

Q and A on Assessment

1. Do we need to test all students with disabilities (SWD) enrolled in special education classes?

Yes. All students with disabilities are expected to participate in the State's student assessment program. Both No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that students with disabilities be assessed in the same manner and with the same frequency as non-disabled students. This requirement provides for assessment with the regular benchmark exam, with or without allowable accommodations. For those students with a significant cognitive disability (SCD), the alternate portfolio assessment may be used. Participation is expected to be 100% for students under IDEA, and at least 95% of these students must be assessed under NCLB.

2. Who is responsible for testing students attending approved day service centers and therapeutic day programs?

All school age students enrolled in the public schools receiving their educational services through a contracted day service center or a therapeutic day treatment program must be assessed. It is expected that certified personnel from the local sending district will be responsible for testing these students in the same manner as those students located on school campuses. This involves appropriately trained and certified staff to administer the tests along with providing the necessary test security.

3. What if the parent refuses for a student to be tested?

All students enrolled in the public schools are required to participate in the statewide assessment. Parental waivers for testing are not recognized in this state. Students are to be tested if they are enrolled in school at the time the tests are scheduled.

4. If a child is approved by the Arkansas Department of Education to be exempt from the test for extreme circumstances, is the student included in calculating the district's participation rate?

Yes. The student not taking the test will be counted against the participation rate of the school. Students with disabilities are exempt only under extreme circumstances such as medical emergencies. Any student with disabilities receiving such an exemption must be reported to the Associate Director of Special Education at the Arkansas Department of Education.

5. Do we include homebound students in testing?

No. Homebound students currently are not expected to participate in the statewide assessment program. They will be counted as non-participating and will be part of the calculation of the 95% participation rate requirement under NCLB.

6. Where do we find qualified teachers to assist during test days?

It is the responsibility of the local school district to provide certified teachers to administer the tests and the allowable accommodations. Review of student IEPs in the early spring will provide an indication of the additional staff needed to administer the tests the next year. Planning for this need should begin at that time. Retired certified teachers, as well as unemployed certified teachers can be employed to meet this need. All staff used for test administration must receive the proper training before test day.

7. Can I unspiral the test booklets so all students in a small group will have the same booklet form?

No. Test booklets may not be taken out of the order they are presented in the package. This random order is designed to distribute different booklets evenly throughout the class. They may not be re-ordered in any way to make the administration of accommodations easier or to reduce the number of staff members required for administering accommodations.

8. What portions of the test may I read to the students?

Certain portions of the test may be read or signed to the student; however it is very important that any person responsible for administering the test be very familiar with the allowable sections. Readers are allowed to assist students by the reading directions and the test items for the math sections or the writing sections of the test. Careful attention should be made to ensure that **NO PORTION OF THE READING TEST ITSELF IS READ OR SIGNED TO THE STUDENT.** Individual words on the math or writing portions of the test may be read to a student as indicated by the student without reading the entire passage. Persons reading any portion of the reading test itself face the possibility of severe penalty.

9. How many students may take the alternate portfolio assessment?

There is no cap on the number of students who may be assessed with the alternate portfolio assessment. Anyone assessed with the portfolio must be determined eligible by the IEP Team according to the criteria established for those students

with a Significant Cognitive Disability. According to federal regulation, only those students determined to have a SCD may be assessed with these alternate assessments against alternate achievement standards. It is anticipated that a very small number of students will be assessed with the alternate portfolio considering the strict criteria, which must be met.

10. How does the 1% cap apply to the benchmark exams?

The 1% Rule, as established by the federal regulations, applies only to the number of proficient scores on the alternate portfolio assessment, which can be used in calculating AYP for the school district. This Rule does not apply in any way to scores on the regular benchmark exam.

11. Do all students take the benchmark at their grade level?

Yes, all students must be assessed with the benchmark exam at their present grade level of enrollment. It is not possible to use any out of level assessment as a part of the required assessment for AYP purposes.

12. How are test accommodations determined for a student?

Test accommodations are determined by the student's IEP Team based on the individual needs of the student. The IEP Team will consider all aspects of the child's performance in the classroom and will make recommendations for accommodations based on that finding. It must be noted that the allowable accommodations recommended for statewide test situations must be a part of the routine instruction for the child in the classroom, as noted in the student's IEP. No accommodation will be allowed for the benchmark test situation only. It must be tied to an instructional need.

13. Do the allowed accommodations apply to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)?

Yes. The same accommodations allowed for the benchmark may be used for the ITBS.

14. Is there an alternate assessment for the ITBS?

There is no alternate assessment or portfolio for the norm referenced Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

15. How do I order Braille or large print test booklets for my students?

Alternate format test booklets are available for both the benchmark exam and the ITBS. These booklets can be ordered in large print editions or in Braille format. Orders for these materials should be made through the district test coordinator, who in turn will forward that to the Arkansas Department of Education Student Assessment Unit for processing by the proper vendors. These orders should be placed as early as possible to insure delivery by testing dates. Students using either of these formats for their instruction must have the proper test format available to them for the assessment.

16. May the allowed accommodations be used with regular education students?

The accommodations allowed for students with disabilities are not to be used with regular education students. These accommodations have been permitted based on the disability of the student and his/her need for the accommodation to access the test. It is intended that these accommodations will “level the playing field” in terms of accessing the test, and in no way will create an unfair advantage to any student.

17. Who is responsible for conducting the alternate portfolio assessment for eligible students?

It is expected that the student’s IEP team will make the determination that the student meets the criteria for alternate portfolio assessment. Once that determination has been made and it is decided that an alternate assessment with the portfolio is necessary, then the special education/regular education teacher responsible for the student’s instruction will be expected to select the appropriate strands and materials for submission for the student’s portfolio. Parents and other service providers may assist in the preparation of the portfolio, but the instructional personnel are responsible for its development and submission.

18. Is the school required to keep a copy of the material submitted in the portfolio?

There is no requirement that the school maintain a copy of the student’s portfolio to be submitted. However, it is strongly recommended that some form of the portfolio be retained as a part of the student’s record. These portfolios are not returned after scoring, so it would be necessary to make any copies of the materials before submission of the portfolio. Parents often ask for a copy of the portfolio; it is a local decision as to whether to provide the portfolio to the parent.

It may be expensive to duplicate photographs and/or audio/video tapes. Alternate forms of this material may be considered, such as written transcripts if it is not possible to make other duplicate copies.

19. How can I access the released test items for the benchmark exam?

Copies of released items from the benchmark are available online through the website of the Arkansas Department of Education. Please access this information through www.arkedu.k12.ar.us then proceed by going to the ACTAAP logo at the bottom of the page, then Student Assessment and scroll to find the released item booklets for the specific entries.

20. When is the alternate portfolio assessment to be submitted this year?

All portfolios are to be submitted to the vendor on or before March 24, 2006.

21. Where can I find a list of the allowable accommodations?

Hard copies of the booklet, "Guidelines for Assessment Accommodations for Students with Disabilities" have been distributed statewide. This information may also be accessed online at www.arksped.k12.ar.us.

22. Are students to be tested who are home-schooled but receive some special education, such as speech therapy services, from our school?

No. Home-schooled students are not to be tested and are not to be counted in the district's enrollment for AYP calculation. Please refer to Commissioner's Memo LS-06-066 dated 12/22/2005. As directed in this memo, home-schooled students who are properly coded for APSCN will not be included in the enrollment for AYP calculation.

23. Are students enrolled in private schools by their parents to be tested if they are receiving some special education, such as speech therapy services, from district staff?

No. Students enrolled in private schools by their parents are not to be tested. These students should not be included in the district enrollment although they are receiving some special education services from the district.

24. Will home schooled students and students parentally enrolled in private schools who are receiving special educational services from the district be included in the N of 40 for the reporting of a subgroup for AYP purposes?

No. These students are not tested on the benchmark and will not be included in the subgroup AYP calculation.