



Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

State and Districtwide Assessments

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was signed into law on December 3, 2004, by President George W. Bush. The provisions of the Act are effective July 1, 2005 with the exception of some elements of the definition of “highly qualified teacher” that took effect upon the signing of the Act. This is one in a series of documents, prepared by the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) that cover a variety of high-interest topics to support local school systems, local Infants and Toddlers Programs, and other public agencies in preparing to implement the new requirements. This document only addresses the changes in the provisions regarding State and districtwide assessments that take effect on July 1, 2005. It does not address any changes that may be made in the final federal regulations or potential changes to State statutes or regulations.

1. What statewide assessments are required for students with disabilities?

All students with disabilities are included in all general state and districtwide assessments consistent with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act.

Students with disabilities are required to participate in all statewide assessments. In Maryland these include:

- Work Sampling System
- Maryland Functional Testing Program (MFTP),
- Maryland School Assessment (MSA),
- Alternate Maryland School Assessment (ALT-MSA) for students with significant cognitive disabilities
- Maryland High School Assessments (HSA)

In some cases the Maryland High School Assessments and the MSA, as described in the chart, are the same assessment.

HSA	Description of Exam
Algebra/data analysis	End-of-course exam
English	Usually a grade 10 end-of-course exam which is also an NCLB high school English language arts/reading assessment
Government	End-of-course exam
Biology	Usually a grade 10 end-of-course exam which is also an NCLB high school science exam

[COMAR 13A.01.04]

2. What districtwide assessments are required for students with disabilities?

Students with disabilities are required to participate in all districtwide assessments. These would include those administered to all students within the system or those within a total subgroup. Examples may include the administration of the PSAT, course related exams, formative and summative assessments, or CRTs administered to students within a specific grade level or course.

[Sec. 612(a)(16)(A)]

3. What accommodations are available for students with disabilities?

Accommodations are available for all students consistent with each student's individualized education program and the Requirements for *Accommodating, Excusing, and Exempting Students in Maryland Assessment Programs (Revised August 20, 2004)*.

Local school systems must ensure that:

- accommodations are provided to all qualified students; and
- accommodations used in assessments are also used in daily instruction.

[Sec. 612(a)(16)(B)]

4. Are there additional alternate assessments for students with disabilities?

Alternate assessments must be available for those students who cannot participate in the MSA with accommodations as indicated in their IEPs. Any alternate assessments must be available for students with disabilities consistent with the State's academic content standards.

The alternate assessments include the following:

- ALT-MSA for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on alternate academic achievement standards (limited to reporting 1% of those scoring proficient)
- M-MSA (Modified MSA) for students with persistent academic disabilities who with access to the general education curriculum will approach or even reach grade level achievement standards (in development for 05-06 school year/ limited to reporting 2% of those scoring proficient)

[Sec. 612(a)(16)(C)]

5. What must be reported regarding assessments for students with disabilities?

Participation

State educational agencies (SEAs) and Local educational agencies (LEAs) must report the numbers of students with disabilities who participate in

- Regular assessments
- Alternate assessments described in Section 612(a)(16)(C)(ii)(I)

Accommodations

SEAs and LEAs must report the numbers of students with disabilities who were provided accommodations in order to participate in Regular assessments and Alternate assessments

Performance

SEAs and LEAs (for districtwide assessments) must report the performance of students with disabilities on regular assessments and on alternate assessments (if the number of students with disabilities participating in those assessments is sufficient to yield statistically reliable information and reporting that information will not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student), compared with the achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, on those assessments [612(a)(16)(D)],

* LEAs/nonpublic special education programs will be reporting data to SEA annually

6. What is the role of the IEP Team related to statewide and districtwide assessments?

- If the IEP Team determines that the child shall take an alternate assessment on a particular statewide or districtwide assessment of student achievement, they must provide a statement in the IEP stating why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment, and why the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child. [Sec. 614(d)(1)(A)(I)(cc), and (VI)(aa), and (bb)]
- The IEP Team must include a description in the IEP of benchmarks, or short-term objectives for children who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards. [Sec. 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(I)(cc)]
- The IEP Team must determine accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on statewide and districtwide assessments consistent with Section 12 (a)(16)(A). [Sec. 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(III)]

7. Are there specific requirements related to universal design principles?

SEAs and LEAs (for districtwide assessments) must use universal design principles, to the extent feasible, in developing and administering any assessments.

[Sec. 612(a)(16)(E)]

Note: While many elements of “universal design” are consistent with accepted assessment standards (1999 AERA/APA/NCME Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing), some of the universal design practices may not yet meet those standards. MSDE will continue to identify additional strategies to make assessment accessible for students with disabilities.

8. Will there be additional guidance?

Additional guidance and training will be provided to LSSs, including local directors and local accountability coordinators (LACs), as well as to nonpublic special education programs, through the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services and the Division of Accountability and Assessment.

For more information, call 410-767-0858

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