



## New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) FAQ

### WHO ARE THE PARENT CENTERS?

We are a group of federally-funded centers throughout New York State who are here to help! We are specialists in decoding the special education system for families who have students with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the time a child is born until they are 26 years old. We can help you navigate systems and provide resources and referrals. Our services are always free to families. Reach out for us early and often!

Find your Parent Center here: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>

### **What is NYSAA? How is it different from the general assessment?**

Starting in third grade, all students in New York State have to take statewide tests. These tests measure how well students meet statewide learning standards. For students with severe cognitive disabilities, there's a different test called the NYSAA. This test checks how well these students meet simpler standards, making sure they can show what they've learned.

NOTE: How a student is assessed will impact their diploma/exiting credential. Students who are alternately assessed will NOT earn a high school diploma.

**DO YOU KNOW HOW YOUR CHILD IS ASSESSED? CHECK YOUR CHILD'S IEP EVERY YEAR.**

**Things Every Parent Should Know About Student Participation in Statewide Assessments Under ESSA:**

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/essa-fact-sheet-assessment-parents-2024-update.pdf>



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### Who is eligible for New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)?

Only students with **severe cognitive disabilities** are eligible for the NYSAA. The CSE/IEP team, which includes the parent/family, determines every year whether or not a student is eligible for NYSAA based on the following criteria:

- has a severe cognitive disability; **and**
- significant deficits in communication/language; **and**
- significant deficits in adaptive behavior; **and**
- needs a highly specialized educational program focused on life skills, as well as academics; **and**
- needs extra support, for example: assistive technology, personal care services, health/medical services, or behavioral intervention.

**To be eligible for NYSAA, a student MUST meet ALL the criteria. To learn more, please click on the following links:**

Eligibility and Participation Criteria - NYSAA:

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/8-eligibilityb-19.pdf>

Memo: Eligibility Criteria for Participation in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA): <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/9-policy-brief-19rev.pdf>

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### How do I know if my child is assessed using alternate or standard assessments?

Go to this section of your child’s IEP:

PARTICIPATION IN STATE AND DISTRICT-WIDE ASSESSMENTS (TO BE COMPLETED FOR PRESCHOOL STUDENTS ONLY IF THERE IS AN ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR NONDISABLED PRESCHOOL STUDENTS)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student will participate in the same State and district-wide assessments of student achievement that are administered to general education students.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student will participate in an alternate assessment on a particular State or district-wide assessment of student achievement. Identify the alternate assessment:
Statement of why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment and why the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the student:	

### **When do I need to know about NYSAA?**

- Ideally, as soon as you realize that your child has severe cognitive disabilities, you should begin to learn about NYSAA.
- If your IEP/CSE team does not bring up how your child will be assessed, **you should bring it up.**
- If you have questions at any time about how your child's learning is measured, say something.
- Be sure to address this every single year.

### **Why do I need to know about NYSAA?**

In order to:

- Understand what information is needed to know if NYSAA is appropriate for your child
- Ensure that your child makes progress on state grade-level content standards at a reduced complexity.
- Make fully-informed decisions
- Find the most appropriate services, settings, resources, and support for your child
- Help set them up for their most successful and independent adult life
- Meet the requirements and deadlines to apply to programs that can help your child.

## **Who at my child's school can help me understand NYSAA?**

- The special education administrator or parent coordinator at your school should be able to direct you to the right person. Some people to consider are:
  - IEP Chairperson/Coordinator
  - Principal or Assistant Principal
  - Social worker or school psychologist
  - CSE representatives/SBST (school-based support team)
- If you still have questions, please reach out to your local Parent Center

## **Now that I know what NYSAA is, what is it NOT?**

- NYSAA must ONLY be considered for a child who meets all the criteria and ONLY after all options for support, accommodation, and modification are considered.
- NYSAA is not meant for a child who simply does not test well or may bring down the overall performance of a school.
- Mixed assessment models are available for students with mixed profiles.
  - A mixed mandate means that a student can take the standardized assessment for one subject (e.g., Math) with whatever accommodations they might need in place AND be assessed through NYSAA for another (e.g. ELA) subject. For more information, see: Memo: Eligibility Criteria for Participation in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA): <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/9-policy-brief-19rev.pdf>

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### What is the connection between NYSAA and the Regents Exams?

- Students who are alternately assessed do not take the Regents exams and **will not be eligible for a diploma.**
- If a student can pass high school classes, they should take the standard assessments, like the Regents exams.
- There are many accommodations available to students with disabilities. For a list of possible accommodations, see: <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/testing-accommodations-students-disabilities-policy-and-tools-guide>
- Right now there are many different pathways to get a high school diploma - a student does not need to pass all the Regents exams to receive one. NY State Education Department is changing these requirements over the next few years. Check the NYSED website and, for more support, contact your local Parent Center.
- For more information:
  - High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities: [https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/graduation\\_options\\_for\\_students\\_with\\_disabilities.pdf](https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/graduation_options_for_students_with_disabilities.pdf)
  - High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities (Spanish) - Advocates for Children of New York: <https://advocatesforchildren.org/resource/opciones-de-graduacion-de-la-escuela-secundaria-para-estudiantes-con-discapacidades/>
- And here's a fillable worksheet to help you keep track: [https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/hs\\_grad\\_checklist.pdf](https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/hs_grad_checklist.pdf)

*Please note: the worksheet says 44 credits. This is only applicable in NYC. In the rest of the state, a student must earn 22 credits.*

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### **Accommodations/Language supports for the NYSAA exams:**

For more information on accommodations and language supports on NYSAA tests, check out these links:

- Accessibility Supports for Students with Severe Cognitive Disabilities Tested on the NYSAA in ELA and in Mathematics:  
<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/7-accessibility-sscd-19.pdf>
- The Provision of Oral Translations for the New York State Alternate Assessments in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science:  
<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/3-translations-19.pdf>
- Process to Medically Excuse a Student with a Severe Cognitive Disability from participation in the New York State Alternate Assessment:  
<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/state-assessment/2-medically-excused-19.pdf>
- For English Language Learners who are NYSAA eligible, schools may allow a one-time exemption from the State's ELA assessment. However, these students must take the NYSAA in all other subjects appropriate to their age-equivalent grade level.

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### How does Alternate Assessment impact my child's transition out of high school?

- If your child participates in NYSAA, they will not earn credits toward a diploma and will work on a modified version of the NY State Curriculum. When they exit high school (rather than graduate) they will receive a certificate called a Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC certificate) based on having achieved their IEP goals. This is NOT a high school diploma and is not accepted for admission to colleges, universities, the United States military, or most employers.
- Alternately assessed students still have a right to high-quality instruction! Make sure the Annual Goals in their IEP target skills they need for post-school learning, living, and employment. As a parent, you know your child the best.
- This link from the NY State Education Department can help you get started as soon as your child is 12 years old: Postsecondary Transition Planning Checklist (nysed.gov):  
<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/special-education/postsecondary-transition-planning-checklist-for-families.pdf>
- When your child turns 14, NYS **requires** the school to work with your child on transition skills and support them through the transition process, including connecting them to agencies that will support them as an adult with a disability. Pay special attention to the “Coordinated Set of Transition Activities” section of the IEP.
- Be sure to ask about Pre-ETS services (Pre-Employment Transition Services) from ACCES-VR (<https://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/pre-ets> ). These are services that are only available to students who are still in high school, anytime between 14 and the day before their 22nd birthday.
- Make sure you have contacted OPWDD (Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (<https://opwdd.ny.gov/>) and ACCES-VR (Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (<https://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr> ) and learn as much as you can about transition for your child.

- REMEMBER: Start this process early! Don't wait until your child is about to exit high school to connect!
- For more information, contact your local Parent Center.

## **What are other agencies and services that can help my child?**

It's important to get as much information as you can about the agencies that can support your child during and after their transition from high school.

- Independent Living Centers | Adult Career and Continuing Education Services | NYS Education Department:  
<https://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/independent-living-centers>
- Transition & College Access Centers (NYC only):  
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/special-education/family-resources>
- Western New York Collegiate Consortium of Disability Advocates / WNY CCDA: <https://www.wnyccda.org/>
- Parent Centers: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>
- Adult Career and Continuing Education - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR): <https://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr>
- Office of Special Education (OSE) Resource Map  
<https://map.osepartnership.org/>
- Office of People with Developmental Disabilities  
<https://opwdd.ny.gov/access-supports>
- National Technical Assistance Center (NTACT): <https://transitionta.org/>
- Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) / Regional Support/RBERNS | New York State Education Department:  
<https://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed/regional-supportrberns>
- Think College: <https://thinkcollege.net/>

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