



EmpowerED
Pickerington

Resource Series for Special Education Support
Focus - Supporting Every Learner, Supporting Every Family, Every Day

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Welcome to Student Services

Mission

Our mission is to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Purpose

To provide educators and families with information about the Whole Child by pursuing and completing evaluations to develop plans to help ensure that students are able to receive a free and appropriate education, regardless of their disability.



District Goals: We will...

- Cultivate **Academic Excellence** by engaging all students in relevant and rich learning experiences that prepare them for career, college, and life.
- Provide **Modern Facilities** that are physically safe and offer diverse opportunities to all students.
- Ensure **Operating Efficiency** to be financially accountable to our community, maximize resources, and ensure that we are lean and efficient.
- Be **Pillars of our Community** by relentlessly pursuing opportunities to engage with all residents.



Understanding State and District Assessments for Students with IEPs

- **Ohio's State Tests (OST)**
- **Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)**
- **Ohio English Language Proficiency Screener (OELPS)**
- **Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (OELPA)**
- **Alternate Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (Alt-OELPA)**



Overview

All students in Ohio — **including those with disabilities** — are required by law to participate in statewide assessments. These tests measure how well students are mastering Ohio's Learning Standards and help ensure schools are meeting students' learning needs.

However, **how** a student participates depends on their individual abilities and support needs, as outlined in their **IEP (Individualized Education Program)** or **504 Plan**.



Purpose for Testing

State testing helps:

- Track how well schools are teaching students with disabilities.
- Identify whether students need more help or different instruction.
- Ensure that schools are accountable for educating *a//* students, not just those without disabilities.



Key Participation Requirements

Students with disabilities must take one of the following:

1. Regular State Tests (General Assessments)

- These include the Ohio State Tests (OST) in reading, math, science, and social studies.
- Students can use **approved accommodations** listed in their IEP or 504 Plan.

2. Alternate Assessment (AASCD)

- The *Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)* is designed for students whose cognitive disabilities are so significant that they cannot meaningfully participate in the general tests, even with accommodations.
- The **IEP team** decides if a student qualifies for this option — not the parent or school alone.



When Testing Happens

Students with disabilities take the same tests, during the same testing windows, as other students:

- **Grades 3–8:** English Language Arts and Math each year; Science and Social Studies in select grades.
- **High School:** End-of-Course exams (e.g., Algebra I, Biology, American Government).
- **AASCD:** Administered each spring for eligible students.



Accommodations

Accommodations help a student access the test without changing what is being measured. Examples include:

- Extended time
- Small group or individual testing setting
- Reading directions aloud
- Use of assistive technology (e.g., screen reader, text-to-speech)
- Breaks as needed

Important:

- Accommodations must already be part of the student's regular classroom supports — they shouldn't be introduced for the first time on test day.
- Accommodations must be written into the **IEP or 504 Plan**.



IEP and Testing Decisions

Parents are an equal part of the IEP team. During IEP meetings, families should be prepared to discuss:

- Which state assessments the student will take.
- What accommodations will be used.
- Whether the student meets the criteria for the alternate assessment based on the Ohio Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool.
- How results will be used for progress monitoring or graduation requirements.

Parents should **review and understand** the testing section of the IEP before signing it.



What is the Ohio Accessibility Manual?

- The Ohio Accessibility Manual is a policy and guidance document that outlines how state assessments in Ohio (for grades 3-8 and high school in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies) make accommodations and supports available so a range of students can access the tests.
- It covers “accessibility features” including: universal tools (for all students), designated supports (for students who need more help), and accommodations (for students with disabilities, and also English learners/ELs) — plus administrative considerations (how the tests must be administered) for those features.
- For example, ODE’s website says it “helps to define the specific accessibility features available for all students, students with disabilities, students who are English learners and students who are English learners with disabilities.”



Key Parts of the Manual

Here are specific parts of the manual to review (or ask your school about) to make sure things are in place:

- **Universal Tools:** These are features available to *all* students taking the state test. For example, maybe a built-in calculator for math (if allowed), highlighting tool, etc. (Check Section 2.4 in the manual).
- **Designated Supports:** These are supports available to some students (based on need) but don't require formal accommodation paperwork. (See Section 2.5).
- **Accommodations:** These are supports for students with disabilities (and often English learners with disabilities) that *must* be documented (for instance in an IEP or 504 plan). (See Section 2.6).
- **Administrative Considerations:** This includes how tests are administered, how supports are implemented, roles of school staff. (See Section 2.3).



Key Parts of the Manual, cont'd

- **Decision-Making Framework:** The manual outlines a process for deciding which supports/accommodations apply to which student. (See Section 2.1)
- **Special formats / Assistive Technology:** If your child uses assistive tech (like Braille, audio format, large print, etc) the manual mentions guidance and alternate format tests.
- **Unique Accommodation Requests:** If a student needs something *beyond* what's listed in the manual, there is a process for the district to request a "Unique Accommodation."



Things to Keep in Mind

- Even though the manual lists many supports, not **all** supports are guaranteed for *every* student — eligibility depends on need and documented support.
- The manual is about *state-tests* (the ones that the state of Ohio administers). So supports for classroom tests, or private assessments, may differ.
- Having supports during instruction (in the classroom) is separate — while related, this manual is specifically focused on test administration and access.
- Documentation matters — if your child has a documented disability, the IEP/504 plan should reflect that and connect to what the manual allows.
- Understand the difference between “access” vs “modification” — supports should allow access to the same curriculum/test, not necessarily change the test/boundaries (unless it’s an alternate assessment)



Alternate Assessment (AASCD)

- The AASCD is based on **Ohio's Alternate Learning Standards (Extended Standards)**.
- It is used for a **very small percentage** of students (typically 1% or fewer statewide).
- The decision to use it must be backed by clear evidence of the student's significant cognitive disability and need for extensive support.
- Participation in the AASCD can affect graduation options — so it's an important decision for families to discuss with the IEP team.

Ohio Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool



SECTION 12: STATEWIDE AND DISTRICT WIDE TESTING

12 STATEWIDE AND DISTRICT WIDE TESTING

Is the child participating in the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Click below for guidance in considering AASCD:

[Ohio's Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool](#)

If yes, justify the choice of alternate assessment and address why it is appropriate below:

Must be completed

The screenshot shows the 'Ohio's Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool' form. It includes fields for Student, Grade, and Date. The form is divided into two main sections: Part A - Determining Initial Eligibility and Part B - Reviewing the student's disability category. Part A contains two questions: 1. Does the student have a current individualized education program (IEP)? and 2. Review the student's disability category. The form includes decision paths with 'STOP' and 'Proceed' buttons. The footer indicates it is a Department of Education document from October 2020.

EachChildOurFuture

Ohio's Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool

Student: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Part A - Determining Initial Eligibility
Directions: Complete the first two questions to determine if the student may be eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

1. Does the student have a current individualized education program (IEP)?

☐ No, the student does not have an IEP. **STOP** Stop here. The student is not eligible for alternate assessment.

☐ Yes, the student has a current IEP. **GO** Proceed to the next statement.

2. Review the student's disability category.

Student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:	Student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:	Student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:
☐ Specific Learning Disability ☐ Speech or Language Impairment (only)	☐ Deafness/Hearing Impairment ☐ Emotional Disturbance ☐ Orthopedic Impairment ☐ Other Health Impairment ☐ Visual Impairment	☐ Autism ☐ Deaf-Blindness ☐ Intellectual Disability ☐ Multiple Disabilities ☐ Traumatic Brain Injury
STOP Stop here. The student is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment. A student identified with these disability categories very rarely will be a student with a most significant cognitive disability, and therefore rarely, if ever, qualify for the alternate assessment.	GO Proceed to Part B. A student with any of these disabilities may have a cognitive disability. However, fewer than half the students in these categories may have a most significant cognitive disability that would qualify them for the alternate assessment.	GO Proceed to Part B.

2 | Ohio's Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool | October 2020

Ohio Department of Education

What is the Decision Making Tool?

- The tool is designed to guide the IEP team when deciding if a student should participate in the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD) instead of the general state assessment.
- It was developed in consultation with parents, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders.
- The tool is divided into parts (Parts A through D) that the IEP team works through step by step, considering whether the student meets all of the criteria. If the student does *not* meet the criteria in any part, they may *not* be placed in the alternate assessment.
- The tool must be attached to the student's IEP and signed by all IEP team members when considering participation in the alternate assessment.



Why This Matters for Parents

- Because only students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities* should participate in the alternate assessment under federal law (Every Student Succeeds Act/ESSA).
- The decision affects what assessment your child takes — the general assessment or the alternate one — which can have implications for instruction, future expectations, reporting, and outcomes.
- Because ODE monitors how many students take the alternate assessment (there is a federal cap around 1% of all tested students).
- As a parent, you are part of the IEP team, so you should understand how the tool works, what the criteria are, and what it means for your child.



Key Components/Criteria of the Tool

- **Part A – Initial Eligibility:** Confirms things like the student has an IEP, is within tested grades, etc.
- **Part B – Significant Cognitive Disability Criteria:** A central focus is whether the student has a significant cognitive disability that impacts intellectual functioning *and* adaptive behavior, and that the student is unable to participate in the general state assessment even with accommodations.
- **Part C & D – Participation and Access to Curriculum:** These parts look at whether the student's instruction is aligned with the extended standards (instead of only grade-level general standards), whether the student requires extensive modifications, and whether the student consistently needs support across settings.
- The tool explicitly states what *shouldn't* be used as justification for alternate assessment eligibility — e.g., based on disability category alone, low achievement, poor attendance, etc.



Other Important Things to Know

- The label of “significant cognitive disability” is **not** based on a specific disability category (i.e., the disability label alone doesn’t automatically qualify).
- Being on the alternate assessment is a *serious decision* and not purely a convenience for the student; it should reflect that the student cannot access the general assessment even with supports.
- The tool must be used *before* the decision is made for alternate assessment participation. It’s not just retroactive.
- Because Ohio has had higher participation rates than the 1% federal cap, districts and ODE may scrutinize decisions for alternate assessment eligibility—so being well-informed helps ensure appropriate decisions.
- If the decision is alternate assessment, the student will use the extended standards (which are different from the general grade-level standards). It matters for how instruction is planned.



What are the OELPS, OELPA and Alt-OELPA?

OELPS (Ohio English Language Proficiency Screener)

- This is the instrument used to **identify** whether a newly enrolled student might be an English learner (i.e., someone whose home language is not English and who may need English-language support).
- It assesses the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Typically administered when a student enrolls and the home language survey or other information indicates the student's first/home language may not be English.

OELPA (Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment)

- After a student is identified as an English learner, this is the annual **summative** assessment of English proficiency in Ohio for ELs.
- It measures the same four domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and is aligned to Ohio's K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards.



What are the OELPS, OELPA and Alt-OELPA?

- It helps determine when a student is ready to exit the English learner program (i.e., considered proficient enough in English to not need the extra services).

Alt-OELPA (Alternate Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment)

- This is a special version of the English proficiency assessment—designed for ELs **with the most significant cognitive disabilities**.
- The Alt-OELPA is aligned to extended standards (for those students whose cognitive disabilities limit participation in the general proficiency assessment).
- It is administered annually to eligible students (K-12) in place of the standard OELPA when the student meets criteria.



Why They Matter for You and Your Child

- These assessments ensure that students whose home language isn't English are properly identified and supported to learn English—and that the school monitors their progress.
- For students identified as ELs, the OELPA (or Alt-OELPA if eligible) is key to determining when they have achieved sufficient English proficiency to access grade-level content without the special EL supports.
- They affect placement, exit decisions, progress monitoring, and ultimately how your child participates in school instruction and assessments.
- As a parent, knowing about these helps you advocate: understanding when your child is screened, what the results mean, what supports they receive, and how/when they might exit the EL program.



Important Considerations

- Being an EL **doesn't mean** your child is being placed in a separate academic track—they're receiving additional support to access the same curriculum.
- Exiting from EL status is a big step: it means the school believes the student can meaningfully participate in general education without specialized EL services. Monitoring continues afterward to ensure sustained progress.
- The Alt-OELPA is **only for** those EL students who also have the **most significant cognitive disabilities** and cannot participate in the general OELPA even with accommodations. It's not a "lesser" test by choice—it's chosen based on documented need.
- The scores on OELPA/Alt-OELPA may not always align exactly with the content assessments (state tests in other subjects) so supports in classroom content still matter.



2025-2026 Testing Dates (OST)

Fall Grade 3 English language arts: Oct. 13-31, 2025 (Oct. 13 is Columbus Day)

- Five consecutive school days, including makeup
- **Results available for Districts**
 - Online Dec. 2, 2025

Fall high school end-of-course: Dec. 1, 2025-Jan. 16, 2026

- 15 consecutive school days, including makeups
- **Results available for Districts**
 - Online Math/Science/Social Studies Jan. 21, 2026
 - Online ELA Feb. 16, 2026

Spring English language arts: March 23-April 24, 2026

- 15 consecutive school days, including makeups

Spring math/science/social studies: March 30-May 8, 2026

- 15 consecutive school days, including makeups
- **Results available for Districts**
 - Online Math/Science/Social Studies May 12, 2026
 - Online ELA May 20, 2026



2025-2026 Testing Dates (AASCD & OELPT)

Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)

Test Administration Window: Feb. 23-April 17, 2026

Results available for Districts: immediately after test submission

Ohio English Language Proficiency Screener (OELPS)

Test Administration Windows

OELPS: Aug. 5, 2025-June 30, 2026

Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (OELPA)

Test Administration Window: Feb. 2-March 27, 2026

Alternate Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (Alt-OELPA)

Test Administration Window: Feb. 2-March 27, 2026



How Parents Can Support

- Attend and participate in IEP meetings.
- Ask your child's teachers how accommodations are used during instruction and practice tests.
- Help your child understand that testing is just one way to show what they've learned.
- Contact your district's testing coordinator or special education director if you have concerns about test accommodations or participation decisions.



Where to Learn More

- **Ohio Department of Education and Workforce:**
[Testing for Students with Disabilities](#)
- **Ohio's Accessibility Manual:**
Lists all approved supports and accommodations.
[Accessibility Manual for Ohio's State Tests](#)
- **Parent Mentors and Special Education Resources:**
Many Ohio school districts have Parent Mentors who help families understand testing and IEP processes.





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Focus - Supporting Every Learner, Supporting Every Family, Every Day

