

Series: 2001-2002

CIRCULAR LETTER: C-21

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Directors of Special Education
High School Principals
District CAPT Coordinators

FROM: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education

DATE: April 3, 2002

SUBJECT: Participation of Special Education Students on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Expectations for Their Participation on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)

With the fall 2000 administration of the CMT and the spring 2001 administration of the CAPT, the new requirements of the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) went into effect. These amendments require that all students enrolled in special education participate in the statewide testing efforts with accommodations, where necessary. These amendments further require that states make available alternate assessments for those students with disabilities who cannot participate in the standard assessments, even with accommodations. The federal expectations with regard to this Act are clear: high expectations and standards for student performance; participation in the general curriculum and statewide testing; and, public accountability for progress.

Based on these federal expectations, Circular Letter C-14, series 1999-2000, dated March 17, 2000, established state level target goals and expectations for the participation of special education students in the CMT and CAPT. These **target goals** and expectations are as follows:

At least 80 percent of all special education students will participate in each subtest of the standard grade level version of the CMT/CAPT,

No more than 15 percent of the special education students will participate in out-of-level testing,

No more than 5 percent of the special education students will participate in the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist.

As you can see from in the table below, the number and percentage of special education students who participated in the standard CMT for 2001 was a substantial increase over the 2000 participation rate. This increase is attributable, in part, to a general increase in district awareness regarding state and federal expectations. This increase in participation is also attributable to district level examination of the performance of special education students on prior out-of-level tests. Statewide data, as well as district level data, released last fall demonstrate that significant numbers of students achieved goal when tested out-of-level, indicating low expectations on the part of Planning and Placement Teams.

On a related note, one can also see from this table that the participation of students enrolled in bilingual education and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs has increased as well. This is primarily due to the change in state statutes, effective July 1, 2001, in which exemption from test participation for students enrolled in these programs is limited to 10 school months or less.

**NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED
IN THE STANDARD CMT
2000 AND 2001**

	Special Education		Bilingual Education		English as a Second Language		Total Population	
	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001
Grade 4								
Mathematics	3,293 (64.1%)	3,998 (77.0%)	359 (44.7%)	743 (78.4%)	212 (32.0%)	555 (71.1%)	41,473 (93.6%)	42,813 (96.0%)
Reading	2,964 (57.7%)	3,630 (69.9%)	350 (43.5%)	717 (75.6%)	199 (30.0%)	550 (70.4%)	41,070 (92.7%)	42,374 (95.0%)
Writing	2,994 (58.3%)	3,579 (68.9%)	342 (42.5%)	673 (71.0%)	199 (30.0%)	545 (69.8%)	40,904 (92.3%)	42,180 (94.6%)
Grade 6								
Mathematics	3,342 (60.8%)	4,309 (73.2%)	165 (31.6%)	433 (69.2%)	82 (17.3%)	313 (61.0%)	41,018 (92.7%)	43,105 (94.7%)
Reading	3,163 (57.6%)	4,084 (69.4%)	160 (30.7%)	423 (67.6%)	79 (16.7%)	305 (59.5%)	40,836 (92.3%)	42,948 (94.4%)
Writing	3,201 (58.3%)	4,155 (70.6%)	160 (30.7%)	406 (64.9%)	78 (16.5%)	303 (59.1%)	40,785 (92.2%)	42,880 (94.2%)
Grade 8								
Mathematics	3,412 (60.9%)	4,124 (71.1%)	58 (12.2%)	235 (56.5%)	88 (22.0%)	251 (56.8%)	38,761 (91.7%)	41,037 (93.8%)
Reading	3,374 (60.3%)	4,108 (70.8%)	55 (11.5%)	240 (57.7%)	74 (18.5%)	248 (56.8%)	38,758 (91.6%)	41,120 (94.0%)
Writing	3,355 (59.9%)	4,100 (70.7%)	48 (10.1%)	222 (53.4%)	70 (17.5%)	240 (54.3%)	38,613 (91.3%)	40,935 (93.6%)

We're hopeful that our CAPT data will reflect the same increase in participation across all programs. However, the high proportion of absenteeism in some districts negatively affects CAPT participation rates. Districts need to aggressively promote student attendance and conduct make-up testing.

HR 1, *No Child Left Behind*, the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) accountability legislation establishes for statewide testing efforts a state participation standard of **95 percent of the total school population as well as for each subgroup** (e.g., race/ethnicity; gender; special education; bilingual/ESL; eligibility for free and reduced lunch). Clearly, the Department and districts are going to have to collaborate on efforts to increase attendance during testing and promote participation in standard grade level tests in order to meet this new requirement.

In order to prepare for the upcoming CAPT administration, you should:

- Review your PPT decision-making procedures relative to level of test participation for special education students;

- Examine the performance of your students who tested out-of-level on the 2001 CAPT Administration;

- Develop incentives or motivational strategies to encourage school attendance during the testing window; and,

- Conduct make-up testing in an aggressive fashion in order to increase participation rates.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the federal requirements regarding testing or reporting of student information, please call Dr. Douglas Rindone, Chief of the Bureau of Student Assessment and Research at 860-713-6888, George Dowaliby, Chief of the Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services at 860-807-2025 or Dr. Charlene Tucker, Director of Student Assessment at 860-713-6897.

TSS:htk