



Participation in Assessment

This tip sheet provides information about participation in assessment and accommodations for assessments. It includes a brief summary of federal regulations and tips for implementation. To learn more, review the additional resources and check with state law for additional requirements.

What Does IDEA Say?

According to IDEA Sec. 300.320(a)(6), each child's individualized education program (IEP) must include –

- “(i) A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and districtwide assessments consistent with section 612(a)(16) of the Act; and
- (ii) If the IEP Team determines that the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular State or districtwide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why—
 - (A) The child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and
 - (B) The particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child.”

All students with disabilities should be included in educational accountability systems. Most students with disabilities participate in regular assessments similar to peers without disabilities with or without accommodations. A small percentage (~1% to 2%) of students with significant cognitive disabilities may participate in a State or district alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards.

Ask your state and/or local school district for a copy of their guidelines on the types of accommodations, modifications, and alternate assessments available to students.

Alternate assessments offer a form of assessing the learning of students who are unable to participate in the general assessments because of the challenges of their specific disability, particularly those with significant cognitive disabilities.

What do we mean by testing accommodation?

"Testing accommodations change *how* students are tested but do not change *what* a test measures. Students with disabilities who receive testing accommodations are required to take the same assessment and reach the same level of proficiency as students who do not use them."
(IRIS Center)

Tips for Success

- ✓ Include rationale for testing accommodations or participation in the alternate assessment in the IEP's present level of academic and functional performance.
- ✓ Be aware of approved testing accommodations for your state and district assessments.
- ✓ Ensure that selected testing accommodations are also available to the student for classroom summative assessment, as appropriate.
- ✓ Select accommodations based on education needs, not current placement or disability category.
- ✓ Engage students and families in decisions about appropriate testing accommodations or participation in alternate assessments.





Where can you learn more?



Accommodations: Instructional and Testing Supports for Students with Disabilities (IRIS Center).

This module overviews instructional and testing accommodations for students with disabilities, explains how accommodations differ from other kinds of instructional adaptations, defines the four categories of accommodations, and describes how to implement accommodations and evaluate their effectiveness for individual students.



Participation in General Assessments – FAQ (The National Center on Educational Outcomes). This resource shared frequently asked questions (FAQs) about participation in general assessment. Additional FAQs focus on accessibility and accommodations and reporting.



Taking the Alternate Assessment Does NOT Mean Education in a Separate Setting! (TIES Center).

This parent brief discusses the characteristics of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and the nature of alternate assessments for these students. The brief also addresses concerns around least restrictive environment, legal provisions, and next steps for parents.



PROGRESS Center Website. The PROGRESS website includes additional information about developing high-quality IEPs and additional tip sheets in this series.



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