

**Connecticut Mastery Test
Fourth Generation
Language Arts Handbook**

CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Introduction	vi
Position Statement on Language Arts.....	vii
Part I: Summary of Changes from CMT 3 to CMT 4.....	1
I. Overview of Global Changes	2
II. Changes in Reading Comprehension	2
III. Changes in the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP ®)	3
IV. Changes in Editing & Revising.....	4
V. Changes in the Direct Assessment of Writing	4
VI. Changes in Testing Time	5
Part II: Reading Comprehension	7
I. Overview	8
II. Reading Comprehension Strands and Objectives	10
III. Sample Questions Reported by Strand/Objective	12
IV. Types of Reading Text	21
V. Reading Comprehension Test Blueprint	22
VI. Reading Comprehension Scoring Rubrics	23
VII. Multiple-Choice and Open-Ended Sample Items by Grade.....	27
Part III: Degrees of Reading Power (DRP ®)	195
I. Overview	196
II. Description of DRP Tests.....	196
III. Preparing Students to Take DRP Tests	197
IV. Using DRP-Like Materials to Teach Reading Comprehension	197
V. DRP Scoring.....	197
VI. Contact Information	199
VII. DRP Sample Passages.....	199
Part IV: Editing & Revising.....	209
I. Overview	210
II. Editing & Revising Skills Test Objectives.....	210
III. Test Blueprint.....	213
IV. Editing & Revising Samples	213

Part V: Direct Assessment of Writing	245
I. Overview	246
II. Modes of Writing	246
III. Direct Assessment of Writing Guidelines and Rubrics by Grade.....	248
IV. Samples of Student Writing	254
 Part VI: How to Get More Information	 305
I. Information available from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)	306
II. What is NAEP?	308

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Connecticut State Department of Education, I am pleased to present the *Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) Fourth Generation Language Arts Handbook*. This handbook has been developed to provide Connecticut’s public school teachers and school administrators with important information about the CMT language arts subtests. It is designed to answer many of the frequently asked questions about how to prepare students for the CMT language arts subtests. Questions like, “How is the test changing?”, “What precisely will our students be expected to know and be able to do?”, and “How should I best prepare my students to succeed on the CMT?” often are asked when a new generation of the test is discussed. In this handbook, you will find:

- a summary of the changes in both the content to be assessed and the item formats;
- an explanation of test design;
- sample items that illustrate each strand to be assessed in reading and writing; and
- sample anchor papers and rubrics used for scoring open-ended student responses in Reading Comprehension and the Direct Assessment of Writing.

The materials in this handbook represent a comprehensive survey of the important elements of the Fourth Generation CMT. It is my hope that this handbook will be helpful in your efforts to improve language arts instruction in Connecticut’s classrooms.

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg
Commissioner of Education

INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) is designed to measure student performance in the areas of mathematics, reading and writing. The assessment focuses on content that is reasonable to expect students at each grade to master. On the CMT, students are not compared to one another in terms of performance; rather, student performance is compared to an absolute standard of specific learning goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are identified by the Connecticut curriculum frameworks. The frameworks guide educators throughout Connecticut in designing instructional programs across all grades to bring about continued improvement in student achievement.

Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation now requires states to administer a statewide assessment to all public school students in Grades 3 through 8 in reading and writing. To meet this mandate, Connecticut will expand the CMT test population from Grades 4, 6 and 8 to Grades 3 through 8 in the spring of 2006.

This language arts handbook outlines the changes for the fourth generation of the CMT. New generations of the test offer opportunities to adjust content, re-establish standards and reflect changes in philosophy and technology that have occurred since the previous generation was developed. Dozens of Connecticut educators have had significant roles in this work. The Connecticut State Department of Education extends its thanks to those who served as members of the Reading and Writing Advisory Committees, Reading and Writing Anchor Committees, Fairness Committee and the Handbook Advisory Committee.

This handbook contains information comparing CMT 3 and CMT 4, a description of content areas, test blueprints, rubrics, and examples of items and student responses across content areas. Please note that the information in this handbook, if used in isolation, will not sufficiently prepare students for CMT testing. Rather, this handbook is designed to be used with the Connecticut frameworks and the *Connecticut Blueprint for Reading Achievement* to implement high-quality instruction in all Connecticut classrooms.

Position Statement on Language Arts

Adopted February 4, 2004

The State Board of Education believes that a strong language arts program is essential to ensure that students develop the skills they need to comprehend and communicate effectively. The language arts are unique among the subjects because the underlying domains – reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing – include skills and competencies that are applied to learning in all of the disciplines. These domains are the means by which we communicate and receive ideas and acquire new information. The ability to communicate with others through these domains is essential for a productive life.

The Board believes that the language arts contribute to children's education and preparation for life in numerous ways. For example, the language arts program:

- provides a foundation for students' success in all content areas and in future careers;
- enables students to obtain and communicate information;
- provides exposure to others' lives and to worlds beyond their own through literary text;
- helps students use language to think critically and to solve problems in everyday life; and
- provides students with the tools and motivation to continue their learning beyond school.

A quality language arts education should therefore be part of the core curriculum for all Connecticut students. PreK-12 language arts education program should enable students to achieve the goals and standards outlined in *Connecticut's Common Core of Learning* and the *Connecticut Language Arts Framework*. By the end of high school, all graduates should be able to:

- develop and communicate informed opinions through reading, interpreting and evaluating various texts;
- recognize the influences of individual, social, cultural and historical contexts on readers and writers;
- read and interpret texts in a variety of disciplines;
- write in a variety of formats;
- write and speak in acceptable standard English;
- construct meaning from communications in a variety of forms;
- read and respond to a variety of authors, texts and genres, and share responses to extend understanding and enjoyment;
- compose, revise and edit written materials using conventions of standard English, including correct spelling, grammar and legible writing;
- view theatre, film and art with an eye toward appreciation and evaluation;
- apply effective listening and speaking skills in a variety of settings;
- communicate with others to create interpretations and evaluations of written, oral and visual text; and
- appreciate the influence that contemporary and classical artists and authors have on human thought.

Improving student achievement in the language arts is therefore an important component of implementing the Board's general education agenda outlined in *Working Together for Student Achievement*.

(continued)

In providing all children with a quality language arts education, everyone has a role.

Teachers and schools play an essential role in ensuring quality language arts education by:

- providing a quality language arts program which includes reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing;
- providing a comprehensive PreK-12 reading program, which includes instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension;
- setting high expectations for all students to ensure earlier and more equitable opportunities to learn to read and write;
- providing a rigorous study of language arts skills and concepts and their applications to reading and writing in real-world contexts;
- creating classrooms that are rich learning environments that foster literacy in all students;
- providing more active student involvement with language arts, including:
 - reading and writing that relate to students' current world and their future career needs and demands; and
 - using a variety of skills to foster effective communication and lifelong love of reading and writing;
- fostering more systematic and appropriate use of technological tools to enhance instruction in language arts;
- assessing students' knowledge and skills and providing appropriate instruction based on that assessment;
- providing students with evaluations that are continuous and based on many sources of evidence;
- using a variety of teaching strategies to guide students in developing literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities;
- collaborating with colleagues such as speech language pathologists, English as a Second Language professionals and teachers of sign language in the acquisition of literacy; and
- serving as role models in speaking and writing.

Parents play an essential role in children's language arts learning by:

- providing multiple opportunities to engage their children in conversations and communications about life experiences;
- talking to and questioning their children from a very young age and carefully listening to their responses;
- reading to their children regularly and listening to their children read; and
- setting up the home environment with many print, media and visual materials.

Teacher and administrator preparation and professional development programs play an essential role in improving the quality of language arts education by:

- providing programs to develop skilled educators in the language arts;
- providing faculty members and administrators with opportunities to improve their ability to deliver quality instruction, including participation in local, statewide and regional in-service sessions and conferences specifically designed for employing the language arts in their discipline; and
- providing more professional collaboration and teacher externships to provide a stronger focus on language arts.