New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)

Essential Information for Families of Students with Disabilities

Produced by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Transition at Cornell University.

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Disclaimer

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Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities

Self-Advocacy
Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.

Family Partnership
Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.

Specially-Designed Instruction
Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.

Research-Based Instruction
Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.

Multi-Tiered Support
Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.

Inclusive Activities
Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.

Transition Support
Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.
Training Objectives

Participants will:

• Review the state assessment options
• Identify the purpose and structure of the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSSAA)
• Become familiar with the process for determining whether a student is eligible for the NYSSAA
• Explore student exit options and how the NYSSAA designation impacts student’s postsecondary planning
Materials

• Participant Workbook
  - My Teenage Self Worksheet
  - Hopes and Dreams Activity Worksheet
  - New York State Education Department (NYSED) NYSAA Participation Decision-Making Flowchart

• Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Parent Brochure

• NYSED’s Eligibility and Participation Criteria—NYSAA

• Sample Parent Notification of Participation in NYSAA

• A Parent’s Quick Guide to NYSAA
Opening Activity

• Take a few moments to reflect on your memories of yourself at the age of 15–21.
• What were your plans for yourself after high school?
• At what age did you begin thinking about what you wanted to do when you graduated?
• To what extent did those around you help you consider your options for life after high school and at what age did you begin these discussion?

Refer to Participant Workbook, p. 4
What Are Statewide Assessments?
Statewide Assessments

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that states administer annual statewide assessments to:

• All students in grades 3–8, and at least once in high school, including students with an IEP, in:
  - Reading/language arts
  - Math
  - Science (grades 4 and 8)
Student Test Results

Student test results are used to:

• Serve as an "academic checkup" to make sure your child is on track for the next grade level;

• Measure progress over time so you can see your child's year-to-year performance; and

• Provide a deeper level of information by pinpointing what skills your child has mastered and what skills your child is still developing.
Types of State Assessments

- General Assessment
- General Assessment with Accommodations
- Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)
Grades 3–8 General Assessments

• Grades 3–8 tests are two sessions each, over a two-day period
• Depending on the district, the test can be given on paper or on a computer
• Grades 3–8, are untimed; Regents exams are timed
• The tests consist of multiple-choice and open-ended questions
• Students can complete practice tests in advance using the [NYS Question Sampler](#)
General Assessments with Accommodations

Accommodations for general assessments must be documented on the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan and could include:

• Flexibility in scheduling (e.g., scheduled breaks)
• Flexibility in the test setting (e.g., separate location)
• Changes in test presentation (e.g., enlarged print)
• Changes in the method of response (e.g., use of a scribe for written responses)
Alternate Assessment—NYSSAA

• For students who are unable to participate in the State's general assessment system because of the severity of their disabilities, even with accommodations, states are required to develop and implement an alternate assessment.
• NYSSAA, as decided through the CSE, is for students with the most severe disabilities in grades 3–8 and high school.
What Does Participation in NYSSA Look Like?
How Is NYSAA Structured?

NYSAA eligible students are assessed using the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment system.

Figure 7. Screenshot of the instructions for an ELA reading testlet in Kite Student Portal.
How Is NYSSA Structured? (continued)

- The DLM alternate assessment is delivered in testlets.
- Each testlet contains an engagement activity and three to nine items.
- This provides the opportunity to customize the assessment to the individualized abilities and needs of the student.

Figure 9. Screenshot of an engagement activity in a mathematics testlet on Kite Student Portal.
How Are the Results Shared and Used?

• Scores may be used to guide conversations about a child’s IEP or to determine educational priorities and academic goals. These scores can help:
  - Identify a student’s strengths and needs;
  - Provide information to allow for meaningful discussions surrounding a student’s IEP;
  - Set instructional priorities that inform a student’s functional and academic goals and short-term objectives; and
  - Identify a student’s most effective method of communication across multiple settings.

• Schools provide parents with an Individual Score Report.
### When Is NYSAA Given?

#### Assessment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>English (ELA*)</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
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</table>

* ELA is English Language Arts
** Once (Must be done once)
Is My Child Eligible for NYSAA?
A Student Must Meet All Three Criteria to be Eligible

• Student has a **severe** cognitive disability and **significant** deficits in communication/language and **significant** deficits in adaptive behavior; **AND**

• Student requires a highly specialized educational program that facilitates the acquisition, application, and transfer of skills across natural environments (home, school, community, and/or workplace); **AND**

• Student requires educational support systems, such as assistive technology, personal care services, health/medical services, or behavioral intervention.
Definition of Students with Severe Disabilities

Students who have:

• “...limited cognitive abilities combined with behavioral and/or physical limitations and who require highly specialized education, social, psychological, and medical services in order to maximize their full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment.”

8 NYCRR section 100.1(t)(2)(iv)
Students with Severe Disabilities

• Students with severe disabilities may experience:
  • Severe speech, language, and/or perceptual-cognitive impairments, and evidence challenging behaviors that interfere with learning and socialization opportunities.

• These students may also have:
  • Extremely fragile physiological conditions and may require personal care, physical/verbal supports and/or prompts, and assistive technology devices.

8 NYCRR section 100.1(t)(2)(iv)
What Is the Decision-Making Process?
NYSAA Decision-Making Process

Using NYSED’s Eligibility and Participation Criteria and NYSED’s Participation Decision-Making Flowchart, CSE Teams must determine annually on an individual basis whether a student will participate in:

• The State’s general assessment with or without accommodations;
• NYSAA with or without accommodations; or
• A combination of the State’s general assessment for some content areas and NYSAA for other content areas.
CSE Considerations

CSE Teams must ensure decisions are not based **exclusively** on:

- Category of disability
- Excessive or extended absences
- Language differences
- Cultural or environmental factors
- Previous low academic achievement
- Previous need for accommodations to participate in state or district-wide assessments
Additional CSE Considerations

CSE Teams must also thoughtfully consider how participation in NYSAA will impact student’s:

• Participation and progress in general curriculum
• Opportunity to earn a regular New York State diploma
Parents **must be clearly informed** their child’s performance will be measured based on alternate achievement standards that are:

- Reduced in depth, breadth and complexity
- Do not meet the expectations necessary to earn a regular high school diploma (e.g., local or Regents diploma) in NYS
If the CSE determines that the student will participate in NYSAA, the student’s IEP must indicate this and provide a statement of why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment and why the particular alternate assessment is appropriate for the student.
How Can Families Help with the Decision-Making Process?

• Together with your child, discuss their future hopes and dreams.
• Work collaboratively with your school toward achieving your child’s annual goals.
• Talk with your school and your child about meaningful ways to develop your child’s unique talents.
• Communicate with your child before the CSE meeting to gain understanding of what they enjoy, and how the school might assist in fostering them.
• Using their preferred communication mode, encourage your child to share their ideas during the CSE meeting.
What Is the Impact of Student Participation in the NYSAA?
Hopes and Dreams Activity

Using the corresponding handout, take a few minutes to think about your hopes and dreams for your child in the following categories:

- Independent Living
- Community Engagement
- Social Life
- Employment

Refer to Participant Workbook, p. 11
## Diploma and Credential Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)</th>
<th>Standard Assessment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential</td>
<td>• Local Diploma</td>
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<td>• Regents Diploma</td>
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<td>• Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential</td>
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Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential

• Available to Students with Disabilities assessed using NYSAA
• Must be accompanied by documentation of the student’s skills and strengths and levels of independence in academic, career development, and foundation skills needed for post-school living, learning, and working
Postsecondary Impact

Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential is **not** a NYS high school diploma, and therefore does not meet criteria for:

- College admittance
- Many postsecondary training programs
- US military branches
Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential Recap

• The credential is intended to:
  - Promote learning experiences that support useful, basic, academic and career skills.
  - Focus on a course of study and instruction aligned with the CDOS Learning Standards, not the CDOS credential.
  - Document a students’ skills and strengths and levels of independence in academic, career development, and foundation skills needed for post-school living, learning, and working.

• Remember, this is a skill-based certificate, not a diploma.
Hopes and Dreams Activity—Part 2

Now that you’ve reviewed NYSAA and the impact it can have on your child’s postsecondary planning:

• Do you still have the same hopes and dreams previously listed?
• Have they changed?
• Do you think your child’s strengths and needs indicate participation in NYSAA?
Let’s Review
A Recap of NYSAA

• Federal law requires that all students be assessed in ELA, Math, and Science.

• NYSAA measures the attainment of the State’s learning for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities.

• IEP goals should support the short-term instructional goals and skills needed to access the student’s participation and progress in the general education curriculum.

• Results from the NYSAA can provide one piece of evidence to help inform instruction for students.
Helpful Resources—NYSAA

• A Parent’s Quick Guide to Participation in NYSAA
• Eligibility Criteria for Participation in NYSAA
• Decision-Making Flowchart
• Decision-Making Checklist
• Parent Notification of Participation in NYSAA Sample Letter
Helpful Resources—Graduation Requirements

- Current Diploma Requirements
- Diploma Requirements
Additional Trainings

• Agency 101
• Diploma and Credential Options
• Student-Directed IEP for Families
• Transition for Families
• Navigating Virtual Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLEs)
• Understanding the IEP Process for Parents of Preschool Students
Resources (1 of 4)

• NYSED:SSS:CR 100.1(t)(2)(iv)
• A Parent’s Quick Guide to NYSAA
• Accessibility Supports for Students with Severe Cognitive Disabilities Tested on the NYSAA in ELA and in Mathematics
• Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Standards
• Dynamic Learning Maps
• Eligibility Criteria for Participation in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)
• ESSA Assessment NFR Summary Fact Sheet for Final Reg. title I part A and B December 7, 2017 (PDF) (ed.gov)
Resources (2 of 4)

- Exiting Credentials
- DLM Score Report Helplet: What Is Skill Mastery?
- New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)
- New York State Diploma Requirements Applicable to All Students Enrolled in Grades 9-12
- New York State Diploma Tracking Tool
- New York State Education Department Past Examinations
- New York State Education Department Question Sampler
- New York State Grades 3–8 Testing Program Question Sampler
Resources (3 of 4)

• NYSAA Student Score Report Samples (in multiple languages)
• Parents’ Frequently Asked Questions About New York State’s Annual Grades 3–8 English Language Arts & Mathematics Tests
• Parent Notification of NYSAA – Sample Letter
• Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential for Students with Severe Disabilities
• Student Exit Summary
• Testing Accommodations Guide for Students with Disabilities Feb 2018
• The Provision of Oral Translations for the New York State Alternate Assessments in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science
Resources (4 of 4)

• Things every parent should know about student participation in statewide assessments under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
• Understanding NYS Diploma Requirements—Family Resources
• What is the HSE/TASC™ Test?
Contact Us

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