



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## **NCSC/CTAA Considerations Prior to Closing a Test**

Since the opening of the NCSC/CTAA test window on March 30, 2015, we have been monitoring the status of all tests across the state, as well as nationally. We have noted a large number of test closures for “no observable response” and would like to share these considerations.

Both, the [NCSC Test Administration Manual](#) (TAM) pages 30-34 and the [NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators](#) pages 33-36, which are both available on the NCSC Assessment System in the Resources section, describe the potential reasons for Closing a Test. Tests may be closed only for three reasons: no observable response, no longer eligible for this alternate assessment, or withdrew from current school.

### **Importance of Providing Opportunities to Attempt All Items**

The 2015 administration of the NCSC/CTAA assessment is the first time sufficient numbers of students are participating in an alternate assessment for English language arts and math aligned to the Common Core State Standards. This assessment opportunity provides high quality items which will yield high quality data for continued assessment design creating a best match for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The NCSC pilot phases 1 and 2 showed us we can be confident using data from the 2015 assessment to work toward building a more adaptive test for the future.

However, the data from the 2015 administration will yield a great assessment design for these students ONLY if every student who has an observable method of expressive communication attempts all items, whether they respond incorrectly, skip some, or respond correctly. Knowing which items each student gets wrong or skips over is as important as knowing which ones each student responds to correctly. Only if all students are given the chance to attempt each item – and either does not answer, guesses, responds incorrectly or correctly– can we be sure that our item statistics reflect well, the learning of all students participating in this alternate assessment – and in the future. When all students with an observable method of expressive communication participate, we will continue to have confidence in the item statistics to allow us to provide the right group of items to the right students.

Therefore do not close the test for students with observable communication who may appear to be guessing, are skipping questions, or responding incorrectly. These types of responses provide essential information to ensure the provision of the highest quality, most appropriate tests in the future.

In order to close a test based on the fact that the student had no observable response, the Test Administrator (TA) must verify through the Student Response Check (SRC) that the student does not yet have an observable mode of communication to respond to the test items.

The expectation for students whose tests are closed for “no observable response” is that their Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI) information and the SRC also support the test closure. For example, the LCI would typically be coded as follows:

- Expressive Communication
  - Student communicates primarily through cues, facial expressions, change in muscle tone etc., but no clear use of objects/textures/regularized gestures, pictures, signs, etc. to communicate.
- Receptive Language
  - Uncertain response to sensory stimuli (e.g., sound/vision, sight/gestures, touch, movement, smell).

The SRC, whether computer or paper-based, should also support the fact that the student does not verbalize an answer, gesture or point to an answer, use assistive technology to indicate an answer, use eye gaze, circle or mark answers on the paper.

If tests are closed for no observable response and the LCI and SRC indicate that the student has a mode of communication or response, the test may be considered to have been closed inappropriately and may be determined to be an invalid administration.

If the LCI and SRC clearly support that the student does not have an observable means of responding, the TA administers the first four items of either math or English language arts. If the student does not present an observable means of response the TA may close the test. If the student demonstrates a means of response, but answers incorrectly or does not attempt to answer, the TA should continue through the test. To clarify, the test may not be closed because the student answered incorrectly or did not answer, it may be closed only if there is not an observable means of communication for response. Closing an assessment for no observable means of response or mode of communication should indicate the need for instruction in communication.