

Connecticut Alternate Assessment System: Overview of the Early Stopping Rule Transcript

Slide 1. Connecticut Alternate Assessment System: Overview of the Early Stopping Rule and Student Response Check

Welcome to the CSDE Learning Series for Planning and Placement and Section 504 Teams.

In this training, we will focus on the Early Stopping Rule and the Student Response Check.

Slide 2. Part B: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

We will take a moment to review the federal legislation that guides our work at both the state and local levels.

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities of Education Act (IDEA) requires states to make available an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) for eligible students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Moreover, IDEA requires that if a Planning and Placement Team determines that a student must take an alternate assessment, the team must include a statement in the student's IEP of why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment; and why the alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the student (34 CFR § 300.320(a)(6)(ii)).

Slide 3. Participation – Connecticut General Statutes 10-14n

Together, the ESEA and the IDEA provide the system and structure to ensure that children with disabilities have access to learning environment that meet their individual needs.

Slide 4. The Design of Alternate Assessments

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System is designed to measure the knowledge and skills of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities as required by the IDEA and ESSA. They support student independence to the greatest extent possible by making academic and language content accessible and the expected achievement levels appropriate. These assessments adjust for the depth, or cognitive complexity of skills and abilities, within the grade level standards. The assessments measure fewer standards, and the content adjusts for difficulty and is scaffolded to support the diverse range of accessibility needs within this student population.

Additional Information:

Depth- refers to how much of a single skill is measured by an item; for example, a deeper level item may address both description and dialogue narrative techniques whereas an item of less depth may only address description.

Breadth- refers to the scope or range of the content standards covered by the items in the AA-AAAS. In some cases, the AA-AAAS may cover the same content standards as the general assessment (perhaps, the essence of those standards).

Complexity-refers specifically to the format of the passages, items, tasks with built in scaffolding (documented in the secure Directions for Test Administration- applicable to the CTAA Math and ELA; and the CTAS Performance Task script read by the teacher).

[Slide 5. The Design of Alternate Assessments Administering Test Items](#)

Alternate Assessments incorporate optimal testing conditions that must be provided to all students who take the test, accessibility features that must be provided to students as needed, and accommodations that students must receive as specified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

This combination of accessibility features, optimal testing conditions, and accommodations is incorporated within the assessment design and is intended to maximize students' test access and performance.

The CTAA and CAAELP are online, while the CTAS is a paper, performance task-based assessment. Each assessment may be accessed in a variety of formats based on the diverse needs of the student.

The content of the CTAA for both English language arts and mathematics is designed to be read aloud to all participating students. The TEA reads the item, response options, and passages as often as is reasonable to obtain a student's response to an item. All text must be read to students exactly as written. The TEA may not paraphrase or vary speed to emphasize words in ways that hint at correct or incorrect responses.

Generally, students may access the test items by:

- Listening to the trained teacher read the test;
- Reading the test question independently if the trained teacher determines this is appropriate;
- Having the test question signed by a qualified trained educator; or
- Listening to a recorded voice read the test question (applicable to the online CTAA and CAAELP only)

Review the [CTAA System User Guide](#) and the Test Administration Manuals (available for the CTAA, CTAS, and CAAELP) (available on the Connecticut Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal) to determine how to activate/use accessibility features if needed.

[Slide 6. The Design of Alternate Assessments: How Students Respond](#)

Accommodations are changes in the materials or procedures of the assessment that do not alter the construct being measured. A student may use the accommodations that are in their IEP that are consistent with the policies associated with the CTAA, CTAS, and CAAELP. TEAs

should refer to the Supplementary Aids and Services section in the plan for more information on the student's accessibility supports throughout instruction to determine accommodations that may be needed by the student.

There are a variety of ways a TEA can administer the alternate assessments so that they are accessible using the mode of communication used by the student.

For example, assistive technology can be used in conjunction with the test delivery interface when administering the CTAA and CAAELP. Permissive mode must be activated in the student's TIDE account and the functionality should be tested using a practice test before the student participates in summative testing.

A paper version of the CTAA may be downloaded and printed from TIDE and made available to the student if it is a more appropriate format than the online test platform. As a reminder, the TEA will transcribe the student responses from the paper test into the test delivery interface in order to submit and process the student's test.

The TEA typically reads and scribes all portions of the test as needed by the student as defined by the associated testing materials applicable to each test. For example, teachers will follow the script in the Directions for Test Administration for CTAA and CAAELP and follow the script as documented in the required CTAS test materials.

The TEA may also administer the assessment using sign language if that is an appropriate accommodation in the student's IEP.

Slide 7. What is the Early Stopping Rule (ESR) and Student Response Check (SRC)?

What is the Early Stopping Rule?

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Generally, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be able to participate in the CTAA for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in Grades 3–8 and 11, and science if the student is enrolled in Grades 5, 8, or 11, and the Connecticut Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment (CAAELP) if the student is designated as an English learner/multilingual learner (EL/ML). These alternate assessments are designed specifically for these students.

However, the CSDE developed a process called the Early Stopping Rule (ESR) for a very small subset of students that have not yet established a mode of communication. The guidance in this training applies to the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System only for the purpose of determining if a student has the necessary observable communication skills to participate fully on alternate assessments.

Slide 9. General Characteristics of Eligible Students

We are now going to review general characteristics of students that typically meet the qualifications for an ESR.

Typically, the students who are eligible for the ESR are those students who require the most complex support for their needs even when compared to their peers with significant cognitive disabilities also participating in the alternate assessments.

Often, these students do not use oral speech, nor do they have an established communication system even through the use of assistive technology (low or high tech). Goals may include learning cause and effect to utilize augmentative or alternative communication supports. These students do not currently use objects or textures, regularized gestures, pictures, signs, etc., to communicate with consistency. They may demonstrate uncertain response to sensory stimuli and their IEPs often focus on medical and functional academic needs. Additionally, the IEP should also document goals that support the development of the student's communication.

Slide 10. The ESR Guidelines

Before we begin, here are a few important considerations. If a TEA believes that their student may qualify for an ESR, they should carefully review the ESR guidelines and administer the SRC in December and early January. The SRC **must** be completed prior to the opening of the applicable testing windows. For those students that qualify per the outcome of the three trials, the corresponding SRC Administration Behavioral Notes and ESR Request and Attestation Form should be completed with accuracy, signed, and returned to their District Administrator by the deadline specified in this training.

Incomplete or incorrect forms will be denied approval.

Slide 11. SRC and ESR Submission Deadlines

TEAs, Special Education Directors and DAs need to be aware of the SRC and ESR submission deadlines.

Submission and deadlines for each year can be found on the [Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Early Stopping Rule and Student Response Check website](#).

As stated in the previous slide, incomplete and late submissions will be denied.

Slide 12. What is the ESR Process?

Specifically designed for the Connecticut Alternate Assessments, trained TEAs will follow the guidance outlined on the Early Stopping Rule document, they will administer a three-item **Student Response Check (SRC)** (included in Appendix A) to the student who do not have an observable mode of communication to respond to instruction. This must be completed in an individual setting.

The SRC is a content-neutral screener that applies to all alternate assessments including the CTAA, CTAS, and the CAAELP.

The administration of the SRC confirms the observation of the student's mode of communication. The purpose is to determine if the student can indicate a response using

their preferred method of communication. It is NOT necessary that the student respond correctly to any of the items.

The SRC should be administered individually to the student a total of three times, on three different days, and at various times of the day, between **December 1, 2025, and January 5, 2026 (CAAELP) and December 1, 2025, and February 2, 2026 (CTAA and/or CTAS).**

Slide 13. Excerpt of the SRC Eligibility Process

As the trained teacher administers the SRC, they will work with their student using a variety of communication modes, such as verbalizing, gesturing, signing, or pointing – which are acceptable ways students can answer the three questions on the form. TEAs should also program any assistive technology to support the response to these questions for students that use a communication device or other technologies.

With a variety of communication modes available, the TEA will observe if the student is able to respond. If the student uses a communication response during any of the three SRC administrations, the trained TEA will discontinue the SRC because the student does not qualify for the ESR. The student is expected to participate in the alternate assessments applicable to the grade of enrollment.

For illustrative purposes, this is an example of the first item of the SRC. The TEA will follow steps shown on the left-side section of this slide, and present **Student Response Check Card Item #1** to the student in paper form or on a device (as shown on the right).

The TEA will follow the entire process as indicated in the **Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Early Stopping Rule** document available on the Alternate Assessment page of the Connecticut Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal.

Using a variety of communication modes (listed), ask the student to “Select A”.

Slide 14. SRC Administration Behavioral Notes

Using Appendix B of the Early Stopping rule guidelines, the TEA will note the communication behaviors of the student for each SRC card indicating that the student does or does not demonstrate an observable communication response necessary to participate on the alternate assessment. As a reminder, the student’s response does not need to be correct.

The TEA will repeat these steps on the second and third administrations of the SRC scheduled at an earlier or later time on different days.

Effective 2025-26, a copy of this form should be submitted to the DA along with a copy of the completed and signed ESR Request and Attestation Form. The original copy of the SRC Administration Behavioral Notes should be kept with the student’s file.

If the student can provide a mode of communication to any of the three items, discontinue administration. The student does not qualify for the ESR.

Slide 15. Early Stopping Rule Request and Attestation Form

The trained TEA who administered the SRC will complete the request and attestation form shown here. They will complete the table and check boxes and include all specified signatures.

New for 2025-2026, a copy of the SRC Administration Behavioral Notes and a copy of the attestation form should be submitted to the DA for Testing **before January 5, 2026, for CAAEP and February 2, 2026**, for CTAA and/or CTAS.

The DA will be required to submit both of these completed forms and the to the CSDE by January 12, 2026, for CAAELP and March 2, 2026, for CTAA/CTAS to confirm eligibility for ESR.

It is important that the TEA do not proceed with testing or open any tests for their student if they received ESR approval by the CSDE.

TEAs should locally maintain a copy of their notes documented from Appendix B and a copy of the request and attestation form with their student's records.

Slide 16. SRC Eligibility Process

If the student does not show any response using an observable mode of communication for each of the three items across three separate administrations, then the student meets eligibility for the ESR.

Reminder: The purpose of the ESR process is to identify eligible students *before* the onset of the assessment window. Therefore, late submissions may be denied unless the CSDE is notified by the District Administrator of extenuating circumstances.

TEAs must save a copy of the completed form locally with student's records.

Slide 17. If the Student Doesn't Qualify

For students who have limited and inconsistent mode of communication and don't meet the criteria per the Student Response Check:

- Review and determine the access points used for the students to access their instruction within the learning environment.
- Understand accessibility supports including assistive technology that may be available for that student to access the learning environment, including curriculum and social emotional learning.
- Based on accessibility supports utilized throughout instruction, review designated supports and accommodations associated with each applicable standard assessment.
- Trial practice and training tests with appropriate supports and accommodations to gather information and evaluate student need.

Slide 18. Guidance for District Administrators

District Administrators (DA in TIDE) should first verify that the student's Alternate Assessment Indicator is set to Yes in TIDE. This is automatically activated when the PPT completes the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form and Verification Section for all grades covered by the duration of the IEP including the student's current grade of enrollment AND the plan is finalized and implemented. If the indicator is set to No, contact the student's Case Manager as the plan may not be implemented or may require an amendment. **Do not** submit the ESR request until the issue is resolved and the alternate indicator is set to Yes in TIDE.

When submitting the information in TIDE, ensure the student SASID is entered correctly and that all portions of the digital form including the TEA's EIN, dates of the SRC administration, and teacher/administrator signatures.

DAs should submit a copy of the completed SRC Administration Behavioral Notes and the ESR Request and Attestation Form via TIDE Forms by the following deadlines:

- CAAELP - No later than January 12, 2026
- CTAA/CTAS - No later than March 2, 2026

Resource for DAs: [How to Submit the Student Response Check and Early Stopping Rule \(ESR\) Request and Attestation Form in TIDE.](#)

Slide 19. Checking ESR Status in TIDE

It may take up to a week for ESRs to be reviewed and approved. DAs will receive an email from Cambium Assessments indicating the ESR status as approved, denied, or needs more information. All educators with access to TIDE can check the student's ESR status by searching the student and viewing the student dashboard.

If the student has been approved for an ESR, "Yes" will be indicated for the Early Stopping Rule Indicator. If your ESR was approved, **no further action or testing is required by the TEA or DA on behalf of the student.** **TEAs should not open or attempt any tests with the student.**

Once the ESR is approved, the student is assigned the ESR test code status and will count as a participant. Once the test window is opened, a Cambium team member will close the tests within the system.

Slide 20. New Resource for TEAs: ESR Checklist Tool

The optional [ESR Checklist](#) was created to support trained Teachers Administering the Alternate (TEA) Assessment complete the appropriate procedures for determining student qualifications. The checklist also includes critical steps to ensure TEA credentials, user access to related systems, and information pertaining to student eligibility. These combined activities support the approval process for teachers requesting the ESR for their students. If applicable, please review this checklist early in the school year to appropriately screen and identify eligible students and submit documentation by the test-specific deadlines described in this resource.

Slide 21. CSDE Performance Office Special Populations Contact Information

Here is our contact information. Please reach out with any questions as we are here to support you and your teams.

- Abe Krisst, Bureau Chief
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Slide 22. Thank you!

Thank you for attending and for all you do for your students.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.