

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Pennsylvania Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) is a set of online tools designed to provide diagnostic information in order to guide instruction and provide support to students and teachers. These tools (available at no cost to districts) are fully integrated and aligned with the Standards Aligned System (SAS). These tools assist educators in identifying students' academic strengths and areas of need, providing links to classroom resources.

The CDT is:

- offered to students in grades 3 through high school.
- available for use in the classroom throughout the school year on a voluntary basis.
- based on content assessed by the Keystone Exams and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).
- comprised of multiple-choice items.
- designed to provide real-time results for students and teachers, with links to materials and resources in the SAS.
- delivered as an online computer adaptive test (CAT), ensuring valid and reliable measures of a student's skills, while minimizing testing time.

DIAGNOSTIC VS BENCHMARK

	Purpose	Impact on Instruction	Intended Users of the Results	Examples	Type of Information Provided
Diagnostic	To guide instruction specifically targeted to meet students' needs, including students' strengths and areas of need	Tools that provide alignment to units, lesson plans, and other resources, based on students' learning goals	Students, parents, and educators	Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) Teacher-created diagnostics	Provides information to guide instruction specifically targeted to meet students' strengths and areas of need, above or below grade level
Benchmark	To determine how well students are progressing toward demonstrating proficiency on a set of designated grade-level curriculum content standards	Low-stakes assessments used to predict how students will do on the high-stakes summative assessments	Students, parents, and educators	Acuity Assess2Know 4-Sight	Provides information on the degree to which students have mastered a given concept or how students are progressing toward demonstrating proficiency on grade-level content standards

Q How do we sign up to use the CDT?

A The *CDT Quick Start Guide* is available electronically on the PA eDIRECT website (<https://pa.drccedirect.com>). To access it, click on **Documents** under the **General Information** tab on the PA eDIRECT home page and select **the most recent Classroom Diagnostic Tools admin** from the **Administration** drop-down box. You can also contact DRC CDT Customer Service by phone at 1-888-551-6935 or email at PAcustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com.

Q Is there a testing window in which CDTs are administered?

A Once the CDTs are released, they are available throughout the school year. Each administration runs from late August to late July.

Q Is the CDT available in paper/pencil format?

A No, there is no paper/pencil version of the CDT. Each CDT is offered online only due to the adaptive nature of each CDT.

Q In what format is information for administering the CDT available and when?

A The *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* contains all the information needed for Test Coordinators, Teachers, and Test Administrators to utilize the CDT successfully. The *Technology Coordinator Training PowerPoint* contains information and detailed instructions for Technology Coordinators to install the PA Online Assessments software.

The *Classroom Diagnostic Tools Interactive Reports User Guide* contains information needed for teachers to access and use the Interactive Reports once students have completed the CDT. All these manuals/presentations are available electronically on the PA eDIRECT website (<https://pa.drcedirect.com>). To access them, click on **Documents** under the **General Information** tab on the PA eDIRECT home page and select **the most recent Classroom Diagnostic Tools admin** from the **Administration** drop-down box. Manuals and training presentations are available prior to the beginning of the administration window and are updated periodically throughout the administration year.

Q What is a computer adaptive test (CAT)?

A A CAT is a type of tool consisting of questions that adapt to each student’s ability, depending on how he or she responds to each question. If a student answers a question correctly, the difficulty of subsequent questions increases. Because the CDT is a diagnostic tool rather than an on-grade summative test, some of the more challenging questions presented are targeted to Eligible Content standards beyond those assessed in the student’s current course or grade level.

Q If I am an Algebra I teacher, and my students are doing poorly, may I give them a Mathematics CDT to determine gaps outside of the Algebra I CDT?

A Students in grades 9–12 are systematically obstructed from taking Mathematics 6–8 and are required to take Algebra I. The Algebra I CDT will provide information about foundational skills aligned to the Algebra I diagnostic categories because it contains questions that assess Eligible Content based on Algebra skills from grade 3 through High School. Students will receive questions measuring a wide range of Eligible Content represented by various grade levels. If your students are struggling to answer questions correctly, the CAT will provide questions aligned to Eligible Content at a lower grade level.

Q What should I tell the students preparing to take a CDT?

A It is important to inform students that the CDT questions may be challenging. Students should not be frustrated if they encounter questions they cannot easily answer. Since the CDTs are not restricted to Eligible Content at a given grade level or course, each CDT may allow a student to be presented with more advanced Eligible Content if the student demonstrates that he or she is advancing beyond the standards at a given grade or course. Conversely, a student who is struggling to answer questions correctly may be presented with Eligible Content at a lower grade level. For more information about what to tell students, refer to the *Prepare the Students for the Assessment* section of the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide*.

Q When do students and teachers receive CDT results?

A Once a student completes an assessment, results are immediately available. Students are presented with an “immediate score page” when they complete the CDT. Teachers access student results in the Interactive Reports (Interactive Maps) on the PA eDIRECT website. Teachers must have a PA eDIRECT account and be associated with students via Student Groups to view student results.

Q I cannot see the results for the students that just completed the CDT. Why not?

A For teachers to access student results, they must have a PA eDIRECT user account with appropriate permission, be associated with the students in the PA eDIRECT Test Setup system via Student Groups, and have an email address listed in Test Setup that **matches**

the email address for their PA eDIRECT user account (**capitalization does matter**). Refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* and the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools Interactive Reports User Guide* for additional information and instructions.

ACCESS

Q Do nonpublic schools have access to the CDT?

A Yes, all nonpublic students will be able to participate. Please contact PA Customer Service for more information.

ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

Q If you are administering multiple assessments to the same student, will the student get the same questions?

A It is possible for a student to see the same question across multiple administrations.

Q Can I identify specific standard or reporting category areas to be assessed rather than have the CDT assess all areas?

A Currently, all reporting categories are assessed at one time. The teacher is not able to choose one category to assess. However, the Pennsylvania Department of Education is examining the feasibility of this recommendation.

Q Should grade 8 students enrolled in an Algebra I or Biology course take the Algebra I and Biology CDTs or the Mathematics and Science CDTs?

A If you are seeking information about students' strengths and areas of need in the course-specific content, you will want to administer the CDT that aligns to the course in which they are currently enrolled (e.g., Algebra I, Biology). However, if you are interested in the mathematics or science skills related to general mathematics or science diagnostic categories such as those aligned to the PSSA, you may administer the Mathematics or Science CDTs as well.

Q If a student takes the end of the year 7th grade CDT, how will the content differ from a beginning of the year 8th grade assessment?

A The CDT is a computer adaptive test (CAT), which means that the student receives questions based on how well they are doing on the current CDT, or, if available, how well they did in a previous administration. In the example, the 8th grader will begin the CDT at approximately the same level, and with similar content as where the student left off at the end of the 7th grade CDT. If the student did not take the CDT in 7th grade, the student will be given questions at the average 8th grade level until the computer has a chance to adjust up or down. If the student's learning has progressed, he or she will receive more challenging content. If the student digresses or is struggling to answer questions correctly, the student will receive questions measuring Eligible Content at a lower grade level than what he or she received previously.

TIMING

Q How much time should be allotted for each CDT?

A Each CDT should take the typical student 50 to 90 minutes to complete. Each CDT is between 48 and 60 items in length. Districts and schools may elect to administer an entire CDT at once or spread testing over two consecutive days.

Reading/Literature CDT Consideration It is recommended that the Reading/Literature CDT be administered over two days due to the additional reading load. Please refer to the “Extended Testing Time” section of the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* for detailed instructions on allowing students to test over multiple days. You may also refer to Refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* and the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools CDT Test Time Analysis* for additional information.

*** It is highly recommended that all grades 3–5 testing be administered over multiple days.**

Q Do the CDTs have a time limit for student completion? May a student complete an exam the next day?

A There is no time limit for a student to complete a CDT.

Q How often should a CDT be administered?

A The recommended number of times for a student to take one of the available CDTs is three (3) times in a given school year. There should be enough time between CDT administrations to allow for instructional impact to be reflected in the student’s results.

Traditional Schedule

The minimum time between two same-subject CDTs should be five to six weeks.

Block Schedule

Due to the accelerated nature of block-schedule classes, the minimum time between CDTs may be less than the five to six weeks recommended for traditional schedules. It is important, however, to ensure that there is enough time between administrations of each CDT to allow for instruction.

Though there are no restrictions on the time between CDTs, there is a restriction in the Test Setup system that only allows a student to be associated with a single CDT a maximum of five (5) times within a given school and year. The Test Setup system gives a student an additional two (2) attempts beyond the recommended three (3) attempts, to allow for possible invalidations that could occur.

RESULTS

Q What types of results are provided for the CDT?

A Information concerning students’ strengths and areas of need are reported as diagnostic categories. On the “immediate score page,” the student sees results for each available diagnostic category. In the Interactive Maps, the teacher is provided with diagnostic category scale scores and overall scale scores for the assessment.

Q What is the minimum and maximum score a student can earn on a CDT?

A With the inclusion of grades 3–5, the minimum scale score has changed to 200 for all assessments except Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Chemistry, and Biology. The minimum scale score for those assessments is 400 and the maximum scale score for all assessments is 2000. Scale scores allow for multiple variables, like item difficulty, to be factored into the student’s results. Item difficulty rather than raw score (number correct) is a critical component of administering an adaptive classroom diagnostic tool.

Q **If a student does not complete the CDT, will the student/teacher still get results?**

A No.

Q **Are the Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) predictive of success on the PSSA or Keystone Exams?**

A CDT, PSSA, and Keystone Exams have different reporting scales. Therefore, a scale score on one is not directly comparable to a scale score on another. The CDT benchmark cuts determine the red/green/blue score ranges in the interactive reporting suite. They do not exactly match PSSA and Keystone cuts because the scales are different. However, CDT, PSSA, and Keystone are based on the same Eligible Content. As such, it is reasonable to expect that students who do well on CDT will do well on PSSA/Keystone and vice versa.

In July 2015, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education approved new cut scores for the PSSA. It should be noted that these cut points were not available at the time CDT scores were reported during the 2014-15 school year.

After the Board’s approval, the CDT benchmark cuts were reviewed to ensure that score interpretation is consistent across CDT, PSSA, and Keystone. That is, students who score Below Basic or Basic on PSSA are likely to score in the red range (“Areas of Need”) on CDT and students who score Proficient or Advanced on PSSA are likely to score in the green or blue range (“Strengths to Build On”) on CDT. During the review process it was determined that adjustments were needed to CDT benchmark cuts to maintain consistency with PSSA. This is a result of the changes to PSSA cuts which resulted in fewer students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the 2015 PSSA compared to 2014.

The revised CDT benchmark cuts have been in place in the interactive reporting suite since the start of the 2015-2016 school year.

Q **What is the confidence interval?**

A The error bands on the Interactive Reports Individual Student Map represent \pm one standard error. This is approximately a 68% confidence interval.

CDT COMPUTER ADAPTIVE TESTS (CATs)

Q **What types of questions are on the CDT assessments?**

A The CDT assessments include multiple-choice questions only. All questions on the CDT are aligned to the Pennsylvania Standards. The Pennsylvania Standards, Curriculum Frameworks, and Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content can be found on the SAS website (www.pdesas.org). Each CDT is broken into several diagnostic categories, and the items

contained in the selected CDT are grouped by these diagnostic categories.

Q Do the CDTs include multiple-choice questions with several possible correct answers?

A Each multiple-choice question has only one correct answer.

Q Can you see the actual CDT questions?

A No, the actual CDT questions administered to students are not available. However, sample questions that appear on the Learning Progressions Map are representative of the types of questions found in the CDT.

ONLINE ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

Q What online testing tools or functions are available for students?

A All CDTs have the same basic tools, which include the Pointer, Cross-Off, Highlighter, Sticky Note, Magnifier, and Line-Guide. Advanced tools are available on select CDTs, such as the Basic Calculator, Scientific Calculator, Graphing Tool, Formula Sheets, Conversion Tables, and Periodic Tables. By completing the corresponding Online Tools Training, students can practice using the various tools prior to taking any CDT.

Q Are students allowed to use scratch paper when taking the CDT?

A Students are allowed to use scratch paper when taking the CDT. However, all scratch paper must be collected and returned to the Test Administrator or Teacher at the end of each CDT session.

Q What happens if a student inadvertently exits the CDT?

A To re-enter the session, the student should use the same username and password (Student Login Ticket). The student will resume the test right where they left off.

Q May students taking different CDTs test together in the classroom?

A Yes. Even though students are in separate eDIRECT test sessions, there is no restriction on testing students who are taking different CDTs together.

PA ONLINE ASSESSMENT STUDENT TUTORIALS

Q Is there a PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial for each CDT assessment?

A Each CDT administered has a PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial. The student tutorials use pictures, motion, and sound to present visual and verbal descriptions of the properties and features of the PA Online Assessment system. When a course has been selected in the tutorial menu screen, the student can explore written descriptions of the tools and features specific to the selected CDT. The student can then select from a list of video options related to that course. If preferred, a Play ALL feature is available. It is strongly recommended that students review the PA Online Assessment Student Tutorials prior to taking a CDT (to gain a better understanding of how the CDT process works). Students are allowed to repeat the tutorial as often as desired or needed.

Q How long does it take to complete the PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial?

- A Once a CDT is selected from the tutorial menu screen, the Play ALL videos range from 9 to 15 minutes in length. Additional time should be scheduled for students to review the individual student tutorial components as needed.

ONLINE TOOLS TRAINING (OTT)

Q Is there an Online Tools Training for each CDT?

- A Each CDT assessment being administered has an Online Tools Training (OTT). The Online Tools Training is designed to provide an introductory experience using the online assessment software in preparation for taking the CDT. It is strongly suggested that students be given time to take the Online Tools Training prior to taking a CDT for the first time. Specific instructions to administer the Online Tools Training are detailed in the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide*.

Q What is the purpose of each Online Tools Training?

- A The purpose of the Online Tools Training is for students to observe and try out features of the online assessment software prior to the actual CDT. Questions have been selected to demonstrate online CDT features and uses. This allows students to experience taking the CDT on a computer and to experiment with the features and tools available during an actual CDT administration. The Online Tools Training is not designed to demonstrate complete coverage of the assessed content, and it is not scored.

Q How long does it take to complete an Online Tools Training for a CDT?

- A It is recommended students be given at least 20 minutes to go through all questions in the Online Tools Training for a CDT. If it is needed, additional time should be scheduled for students to become familiar with the features of the online assessment software.

ONLINE CALCULATOR

Q What types of calculators are available for students to use on selected CDTs?

- A Selected CDTs have a basic calculator and a scientific calculator as part of the tools available. A graphing tool, which allows students to graph functions, is also available. An *Online Calculator Manual* describing the functions available on each calculator is posted on the PA eDIRECT website (<https://pa.drceirect.com>). Click on **Documents** under the **General Information** tab and select **General Information** from the **Administration** drop-down box. Students are strongly encouraged to practice using all of the online calculators and tools when completing the Online Tools Training.

NOTE: Since the CDT is a computer adaptive test the calculator is an available tool for use at all grade levels.

Q Can students use their own calculators instead of the online calculators when taking selected CDTs?

- A Students may use their own calculators. However, students are not permitted to use graphic organizers, hand-held computers, smart phones, personal computers, personal data devices (PDAs), cell phones, dictionaries, thesaurus, or spell- or grammar-checkers on any part of the CDT.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Q What accommodations are available for the CDT?

A As with the PSSA or Keystone Exams, appropriate accommodations are permitted and are based on determinations made by the student’s teacher(s) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

Q What online accommodations are available to students?

A Audio Version: Audio versions are available for the Mathematics, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Science, Biology, and Chemistry CDTs. Students who require the audio-accommodated version of the CDT must take the CDT on computers with the Text-to-Speech (TTS) version of the PA Online Assessment software installed. School personnel must also mark this accommodation in eDIRECT prior to printing test tickets. Audio versions of the Online Tools Training are available; refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* for additional information.

Audio for Visually Impaired Students: The Audio for Visually Impaired students is available for all CDT tests. This accommodation provides a more detailed description of what the students would see on the screen. Students who require the audio-accommodated version of the CDT must take the CDT on computers with the Text-to-Speech (TTS) version of the PA Online Assessment software installed. School personnel must also mark this accommodation in eDIRECT prior to printing test tickets. Audio versions of the Online Tools Training are available; refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* for additional information.

Color Chooser: Students are able to choose the background color in the student interface. This online accommodation is available to students for all CDTs. School personnel must mark this online accommodation in eDIRECT prior to printing test tickets.

Contrasting Text Chooser: Students are able to choose the color of the text and the background in the student interface. This online accommodation is available to students for all CDTs. School personnel must mark this online accommodation in eDIRECT prior to printing test tickets.

Q Is there a magnifier student can use on the CDT?

A A magnifier is available for all students to use on the CDT assessments.

EDIRECT—SETUP PROCESS

Q What is required of District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) and School Assessment Coordinators (SACs) in setting up students for the CDT assessments?

A DACs or SACs should verify teacher and student data in PA eDIRECT Test Setup, and then create Student Groups and Test Sessions.

***NOTE: It is best to create Student Groups prior to creating test sessions to confirm the correct students have been added to the Test Session and will be visible in the group reports.**

Q What is required of DACs and SACs in setting up computers for the CDT?

A The DAC should work with the District Technology Coordinators to ensure the PA Online Assessment software is installed on all computers to be used for the CDTs.

Q What is the process for setting up multiple teachers or students?

A PDE no longer collects PIMS information for student uploads and teacher data. Instead, LEAs will utilize the eDIRECT system to upload data for CDT testing. Sites are required to upload or manually load students prior to putting them into a Student Groups and Test Sessions. This can be done one at a time or as a group upload.

Q Can a teacher be associated with multiple grades and courses?

A Yes, a teacher can be associated with multiple grades and courses in multiple schools within a district. The DAC or Sac would set the teacher up with permissions for multiple sites if they are associated with groups in different schools.

Q If students transfer from another school system, how can we administer the CDT to them?

A In order to assign the student to the new site, the DAC or SAC must upload the updated student information using the upload-multiple-student process. To view the new student's data, the student needs to be assigned to the new site. Detailed instructions can be found in the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide*.

Q How do you move students transferring between schools within the same district?

A DACs can move students to different schools within their district either by editing the student's site information in the PA eDIRECT Test Setup system manually or by uploading a file. Detailed instructions can be found in the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide*.

Q Do Student Groups (classes) need to be created individually?

A No, multiple Student Groups can be created at once using a Student Group upload. Refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* for additional information and instructions.

eDIRECT—STUDENT LOGIN TICKETS

Q Can Student Login Tickets be printed in advance?

A Yes, Student Login Tickets can be printed prior to the start of the test window. Please make sure printed tickets are kept in a secure location. Tickets should only be given to students when they sit down to take the CDT because Student Login Tickets are considered secure material.

Q How secure are the printed tickets with each student's PAsecureID number?

A Student Login Tickets are secure material. All tickets should be collected and destroyed after the students have completed testing.

Q What is the process to follow if a Student Login Ticket is lost?

A If a Student Login Ticket is lost, the Teacher/Test Administrator can go into the Test Session on eDIRECT and reprint the individual ticket. If security is of concern, the ticket can be deactivated by removing the student from the Test Session and a new student login can be created by

adding them back into the Test Session.

Q How long are the Student Login Tickets valid?

A A Student Login Ticket is valid the entire testing window. The testing window can be specified when setting up the Test Session.

Q How can school principals and district curriculum directors or superintendents access CDT results?

A School principals must have school PA eDIRECT user accounts, and district curriculum directors or superintendents must have district PA eDIRECT user accounts with the appropriate permissions. A school user will have access to all of the students/groups in the school, and a district user will have access to all the students/groups in a district. Refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* and the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools Interactive Reports User Guide* for additional information and instructions.

Q In addition to the Learning Progression Map, is there another way to determine a student's strengths and areas of need?

A The Individual Student Report also provides a high level snap shot of student strengths and areas of need.

Q What does it mean if a student's error bands overlap from one administration to the next?

A The error band represents the student's standard error, and if a student's bands overlap from one administration to the next, it indicates that the scores are not significantly different.

Q Are the student scores or the student color bands more important?

A Both are important, but the student scores offer a more precise picture of student achievement than the color bands. This is true for the overall score and the diagnostic category scores. In addition to a student's location on the achievement continuum at a single point in time, his or her pattern of growth over time offers valuable information to guide the teacher in adapting instruction that is appropriate for each student.

Q In the Learning Progression Map, what color is the dot if a student is presented with two questions for the same Eligible Content and gets one wrong and one correct?

A The color of the dot reflects the student's results compared to the expected results for a student in the center of the green range (at grade level). The expected results depend on the difficulty of the questions. If the student scores one out of two correct and the expected score is less than one (because the questions were difficult), then the dot would be green. Conversely, if the student scores one out of two correct and the expected score is greater than one (because the questions were less difficult), then the dot would be red.

Q What if there are no resources listed on the Standards Aligned System (SAS) when an Eligible Content code is selected within the Interactive Reports?

A Additional resources on SAS are currently under development, and eventually, resources for

all Eligible Content will be available on SAS. For now, however, if the Eligible Content does not have a resource listed within the Interactive Reports, use resources currently available within your district or school.

Q What if students need to be tracked in separate groups, such as ESL, Title I, Gifted, and Special Education students?

A Students can belong to multiple Student Groups, and it is through these Student Groups that their results are accessed in the Interactive Reports. A Student Group can even contain students from different districts or schools, which might be necessary for part-time Career and Technical Centers (CTC), alternative education, or special education students. Refer to the *Classroom Diagnostic Tools User Guide* for additional information and instructions.

Q Is there a way to generate a school- or district-wide report?

A Currently there is not a school or district CDT report because the CDT is intended as a teacher tool. However, sites have the ability to review the data by grade level for a school. The school or district coordinator would create a Student Group that includes all students in a specific grade, then export the data.

Q Do districts have access to the simulation data covered in the Train-the-Trainer for Teacher Utilization of the CDT training?

A Yes, please contact DRC PA Customer Service via either phone at 1-888-551-6935 or email at PAcustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com.

Q Is data stored from year to year so that students' CDT results can be viewed over time?

A Yes, the longitudinal reports are available to view previous and current CDT administrations.