

2014 – 2015

- Provide feedback from select districts to improve upon implementation of CCSS
- Statewide implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessments

Sec. 10-5e. Development or approval of end of the school year examinations. On and after July 1, 2014, the Department of Education shall commence development or approval of the end of the school year examinations to be administered pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of section 10-221a. Such examinations shall be developed or approved on or before July 1, 2016.

According to the CMT Manual a student may refuse the test following these instructions:

Students Who Leave A Test Blank

If a student is present for a particular test session but does not respond to any questions (the test booklet is completely blank for that test session), the test examiner must fill in the “Left Blank” bubble for that test session on the back cover of the test booklet. The student should not be administered a make-up test.

Note: If a student is present for testing and leaves the test blank and the test examiner does not fill in the “Left Blank” bubble, the student will be reported as absent. This will negatively impact the district’s AYP participation rate.

http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/cmt/resources/misc_cmt/Test%20Coordinators%20Manual%202011.pdf

<http://www.realhartford.org/2011/08/31/back-to-school-guide-reclaiming-your-childs-education-12/>

Procedures for opt-out/refusal

1. Submit an opt out letter to the school site administrator, which includes your rights as the parent or legal guardian of the student (see **Get Tough Guide** on UOO website).
2. Provide your own written statement that you are aware you are not required to keep your child home during the testing window.

3. Secure alternative in school academic assignments/activities for your child during the testing window.

4. Know the legal requirements for high school graduation, but advocate for alternative assessments to be used to determine student proficiency in the required subjects such as a portfolio review for elementary and middle school students, all of which are voluntary and will provide the parent with the student's actual completed work demonstrating proficiency.

4. Be adamant in your resolve to exempt your child from testing, which can include any or all the following:

- Seeking legal assistance
- Seeking police protection if your child meets with verbal or physical force in an attempt to have him/her report to a testing area
- Organizing and attending regular meetings with opt out support groups or consult online groups
- Contacting any of the United Opt Out administrators for additional support or information

Urgency for opt-out/refusal

Connecticut is on board to implement Common Core State Standards, the PARCC assessments, and data collection – inclusive of personal information - on students and on teachers. These reform measures are questioned by many educators, students, parents, and tax paying citizens, as it seems federal policy has taken away state rights and local control of education. Also, the increase in the amount of assessments along with privacy changes in FERPA, the laws that protect a student's privacy, not passed by the federal congress raise concerns.

Sample language to include in opt-out/refusal Sample Opt Out Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be advised that our child will not be participating in state standardized testing during the current school year. Furthermore, we ask that no record of this testing be part of our child's permanent file, as we do not wish our child to participate in standardized achievement testing for promotion, graduation, or school/state report cards.

We believe the following of forced, high stakes testing:

- Is not scientifically-based and fails to follow the U.S. Government's own data on learning
- Fosters test driven education that is not meeting the individual/intellectual needs of students

- Presents a racial and economic bias detrimental to second language students, impoverished students, and students of color
- Violates fiscal fairness in funding schools
- Supports complicity of corporate interests rather than democracy based on public concerns
- Fosters coercion over cooperation with regards to federal funding for public education
- Promotes a culture of lying, cheating, and exploitation within the school community
- Has used the achievement gap to foster a “de facto” segregation that has resulted in separate and unequal education for minorities

We understand that federal law provides the parent or guardian the right of choice regarding standardized testing when such testing violates beliefs. In contrast to our beliefs, which are firmly rooted in a moral code that embraces equity and fairness, we believe such testing is not in the best interests of our child since it fosters competition instead of cooperation, contributes to separate and unequal education for minorities, and belies our child's intellectual, creative, and problem-solving abilities, while presenting a fictitious picture as to the impact of the pedagogy provided by our child's individual educators.

Ultimately, our state is required to provide our child with an education in a least restrictive environment that does not force us to go against our core beliefs. My child should proceed to learn and develop at an individual pace following education standards that are imparted under the guidance of education professionals, not market-based reformers, who are able to provide quality pedagogy without fear of reprisal if students - who mature at vastly different levels and come from diverse backgrounds that may or may not be supportive of intellectual pursuit - do not hit the bulls' eye of a constantly moving achievement target.

Therefore, we request that the school provide appropriate learning activities during the testing window and utilize an alternative assessment portfolio or concordant college testing score to fulfill promotion and or graduation requirements, as our child opts out of standardized testing.

Sincerely,

Child's Name _____

ID# _____

Resources and organizations

<https://www.facebook.com/StopCommonCoreinCT?ref=ts&fref=ts>

http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/stop-common-core-in-cts.fb28?r_by=8115399

State specific watch-list

Corporate Education Reform Industry spends nearly \$4.7 million on Connecticut lobbying, little of it telling the truth.

Corporate Education Reform Organization	Amount Spent on Lobbying
Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now, Inc. (ConnCAN)	\$1,121,672.17
Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Advocacy, Inc. (ConnAD)	\$758,969.00
A Better Connecticut	\$1,490,000.00
Students First/GNEPSA (Michelle Rhee)	\$876,602.08
Achievement First, Inc. (Dacia Toll/Stefan Pryor)	\$237,504.22
Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER)	\$126,559.85
Students for Education Reform (Michelle Rhee)	\$15,714.22
Connecticut Charter School Association/N.E. Charter School Network	\$22,000.00
Excel Bridgeport	\$515.00
Teach For America	\$1,185.00
EDUCATON REFORM LOBBYING EXPENDITURES	\$4,650,721.54

- Rep. Gail Lavielle (R-143)
- Rep. Timothy LeGeyt (R-17)
- Rep. Michael Molgano (R-125)

Additional or miscellaneous information

Connecticut's SB24 passed in 2012 requires the State Department of Education to develop new, standardized tests that will be given, at regular intervals, to all kindergarteners, first graders and second graders.

The new law also requires that all certified employees, including teachers and administrators who work with children in the K to third grades, (and all special education teachers,) must pass a new State Board of Education reading instruction exam. In addition, all teachers and administrators in those grades will have to have 30 hours of continuing education in reading instruction every five years, instead of the present requirement of 15 hours.

It appears at this time any early childhood testing is done by individual district choice with no one state mandated test mechanism. However, state mandated tests seem forthcoming.

The Common Core State Standards Aligned Practice Assessment was administered from April 22, 2013 through May 17, 2013.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

“District leaders who were able to join the March 13, 2013 conference call were notified that follow-up information would be provided to districts participating in the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Common Core aligned “Practice Assessment.” This memo includes more detailed information regarding what and how students will be assessed. Additional information will be provided in the coming weeks to support district administration of the practice assessment. Should you have any questions please contact Emily Byrne via email at emily.byrne@ct.gov or via telephone at 860-713-6546.

Overview of the Practice Assessment Items

English Language Arts: The CSDE has developed a practice assessment in both reading and writing that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The items were developed to simulate the Smarter Balanced assessments. The practice assessment differs from the current CMT and CAPT in several ways, ranging from the rigor of the stimuli to the format of the items:

All stimuli on both the reading and writing practice assessment follow the CCSS guidelines for grade appropriate complex text, which means stimuli may be more difficult than those on the CMT and CAPT;

The practice assessment puts an emphasis on informational text, as outlined in the CCSS—the reading portion of the practice assessment consists of three (3) stimuli: one (1) literary and two (2) informational passages; and

The writing portion of the practice assessment moves the focus to one (1) mode of writing per grade, with the expectation that all students in all grades will write narrative,

informational/explanatory, and opinion/argumentative responses based on grade appropriate complex sources.

Students will now need to identify proper conventions, where the CMT and CAPT have not required this, within the multiple choice and open-ended items in the practice assessment. They will also have to demonstrate the proper use of conventions in their extended writing tasks. However, the most significant difference between the CMT and CAPT versus the practice assessment is the variation of item types. The practice assessment includes:

- Traditional multiple choice items;
- Multiple choice items that have more than the typical four distractors;
- Multiple choice items that contain multiple correct responses; and
- Two part multiple choice questions in which a student must determine the correct response to both questions.

The practice assessment also includes basic constructed response items as well as a two new type of writing items: the brief write and the full-write. Students are directed to write a multi-paragraph response to a question in a specific mode of writing. Lastly, the writing practice assessments include a full-write component consisting of multiple sources that students must read and then incorporate into their multi-paragraph response.”