

NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

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State releases 2006 Connecticut Mastery Test results

HARTFORD – Approximately 3 out of 5 Connecticut students in Grades 3-8 met the state goal in reading, writing and mathematics, according to Connecticut Mastery Test results released today by the State Department of Education.

The No Child Left Behind Act required Connecticut to add for the first time tests in Grades 3, 5 and 7, in addition to the tests in Grades 4, 6 and 8, which have been administered since 1986. The number of students tested doubled to about 250,000. In another first, students took the CMT in the spring rather than the fall. New tests (CMT4) were created for each grade level to accommodate these changes.

The Department is reporting the results in terms of the highest performance standards – goal and advanced – and not in terms of the proficiency standard, which the state uses to determine whether schools are making adequate progress from year to year under NCLB.

“If we reported these results using the proficiency standard, the performance of our students would look better,” said Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner of Education. “But we believe it is imperative to focus on goal and advanced and hold the highest standards for all our youngsters. We must do that to be competitive not only with the rest of the nation, but also with the rest of the world. Districts and superintendents must attend to the proficiency standard, but I encourage all of them to have a laser-like focus on goal.”

The CMT4 provides information regarding the mastery of important skills in mathematics, reading and writing. Five levels of performance – below basic, basic, proficient, goal and advanced – have been established in the three content areas. The goal level has been an important benchmark for judging the quality of education in Connecticut for more than a decade. It represents a challenging but reasonable level of expectation for Connecticut students.

Table 1 contains a summary of the statewide results from the spring 2006 CMT4 administration. Results are summarized by grade and content area in terms of the percentage of students reaching the goal and advanced achievement levels. Results show that about 60 percent of Connecticut's students in Grades 3-8 achieved the state goal in mathematics, reading and writing. In addition, nearly 22 percent of the students tested performed at an advanced level.

Table 1: State Results for Mathematics, Reading and Writing by Grade

| Grade | Mathematics | | Reading | | Writing | |
|-------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | % At/Above Goal | % At/Above Advanced | % At/Above Goal | % At/Above Advanced | % At/Above Goal | % At/Above Advanced |
| 3 | 56 | 22 | 54 | 17 | 61 | 22 |
| 4 | 59 | 22 | 58 | 16 | 63 | 22 |
| 5 | 60 | 23 | 61 | 18 | 65 | 22 |
| 6 | 58 | 23 | 64 | 20 | 62 | 22 |
| 7 | 57 | 25 | 67 | 23 | 60 | 22 |
| 8 | 58 | 24 | 67 | 24 | 62 | 22 |

Table 2 contains a summary of the subgroup results from the spring 2006 CMT4 administration. Results are summarized by subgroup and content area averaged across grades in terms of the percentage of students reaching the goal and advanced achievement levels.

Table 2: Results by Subgroup for Mathematics, Reading and Writing

| Subgroup | Mathematics | | Reading | | Writing | |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | % At/Above Goal | % At/Above Advanced | % At/Above Goal | % At/Above Advanced | % At/Above Goal | % At/Above Advanced |
| State | 58 | 23 | 62 | 20 | 62 | 22 |
| Female | 58 | 22 | 64 | 22 | 71 | 28 |
| Male | 58 | 24 | 59 | 18 | 54 | 16 |
| Asian | 77 | 41 | 74 | 30 | 76 | 33 |
| Black | 27 | 5 | 33 | 4 | 39 | 7 |
| White | 70 | 30 | 74 | 26 | 72 | 28 |
| Hispanic | 29 | 6 | 31 | 4 | 37 | 7 |
| F/R meals | 30 | 6 | 32 | 4 | 37 | 6 |
| Full price meals | 70 | 30 | 74 | 26 | 72 | 28 |
| Special Ed. | 20 | 4 | 20 | 3 | 20 | 3 |
| Non-Special Ed. | 63 | 26 | 67 | 22 | 68 | 24 |
| ELL | 21 | 4 | 15 | 1 | 25 | 3 |
| Non-ELL | 60 | 24 | 64 | 21 | 64 | 23 |

Gender Results

- Females and males performed equally well on the mathematics test in terms of the goal standard, but males performed slightly better than females in terms of the advanced standard. Females outperformed males by 5 percentage points in reading and 17 percentage points in writing based on the goal standard. Females outperformed males by 4 percentage points in reading and 12 percentage points in writing based on the advanced standard.

Race/Ethnicity Results

A comparison of the results of the three largest minority groups in Connecticut (i.e., black, Hispanic and Asian students) with the results of white students shows performance gaps across all three content areas in all six grades.

- White and Asian students performed similarly in reading, but Asian students outperformed white students by 7 percentage points on the mathematics test and by 4 percentage points on the writing test in terms of the goal standard. Both groups performed considerably better than the black and Hispanic groups. In mathematics and reading, the percentage of white students who scored in the goal range was 42 percentage points higher than the average of black students and Hispanic students. In writing, the proportion of white students scoring at or above goal exceeded the proportion of black and Hispanic students by 34 percentage points.
- Asian students outperformed white students by 11 percentage points on the mathematics test, by 4 percentage points on the reading test and by 5 percentage points on the writing test in terms of the advanced standard. Both groups performed considerably better than the black and Hispanic groups. In mathematics, the percentage of white students who scored at or above advanced level was about 24 percentage points higher than the average of black and Hispanic students. In reading, white students outperformed the average of the black and Hispanic groups by 22 percentage points based on the advanced standard. The difference was 21 percentage points for the writing test.

Poverty Status Results

- Eligibility for free or reduced-price meals is a proxy for poverty. Students who pay full price for meals outperformed students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals in mathematics, reading and writing. The average gap across the three content areas was about 39 percentage points for goal and 23 percentage points for advanced.

Special Education Status Results

- Non-special education students performed better on the goal and advanced standards in mathematics, reading and writing than students who received special education services. The average gap across the three content areas was about 46 percentage points for goal and 21 percentage points for advanced.

English Language Learner (ELL) Status Results

- Students who are non-ELL outperformed ELL students in mathematics, reading and writing based on the goal and advanced standards. The average gap across the three content areas was about 42 percentage points for goal and 20 percentage points for advanced.

Results from the CMT4 provide a new baseline for student achievement with the testing window moved from fall to spring and testing expanded to include Grades 3, 5 and 7. District and state reports include additional information for parents, teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators and superintendents to help identify and address the varying needs of students.

“Because the CMT4 is a new test, grade-to-grade comparisons to previous generations are limited,” Commissioner Sternberg said. “There have been changes to the format, structure, length and scoring of various areas of the CMT. The expectations of what students should know and be able to do are different. That being said, we are not seeing dramatic changes – up or down – in student performance. If we look at the data from the third generation of the CMT, student achievement is relatively flat, and, in general, that trend has continued with the CMT4.

“We continue to remain concerned about the persistent gaps in student achievement, and we have several initiatives in place to address them that we are going to move forward with,” the Commissioner said. “For example, formative assessments – short, focused tests given every four to six weeks, which, as research shows, produce increased achievement for all students, particularly our lowest-achieving youngsters – will be piloted in a small number of school districts during the next school year. The federal government refused to fund this proven assessment system, but the state legislature has approved funds to develop and implement these formative tests in a small number of schools.”

Another initiative, championed by Governor Rell and funded by the General Assembly, is to provide high quality preschool programs to at-risk youngsters who have not had access previously to these programs. Next year, an additional 1,000 youngsters will be served.

“This approach has been proven unequivocally through multiple research studies both nationwide and in Connecticut,” Commissioner Sternberg said. “While we are greatly increasing the number of preschoolers whom we will serve, there are still thousands of children who will not have access to high quality preschool programs next year.

“Once we serve all of our youngsters,” the Commissioner said, “I am confident that we will see a narrowing of the gap.”

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