



## FOCUS on...

### Issues in Special Education

GUIDANCE & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
From the Missouri Office of Special Education

## State & District-wide Assessments of School Achievement

### What IEP Teams Need to Know...

#### PURPOSE OF THIS BULLETIN

This Technical Assistance Bulletin will provide IEP team members with the information they need to make decisions about each child's participation in these assessments.

Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 have resulted in a greater focus on the accountability of educational services for students with disabilities. The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) uses the performance of all students on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Grade-Level Assessments, End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments, and the MAP-Alternate (MAP-A) in determining a district's performance level for district accreditation. Participation in the ACT is also factored into this determination. The NCLB Act requires states to annually report on the performance of students with disabilities as well as other subgroups of students as measured by the Grade-Level, the MAP-A, and EOC Assessments. The Office of Special Education has identified the improved performance of students with disabilities on the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments as one of its Performance Goals as required by IDEA. This focus on educational achievement and outcomes for students with disabilities should help to direct attention to the accommodations and supports needed by students with disabilities to access and progress in the general education curriculum. Participation in state and district-wide assessments goes hand in hand with access to the general education curriculum.



### 1. Why are students with disabilities required to participate in the Grade-Level Assessments, End-of-Course Assessments and district-wide assessments of student achievement?

Participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments of student achievement is required by a number of state and federal laws and regulations. More importantly, participation in these tests sets the expectation that students with disabilities can achieve the standards that have been established for all students. Their participation should lead to improved teaching and learning, and will also allow local administrators and boards of education to consider the needs of all students when they make instructional decisions and set policy (i.e., curriculum adoptions, staffing patterns, and professional development). It is important to expect students with disabilities to meet the high standards that have been set for all students. This may involve using the accommodations and supports provided by special education. It is also important to remember that the majority of students with disabilities identified under IDEA do not have significant cognitive disabilities which would inhibit their ability to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.



## **2. In general, what decisions does the IEP team have to make regarding a student's involvement in state and district-wide assessments of student achievement?**

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must make decisions about how students with disabilities participate in assessment programs. These decisions include whether a student will participate in the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments or the MAP-A. When making the decision about participation in the Grade-Level or EOC Assessments, the IEP team must also consider the student's need for accommodations. If the IEP team decides that the Grade-Level or EOC Assessments are not appropriate for an individual student, even with the use of accommodations, then the team can determine the student's eligibility for the MAP-A.

The IEP must also address these same considerations for district-wide assessments of student achievement. If the IEP team determines that a child will not participate in a district-wide assessment (or a part of an assessment) even with accommodations, the IEP must state why the assessment is not appropriate and how the child will be assessed to measure the skill and/or knowledge being assessed by the district-wide assessment.

In making these decisions, the IEP team has the responsibility and authority to determine the individual accommodations that a student needs to ensure his or her participation in state and district-wide assessments of student achievement. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) or local school districts cannot limit the authority of an IEP team in the selection of accommodations.

If a specific accommodation is not on the list of accommodations in the Examiner's Manual, the accommodation can still be used. However, some accommodations will invalidate a student's test results for accountability purposes. All assessment accommodation decisions made by the IEP team must be documented in the IEP. See questions 5 and 7 for further information on the documentation of accommodation decisions and accommodations that invalidate test results.

## **3. Do Students with disabilities have to take all parts of the Grade-Level or EOC Assessments?**

Students with disabilities must take all of the Grade-Level Assessments or the MAP-A which are developed for their grade level. In Missouri students are required to take the Algebra I, Biology, English II and Government EOC Assessments. If a student's IEP team determined that MAP-A is the appropriate assessment, the student would not take the EOC Assessments. Students who are participating in the MAP-A will not



participate in the other statewide assessments. Students with disabilities who are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) are also required to take the ACCESS for ELLs English Language Proficiency Assessment.

The MAP-A has been developed to allow all students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to participate in the Missouri Assessment Program. The student's IEP team must determine that the student meets all of the criteria outlined in the Missouri Alternate Assessment Decision Making Checklist found in Table 1 on page 3. The MAP-A is aligned with the Missouri Show-Me Standards. The MAP-A Science is a portfolio-based assessment that measures student performance based on alternate achievement standards in grades 5, 8 and 11. The MAP-A Science relies on the involvement of teachers to customize the assessment for each student. The MAP-A English language arts and mathematics assessments provide year long instructionally embedded assessments and a summative assessment based on the previous embedded assessments for students in grades 3-8 and grade 11.



**TABLE 1**

**Missouri Alternate Assessment Decision Making Checklist**

Alternate assessment participation is determined by the student’s IEP team, using the criteria established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. **The IEP team for a student with a disability MUST answer “YES” to ALL of the following eligibility criteria in order for the student to be eligible to participate in the Missouri Alternate Assessment.** Please refer to the Missouri Alternate Assessment Decision Making Guidance Document at <http://dese.mo.gov/webinar/documents/Introtoadvancedplacement-GuidanceDocument02-13-13.pdf> for additional guidance in determining eligibility for the alternate assessment.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

<b>1. Student has been evaluated and found eligible under IDEA.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student has an identified disability under IDEA.</li> <li>• The student has an Individualized Education Plan.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. The student demonstrates the most significant cognitive disabilities and limited adaptive skills that may be combined with physical or behavioral limitations.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student has been determined to have cognitive abilities falling within the most significant cognitive disability range as evidenced by standardized assessments</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student has been determined to have cognitive abilities falling within the most significant cognitive disability range as evidenced by pervasive supports.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student demonstrates adaptive skills that are significantly limited compared to same age peers.</li> </ul>		
<b>3. The most significant cognitive disability impacts the student’s access to the curriculum and requires specialized instruction.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student requires a highly specialized educational program with intensive supports and modifications/ accommodations for access to the general education curriculum</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student requires daily instruction for core academic standards and functional life skills on a substantially different grade level from that of peers with disabilities</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student requires intensive instructional strategies which may include, but are not limited to, repeated drill/ practice in multiple settings, skills taught in substantially smaller steps than peers with frequent prompts and guidance from adults</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student requires information to be obtained primarily through methods other than reading due to limited reading ability</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student requires alternate methods to express or share oral or written ideas and information.</li> </ul>		
<b>4. The most significant cognitive disability impacts the student’s post-school outcomes.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student’s post-secondary outcomes likely require supported or assisted living.</li> </ul>		
<b>5. Additional factors considered for the student.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student’s inability to participate in the regular assessment is primarily the result of the most significant cognitive disability and NOT excessive absences; visual or auditory disabilities; or social, cultural, language or economic differences.</li> </ul>		



#### **4. What assessments must be considered at the district level?**

District-wide assessments include those assessments that are part of the district assessment program used to determine levels of student achievement. Districts should provide IEP teams with a list of the district-wide assessments administered in their districts and the grades at which they are administered so the IEP team can make participation decisions. If an IEP team determines that a particular district-wide assessment (or a part of the assessment) is not appropriate for an individual student, the IEP team must document in the IEP why the assessment is not appropriate and how the student will be assessed.

When determining alternative assessment methods for district-wide assessment, the IEP team must ensure that the alternate method of assessment will be consistent with that purpose. In other words, if the purpose of the district-wide assessment is to assess reading ability, the alternative method must also result in an assessment of the student's reading ability. The MAP-A is not an alternate to a district-wide assessment of student achievement for MAP-A eligible students.

#### **5. What do IEP teams need to know in order to make effective decisions about a student's participation with accommodations or modifications?**

It is important that IEP teams know how the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments have been constructed and what skills students will need to take the tests. Grade-Level Assessments consist of a combination of multiple choice, constructed response and performance event questions. Multiple choice questions require students to choose their answers from a provided list. The constructed response and performance event items require written responses. EOC Assessments are all multiple choice with performance events in Algebra I, Biology, English I and English II. Being familiar with the nature of the assessment items on the Grade-Level, EOC and district-wide assessments will assist teams in making decisions about accommodations/modifications.

Each IEP team must determine what accommodations, if any, the student needs in order to participate in the state or district-wide assessments. The purpose of an accommodation is to "level the playing field" so that a student with a disability can demonstrate what he knows and is able to do, but not provide the student with an advantage. When an accommodation changes the construct of the assessment, it becomes a modification and results in the Lowest Obtainable Scaled Score (LOSS) for the student.

Typically, the accommodations needed by students with disabilities in a testing environment are also used by students in their instructional program. The accommodation cannot be used solely on the Grade-Level or EOC Assessments, but must be needed in order for the student to learn in his/her school environment or to show what he/she has learned. For example, the test can be scribed for a student who requires scribing in the everyday school environment to show the content he/she has learned. However, scribing is not an appropriate accommodation for spelling or for poor handwriting as students without disabilities also have poor handwriting and make spelling errors. The scoring rubrics do not penalize students for spelling errors or poor handwriting. A second example would be reading the mathematics portion of the test to a student. It would be appropriate to consider reading the mathematics assessment to a student, depending on his/her individual reading difficulties, but it would not be fitting to read the mathematics assessment to a student who is capable of reading the material, but may be inattentive. IEP teams need to be sensitive to the use of accommodations and involve students, especially older students, in making accommodation decisions. Districts need to make every attempt to administer accommodations in a sensitive and discreet manner.

Accommodations determined necessary by the IEP team must be documented in the IEP. The Department has identified a list of common accommodations that might be needed by students with disabilities. Table 2 (see page 8)



lists accommodations currently allowed on the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments. IEP teams are encouraged to review and understand the accommodations in Table 2 as many changes have been made to the accommodations list. If an IEP team determines the need for an accommodation that is not on this list, that accommodation becomes a modification and will result in the Lowest Obtainable Scaled Score (LOSS). Any accommodation or modification used should allow students to demonstrate what they know and can do. A student with an IEP that includes accommodations may use those accommodations during testing. A student is neither required to use all of his or her accommodations nor can the student be denied the use of any of his or her accommodations during testing.

The district has the same obligation to identify those accommodations that will impact a student's score or results on district-wide assessments. IEP teams need to understand the implications of their decisions and how those decisions might impact individual students when considering accommodations for district-wide assessments.

## **6. What scores are generated by the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments and what impact does the use of accommodations have on these scores?**

The Grade-Level and EOC Assessments generate scale scores which determine a student's achievement level. There are 4 achievement levels which describe a pathway to proficiency for the Grade-Level, EOC Assessments and the MAP-A .



### **Grade-Level Assessments**

The Grade-Level assessment is a yearly standards-based test that measures specific skills defined for grades 3-8 in the Missouri Learning Standards and is aligned with the Show-me Standards. The Grade-Level Assessment includes computer adaptive assessments in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and an online assessment in science at grades 5 and 8. Students receive a scaled score based upon test item responses which then determines the achievement level of the student.

### **EOC**

The Department uses students' correct responses and points earned to derive the EOC scale score. A student receives an EOC scale score when he or she enters into any content assessment. EOC scale scores range in value from 100 to 250. The EOC scale score determines the student's achievement level.





**MAP-A**

The achievement level scores for students who take the MAP-A are integrated into the building and district scores for all students to determine Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO).

Student performance can be reported in terms of the four performance/achievement levels that describe a pathway to proficiency. Each achievement level represents standards of performance for each assessed content area. Achievement level scores describe what students can do in terms of the content and skills assessed. These scores are a means of comparing test results with standards of academic performance.



**7. Do accommodations invalidate the Grade-Level or EOC assessments?**

Accommodations that change the construct of the assessment are considered modifications and result in the student receiving the Lowest Obtainable Scale Score (LOSS). The following table lists the accommodations that are considered modifications to the Grade-Level Assessment and will invalidate the test. There are no accommodations that result in invalidation of scores on the EOC assessments.

Accommodation	Format	Description
Calculator Grade 3 ONLY (For Non-Calculator Allowed Items Only) <b>* INVALIDATION - Results in LOSS*</b>	Any	Students in Grade 3 may have access to a physical calculator on items where calculator use is not allowed.
Multiplication Table Grade 3 ONLY <b>* INVALIDATION - Results in LOSS*</b>	Any	Students in Grade 3 may have access to a single digit multiplication table
Read-Aloud Grades 3-5 ONLY(ELA reading passages) <b>* INVALIDATION - Results in LOSS*</b>	Any	Students in Grades 3-5 may have English language arts reading passages read aloud to them by a trained reader
	Online	Students in Grades 3-5 may use assistive technology text-to-speech software to allow ELA reading passages to be read aloud.



### **8. Can teachers preview the Grade-Level and EOC Assessment prior to testing?**

No. School teachers may NOT preview those assessments for any reason. The structure of the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments does not allow for previewing or pre-selecting items.

### **9. Can parents request that their child not participate in the Grade-Level, MAP-A, and the EOC Assessments? What about nonparticipation requests by parents for district-wide assessments?**

All students enrolled in a public or charter school are expected to participate in the state's assessment program. Students with disabilities should be given the opportunity to fully participate and demonstrate skills on these assessments by attempting to take the Grade-Level, EOC or MAP-A. When a student makes an attempt on any of these assessments, he or she will receive the actual score achieved or the Lowest Obtainable Scale Score (LOSS). The student's score will never be a zero or any score below the LOSS. The LOSS is an established score that indicates the level expected for a student who guesses on every item. The LOSS is unique to each grade and content area. If a student does not enter into a Grade-Level Assessment, then the student will receive a Level Not Determined (LND) for that assessment. For EOC Assessments, a LND is not assigned until graduation and only if the student never takes a required EOC.



Missouri does not have a procedure for parents to request that their child be exempt from the MAP Grade-Level, MAP-A, and the EOC Assessments. If the district has a policy and procedure for parents to request that their children not participate in district-wide assessments, then that same procedure must be available to parents of children with disabilities. If no policy exists for parents to request nonparticipation for nondisabled students, then districts may not have a policy for students with disabilities.

### **10. Is out-of-grade-level testing allowed in the MAP?**

No. In order to provide coherent information about school accountability, student achievement, and attainment of state standards at specific grade levels, students must be assessed in the grade level to which they are assigned.

### **11. What accommodations can students with disabilities use on the ACT?**

ACT has a process for students with disabilities to request use of accommodations during the testing session. Only ACT-approved accommodations are allowed during the state-wide administration of the ACT for all 11th grade students in Missouri in order for students to obtain an NCAA-compliant score on the test. Accommodations not approved by ACT cannot be used during the test administration. The MAP-A serves as the alternate assessment to the ACT for students who are eligible for the MAP-A in grade 11.



## Table 2 Resources

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

- End-of-Course Accommodations for Students with Disabilities  
[http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC\\_Accommodations.pdf](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC_Accommodations.pdf)
- Grade-Level Accommodations for Students with Disabilities  
[http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC\\_Accommodations.pdf](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC_Accommodations.pdf)
- Use of a Scribe  
[http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC\\_Accommodations.pdf](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC_Accommodations.pdf)

### Missouri Assessment Program Guidance

- Missouri Assessment Program Website  
<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess>
- LEA Guide to Assessment in Missouri  
[http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC\\_Accommodations.pdf](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/EOC_Accommodations.pdf)
- Missouri Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart  
<http://dese.mo.gov/webinar/documents/Introtoadvancedplacement-AltAssessmentFlowChart02-13-13.pdf>
- Missouri Assessment Decision Making Guidance Document  
<http://dese.mo.gov/webinar/documents/Introtoadvancedplacement-GuidanceDocument02-13-13.pdf>



**12. Are students who are receiving homebound services, enrolled in vocational schools or juvenile detention centers, or placed in approved private agencies OR other out-of-district placements by local districts required to take the Grade-Level and EOC Assessments and district-wide assessments? What about homeschooled students?**

All students enrolled in the district must be tested. This includes homebound students and students receiving services in off-site locations, e.g. other districts, private agencies, and correctional facilities. Special procedures must be used to test these students and may include testing off-campus. The district must follow the appropriate procedures for the Grade-Level and the EOC Assessments. All Test Examiners must be trained, and test security must be upheld. If any of these students do not take the Grade-Level Assessment, they should be recorded as absent, and the district will receive the LND for the student. If a student does not take a required EOC Assessment before graduation, the district will receive the LND for that student. Do not mark a student absent for an EOC Assessment until the final opportunity for taking the assessment before graduation occurs.

Homeschooled students fall into a different category than homebound students. Honoring a parental request for a homeschooled student to be included in the Grade-Level or EOC Assessments is a local district decision.



**Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education  
Office of Special Education**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Office of the General Counsel, Coordinator – Civil Rights Compliance (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/Age Act), 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; fax number 573-522-4883; email [civilrights@dese.mo.gov](mailto:civilrights@dese.mo.gov).