

FAQ WY-ALT

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What is accountability in education?

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

What is the WY-ALT?

Wyoming's new Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (WY-ALT) 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 in an appropriately rigorous assessment.

When and how will the WY-ALT be administered?

Schools have a five-week window during which they will have the opportunity to administer the WY-ALT: February 26 – March 28, 2018. 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. All test results must be submitted by the test administrator for the student before the end of the testing window.

A test administrator designated by your child's school will administer the assessments to your child in a one-on-one environment. Your child will be able to respond in his or her most appropriate modality (oral, signed language, picture system, or augmentative communication device) and use appropriate accommodations that have been documented by the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team members.

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

The WY-ALT is administered by grade band (3-5, 6-8, 9-11). All students will be assessed in English language arts and mathematics. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 will also be 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 help to 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.

Please share this document with friends, neighbors, and interested parties.

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

How is the alternate assessment designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities?

The WY-ALT is designed to be accessible to students with diverse and significant disabilities. First, the test contains performance tasks that range in complexity. Second, the test uses picture symbols and stimuli to engage students in the content. Third, the test allows students to complete the tasks using their preferred method of communication (e.g., pointing, eye gaze, assistive technology, oral response, sign language). Fourth, two types of scripted test items are used: engagement, where the teacher rates the student's level of involvement; and scaffolded, where students are often given multiple opportunities to respond correctly. Scaffolding occurs when a student is presented with a test question and answers incorrectly or does not respond. When this happens, one of the answer choices is removed and the student has a second opportunity to answer the question. 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 other students. 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 content.

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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.

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 testing.

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.

Can parents opt their child(ren) out of required state tests 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:

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“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](#).

Updated training FAQs:

I administered the WY-ALT in spring 2017 but cannot attend the Refresher Training in-person. What should I do?

If you have a conflict and cannot attend any of the in-person trainings, you must attend one of the Refresher Training Webinars, held on the following dates:

- January 30, 2018
- February 1, 2018

Registration information for the webinars will be provided in late December 2017.