

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 and evidence-based selected-response questions. The test questions are not selected in advance. Instead, the test engine adjusts during the test to each individual student. If a student answers a question correctly, the difficulty of subsequent questions increases. Because the CDT is a diagnostic tool rather than an on-grade summative test, some of the more challenging questions presented are targeted to Eligible Content standards beyond those assessed in the student's current course or grade level.

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 the 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 Algebra I, HS Literature, and Biology, 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 school year: Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Geometry, Mathematics 6–HS, Reading/Literature 6–HS, Science 6–HS, Writing/English Composition 6–HS, Grades 3–5 Math, Grades 3–5 Reading, Grades 3–5 Science, and Grades 3–5 Writing. A Full CDT test contains items for all diagnostic categories for a given subject. Diagnostic Category tests contain items for only one diagnostic category for a subject. There is a total of 63 assessments available in the CDT.

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 be struggling with, or extending beyond, the grade and/or course Eligible Content. This valuable information is typically not identified through other types of assessments. Using CDT Interactive Reporting, teachers may access additional information through the Learning Progression Map. The Learning Progression Map allows teachers to pinpoint where students are currently on the learning continuum. The CDT helps identify and provide 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 is available for use in schools and classrooms throughout the school year on a voluntary basis. Several options for student accommodations are available.

How often are students tested?

When administered to students at the beginning of the school year, the CDT can provide teachers with a snapshot of students' stages of learning. This allows teachers to plan targeted instruction. Information from the CDT can also be used to provide teachers with an assessment of total student learning at a given point in, or over, time. Each assessment can be administered a maximum of five times per school year. The recommended number of times for a student to take one of the available CDTs is three (3) times in a given school year. There should be enough time between the CDT administrations to allow for instructional impact to be reflected in the student's results. Teachers have the flexibility to use combinations of Full CDT tests and Diagnostic Category tests throughout the school year to align with their lesson plans and course sequencing.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

The CDT consists of multiple-choice questions and evidence-based selected-response questions. Questions were developed to specifically align to the Pennsylvania Core Standards and/or Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.

Content assessed on the CDT is similar to the 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?

Students taking a Full CDT will answer 48 to 60 multiple-choice items. Students taking a Diagnostic Category test in science, math, or writing will answer 15-18 items, while students taking a Diagnostic Category test in reading/literature will answer about 30 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 Full CDT assessment and 20-30 minutes to complete a Diagnostic Category test.

How are results reported?

Teachers have access to immediate classroom and student 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 as well as sample items for each Eligible Content. The report also links to curriculum and resources available for that Eligible Content on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Standards Aligned System (SAS) website. In addition, a Learning Progression Map is available to assist educators in identifying foundational content that students may have missed from a previous grade level.

How are the CDT results used to improve teaching?

The CDT provides teachers with immediate access to detailed diagnostic reports designed to help them 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 are the CDT results used to support parent/guardian, teacher and student conversations?

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.

