

A group of five diverse professionals (three men and two women) are seated around a wooden conference table in a bright, modern office setting. They are engaged in a discussion, with some looking at documents on the table. The background shows large windows and office furniture.

Making Statewide Testing Participation Decisions: IEP Team Discussion Guide

Why should students with disabilities participate in State testing?

- It allows children to show what they know and can do.
- It provides information to make sure that students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction aligned to standards.
- It reveals performance gaps across different groups of students in your school, and guides school strategies to address the educational needs of all students, including students with disabilities.

What are the test options?

- **General Assessment:** Most students with disabilities take the general assessment with or without accommodations.
- **Alternate Assessment:** A few students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS).

What are the implications of participating in the alternate assessment?

- A short-term implication is that the instruction of students who take the alternate assessment will be at less depth, breadth, and complexity than the instruction of other students.

Did you know?

Test participation decisions may have unintended consequences.

There is a risk that expectations for learning may be lowered, which leads to:

- less rigorous instructional programming
- diminished academic progress
- more limited post-school opportunities

There are ways to support and empower students with disabilities when they participate in tests.

Accessibility features and accommodations can help students show what they know and can do on tests.

- Long term implications are that students who take the alternate assessment may not be on track to meet the requirements for a regular graduation diploma, or may not be eligible for some postsecondary training institutions, military service, or jobs.

How can the IEP team confidently make State assessment participation decisions?

- Use State participation guidelines and any district tools to make participation decisions to ensure students who take the AA-AAAS meet the state's definition for participation, and those who don't benefit from accessibility features and accommodations as needed.
- Parents' explicit consent ensures they understand how their children's participation in the AA-AAAS can impact their future.

Can instructional accessibility features and accommodations support the inclusion of students with disabilities in assessments?

- Consider the student's instructional needs and current instructional accessibility features and accommodations to discuss and decide on testing accommodations.
- Plan time for students to learn new accessibility features and accommodations.
- Plan for evaluation and improvement of students' use of accessibility features and accommodations.

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IEP teams can help ensure that test results reflect actual student learning.

- Use State participation guidelines and any district tools to make participation decisions.
- Ensure that students who take the AA-AAAS meet the State's definition to participate in that assessment.
- Provide needed accessibility features and accommodations

The parent or guardian should sign off on test participation decisions, indicating they understand the consequences of the decisions.

The test participation decision can have major implications for a student's instruction. It may also have longer-term implications for whether a student will be on track to earn a regular diploma, and the types of postsecondary and career opportunities open to the student. It is vital that parents and guardians have a clear understanding of the implications of test participation decisions.

For more information regarding state testing, please visit the following:

www.rockwoodschoools.org

[https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Special%20Education/Assessments/Pages/Pennsylvania-Alternate-System-of-Assessment-\(PASA\).aspx](https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Special%20Education/Assessments/Pages/Pennsylvania-Alternate-System-of-Assessment-(PASA).aspx)