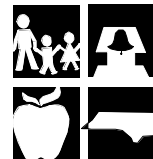


Assessment Brief



Public Schools of North Carolina

State Board of Education • Phillip J. Kirk, Jr., Chairman • North Carolina Department of Public Instruction • Michael E. Ward, Superintendent

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 and North Carolina Alternate Assessments

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IDEA Amendments of 1997

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 will have a major impact on statewide testing programs throughout the United States. This federal law states that:

- Children with disabilities must be included in general State and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary. This requirement is in effect immediately upon enactment.
- Not all children will be able to participate in State and district-wide assessment programs, even with appropriate accommodations. State education agencies and local education agencies must develop alternate assessments and, beginning no later than July 1, 2000, conduct those alternate assessments.
- Once a state education agency receives information from these assessments, it must make available to the public and report to the public, with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children, the following: number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments and number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments.
- Performance of those children on regular assessments (beginning no later than July 1, 1998) and on alternate assessments (no later than July 1, 2000), if doing so would be statistically sound and would not result in the disclosure of performance results identifiable to individual children.

With the full implementation of the IDEA requirements:

- North Carolina schools will continue to have appropriate learning expectations of students with disabilities who do not participate in statewide assessments, and these students will continue to have appropriate educational opportunities;

- North Carolina schools will continue to be accountable for the education of all students, including students with disabilities who do not participate in statewide assessments;
- North Carolina will provide a true measure of school accountability which includes the performance of students with disabilities, including those students with serious cognitive disabilities; and
- Parents of students with disabilities in North Carolina will receive valid and reliable results of student performance and progress.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has conducted numerous meetings with different advisory groups to determine how the State can fulfill the requirements of the IDEA Amendments through a uniform statewide system. This publication contains information regarding (1) the participation of students with disabilities in the North Carolina Testing Program, (2) alternate assessments currently used in North Carolina until July 1, 2000, and (3) alternate assessments to be used in North Carolina beginning July 1, 2000.

Students Identified Under Section 504

The policy in this publication also applies to students identified under Section 504 because the IDEA Amendments mandate accountability for the education of all students with disabilities. For students identified under Section 504, all references to the IEP team in this publication are to be fulfilled by the Section 504 Committee.

Participation in the Statewide Testing Program

As always, the IEP team decides which State-approved assessments are appropriate for students with disabilities on a case-by-case basis based on individual needs. The basis for the decision must be documented using current and longitudinal data. The decision must not be the result of social, cultural, and/or economic differences or excessive absences.

The IEP team must first decide if it is appropriate for the student to participate in the regular North Carolina Testing Program without accommodations. If not appropriate, the team then addresses participation in the statewide testing program with accommodations. To the extent possible, students with disabilities are expected to be taught according to the North Carolina

Standard Course of Study and graduate with a diploma. Most students with disabilities will participate in the regular statewide testing program, with or without accommodations. Additional information regarding policy and procedures for accommodations can be obtained from the local school system.

Alternate Assessments Until July 1, 2000

Until July 1, 2000, according to current State policy, students with disabilities must be administered alternate assessments if they do not participate in the statewide testing program or 1999-2000 Alternate Assessment Portfolio Pilot Administration. The following alternate assessments may be used: (1) standardized tests, (2) curriculum-based assessments, or (3) portfolio-based assessments. Additional information regarding this policy is in *Testing Modifications and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities* (July 1996).

Beginning July 1, 2000, the alternate assessments listed above will not be used for state requirements of accountability or to fulfill the federal requirements of the revised IDEA legislation. Schools may elect to use these alternate assessments for other purposes. Schools will be required to administer State-mandated alternate assessments beginning July 1, 2000.

Alternate Assessments Beginning July 1, 2000

Beginning July 1, 2000, the IEP team may determine that the disability is serious enough that the student cannot participate in the statewide testing program. The student must be administered an alternate assessment if the student does not participate in the administration of one of the following State tests:

- (1) North Carolina Grade 3 Pretest;
- (2) North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests in Reading Comprehension and/or Mathematics (grades 3-8); and
- (3) North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test (HSCT) (grade 10).

Alternate assessments for end-of-course tests are no longer required due to the 1999 State Board of Education policy that specifies all students enrolled in an end-of-course subject for credit must be administered the end-of-course test. The State Board of Education has not finalized decisions about alternate assessments for other North Carolina tests at the time of this publication.

If the IEP team determines that participation in the regular testing program for the grade 3 pretest, EOG test(s), or the HSCT is not appropriate, the team must determine which alternate assessment is appropriate for the student. Effective July 1, 2000, the State-mandated alternate assessments for these tests are: (1) the North Carolina Computerized Adaptive Tests (NCCATs) (under development) or (2) the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP) (currently being piloted).

1. North Carolina Computerized Adaptive Tests (NCCATs).

Students who participate in the NCCATs must have documented evidence that they are following the North Carolina *Standard*

Course of Study at a lower grade level. During the test administration, students view a test question on a computer monitor that is similar to the reading and mathematics questions located on the grade 3 pretest, EOG tests, and HSCT. The test questions will span grades pre-3 through 10, and the results will be placed on a developmental scale to measure student growth (like the grade 3 pretest, EOG tests, and HSCT). Each student will receive an individual student report similar to those for the EOG tests and HSCT. Results will be reported to the public effective with the 2000-2001 school year.

Students who answer questions correctly will receive subsequently more difficult questions until the students begin to answer questions incorrectly. Similarly, those who answer questions incorrectly are administered easier questions better suited for their level of performance. This continues until the appropriate level of student performance is determined and a developmental scale score is assigned. Prior to the test administration, students may use sample questions to practice answering test questions on the computer. Accommodations, including assistive technologies/devices, will be available for students.

A field test for the NCCATs will be conducted during Spring 2000. Field test results will be used to facilitate building the operational NCCATs.

2. North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP).

Students who participate in the NCAAP have serious cognitive disabilities and follow a functional curriculum. The purpose of the NCAAP is to measure student performance and progress on goals specified in the IEP. It is not designed for teacher evaluation purposes.

During 1998-99, 14 volunteer LEAs/schools participated in the NCAAP field test. The NCDPI is conducting a statewide pilot for students at grades 3-8 during 1999-2000. In addition, volunteer LEAs are participating in a pilot at grade 10.

The NCAAP must address each of the following domains: Communication, Personal/Home Management, Career/Vocational, and Community. Each IEP is reviewed and at least one competency from each domain is selected. During the school year, evidence is collected to show student performance and progress in the selected competencies. Portfolios are scored at the end of the school year according to a (1) *Task Rubric*, (2) *Portfolio Rubric*, and (3) *Portfolio Quality Rubric*.

At the end of the pilot, all portfolios will be scored centrally by the NCDPI. Each portfolio will be assessed for validity, overall completeness, and overall quality. The pilot scoring process will assist in the final review and refinement of the portfolio instrument as a whole; the processing procedures for portfolios; and the scoring criteria, procedures, and materials. Once operational, each student will receive an individual student report similar to those for EOG tests and the HSCT. The NCAAP will be implemented statewide effective with the 2000-2001 school year.