

## Ohio's Standards-Based Alternate Assessment for Students With Disabilities

### **Background:**

#### ***What are state assessments?***

Achievement tests measure what students know and are able to do. They replace Ohio's proficiency tests. The tests for English language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science and social studies will not all be given in one year, but their administration will be dispersed from third to eighth grade. Students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade will take tests that year in all five subject areas.

Currently, all students must pass the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests to graduate from high school. The Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests are being replaced by the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT). The Class of 2006 will be the last class required to pass the proficiency tests in order to meet the testing requirements to earn an Ohio diploma. Students will have to pass the all parts of the OGT to meet the testing requirements to earn an Ohio diploma. The OGT tests will be administered beginning in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Students who do not pass will have many opportunities to take the tests in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

State and federal regulations require that all students, including those with disabilities, participate in state and district-wide assessments. As a means of facilitating their participation, these students may receive appropriate accommodations.

It is expected that a only a small percentage of students in the general population-those with significant cognitive disabilities-will not be able to participate in the general assessments, even when allowable accommodations are made. For these students, participation in the alternate assessment may be appropriate.

#### ***Is Alternate Assessment a Test?***

No. Ohio's standards-based alternative assessment for students with disabilities documents access to grade-level content standards and measures an alternate level of achievement for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These standards define what all children should know and be able to do as they progress through school.

The alternate assessment is a collection of evidence that shows student performance of standards-based knowledge and skills within the context of classroom instruction.

In July 2000, Ohio implemented an alternate assessment for students with disabilities. This was designed to ensure the participation of all Ohio's schools are accountable for including all children in statewide assessment. The alternate assessment was based upon a review of the student's individual progress by the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Results of the assessment were expressed in terms of a child's individual progress, based on the IEP team review.

In 2001-2002, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) began working to develop an updated alternate assessment for students with disabilities. This work was brought about by the adoption of Ohio's academic content standards through Senate Bill 1, requirements under the federal *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The primary goal for updating Ohio's alternate assessment system for students with disabilities

was to ensure that the alternate assessment would document specific ways in which students demonstrate knowledge and skills relative to the Ohio academic content standards. A secondary goal was to design assessments which would describe achievement in the same way as the regular assessments. The updated system of alternate assessments was developed based on a collection of evidence (COE) model.

A COE model represents evidence documenting student performance of standards-based knowledge and skills within the context of classroom instruction. This is a specific requirement of NCLB. As new achievement tests are phased in and proficiency tests are phased out, the IEP-based alternative assessment also will be phased out.

**Availability and Use of Alternative Assessment Types for 2004-2005**

Subject Areas of Assessment	Grade Levels	IEP-based Alternative Assessment	Standards-based Alternate Assessment (collection of evidence)
ELA:Reading	3		√
ELA:Reading	4		√
ELA:Reading	5		√
ELA:Reading	6		√
ELA:Reading	8		√
ELA:Reading & Writing	10		√
ELA: Writing	6	√	
Mathematics	3		√
Mathematics	4		√
Mathematics	6		√
Mathematics	7		√
Mathematics	8		√
Mathematics	10		√
Science	4	√	
Science	6	√	
Citizenship	4	√	
Citizenship	6	√	
Science	10		√
Social St.	10		√

**Frequently-Asked Questions**

***Do all students need to participate in state assessments?***

Yes. With the passage of IDEA 1997, there is no longer a question of *whether* students will participate in statewide testing; the question has become *how* their participation might take place.

***Do all IEP goals need to be linked to an Ohio Academic Content Standard?***

No. Each student has a variety of learning needs that may or may not be related to the Standards, and that is appropriate. The alternate assessment is based on Ohio's Academic Content Standards, however, and every student must be receiving instruction aligned to these standards.

***Who determines which students will participate in the alternate assessment?***

The determination of how a student with disabilities will participate in statewide and district-wide assessment is made at least annually by each student's IEP team during an IEP meeting. The State of Ohio provides IEP teams with guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment.

***What factors are considered in determining who participates in Ohio's alternate assessment?***

If the IEP team believes that the alternate assessment is appropriate, that student will participate in the alternate assessment in all subject areas. It is important that participation in the alternate assessment not be based solely on disability condition, achievement level, school attendance, or social/cultural factors.

In March 2003, ODE's Office for Exceptional Children published a set of guidelines for participation in alternate assessments.

These guidelines can be found at:

[http://www.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency/alternate\\_assessment/AA\\_Participation\\_Guidelines\\_2004.asp](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency/alternate_assessment/AA_Participation_Guidelines_2004.asp)

***Is there a “cap” or limit on the number of students a district may assign to take an alternate assessment?***

No. Federal regulations under the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act only place a cap on the total number of alternate assessment scores that may be counted as proficient towards adequate yearly progress (AYP) accountability calculations for school districts. Ohio policy also applies this cap to state accountability calculations for school districts. Under certain conditions, districts may annually request a waiver of the application of this cap on the use of their proficient alternate assessment scores in accountability calculations. More information on the one percent cap can be found at:

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/accountability/PDF/altexample.pdf>

***How do students in ungraded programs participate in alternate assessments?***

If a student is currently assigned to a grade for the purposes of the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the student should participate in assessments according to this grade classification.

Students who currently are not assigned to a grade should be assigned to a grade level on the basis of their chronological age and participate in assessments with their same-age peers.

For example, students *at the beginning of these grades* are approximately these ages:

Grade 3	Ages 8-0 to 9-0
Grade 4	Ages 9-1 to 10-0
Grade 5	Ages 10-1 to 11-0
Grade 6	Ages 11-1 to 12-0

Grade 7	Ages 12-0 to 13-0
Grade 8	Ages 13-0 to 14-0
Grade 9	Ages 14-0 to 15-0
Grade 10	Ages 15-0 to 16-0

***Should students who are not expected to do well on the grade-level general assessments participate in alternate assessments?***

No. The decision about a student’s participation in the alternate assessment must not be made on the basis of the student’s “perceived probability” of poor achievement on the general assessments. As many students as possible should participate in the general assessments.

***Can students participate in the general assessment in one content area (e.g., mathematics) and participate in the alternate assessment in another content area (e.g., reading)?***

No. If a student can participate in any part of the general assessment, then he or she should take the entire general assessment with accommodations as needed. As many students as possible should participate in the general assessment.

***When is an alternate assessment conducted?***

Alternate assessments should be conducted as part of a student’s daily instruction. The alternate assessment is conducted over a period of several months, beginning in the fall or winter of the school year. The final Collections of Evidence are submitted to a scoring contractor by mid-March.

***Who will assemble the Collection of Evidence?***

This evidence will be collected and assembled by the educators who work with students with severe disabilities. The responsibility for the alternate assessment process should be shared by IEP team members, special and general educators,

and related service providers and parents. Joint planning and a common timeline for instruction and assessment will help ensure efficient and effective collaboration for completing the alternate assessment process.

***Who scores the alternate assessments and how will parents find out the results?***

Procedures for scoring of alternate assessments follow the same procedures as the scoring of Ohio's general assessments. This includes the use of individual raters. The results are then used to improve instructional programs. Results of the standards-based alternate assessment will be reported to parents in the same way as regular proficiency and achievement tests. Districts will report individual results to parents.

***What criteria will be used to score the Collection of Evidence?***

The Collection of Evidence will be scored across four categories, known as domains. These domains are performance, instructional context, independence, and settings and interactions.

***How do teachers get training and technical assistance to administer the standards-based alternate assessment for students with disabilities?***

Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRCs) in Ohio will be providing training and technical assistance for school districts in the planning and administration of the standards-based alternate assessment for students with disabilities in the 2004-2005 school year.

**Resources:**

- Ohio Department of Education Web page for alternative assessments for students with disabilities, including alternate assessment manuals and other related resources:  
<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency/AlternateAssessment/default.asp>
- For information related to the 1% cap and other topics related to school accountability:  
<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/accountability/PDF/altexample.pdf>
- Ohio's current IEP-based alternate assessment for students with disabilities:  
[http://www.ode.state.oh.us/exceptional\\_children/children\\_with\\_disabilities/assessment\\_iep.asp](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/exceptional_children/children_with_disabilities/assessment_iep.asp)

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