

Guidelines for Participation in Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)

Federal regulations (The *No Child Left Behind Act* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997*), as well as Ohio Revised Code 3301.07.11 stipulate that all students, including those with disabilities, must participate in state-required assessments. In Ohio, the following three options exist for meeting this requirement:

- 1) participation in the “regular” statewide assessment without accommodations;
- 2) participation in the “regular” statewide assessment with accommodations; or
- 3) participation in a state-approved alternate assessment.

The AASCD is one of the three forms of statewide assessment. The AASCD is appropriate only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are either completing a curriculum that is modified substantially (in form and/or substance) by the IEP from the general education curriculum or completing the general education curriculum but have a disability that presents unique and significant challenges such that the IEP provides for accommodations that exceed the allowable criteria for statewide assessment accommodations.

Ohio’s experience also indicates that students with disabilities who participate in the AASCD share all of the following characteristics: they have a significant cognitive disability documented in their evaluation team report, require instruction focused on the application of state standards through essential life skills, require instruction at multiple levels below age or grade-level, and are unlikely to provide valid and reliable measures of proficiency in content areas in a standardized assessment even with allowable accommodations.

Generally, participation in the AASCD is not appropriate for students who are engaged in and making progress in the general curriculum. Although these students require individualized instruction, they have developed the skills that enable meaningful participation in statewide assessments. AASCD is appropriate for students who have the most significant cognitive limitations and, therefore, require the highest level of individualized instruction.

How a student with disabilities will participate in state- and districtwide assessments is determined by each student’s IEP team, at least annually. If the IEP team determines that AASCD is appropriate for a student, that student will participate in AASCD “across the board” (i.e., in all subject areas). Participation in the AASCD should not be based on disability condition, achievement level, school attendance, or socio-cultural factors.

The IEP team should document test-taking status in the appropriate sections of the student’s IEP, and pertinent status codes should be recorded through the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

***Source: Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, July 2007
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