

INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN DISTRICTWIDE ASSESSMENTS

School districts must assess students with disabilities as frequently and in the same manner as they do students without disabilities. Therefore, to the extent the Chandler Public Schools requires student participation in district-wide assessment, students with disabilities will be included in the assessment or provided an alternative method of assessment.

The IEP team for each student with a disability will make the decision regarding his or her participation in regular district-wide assessment on an individual basis, considering his or her unique needs. To make appropriate decisions regarding the student's need for accommodation and/or alternate assessment, the IEP team will:

1. Begin with the assumption that all students with disabilities will participate in all regular district-wide assessments.
2. Assess the need for accommodation and/or alternate assessment based on the student's present level of educational performance, IEP goals and the content and format of the district-wide assessment(s) under consideration.
3. Allow for alternate assessment only if a student would not be able to demonstrate some of the knowledge and skills on the regular district-wide assessment with appropriate accommodations.

To make these determinations, the IEP team members must be knowledgeable about the child's present level of educational performance and measurable annual goals; the general curriculum; the format and content of the regular district-wide assessment; and the alignment between the curriculum and the academic content standards assessed by the district-wide assessment system.

The IEP team may decide that the student can participate in the regular district-wide assessment without accommodations. However, the IEP team may conclude that the student is unable to participate in district-wide assessments in the same manner as his or her peers, but could participate in the same assessment if accommodations were provided. Accommodations are changes in testing materials or procedures that enable students with disabilities to participate in an assessment in a way that allows the assessment of abilities, rather than disabilities. Accommodations are intended to allow students with disabilities to access district-wide assessments and provide an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. The IEP team may consider five categories of accommodations: setting, timing, scheduling, presentation and response.

Setting accommodations involve changing the conditions of the setting (lighting, furniture, group size) or changing the location in which the test is administered (student carrel, separate room, home). Setting accommodations are typically selected for students who have difficulty focusing their attention or may exhibit behaviours that other students find disturbing during test taking.

Timing accommodations involve changes in the duration of testing. These changes can include changing the amount of time allowed when taking the test or the way in which the time required for administering the test is organized. Examples of timing accommodations include allowing extended time on a timed test, providing breaks during testing and administering the test across multiple testing sessions.

Scheduling accommodations involve adjusting the time of day or day of the week when the test is administered.

Presentation accommodations involve changing the manner in which an assessment is given to a student. Presentation accommodations typically fall into one of three categories: format alterations (providing a test in large print, highlighting key words or phrases, presenting fewer items per page), procedure changes (sign language directions, extra examples, explaining or simplifying directions) and assistive devices (audio-taped directions, magnification devices, markers or masks to maintain place).

Response accommodations involve changing the manner in which the student responds to an assessment. Response accommodations include format alterations (responding in the test booklet, rather than on a separate answer sheet), procedure changes (access to reference materials, like a dictionary or a multiplication table, responding verbally, rather than in writing) and assistive devices (computer text reader or word processor, scribe, calculator, communication board).

The IEP team should consider the accommodations that the student receives in classroom assessments as possible accommodations for the district-wide assessment. The IEP team may also use the administration manual for each district-wide assessment to gather information regarding special testing situations, including the issue of accommodations. The team should attempt to select accommodations that do not invalidate the test, i.e., change the skills or content tested. If the modifications identified would invalidate the test, the student's knowledge and skills should be assessed through alternate assessment. For example, a modification that included reading passages and/or items aloud to students would not be an acceptable accommodation if the purpose of the assessment is to measure reading skills. The team should also consider the student's past performance on district-wide assessments and explore whether any assessment accommodations were used. For example, if the student took the previous assessment under standard conditions, did the results appropriately represent the student's skills? If assessment accommodation were used, did the student report that he or she found them helpful? Did the student's performance with accommodations reflect his or her abilities?

Based on a review of relevant information, the IEP team will determine how the student will participate in the regular district-wide assessment. For those students who are identified as needing accommodations, the IEP team will document in the IEP which accommodations are necessary for the child to participate in the regular assessment. The IEP team may determine that the student can participate in some portions of the assessment without accommodations and identify accommodations for other portions of the assessment. If modifications in testing administration are provided, the District will use caution in interpreting the test results. In such situations, the District will note that the assessment was given using non-standard administration and that the results should be interpreted with that in mind.

The IEP team may determine that, even with accommodations, a student with a disability would be unable to demonstrate at least some of the knowledge and skills tested through the regular district-wide assessment, and as a result, that the student's performance must be assessed through alternate assessment. The IEP team will not determine that participation in an alternative assessment is necessary based primarily upon poor attendance; English language learner status; social, cultural or economic differences; disruptive behaviour; student reading level; expectations of poor performance; amount of time receiving special education services; low achievement in general education; categorical disability label; performance tied solely to a level, label or cut score; or the location where the child receives services. If the IEP team determines that student participation in an alternate assessment is necessary, the team will specifically identify the alternate assessment to be utilized on the IEP. The IEP team will select a mode of alternate assessment that measures the same content area(s) as the district-wide assessment.