

CLASSROOM DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

Information for Educators, Parents or Guardians

What type of test is the CDT?

The Pennsylvania Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) is a computer adaptive test (CAT). Similar to other assessments, students complete a CAT by responding to a series of multiple-choice items. A computer adaptive test (CAT) is different, because as a student responds to each test question, the CAT determines the next test question to ask the student. The CAT uses the student's responses to determine which follow-up question would give the most information about the student's performance on the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. This means that each student can be administered a unique set of questions, which allows the test to give diagnostic information about each student's understanding and abilities of the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.

What are the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content?

Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content are statements that clarify the standards assessed on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) and Keystone Exams. They serve as tools to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. For grades 3–8, questions are aligned to the PSSA Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content found on the PDE website at <http://www.education.state.pa.us>. For end-of-course, questions are aligned to the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content found on the SAS website at www.pdesas.org/Standard/Views.



What subjects are assessed?

CDTs are available in the following areas during the 2014–2015 school year: Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Geometry, Mathematics, Reading/Literature, Science, Writing/English Composition, Grades 3–5 Math, Grades 3–5 Reading, Grades 3–5 Science, and Grades 3–5 Writing.

What is the purpose of the CDT?

The purpose of the CDT is to provide information that will help guide instruction by providing support to students and teachers. The CDT reports are designed to provide a picture or snapshot of how students are performing in relation to the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. The CDT goes beyond focusing only on What students should know and be able to do at a particular grade and/or course. It also provides a snapshot of How and Why students may still be struggling or extending beyond the grade and/or course Eligible Content. This valuable information is typically not identified through other types of assessments. Teachers, through the use of CDT reports, may access additional information through the Learning Progression Map. The Learning Progression Map allows teachers to pinpoint where students are struggling along or extending beyond the learning continuum. The CDT helps identify, and provides suggestions, for “next steps” in student academic development.

Which students take the assessment?

The CDT is currently being offered to students in grades 3 through high school. It will be available for use in schools and classrooms throughout the school year on a voluntary basis. It also allows for student accommodations.

How often are students tested?

Administered to students at the beginning of the school year, the CDT can provide teachers with a snapshot of students' stages of learning. This will allow teachers to plan targeted instruction. Administered at different times during the school year and end of school year, information from the CDT can be used to provide teachers with an assessment of the total student learning at a given point in or over time. It is recommended the CDT be administered three times per year with a minimum of 5–6 weeks between each administration. The CDT for the same content area can only be administered a maximum of five times per school year.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

The CDT consists of only multiple-choice questions. The questions were developed to specifically align to the Pennsylvania Core Standards and/or Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. The CDT is based on content assessed by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) and the Keystone Exams.

What is the minimum/maximum number of test items that a student would answer to get a score?

Each student will answer 48 to 60 multiple-choice items.

How long does the assessment take?

The CDT is an untimed test given in computer adaptive format; therefore, the length of the test is determined by the answers selected by each student. It is estimated it will take a student 45 to 90 minutes to complete a CDT assessment.

How are results reported?

Teachers have access to results through online, interactive, diagnostic reports. Results for the three most recent tests are displayed by Diagnostic Category, indicating students' "Strengths to Build on" and "Areas of Need." The score for each Diagnostic Category links to the Eligible Content covered in the assessment. Each Eligible Content then links

to curriculum and resources available for that Eligible Content. In addition, a Learning Progression Map for each student is available. Materials and resources, as well as a sample item, are provided for each Eligible Content via the Standards Aligned System (SAS).

How may the CDT improve teaching?

The CDT provides teachers with immediate access to detailed diagnostic reports designed to help the teacher understand the strengths and needs of each student or group of students. This allows teachers to gain insight into their students' strengths at the beginning of the year. The diagnostic reports also provide teachers with tools throughout the year that focus on meeting the needs, and attaining the learning goals, of individual students.

How may the CDT help parents or guardians complement classroom instruction?

After a student completes a CDT, the student's teacher will have access to diagnostic information that can be shared with parents or guardians. The individual student reports, highlighting student strengths and areas of need, can become part of the discussions between teachers, parents/guardians, and students to set individual learning goals.

