




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Interim Commissioner 

DATE: March 4, 2015

SUBJECT: Administration of Annual Assessments

Both state and federal laws require the administration of annual assessments in our public schools in certain grades and subjects. These laws do not provide a provision for parents to “opt-out” their children from taking state tests. These mandates have been in effect for many years and the State Department of Education, as well as all public schools, must comply.

Federal and state laws also require the administration of assessments in Science once in each grade band (elementary, middle, and high school). In Connecticut our assessments include the Smarter Balanced Assessments for ELA and Math and the CMT and CAPT in Science. Some students may experience the Connecticut Alternative Assessment (CTAA) in ELA and Math and the Science CMT-Skills Checklist or the CAPT – Science Skills Checklist in Science, in accordance with provisions of an IEP. The following statutory references may be useful in your communications about student participation in State Assessments.

For each tenth or eleventh grade student who meets or exceeds the state-wide mastery goal level on any component of the mastery test, each local school district shall certify such achievement on the student’s transcript and shall issue a certificate of mastery for such component. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-14n(d). No public school, however, may require achievement of a satisfactory score on a mastery examination, or any subsequent retest on a component of such examination as the sole criterion of promotion or graduation. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-14n(e).

If a student has special needs due to a disability or medical condition, testing accommodations may be available. However, the school district must determine what accommodations, if any, would appropriately address the child’s needs. Such determinations are made pursuant to the procedures available under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 20 U.S.C. § 701 *et seq.* In addition, certain students with disabilities may participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment and the CMT Science Skills Checklist or CAPT Science Skills Checklist. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-14q.

Statutory references: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires all states to implement “high-quality, yearly student academic assessments.” 20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(3)(A). The statute further provides that “[s]uch assessments shall...provide for...the participation in such assessments of all students.” 20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(3)(C). ESEA does not allow parents to exempt their children from taking the state assessments. In addition, the Connecticut statute also requires that “each student enrolled in grades three to eight, inclusive, and grade ten or eleven in any public school shall, annually, in March or April, take a state-wide mastery examination . . .”. C.G.S. § 10-14n.