

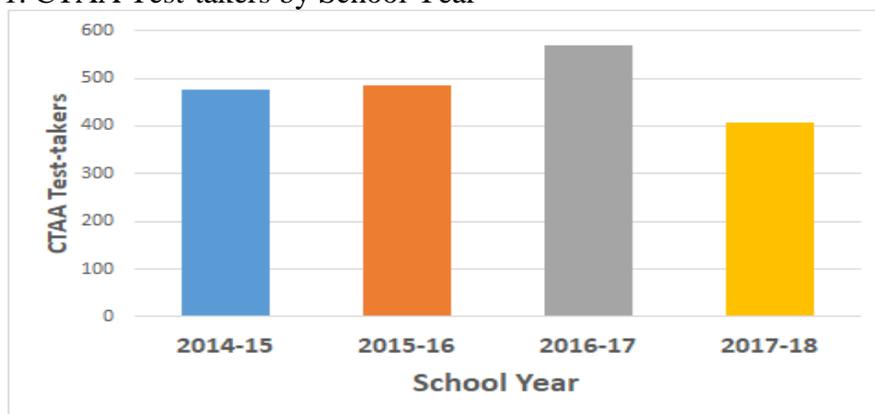
Connecticut's Alternate Assessment Peer Review Study

Students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA) often remain enrolled in public education after age 18. They are eligible to receive transition services until they turn 22. This study examines postsecondary education outcomes for 11th graders who took the CTAA for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics during the academic years 2014-15 through 2017-18. These cohorts of CTAA test-takers comprise over 1,900 students in total. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) examined the relationship between student achievement on Connecticut's alternate assessments and postsecondary education and employment. The primary goal of this study is to illustrate how the alternate achievement standards ensure that students are on track to pursue postsecondary education or employment (in response to [peer review critical element #6.3](#)).

Cohort of Students

The total CTAA test-takers included in this study consists of 1,916 students with disabilities (SWDs). The four years of 11th grade cohorts shown in Figure 1 are fairly evenly distributed.

Figure 1. CTAA Test-takers by School Year



The demographics of the CTAA test-takers were compared to all 11th grade SWDs in the same cohort years (see Table 1). Overall, the CTAA test-takers were representative of all 11th grade SWDs, except for meal eligibility. Students participating on the CTAA were slightly more likely to be eligible for free or reduced priced meals than all 11th grade SWDs.

Table 1. CTAA Test-takers by Student Group

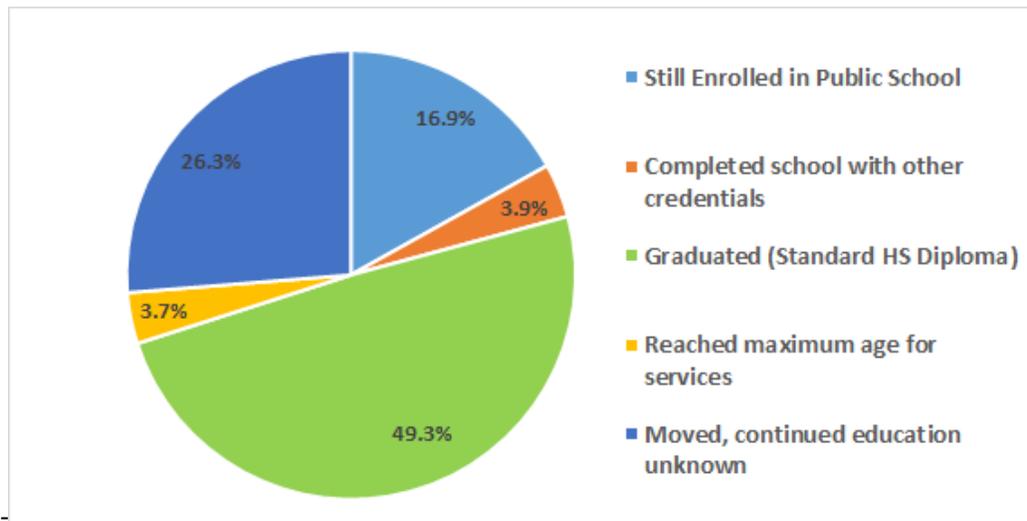
Student Group	CTAA Cohort Count	Percent of Total CTAA Cohort	Statewide 11th Grade SWDs
Gender			
Female	662	34.6%	34.4%
Male	1254	65.4%	65.6%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian or Alaska Native	*	*	0.3%
Asian	78	4.1%	1.8%
Black or African American	389	20.3%	17.1%
Hispanic/Latino of any race	440	23.0%	27.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	*	0.1%
Two or More Races	30	1.6%	2.7%
White	973	50.8%	50.7%
Free Reduced Meal Eligible			
No	685	35.8%	49.6%
Yes	1231	64.2%	50.4%
English Learner			
No	1751	91.4%	92.2%
Yes	165	8.6%	7.8%
Total	1916	100.0%	100.0%

**Data suppressed to protect student confidentiality.*

One important note about the CTAA test-takers is that not all have yet exited public education and therefore cannot be included in the analysis of post-secondary enrollment; they may also be significantly less likely to be employed at the time of this study. Figure 2 shows that 16.9 percent of the cohort of CTAA test-takers are still accessing public K-12 education; most of this group are receiving transition-only services, having completed academic credits toward a regular high school diploma and are working solely on secondary transition goals and objectives

through an individualized education program. Programs offered through transition/vocational service providers deliver services in the areas of independent living skills, job skills, community participation activities, and vocational training opportunities, which will help students reach their post-school goals.

Figure 2. CTAA Test-takers by Exit Type



External Data Sources

Using post-secondary enrollment data acquired through an ongoing multi-year contract with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), CSDE was able to measure the rates of college enrollment for students who took the 11th grade CTAA. Each year, CSDE sends a file of all public high school students who graduate in the most recent academic year with a standard diploma to the NSC, approximately 38,000 records per year. These records and those for the prior seven graduating classes are then matched with NSC records from colleges and universities across the nation, representing about 96% of all college enrollments at public and private non-profit degree-awarding institutions. NSC uses probabilistic matching to return enrollment and graduation and degree awards data for matching records.

To assess the employment and wage-earning outcomes of CTAA test-takers, CSDE requested Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) records from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database through Connecticut’s multi-agency data sharing program, the Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network (P20WIN). This process uses a federated data sharing mechanism. Member agencies include CSDE and CTDOL. P20WIN provides a high degree of data security because the system is managed by the participating agencies and because the data matching and data analysis processes are separated. Last year, CSDE requested wage and employment data through P20WIN, matching CTDOL records with records for the CTAA test-takers in this study. This match resulted in wage and employment data for 700 of the over 1,900 CTAA test-takers in question.

Analysis Method

The CSDE examined the relationship between CTAA performance and postsecondary education and employment by way of cross-tabulations comparing students’ performance levels and postsecondary outcomes. CTAA performance levels represent levels of performance for participating students on their grade-level skills and knowledge. Each student’s performance level is reported by content area (i.e., ELA and math) and ranges from levels 1 to 4 with level 1 designated as “Does Not Meet the Achievement Standard”, level 2 as “Approaching the Achievement Standard”, level 3 as “Meets the Achievement Standard,” and Level 4 as “Exceeds the Achievement Standard.”

Basic Findings

During the academic years 2014-15 through 2017-18, over 1,900 eligible 11th graders took Connecticut’s alternate assessment. Of those students, 938 (49.3%) graduated within the

time period studied with a standard high school diploma. Approximately 7% of 11th grade test-takers enrolled in college and 37% obtained employment. The average quarterly earnings for those who obtained employment after high school was \$908. The following sections provide a detailed description of postsecondary outcomes for students included in the current study in relation to the performance levels achieved on their 11th grade CTAA.

Students at Performance Levels 3 and 4 were more likely to graduate high school and enroll in college.

Figure 3 shows rates of high school graduation for the 11th grade test-takers across the four academic years studied for the ELA and Math alternate assessments respectively. The results show a clear increase in high school graduation rates with performance level on both ELA and Math. In fact, for ELA test-takers, of the students in Performance Level 3 or 4 combined, 57.5% graduated with a regular diploma, compared to only 42.9% of those in Performance Level 1 or 2. For Math test-takers, the rates were 54.1% and 46.6%, respectively.

Figure 3. High School Graduation Rates by Performance Level: ELA and Math

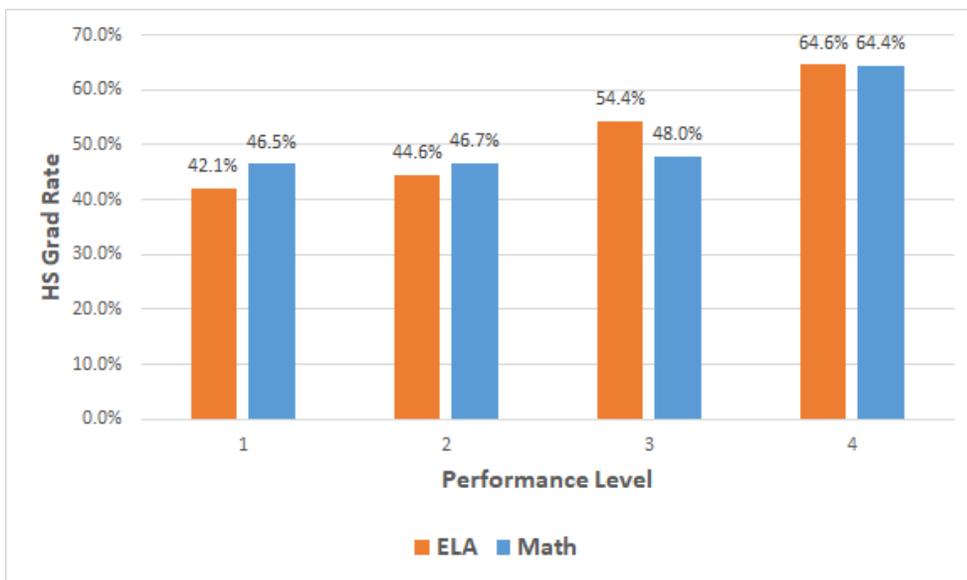
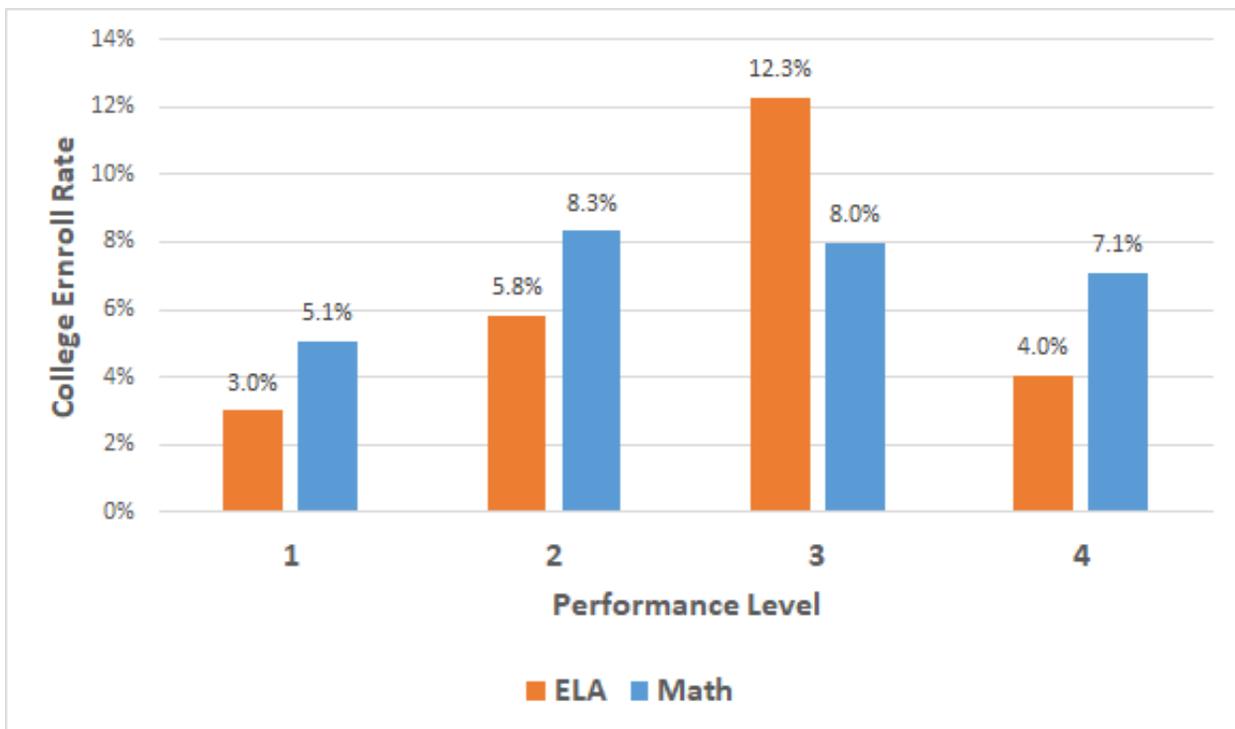


Figure 4 shows college enrollment rates for CTAA test-takers who graduated high school with a regular diploma. Since a high school degree is a standard prerequisite for college entrance, this study examined the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled in college, by performance level band. The data indicate that students at Performance Levels 3 and 4 combined are more likely to enroll in college than those in levels 1 or 2. For ELA, 9.4 % of the high school graduates who scored in Performance Level 3 or 4 enrolled in college, compared to only 4.1% of those graduates in Performance Levels 1 or 2. For Math, the rates were 7.5% and 6.7%, respectively.

Figure 4. College Enrollment Rates by Performance Level: ELA and Math

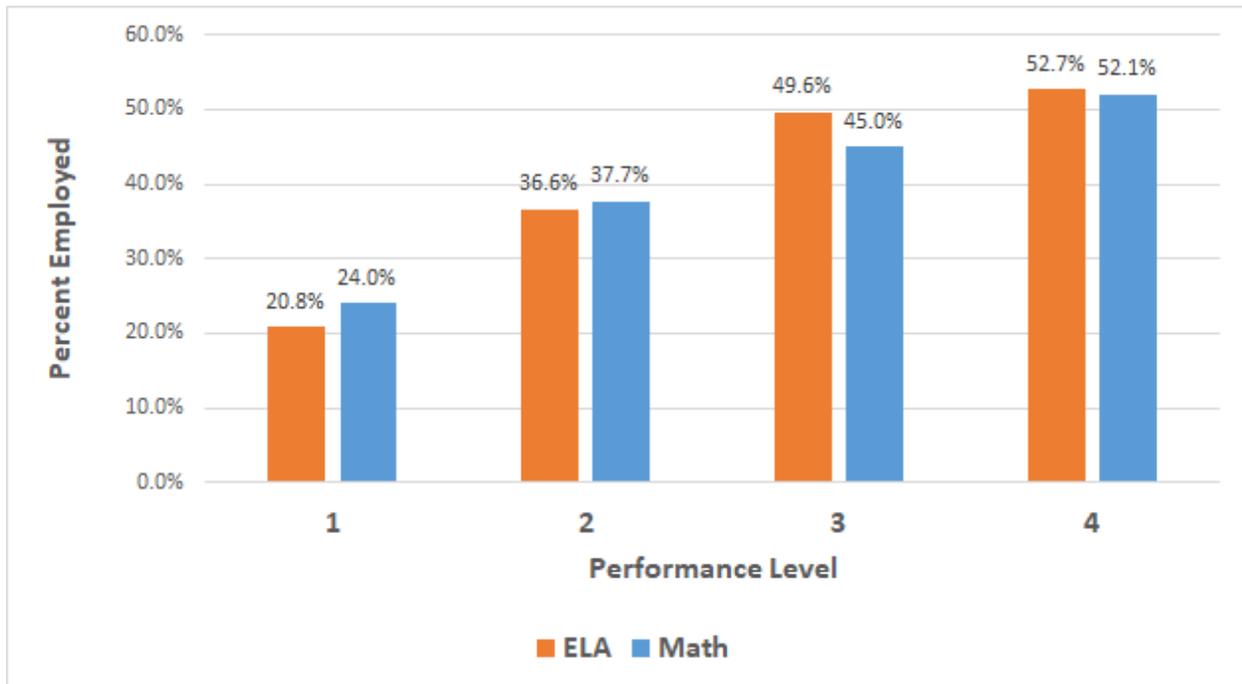


Students at Performance Level 3 and Performance Level 4 are more likely to obtain employment.

Figure 5 shows employment rates by performance level for ELA and Math alternate assessments respectively. The results show a clear increase in employment rates with

performance level on both ELA and Math. Students at Performance Level 3 and Performance Level 4 are more likely to obtain employment after high school. For ELA test-takers, of the students in Performance Levels 3 or 4, 50.5% were employed subsequently, compared to only 25.8% of those in Performance Level 1 or 2. For Math test-takers, the employment rates were 47.6% and 30.2%, respectively. Among all CTAA test-takers in the study, the employment rate was 36.5%.

Figure 5. Employment Rates by Performance Level: ELA and Math

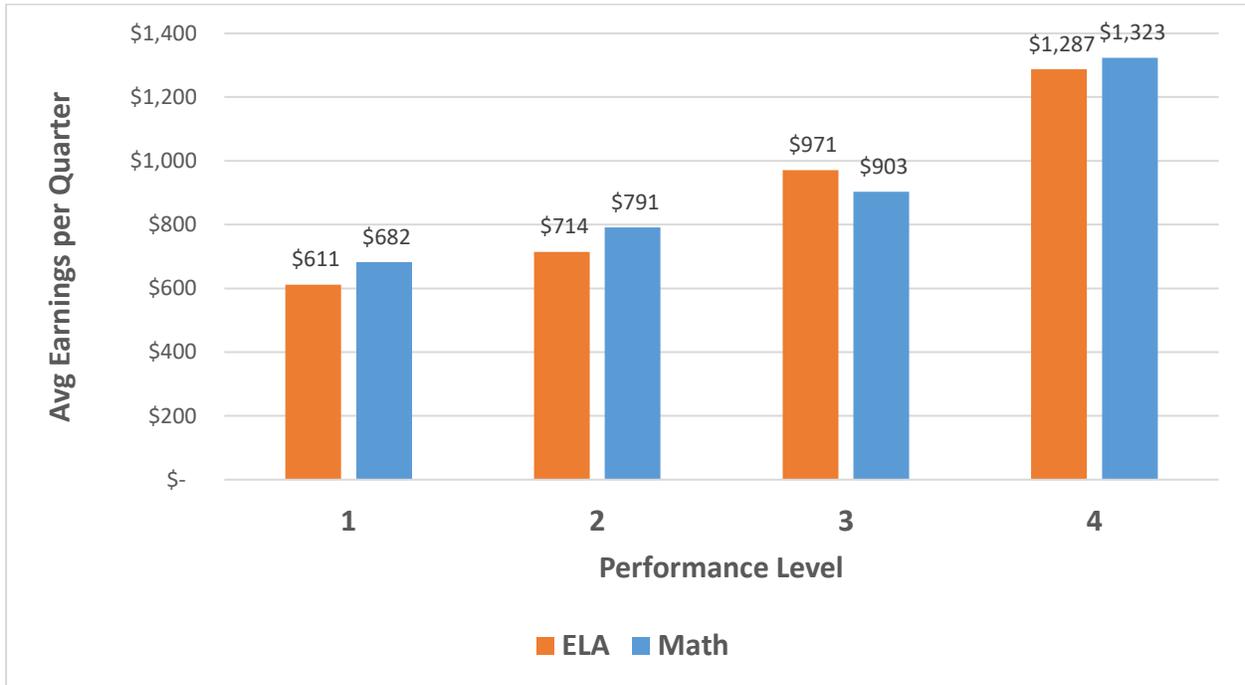


Students at higher performance levels had higher labor force earnings

Students in higher performance bands also had higher earnings per quarter (see Figure 6). Students in Performance Level 4 in ELA had average earnings per quarter of \$1,287 while those in Performance Level 1 had average earnings per quarter of \$611. Students in Performance Level 4 in Math had average earnings per quarter of \$1,323 while those in Performance Level 1 had

average earnings per quarter of \$682. Over all employed CTAA test-takers, the average earnings per quarter amounted to \$908.

Figure 6. Average Earnings per Quarter by Performance Level: ELA and Math



Postsecondary Enrollment Details

This section provides details on the post-secondary enrollment experiences of the CTAA test-takers in our study sample.

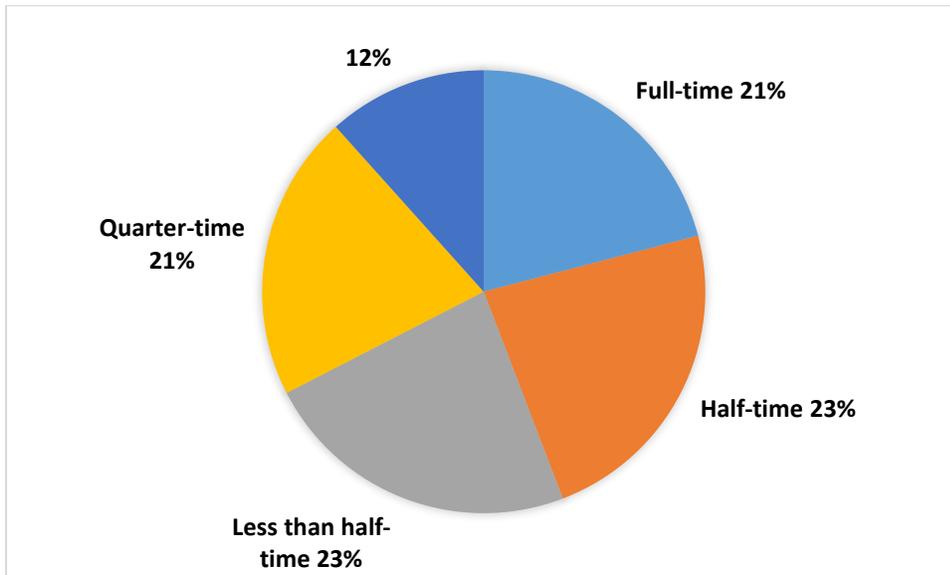
Most students who pursued postsecondary education enrolled in a 2-year college.

Of those enrolled in college, 72% enrolled in a 2-year college and 28% enrolled in a 4-year college.

Most CTAA test-takers who attended college were enrolled as half-or less-than-half-time students.

Only 1 in 5 students was enrolled full-time. Figure 7 shows a breakdown of college enrollees by enrollment status. Two-thirds of students were enrolled in college on a half-time or lesser basis while 12% had withdrawn.

Figure 7. College Enrollment by Enrollment Status



Conclusion

CSDE’s analysis of NSC college enrollment data as well as CTDOL employment and earnings data indicate that the alternate assessment is differentiating between students who are achieving positive post-secondary outcomes and those who are not. Students who perform better on the CTAA are more likely to graduate from high school with a standard high school diploma, enroll in post-secondary education, and earn better wages when employed. Dozens of graduates enrolled in post-secondary institutions and nearly 37 percent secured employment. This should encourage educators in schools as well as support professionals in community-based transition programs to further strengthen their educational programming, specialized supports, and related services, to improve opportunities for students with the most significant cognitive impairments.