

Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessment

Frequently Asked Questions

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This guide provides information on Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessment. A question-and-answer format is used to summarize information. Please contact Emily Thatcher, Alternate Assessment Consultant at Emily.thatcher@iowa.gov or at 515-281-3500 for additional information regarding the Iowa Alternate Assessment.

Background & Policy	
Question	Answer
What is an Alternate Assessment?	An alternate assessment is an academic assessment aligned to the Iowa Core designed for a small number of students with disabilities who are unable to participate in the regular grade level Iowa Assessments even with appropriate accommodations.
What is the purpose of an Alternate Assessment?	<p>The purpose of the Iowa's AYP alternate assessments –Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) and Iowa Alternate Assessment Science (IAAS) is to assess the educational performance of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English Language Arts• Mathematics• Science <p>The alternate assessment ensures students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum.</p>
Why does Iowa have an AYP Alternate Assessments	<p><i>No Child Left Behind (NCLB)</i> requires that all students, even those with the most significant cognitive disabilities, have access to the general education curriculum. For accountability purposes, all students in grades 3-8 and at a high school grades must be assessed on performance against grade level state content standards. In addition, the <i>Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA)</i> also requires students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum and participate in the statewide assessment system. Alternate assessment allows students who cannot participate in the general assessment, to be assessed more equitably given their current performance.</p>
What is AYP?	Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the measure by which schools, districts, and states are held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

What is the ESEA?	<i>The Elementary and Secondary Act, last reauthorized as No Child Left Behind</i> is federal government legislation that requires that all students (including those with disabilities) have access to general education curriculum and be assessed on their performance.
What is IDEA?	The <i>Individuals with Disabilities Act</i> (IDEA) is federal government legislation that requires students with disabilities to participate in the statewide assessments.
Who should participate in Iowa's Alternate AYP Assessments?	Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The IEP team, which includes parents, uses state participation guidelines (found on the Department IAA Website and programmed into the IEP) to determine eligibility for alternate assessment. Students in grades 3-8, 10 and 11 participate in the DLM English Language Arts and Mathematics alternate assessment and students in grades 5, 8, and 11 participate in the Iowa's science alternate assessment (IAAS).
How should students in off AYP years (Grades K, 1, 2, 9 or 12) be assessed?	Students in these grades need to be assessed if the district gives a reading, mathematics, and/or science to all students. Assessment in these grades count for Chapter 72 reporting. Results of these assessments do not need to be sent to the Iowa Department of Education for purposes of Adequate Yearly Progress determination.
What are consequences of participating in the Iowa's Alternate Assessments?	The consequences of participating in alternate assessment, beyond access to and participation in the Iowa Core, is that some students who historically have received a parallel or a different "functional" curriculum now have their school day devoted to instruction aligned to grade level content that all students in their school receive. All students with disabilities in Iowa graduate with a regular diploma, and alternate assessment participation will not impact the type of diploma your child will receive when your child completes the course of study outlined in their IEP.
How does instruction change for students as a result of participating in Iowa's Alternate Assessments?	Students participating in the alternate assessment receive instruction on grade level Iowa Core Essential Elements. IEP teams review participation annually, and it is expected that as students become more proficient on more skills, that students would be considered for exit from the alternate assessment against alternate achievement standards, into the Iowa Assessments and the Iowa Core Standards. Students must participate in the alternate assessment because participation ensures that the general curriculum is taught to students with significant intellectual disabilities.
Is it possible to learn both academic and functional skills at the same time?	Currently many children with the most significant cognitive disabilities have IEP goals that focus on learning life skills. NCLB and IDEA recognizes that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can learn both functional and academic skills at the same time. That is, we should not wait to teach a child to read until they have mastered functional skills. Many students with significant cognitive

	disabilities thrive by learning academic content while they are learning life skills, just as their typical peers do. Teachers can and should address access to life goals during academic instruction.															
When is the IAA administered?	Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessments are instructionally embedded assessments and occur from the start to the end of the school year. Please refer to Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessments webpage for specific start and end dates.															
What does 1% of the alternate assessment mean?	NCLB does not limit the percent of students able to take the alternate assessment. The IEP team decides a student's participation. Any student taking the alternate assessment is counted in the participation rate. However, you can only use a maximum of 1% of the IAA proficient scores at the district level toward meeting district adequate yearly progress (AYP). The 1% refers to the percent of students (in all tested grades combined) taking the alternate assessment that may be able to be counted as proficient for AYP purposes. There is no limit at the building level.															
What content areas and grades does Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessment assess?	English Language Arts is assessed at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11. Math is assessed at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11. Science is assessed at grades 5, 8, and 11.															
What are cut scores?	Cut scores are used to determine if a student scores "basic," "proficient or "advanced on the alternate assessment. When you enter your data on the rating scales into our electronic calculator, the calculator will determine a cut score and then indicate if the student is basic, proficient, or advanced. You can use the cut scores as a way to determine before you enter data what the proficiency level of each student might be.															
What are achievement standards?	Achievement standards are the standards in which performance is based and compared. Achievement standards have three components: <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;">1– Performance levels</td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;">2 – Performance Descriptors</td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;">3 – Cut scores separate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>label each level of achievement</td> <td>(for example...)</td> <td>the different levels of performance (for example...)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Basic</td> <td>Reflect what students know</td> <td>0-50 scores= basic performance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proficient</td> <td>Reflect what students know</td> <td>51-100 = proficient performance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advanced</td> <td>Reflect what children can apply/generalize</td> <td>101 and higher= advanced performance</td> </tr> </table>	1– Performance levels	2 – Performance Descriptors	3 – Cut scores separate	label each level of achievement	(for example...)	the different levels of performance (for example...)	Basic	Reflect what students know	0-50 scores= basic performance	Proficient	Reflect what students know	51-100 = proficient performance	Advanced	Reflect what children can apply/generalize	101 and higher= advanced performance
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Why is the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards?	Alternate Assessments are meant to assess the grade-level content with <i>less depth, breadth, and complexity</i> than the regular assessment, and with a <i>different</i> definition of how well and how much students know and do in the content to be considered proficient. The achievement of students who participate alternate assessment on grade-level content is very different from their general education classroom peers, but the evidence of their work is compelling. These students are able to learn academic content with reduced complexity, breadth, and depth clearly linked to the same grade-level content as their peers.
Can a student participate in the Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessment in one content area and participate in the Iowa Assessments in another content area?	No. IEP teams must select the alternate assessment as the only option for all subject content areas assessed. Students who participate in Iowa's Alternate Assessments will not participate in Iowa Assessments.
Can the IEP be used as the alternate assessment?	<i>No Child Left Behind</i> in Non-Regulatory Guidance to states is quite clear. The IEP cannot be used as an alternate assessment.
Is parental permission required for students with disabilities to participate in the IAA process?	Not directly. Parents are members of the IEP team and will be involved in IEP team decisions on how an individual student will participate in accountability assessment programs.
Can parents refuse to have their child included in the alternate assessment?	No. All students must be assessed under federal regulations. Students with IEPs are assessed through either general or alternate assessments as determined by the IEP team.
What does grade mean?	It means the grade the student is currently in.
We do not use grades but group students according to their ages. What do we use of a grade?	You must identify a grade for each student based on the ages of non-disabled students in particular grades.
Should we assess a student who comes to school only 2-3 hours per day?	Yes. Each student should have access to the Iowa Core on a regular basis. If your student attends only 2-3 hours per day contact Emily Thatcher, IDOE prior to assessment administration to determine assessment requirements
Should an alternate assessment be given to a student who spends all day in a hospital?	Yes. If appropriate, this student should be receiving hospital/homebound instruction. In this case, it would be appropriate for this student to take the alternate assessment.

Alternate Assessment Process & Administrative Support

Question	Answer
How do you document participation in Iowa's Alternate Assessments?	Page G on the IEP allows for a complete description of how the student is being assessed. This will assist parents to understand how their child will participate in district-wide assessments. IEP teams are encouraged to use the <i>Criteria for IEP Teams in Determining Student Eligibility for the Iowa Alternate Assessment 1%</i> document in determination for participation in the IAA located on the DE IAA webpage: http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=461&Itemid=1576
What are the process steps for Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessments?	Timelines, requirements & process steps for Iowa's AYP Alternate Assessments – DLM & IAAS are located on the DE IAA webpage: http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=461&Itemid=1576
Who inputs IAAS rating scale data into the IAAS system?	The teacher who is responsible for instruction enters in the data.
Should a copy of the completed IAAS rating scales be placed in the student's cumulative folder?	No. Only the rating scale results should be placed in the cumulative folder. Rating scales and evidence can be destroyed in September of each new school year.
How long is the previous year's IAAS evidence kept?	You may destroy evidence after September 1st of each new school year
How does instruction change for students as a result of participating in Iowa's Alternate Assessments?	Students participating in the alternate assessment receive instruction on grade level Iowa Core Essential Elements. IEP teams review participation annually, and it is expected that as students become more proficient on more skills, that students would be considered for exit from the alternate assessment against alternate achievement standards, into the Iowa Assessments and the Iowa Core Standards.. Students must participate in the alternate assessment because participation ensures that the general curriculum is taught to students with significant intellectual disabilities.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Question	Answer
What does a district do if they are over the 1% limit?	The Department will contact the district and send them a 1% exemption request form.
Can a student be exempted from Iowa Alternate Assessments?	<p>Every student is to be tested, even those who receive homebound services or attend a shortened school day. District Assessment Coordinators should contact Emily Thatcher, IDOE Alternate Assessment Consultant at Emily.thatcher@iowa.gov for guidance on assessment requirements for students who are receiving homebound services or attend shortened school day.</p> <p>Not testing certain students will affect a local school district’s participation and <i>Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</i> rates. The only decision an IEP team can make is which type of assessment the student will participate-either the general assessment or the alternate assessment.</p> <p>The DLM ELA & Math alternate assessment is a yearlong instructionally embedded assessment, so to say, “we need to exclude this student from the testing window” means the student is being excluded from participation in the Iowa Core, which is documented as non-compliance and illegal.</p>
A student is open enrolled into our school district. Which district “gets” the student’s score?	An open enrolled student counts for participation and performance (if full academic year is met) in the attending district.
For accountability purposes, how are home-schooled students, foster care students, out of state placements, residential placements and homebound students treated in the IAA?	<p>Home school students fall under their own rules and regulations associated with competent private instruction. They are not counted as full time equivalency (FTE) by the local school district and would not be a part of the district’s local accountability system.</p> <p>Foster Placement students have been placed by the court system and if they do not attend a public school, their scores would roll up to the state level.</p> <p>Out-of-State Placements are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The most likely scenario would be that they were placed by the court system out of state. More than likely these students would not be counted in the local district’s accountability system. If the district was a part of the decision to send a student out of state then that sending district must make sure the student is tested (other state’s test not the IAA) and the scores sent back to the district.</p> <p>In-State Private Residential Placements: if a local district was involved in this decision and a 28E agreement was executed, then the score(s) for that student in the residential facility should come back to the sending district. If a parent made a</p>

	<p>unilateral decision or open enrolled to this facility then the district educating that student would keep the score in that district.</p> <p>Home bound students (usually for medical reasons) who are receiving educational services from a district are required to be tested for NCLB. Homebound students take the same assessments as if they were in the building.</p> <p>Students who attend less than a Full Week of School: students attending school less than a full week are required to be tested for NCLB.</p>
<p>Are students in accredited nonpublic schools included in AYP?</p>	<p>Nonpublic school students, even if they are shared time, are not included in AYP decisions.</p>
<p>How do we count students for AYP decisions if they are tuitioned in or out of our district?</p>	<p>Tuition in/out students counts for participation and performance (if full academic year is met) in the resident (sending) district. However, participation and performance of tuition-out students count only at the district level of the resident district (not at the building level).</p>

