

FAQ WY-ALT

updated 11.13.18

What is accountability in education?

Accountability means reviewing how well teachers, principals, and superintendents help students grow academically.

What is the WY-ALT?

The WY-ALT is Wyoming's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. It was administered for the first time in spring 2015. The WY-ALT is aligned to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards Extensions (WyCPSE). The extended standards are designed to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills using an appropriately rigorous, grade-level assessment.

When and how will the WY-ALT be administered?

Schools are given a six-week window to administer the WY-ALT: March 11 – April 24, 2019. This window was chosen to provide schools ample time to assess all eligible students at their own pace. There are no time restrictions inherent to the assessment itself, and students may stop and resume the assessment at any point.

A test administrator designated by your child's school will administer the assessments to your child in a one-on-one environment. Your child is able to respond in his or her most appropriate modality (oral, signed language, picture system, or augmentative communication device). Students also use appropriate accommodations that have been documented on their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan or designated supports indicated on the student's Individual English Learner Plan (IELP), if applicable.

In which grades and content areas will my child be tested?

The WY-ALT is administered to students in grades 3 - 10. All students are assessed in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 are assessed in science.

What is meant by Extended Standards?

Wyoming has extended standards that align to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards (WYCPS). These extensions were designed to make WYCPS more accessible to students with significant cognitive disabilities. These standards ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities are provided with multiple ways to learn and demonstrate knowledge. At the same time, the extended standards are designed to maintain the rigor and high expectations of the WYCPS.

FAQ WY-ALT

(CONT'D)

Specific standards were extended to include four complexity levels (I, II, III, IV) with level I requiring the most support needed and level IV being the most independent. This allows teachers to adjust for various levels of difficulty. The extended standards serve as the foundation for the development of the assessment items for the WY-ALT. You can learn more about the Extended Standards by visiting the [WDE website](#).

How is the WY-ALT designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities?

The WY-ALT is a computer-adaptive test designed to be accessible to students with diverse and significant disabilities. First, the test contains performance items that range in complexity. Second, after a student completes the first item and successive items, subsequent items increase or decrease in difficulty based on student performance or non-response. Third, the test uses picture symbols and stimuli to engage students in the content. Fourth, the test allows students to complete the items using their preferred method of communication (e.g., pointing, eye gaze, assistive technology, oral response, sign language). Finally, there is no time restriction on the assessment; students may stop and resume the assessment at any point during the testing window upon discretion of the teacher. Test design documents for each subject area can be found on the [Resources](#) page of the Wyoming [assessment portal](#).

Why should students with significant cognitive disabilities participate in academic instruction and assessment?

In addition to learning functional life skills such as communication, self-determination, gross/fine motor skills, and social skills, it is generally accepted that all students—regardless of disability—deserve to have the same opportunity to learn academic content and demonstrate their mastery. All children, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities must have access to the general curriculum; be involved in the general curriculum; and progress in the general curriculum. General curriculum means the same grade-level academic content standards curriculum that is afforded students without disabilities. For this reason, extended standards that align to the WYCPS were designed to provide meaningful access to academic content for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Additionally, the WY-ALT provides an opportunity for these students to demonstrate what they know and can do as it relates to academic, grade-level content.

There are also laws that require all students to participate in academic instruction and assessment. The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) reflects the intent to extend educational accountability and reform to all students, including those with disabilities. This legislation, along with the former federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandate that all students with disabilities be included in general state and district-wide assessment programs. Most students with disabilities are able to participate in the general state assessments with allowable accommodations. However, some students may qualify to participate in the alternate assessment in its place.

FAQ WY-ALT

(CONT'D)

Who can administer the WY-ALT?

Only trained Test Administrators (TAs) who are certified employees for the district may administer the WY-ALT. It is the responsibility of each TA to maintain proof of training attendance per the state's policy.

Who determines eligibility for the WY-ALT?

The student's IEP team determines whether a student will participate in the WY-ALT using the [criteria for participation guidelines](#).

Can districts exempt students who choose not to respond from testing?

No. All students are required by federal and state law to participate in statewide assessment.

Can students participate in the general assessment in one content area (e.g., mathematics) and participate in the WY-ALT in another content area (e.g., ELA)?

No. If a student can participate in any part of the general assessment, then he or she should take the entire general assessment with accommodations, as needed. As many students as possible should participate in the general assessment.

I administered the WY-ALT in spring 2018, do I have to attend training for the new assessment?

Yes. All teachers and other staff members involved with test administration will be required to attend an in-person WY-ALT training for the 2018-2019 test administration. Test Administrators are required to attend an in-person training every 4 years or when there is a change in the assessment. Participants will learn how to: administer the test online; submit online appeals and irregularities; follow best practices for online testing; and receive scores online. The training will be held in locations around Wyoming and is expected to last about 4 hours.

2018-2019 Training Locations

Monday, January 7 - Cody/Powell

Wednesday, January 9 - Gillette

Thursday, January 10 - Casper

Friday, January 11 - Green River/Rock Springs

Tuesday, January 22 - Cheyenne

Each location will have 2 sessions, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Test administrators (TAs) are only required to attend one session. Next year, for the 2019-2020 test administration, we will once again implement the online, refresher trainings for those who have administered the WY-ALT in the previous year and attended an in-person training.

FAQ WY-ALT

(CONT'D)

Is the WY-ALT administered online this year?

Yes. For the first time this year, the 2018-2019 test administration, WY-ALT will be administered online. However, for those students whose IEPs or 504 plans require a paper accommodation, Building Coordinators will need to contact the AIR Wyoming Help Desk, 1.888.897.8024.

Can parents opt their child(ren) out of required statewide assessments such as WY-TOPP?

No, opting out of state tests required by law is not allowed. In the spring of 2014, the WDE requested an opinion from the Wyoming Attorney General's Office regarding parent opt outs from state-mandated testing (e.g. WY-ALT, WY-TOPP, and ACT). The following is part of the AG's response:

"In summary, the State Board of Education is authorized to establish the statewide accountability system pursuant to state law, including the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act. It has promulgated rules that require districts to administer the relevant assessments to all students in the appropriate grade levels. These requirements are within the authority granted to the board by the legislature. Consequently, districts may not allow students or their parents to opt them out of the assessments provided by law."

Should students who are not expected to do well on the general assessment participate in the WY-ALT?

The decision about a student's participation in the WY-ALT must **NOT** be made on the basis of the student's "perceived probability" of poor achievement on the general assessment. As many students as possible should participate in the general assessment.

What determines a student's eligibility for the WY-ALT assessment?

The student's IEP team determines the eligibility for the student to participate in the WY-ALT or WY-TOPP assessment based on the [criteria for participation guidelines](#).