

## SCHOOL LEADER SERIES

# Working with IEP Teams to Make State Assessment Participation and Accessibility and Accommodations Decisions

School leaders provide critical leadership to Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. Their role is especially vital when teams make state assessment participation and accessibility decisions for students with disabilities. Annually, at a minimum, a student's IEP team, which includes parents or guardians, determines which state assessment is most appropriate. The IEP team also identifies which accessibility features and accommodations a student needs, if any, to participate in the assessment. This resource focuses on information that school leaders can provide to support IEP teams as they make decisions about participation, and accessibility and accommodations, on state assessments.



It is important for school leaders to ensure that all IEP team members have the knowledge they need to make well informed decisions about state assessment participation and accessibility. It is also important that IEP teams know what to consider and what not to consider when making state assessment participation decisions and selecting accessibility features and accommodations for the state assessment.

### What should school leaders ensure IEP teams do when making decisions about state assessment participation?

It is important for school leaders to ensure that every student's IEP team:

- understands the purpose and format of each of the state's general assessments, the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS), English language proficiency (ELP) assessments, and alternate English language proficiency (alt-ELP) assessments;
- considers the possibility of the student's participation in the general assessment, with or without accommodations, before discussing the student's participation in the AA-AAAS and alt-ELP assessment;
- considers the consequences of assessment participation decisions for students with disabilities, including English learners with disabilities;
- follows state participation guidelines for the AA-AAAS and alt-ELP assessment, which limit participation to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities;
- guarantees that students taking the AA-AAAS and alt-ELP assessment are provided access to the depth and breadth of the general curriculum;
- informs parents or guardians of the consequences of participation in the AA-AAAS; and
- meets state policy requirements.

CCSSO's Assessment, Standards, and Education for Students with Disabilities (ASES) and School Leadership Development and Supports (SLDS) state collaboratives made important contributions to this document.

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## What factors must IEP teams not consider when making assessment participation decisions for students with disabilities?

The IEP team should not determine participation in state assessments solely based on:

- a particular disability;
- the student's previous low academic achievement or need for accommodations;
- the student's instructional setting or percent of time in the general education classroom;
- the student's reading level;
- expected poor performance;
- social, cultural, language, or economic differences; or
- excessive absences or anticipated disruptive behavior.

## What can school leaders do to ensure that IEP teams select appropriate accessibility features and accommodations for students with disabilities?

Provide professional development training to school members of the IEP team in: the purpose of accessibility features and accommodations; who may use them and when; and how to select appropriate instructional and assessment supports for each student with a disability, including English learners with disabilities.

Ensure that all IEP team members, including parents and guardians, have access to and understand state policies on accessibility and accommodations; provide translations and interpreting services when necessary.

Remind teams to use data-informed decision making to select accessibility features and accommodations, based on specific evidence regarding an individual student's needs, to reduce the effect of a student's disability.

## Talking Points for School Leaders

- IEP teams understand the importance of providing students with disabilities access to the grade-level curriculum and ensuring that students receive it, regardless of which test they take.
- IEP teams at our school understand what to consider and what not to consider when making assessment participation decisions.
- IEP teams at our school understand how to select accessibility features and accommodations for state tests for each student with a disability.
- IEP teams at our school respect the views of students' parents or guardians and regard them as equal partners in the assessment participation decision-making process.
- Parents or guardians have an important role in determining which accessibility features and accommodations their student will use on assessments.

School leaders should customize these talking points to meet their specific school contexts.

The information in this resource reflects the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015* (Standard #8) and *Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities*.

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