



# Wyoming Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (WY-ALT)

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## *Frequently Asked Questions for Families*

### 1. 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 the spring of 2015. The WY-ALT is aligned to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards-Extensions (WyCPSE) and designed to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on an appropriately rigorous assessment.

### 2. What is meant by extended standards?

The extended standards refers to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards-Extensions (WyCPSE). The extensions were designed to make WyCPS more accessible to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These standards help to ensure students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are provided with multiple ways to learn and demonstrate knowledge. At the same time, the standards extensions are designed to maintain the rigor and high expectations of the WyCPS.

Specific standards were extended among four complexity levels (IV [most independent] to I [most support needed]) allowing teachers to adjust for various levels of difficulty. The standard extensions serve as the foundation for the development of the assessment tasks for the WY-ALT. You can learn more about the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards-Extensions by visiting <http://edu.wyoming.gov/educators/standards/extended-benchmarks/>.

### 3. 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 ability—deserve to have the same opportunities 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 to 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.

There are also laws requiring 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 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandates 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.

4. Should my child take the alternate assessment?

Decisions concerning a student's participation in statewide and district-wide assessments are made at least annually by each student's IEP team. The state of Wyoming provides IEP teams with guidelines for participation in the WY-ALT, which can be found on the Wyoming Assessment Portal (<http://wyoassessment.org>) on the Resources page.

Wyoming's experience indicates that students with disabilities who participate in the WY-ALT share all of the following characteristics: they have a significant cognitive disability documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) report, require instruction focused on the application of state standards-extensions, require instruction at multiple levels below age or grade-level, and are unlikely to provide valid and reliable measures of proficiency in content areas in a general standardized assessment even with allowable accommodations.

5. When and how will the WY-ALT be administered?

Schools have a four-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 to the assessment itself, and students may stop and resume the assessment at any point. All student test results must be submitted by the Test Administrator 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 mode of communication (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.

6. How is the WY-ALT 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.

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

The WY-ALT is administered by grade band (3-5, 6-8, and 9-11). Students will take the WY-ALT in the same grades and content areas administered for the WY-TOPP. All students will be assessed in English language arts and mathematics. Students in grades 4, 8, 10, and 11 will also be assessed in science.

<h2>WY-ALT Form Assignment</h2>		
Grade Band	Student Grade Level	Content Areas to Be Administered to Each Student
<b>Grades 3–5</b>	3	English language arts and mathematics.
	4	English language arts, mathematics, and science.
	5	English language arts and mathematics.
<b>Grades 6–8</b>	6	English language arts and mathematics.
	7	English language arts and mathematics.
	8	English language arts, mathematics, and science.
<b>High School</b>	9	English language arts and mathematics.
	10	English language arts, mathematics, and science.
	11	English language arts, mathematics, and science.

8. When will I receive my child’s results?

The Family Score Report for the spring 2018 WY-ALT will be sent to your child’s district in late June 2018. Check with your child’s school to determine when you will receive your child’s report.

The score reports for WY-ALT will show your child’s score and performance level on each content area of the assessment. It will also explain what students at your child’s proficiency level know and can do in each content area. Your child’s performance is also reported as a total score that allows you to monitor growth.

9. Where can I learn more about Wyoming’s Alternate Assessment?

Families can visit Wyoming’s Assessment Portal (<http://wyoassessment.org>) to find more information, including sample tasks for the WY-ALT. Families are also encouraged to speak with their child’s teacher to learn more.