

Computer Adaptive Testing Amendment Senator Franken

Background: Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT) are tests that determine which question to present the test taker with next based on whether the test taker has answered the previous question correctly. When a student answers a question correctly, he or she will be presented with a harder question, but if the answer is wrong, the next question could be easier. This is in contrast to fixed form tests, which do not adapt based on the test takers' answers. CATs allow schools and teachers to get more accurate information about a student's knowledge and achievement levels and can also provide feedback to teachers immediately.

Existing Law: Under current law, states cannot use CATs that present students with questions above or below grade level for accountability purposes. Because of this constraint, most states have not implemented CATs. While Oregon uses a CAT for accountability purposes, it must limit questions to within grade level.

Computer Adaptive Testing Above and Below Grade Level: This amendment would allow, but not require, states to use CATs that include questions above and below grade level for state accountability purposes. This has a number of benefits:

- Including questions above and below grade level allows teachers and schools to more accurately pinpoint exactly where a student's achievement level is – and not just their ability to meet an arbitrary fixed standard.
- Because CATs can return results immediately, teachers can use information they get from the tests to better tailor classroom lesson plans and develop individualized plans for students based on the test results.
- Fixed form tests allow students who are high-performing to look good all year without much effort and struggling students who work and grow dramatically to still be counted as underperformers. Students and teachers are not accurately assessed and evaluated, and it makes it more likely that these students will not get adequate attention from teachers.
- Computer adaptive tests can be administered multiple times per year, in a series of low-stakes evaluations that provide teachers, parents, and students with important information about student growth and learning.