



Utah Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)

Understanding the Utah Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)

The State of Utah uses Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT's) for the state and federally mandated testing requirements. A Criterion-Referenced Test is an assessment that is based upon certain criteria, in this case the criteria being the curriculum that has been taught to students. The Curriculum that is used in Utah is called the Common Core Curriculum or Core Curricula. This serves as a framework for the teaching and learning in each subject area; there are Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO's) within each subject. The assessments are developed to capture how a student is performing across the various Intended Learning Outcomes for each subject.

When students are in grades 3-11 they take a yearly Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT's) in reading, writing and listening. This testing is required under the No Child Left Behind Act which requires schools to also monitor their own adequate yearly progress in raising all students to the standards of proficiency in these subjects; it is also required by the state.

Students are also tested in Mathematics by a Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) during grades 2-7 and then there are assessments in pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry for high school students. Students in grades 4-8 are assessed in Science and in high school there are CRT's for earth science, biology, chemistry and physics.

Students also take a mandatory writing assessment, the Direct Writing Assessment (DWA) in grades 5 and 8. During the years students take this it accounts for 5% of the English Language Arts Assessment grade.

These assessments serve a variety of purposes. They monitor student achievement and progress in core subjects, identify areas of strength and weakness for students, identify areas where more instruction is needed and monitor school's progress at teaching all students. There is a wealth of education data to be derived beyond assessing what a student knows and can do, this information is used to strengthen instruction and educational policy.

Format of the Utah Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)

The English Language Arts Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) is designed in a multiple-choice format and assesses whether a student has become proficient in the standards and objectives of the Core Curriculum. There are approximately 60-70 questions on the assessment and it is given over 3 testing sessions.

The Direct Writing Assessment (DWA) for 5th and 8th graders provides students with a prompt for which they write an essay. This assessment is now being offered in a computer based format. The essay is scored by a six point rubric. This test is given in late February/early March.

The Mathematics Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) for students in grade 2-7 are multiple-choice and ask between 50-70 questions. This assessment is given over 2 separate testing sessions. The Science Assessment is grades 4-8 are in a multiple-choice format and ask approximately 60-70 questions given over multiple sessions.

For students who require testing accommodations per an Individual Education Plan (IEP) those are offered; there are also alternate or modified assessments for students with more severe disabilities.

Students taking the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT's) are given scores in a couple manners. There is a scale score for how well a student performed on the test, the number of questions correct, which shows the content areas of correct and incorrect answers, the range of difficulty and the final scale score. The scale scores then translate into proficiency levels. The score at which one level moves to the next is called the "cut score." The levels of proficiency that a student may attain on a Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT's) are Minimal, Partial, Sufficient and Substantial.

Taking the Utah Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)

The Core Curriculum, which has been widely adopted across the United States, speaks to the acquisition of communication skills in the Language Arts and in Mathematics it addresses the educational need for problem solving, reasoning, modeling and the use of analytic tools.

On the English Language Arts Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) students are testing in areas of phonetical knowledge, vocabulary, reading comprehension, analysis, evaluation, revision and editing processes, and the writing process.

On the Direct Writing Assessment (DWA) students are evaluated in their ability in written expression in the areas of: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. These are the six areas that the rubric covers.

In Mathematics, students are tested in the specific content of their grade level instruction for the elementary and early middle grades, and then specifically in the subjects of pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. The standards in these two subjects, English Language Arts and Mathematics, are expressed in the framework of the Core Curriculum

The Science Assessment covers grade level material and the subjects of Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. These assessments are used to evaluate student achievement and also to strengthen educational practices.

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