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“...a system is accountable for **all** students when it makes sure that all students **count** in the **evaluation program** of the education system.”

Thurlow, Elliott and Ysseldyke, 1998

It is the policy of the South Dakota Department of Education to provide services to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, disability, ancestry, or national origin in accordance with State Law (SDCL 20-13) and Federal Law (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

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South Dakota's State Assessment System

States throughout the country are developing assessment systems to measure student achievement during this new period of accountability for the performance of all students. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) passed by Congress now requires annual testing of children in grades three through eight and once in grades nine through twelve. In addition, the new law requires a small biennial sample of students in each state to take part in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test. South Dakota's single statewide accountability system was recently established by state legislation. The system shall hold public schools and public school districts accountable for the academic achievement of their students and shall ensure that all public schools and all public school districts make adequate yearly progress in continuously and substantially improving the academic achievement of their students.

The South Dakota Assessment System provides information for schools to use in evaluating their teaching and curriculum as well as allowing parents to monitor their child's progress. All public schools in South Dakota test students according to South Dakota Codified Law 13-3-55, which was adopted in January 1997 and amended in January 2003. This law mandates that every public school district shall annually administer the same assessment to all students in grades three to eight, inclusive, and in grade eleven. The assessment shall measure the academic progress of each student. Every public school district shall also annually administer to all students in grades five and nine an achievement test to assess writing skills. The assessment instruments shall be provided by the Department of Education. Each state-designed test shall be correlated with the state's content standards.

South Dakota's Assessment System is an aligned system consisting of standards, assessments and accountability. Academic content and achievement standards, assessments and accountability systems must apply to all public school students. An aligned system provides valuable information for all stakeholders.

- a) students benefit from a system that teaches and assesses the standards;
- b) parents are provided with information on how their child is performing according to the expectations of the standards;
- c) teachers gain insight as to the effectiveness of their instructional strategies in helping students achieve the standards;
- d) schools can assess the effectiveness of their programs in meeting the needs of the students in their school;
- e) districts benefit from the wealth of assessment data that can be analyzed to inform decision-making;
- f) communities benefit from reliable information about the success of the local district and schools in raising student achievement; and
- g) State education staff can use the information about schools and districts to identify areas of need. Technical assistance and other resources can be targeted to those schools most in need. Professional development opportunities can center on topics of concern.

State law requires that all public school students in grades 3 - 8 and 11 be assessed annually using an assessment that shall measure the academic progress of each public school student. The South Dakota State Test of Educational Progress (Dakota STEP) shall be South Dakota's state-

designed test. The assessment is used to determine individual, school-level, district-level, and statewide achievement in reaching the goal of proficiency of the state's essential core reading and math content standards. South Dakota has four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic and Below Basic. Performance descriptors have been set for reading and mathematics. These descriptors are narrative statements of academic achievement at each of the performance levels and provide students, parents, and teachers with information as to the level of mastery of South Dakota essential core content standards. Individual reports are available for the state assessments. School building and district results show how groups of students are performing and the success of the school or district in helping students meet the proficient and advanced performance levels. Those students, who are unable to participate in a statewide assessment as determined by the IEP (Individual Education Program) team, will participate in the Statewide Team-led Alternate Assessment Reporting System (STAARS).

Inclusion of All Students

Requirements for including all children in assessments are based on a number of federal laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Title I and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind (NCLB/Title I & Title III), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA). Under §200.6 Inclusion of All Students of NCLB the State must provide for the participation of all students in the grades assessed. Students eligible under IDEA and Section 504 should be provided appropriate accommodations that each student's IEP or 504 team determines are necessary to measure the academic achievement of the student relative to the State's academic content and achievement standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled. Assessment is an integral aspect of educational accountability systems that provide valuable information which benefits individual students by measuring individual progress against standards or by evaluating programs. Because of the benefits that accrue as the result of assessment, exclusion from assessments on the basis of disability generally would violate these federal laws.

Children with disabilities must be included in State and district-wide assessments of student progress with individual modifications and accommodations as needed. Participation of students with disabilities in State and district-wide assessments is not participation just for the sake of participation. Participation in these assessments should lead to improved teaching and learning. Participation in assessments goes hand in hand with access to the general curriculum. Including all children in assessment programs can help to ensure a high quality educational experience for each student by creating high educational expectations for all children and accountability for the educational results of all students. It is critically important that schools know how successful they are in preparing all students to meet high standards. Parents need to know this as well. The inclusion of all children in State and district-wide assessment programs will provide significant information for improving instruction.

According to § 300.138 of IDEA states must develop alternate assessments and guidelines for the participation of children who can not participate in state and district-wide assessment programs. The alternate assessment provides a mechanism for students, including those with the most significant disabilities, to participate in and benefit from assessment programs. South Dakota's alternate assessment is the Statewide Team-lead Alternate Assessment and Reporting System (STAARS).

Standards

- Content standards tell us what students should know and be able to do.
- Achievement standards describe the expectation of performance relative to the content standards. They help answer the question, “How good is good enough?” These standards include Performance Levels (Labels for each level of achievement), Performance Descriptors (Narrative descriptions of performance at each level), Cut Scores (Scores that separate performance levels), and Exemplars (Examples of student work that illustrates the full range of performance at each level).
- Mandated Content Standards: Language Arts, Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Course Guidelines are in place in each district that describes how the standards will be implemented into the school’s curriculum.
- Additional standards: Fine Arts, Health, Physical Education, World Languages.
- Functional Standards are available for students with disabilities not working in the general curriculum.

Assessments

SAT 10/Dakota STEP (Stanford Achievement Test (abbreviated), Edition 10 with augmented state core standards in reading and math) for grades 3 - 8, and 11

The Dakota STEP assessment is a multiple choice paper/pencil test published by Harcourt Educational Measurement. The Dakota STEP is an augmented version of the abbreviated SAT 10 designed to measure achievement in the areas of language arts, science and social science with augmented state essential core standards for reading, mathematics. The Dakota STEP is an untimed test and should be administered so that all students have sufficient time to complete it. Scanners will electronically score the Dakota STEP and scores for each subtest will be given. Students will receive percentile rank scores, which range from a low of 1 to a high of 99, on the Nationally Normed abbreviated SAT 10 in the subtests of language arts, science, social science, reading and math. One of four performance level scores (advanced, proficient, basic, below basic) will also be given for the state augmented tests of reading and mathematics.

Stanford Writing Test at grades 5 and 9

Developed by Harcourt Educational Measurement, the writing assessment provides information that can help establish an effective writing program at the school or classroom level. Four categories or writing modes are available. They are Descriptive, Narrative, Expository and Persuasive. Students write to only one of the modes and administration time is 50 minutes. The writing assessment is hand scored holistically by experienced readers. Two readers are utilized for each student paper. A third reader may be used if scores are more than one point apart. The writing assessment has a six-point rubric so a student’s score will range from a low of 2 to a high of 12.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

NAEP tests are administered to a sample of students from a variety of backgrounds in each state to get an overall picture of the nation’s and each individual state’s progress. The U.S. Department of Education funds this assessment. This test is administered to a sample of 4th and 8th grade students in every state. Performance of children in one state can be compared with the performance of children in other states. NAEP results could be used as an “independent benchmark” against which the rigor of state standards, tests and accountability mechanisms can be measured.

STAARS (Statewide Team-led Alternate Assessment and Reporting System)

In South Dakota, we have designated the STAARS as the state's alternate assessment system. In order to participate in the STAARS, students must meet specific criteria as determined by the IEP team:

- The student has an active IEP and is receiving services under the IDEA; and
- The student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum. The student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application, as illustrated in the annual goals, short-term objectives and use of functional standards; and
- The student primarily requires direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer the skills done in the naturally occurring settings of the student's life (e.g., school, community, home, vocational/career, and recreation/leisure).

The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in the alternate assessment may not result primarily from:

- Excessive or extended absence;
- Deaf/blindness, visual, auditory, and/or motor disabilities or any other specific category of disability;
- Social, cultural or economic difference;
- The amount of time receiving special education services;
- Achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers;
- Placement in an out-of-district program

Students participating in the STAARS have the opportunity to demonstrate their progress in meeting goals linked to appropriate South Dakota Functional Standards. The alternate assessment focuses on progress or lack of progress, in relation to the opportunity to learn concepts and skills. STAARS is intended to document the student's abilities rather than the student's disability. The purpose of the STAARS is to promote student learning through program improvement. Additional benefits and uses for the alternate assessment include ensuring equity in the accountability system, setting expectations or standards for student learning, communicating expectations and progress with parents and the public, driving professional development decisions and aligning resources with needs at the state, district, facility or building levels. School districts or facilities administering the alternate assessment will complete the STAARS Planning Form and companion Reporting Form for each student using the alternate assessment. The forms, when completed and results compiled will be reported by May 1 of each year to Special Education Programs.

South Dakota is currently in the process of meeting the new requirements under NCLB for alternate assessments and alternate achievement standards. A tentative timeline for the completion of this regulation is as follows:

- South Dakota is currently in the process of revising the functional standards. Workgroups of South Dakota special education and regular education teachers are utilizing the state academic content standards and creating extended alternate academic content standards. The timeline for completion is June 1, 2004.
- An examination of the alignment of the extended alternate academic content standards with the State's academic content standards in reading and math will be

conducted by the Buros Institute. Panels of South Dakota special and general education teachers will convene to make judgments about the degree to which the extended alternate academic content standards are in alignment with the State's academic content standards. Timeline for completion is July 1, 2004.

- The Buros Institute is conducting a review of the STAARS testing program to examine the technical quality. Recommendations will be made for ways to improve the technical quality and reporting. Timeline for completion and a revised STAARS ready to implement is September of 2004.
- The revised STAARS will be piloted during the 2004-2005 school year.
- A standard setting workshop will be conducted to set performance level expectations for the STAARS assessment. Panels of special and general education teachers from across the state and representing differing grade levels for reading and mathematics will be convened for a one-day workshop to set performance level cut-score values for the STAARS assessment. Timeline for completion is July 1, 2005.

Accountability

Under section 1111 (b)(2)(B), of the "No Child Left Behind" Elementary and Secondary Education Act, each State must demonstrate what constitutes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of the State, and of **all** public elementary and secondary schools and local education agencies in the State, toward enabling all students to meet the State's student achievement standards.

AYP definitions must apply the same high standards of academic achievement to all public elementary and secondary school students in the State, be statistically valid and reliable, and measure progress based primarily on the State's academic assessments. The definition must include separate annual measurable objectives for continuous and substantial improvement in **both mathematics and reading for all students and for each of the following specific groups of students: students who are economically disadvantaged, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency.**

AYP must include a timeline that ensures that all students and each subgroup meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievement no later than the 2013-2014 school year. AYP is determined for each school (structure or grade span) and each district. If AYP is not met for two consecutive years in either reading or math, a school will be placed in School Improvement in that subject area. Schools in this category will receive technical assistance from the state in order to help the school raise the level of student achievement.

Involving Students with Disabilities in South Dakota's Assessment System

We began the process of testing student progress when we built our first schools and hired our first teachers. This process of administration of a test and the use of test results is referred to as assessment. It is the process of holding someone and something accountable for the educational success of each generation of students.

In a nutshell, educational "accountability" is a system built around policies and procedures designed for informing school personnel and the general public of the direction in which the school is moving (Westat, 1994). Educational accountability asks the question, "Who will answer to whom, for what, and with what consequences?" (Erickson, 1998). Today that question takes on added significance.

Reasons for Involving Students with Disabilities in Assessment Systems

- Under President Bush's "No Child Left Behind Act", every child in grades 3-8 and one grade in high school will be tested. Holding schools accountable for the academic achievement of all subgroups ensures that no child is left behind.
- Participation will provide a clearer picture of the performance of all students, not just students who do not have disabilities;
- School improvement programs are implemented and evaluated by the results obtained from educational accountability systems. All students must be considered when making decisions about school improvement programs.
- In order to make accurate comparisons among states, districts and educational programs, participation rates of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments must be comparable across all boundaries.
- Exclusion of some students from accountability systems indicates that those students are not important and are not expected to achieve and be productive. This exclusion sends the wrong message to students with disabilities. All students are expected to achieve at high levels and to reach their potential.
- Most students who have a disability are capable of pursuing the same educational goals, as are other students. By considering individual needs and making individual accommodations most students with disabilities will be able to participate in assessment programs.

State and district assessments are used to provide information on the educational progress of students. These assessments are a key part of standard-based reform, and are used to measure the extent to which students are meeting standards. Previously, participation of students with disabilities in an educational accountability system was not mandated and not all students were being included in these assessments, resulting not only in an inaccurate picture of education but also in several unintended consequences. The amended Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA 1997) and President Bush's "No Child Left Behind", require that all students

with disabilities participate in state and districtwide assessment programs; however, participation in a state or district assessment system does not mean that all students take the same test. There are several ways in which students with disabilities can participate in assessments. These often are divided into three categories: (1) assessments taken with no accommodations, (2) assessments taken with accommodations, and (3) alternate assessments. A small percentage of students with disabilities may need to participate in an alternate state or district assessment because their educational goals are different from the majority of students, even though they may be working toward the same standards.

To get an accurate picture of where the educational system's strengths and weaknesses are, a determination must be made regarding student performance. Assessments in standards-based systems serve a number of purposes: instructional planning; measuring school and district performance; and for accountability on the part of the state, district, and school as well as the student. The quality of the educational program should be improved to ensure that all students are working toward the same standards. Where and how students work toward standards can be flexible as long as the standards remain the same.

It is important to distinguish assessment for determining special education eligibility from assessment used for educational accountability or assessment that is used to measure a student's response to instruction. Parents, teachers, administrators and students with disabilities may need to explore the reasons for each type of assessment as these new mandates are implemented in our schools. To become informed participants in the decisions that need to be made about student assessment, all stakeholders need to become knowledgeable about the reasons for assessment and the differences between assessment programs in the school. This involvement will help to increase participation of students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs in South Dakota.

Assessment Differences That Need to be Communicated

- **Evaluation for Special Education Eligibility:** Assessment information used for special education eligibility is not information that can either determine a student's response to instruction or indicate how well that student and the educational system are functioning. It is used solely to determine whether the student has a disability and to determine what level of special education services the student will need, if any are needed.
- **Classroom Testing:** Assessment information obtained in the student's academic classroom is used to determine how well a specific lesson is learned, indicates where a student's strengths or weaknesses lie, indicates which lessons need to be retaught, or can be used to determine a student's progress over a period of time. The results can also be used to redirect instruction or to indicate mastery of a subject area.
- **Accountability:** Many forms of accountability assessment are used throughout the educational system. Most are intended to provide a comparison of one student with other students or compare a school or state with other schools or states. They give stakeholders a broad picture of the status of education at a single point in time. They are not used to determine special education eligibility.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities in State and District Assessments

The IDEA 1997 not only mandates participation in state and districtwide assessments, it also asks a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to document the need for accommodating participation in those assessments. The purpose of accommodated participation is not to provide an advantage in assessment, but to accurately measure what the student knows and can demonstrate. The intent is to accurately measure the student's ability rather than to confirm that the student has a disability. An example would be to require a student who is blind to read the test materials without the benefit of Braille testing accommodations. The results of that assessment would only confirm that the student is blind; it would not measure the student's actual ability. A more common example of an accommodation is the glasses many people are allowed to wear during their driver's license test. Without that particular accommodation many people would not pass their driver's test and would not be allowed to drive. With that accommodation the test measures a person's ability rather than the person's vision problem.

There are many ways to accommodate participation in assessment programs. Some standard allowable accommodations for students on an IEP or 504 plan are Braille versions of the test, large print versions of the test, assistive devices, and interpreter services for test directions. The actual accommodations that can be provided a student are divided into five basic categories: 1) Setting; 2) Scheduling; 3) Timing; 4) Response; and 5) Presentation. Always, the intended purpose of providing an accommodation is to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged when participating in state or districtwide assessment programs. An appropriate or reasonable accommodation should not interfere with the interpretation of a student's score.

One way to determine which accommodations need to be provided when a student with a disability participates in an assessment program is to survey the student's IEP for accommodations the student receives as part of the general or special instructional programs in school. Other accommodations may be appropriate based on the conditions presented by a secure testing environment, but a student should not be provided with an accommodation that is not a part of the student's current IEP, daily instruction, classroom setting or general testing environment. The general rule is that accommodating participation in assessment programs should not be a one-time only accommodation. The accommodations should mirror the accommodations provided in the student's regular instructional program and those documented in the student's IEP, however, no accommodation should interfere with the accurate interpretation of a score.

Guidelines for Making Decisions about Accommodations

Accommodations used in the instructional process should be used, if necessary, for assessing students. Accommodations in test administration are provided to allow students with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their aptitude and achievement in testing situations rather than reflect their impairment. Although test accommodations provide students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, they do not guarantee equal outcomes. An appropriate or reasonable accommodation should not interfere with the interpretation of a student's score. For example, allowing a student with a learning disability in reading to have word problems read to him or her during the math test is an appropriate accommodation for this

student because math skill, not reading, is being assessed. However, reading the reading comprehension test to this same student would be an inappropriate accommodation because reading comprehension is the skill being assessed, not listening comprehension.

No accommodation should interfere with the accurate interpretation of a score. Professional judgment and experience play important roles in any decision concerning which accommodation is needed, the extent to which it is needed, and for which student.

Listed below are some general guidelines for the IEP or 504 teams to consider in determining accommodations for individual students.

- Does the accommodation fit the student's instructional process and areas of strength and weakness, rather than the category of disability? (For example, not all students with learning disabilities have reading problems and, therefore, not all require that math problems be read to them.)
- Does the student's IEP or 504 Plan call for the same or a similar accommodation for class work?
- Is this an accommodation that is typically provided for the student during instruction and assessment in the general classroom?
- Is the student sufficiently skilled to use this accommodation with ease or will the accommodation serve as an impediment? This question is especially pertinent when considering the use of technology or assistive technology devices. (For example, a student is allowed to use a word processor as an accommodation during testing, but the student is not sufficiently skilled to use it with ease, speed and confidence, thereby hampering his or her performance.)
- Is the accommodation **necessary** for this child? (For example, a student with ADD/ADHD who reads well may not need math problems read to him or her but may require small-group administration of the test so the teacher can keep the student on task.)

The IEP of a student with a disability must document participation in any state and districtwide assessments and indicate the accommodations to be provided. It is the responsibility of each student's IEP team to make decisions regarding participation and the type(s) of accommodation(s). Additionally, if an IEP team decides a student is unable to participate in a state or district assessment program even with appropriate accommodations; that decision, and the reasons for it, must be documented in the IEP and the team must provide the student with an alternate assessment. Currently, the only alternate assessment available to schools and facilities is the Statewide Team-led Alternate Assessment and Reporting System (STAARS). It was developed by educators across South Dakota. The revised STAARS will be available for the 2004 – 2005 school year. The assessment is available online through the South Dakota Special Education Programs at <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/Special/news/staars.htm> or by contacting local district/facility special education personnel. Information about participation and accommodations must be documented in the student's IEP that precedes the actual administration of the assessment.

Since every student is different and disabilities affect students in different ways, testing accommodations will not be universally applied. The student's IEP team can use the following guide when considering accommodations.

ALLOWABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS ON AN IEP AND/OR 504 PLAN

ALLOWABLE STANDARD ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE DAKOTA STEP	
Timing/Scheduling	
•	Time of day most beneficial to students
•	Frequent breaks within a subtest
Setting/Administration	
•	Test individually
•	Home/hospital setting
•	Environmental Modifications: Special lighting, adaptive furniture, noise buffers, carrels, special seating
•	Sign language (ASL, cued speech) for directions
Presentation Format	
•	Large print (18 pt. text)
•	Repeating directions
•	Simplifying directions
•	Visual aids (magnifiers, templates)
•	Audio amplification equipment
▪	Multiplication Chart
•	Talking calculator use allowed for Mathematics Problem Solving subtest, grades 4, 5,6,7,8 and all of grade 11(only limited text entry such as some scientific & graphing calculators)
•	Readers (only for vocabulary, math procedures, math problem solving, language, science, and social science) Readers may read the reading comprehension questions to the student as long as the student reads the passages themselves
•	Abacus for visually impaired (VI) students
•	Sign language (ASL, cued speech) for directions
•	Braille
Response Format	
•	Visual aids (graph paper, templates, rulers)
•	Special pencil, pen, pencil grip
•	Auditory aids
•	Bubbler
•	Braille
Other	
•	Augmentive, assistive, or adaptive technology

Allowable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities and 504 Students

Timing/Scheduling

- **Time of day most beneficial to students**

Some students with health problems and/or medication schedules benefit by being tested at particular times of the day (e.g., first thing in the morning, immediately following medication). It is permissible to test at a time that is most beneficial to the student.

- **Frequent breaks within a subtest**

If factors such as mental and/or physical fatigue or disruptive behavior present a problem, it is acceptable to plan breaks within one sitting of the test administration or to spread out test activities over several sittings. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that students do not have an opportunity to share and/or compare test information during breaks that are provided.

Setting for Administration

- **Test individually**

Students may be tested individually, as necessary, for teacher supervision and support and/or for the provision of other accommodations. If it is likely that a student will be easily distracted or disruptive during the test administration, it would be appropriate to test that student individually. If a student becomes disruptive unexpectedly during testing, it is permissible to remove the student from the test setting so that other students may proceed with the test undisturbed. The disruptive student should be calmed down and the test continued separately, whenever possible.

- **Home/Hospital**

If a student on an IEP or 504 plan is unable to participate in the assessment at the school, it is acceptable to send school personnel to the student to administer the test.

- **Environmental Modifications**

Students should be tested using the adaptive or special furniture that they normally use in the course of daily instruction (e.g., special tables, chairs, slant boards, etc.). Students may be tested using special lighting, amplification, or noise-buffering devices as necessary and employed for classroom instruction and as outlined in their IEPs.

Presentation Format

- **Braille and Large Print (18 pt. text)**

Braille and large-print Dakota STEP test booklets and answer documents are available for students who are visually impaired. Directions will be sent separately to test examiners administering Braille and large-print versions of the test. It is imperative that all requests for Braille and large-print tests be communicated to Ann Larsen, DOE, at 1-605-773-4693, as soon as the need for such accommodations is identified.

- **Sign Language Interpreters**

Students who are deaf or hearing-impaired may have the Dakota STEP administered individually. A sign language interpreter may assist in test administration by giving directions and clarifying information as allowed in the Directions for Administering.

- **Talking Calculators**

Talking calculators may be used as long as the student is tested individually or with the use of headphones.

- **Readers**

Readers may be provided to allow students with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their aptitude and achievement in testing situations rather than reflect their impairment. For example, allowing a student with dyslexia to have word problems read to him or her during the math test is an appropriate accommodation for this student because math skill, not reading, is being assessed. However, reading the reading comprehension test to this same student would be an inappropriate accommodation because reading comprehension is the skill being assessed. Therefore, reading the comprehension test aloud creates a listening comprehension test.

Readers may be provided when necessary for the following subtests: vocabulary, mathematics (problem solving and procedures), language, science, and social science. If the student reads the reading comprehension passages independently, then the examiner/teacher may read the questions orally to the student.

Response Format

- **Bubbler**

School personnel may **bubble** student verbal responses to multiple-choice items only. This accommodation is available for those students who are unable to mark their answers in the test booklet.

School personnel may also **bubble** responses that have been marked in the test booklet and need to be transferred to an answer document.

Special Accommodations

The U.S. Department of Education expects most students with disabilities to participate in regular statewide assessments either without accommodations or with appropriate accommodations that are consistent with the accommodations provided during regular instruction.

In exceptional circumstances, there may be a student whose disabilities are such that the allowable accommodations listed in this document will be insufficient to provide access to the Dakota STEP. In these cases, the district will need to complete the Dakota STEP Special Accommodation Consideration Request form. The South Dakota Department of Education and Harcourt will determine whether the request is for an accommodation or a modification of the Dakota STEP, and instructions will be emailed to you on how to properly code the student answer document. An allowable accommodation does not invalidate the student's score and can be coded as a standard allowable accommodation, while a modification does invalidate the student's score and must be coded as a non-standard accommodation which will yield a below basic score.

You can access the Dakota STEP Special Accommodation Consideration Request form at <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/Special/forms/index.htm>

You may email the form to Ann Larsen at ann.larsen@state.sd.us

OR

The form found at the end of Tab 4 can be completed and faxed to 773-3782.

If you have any questions call Ann Larsen at or Dawn Smith at 605-773-3678 for further assistance.

When a student participates in the Dakota STEP, Stanford Writing, or the STAARS it is very important that the district's/facility's test coordinator and special education staff work together to make sure that the student's personal information is correctly provided on the test's answer document. This process is also explained in the test coordinator's handbook. It contains samples of the demographic information that needs to be coded for **every** student. The handbook can be obtained from the local school district or facility test coordinator.

Providing an Alternate Assessment

Alternate assessments are defined as methods for measuring the performance of students who are unable to participate in state and district-wide assessment programs. Studies conducted in several states providing an alternate assessment indicate that between 5% and 10% of students with disabilities would participate in an alternate assessment. In South Dakota the actual number of students that participate in an alternate assessment is closer to 0.5% of the general student body.

Generally, an alternate assessment requires the student to demonstrate knowledge in the assessed subject area(s). All alternate forms of assessment require the student to do more than just mark their response on an answer sheet. The basic forms that alternate assessments take are as follows:

- Portfolio
- Performance-based tasks
- Essay
- Constructed-response
- Classroom presentation
- Demonstration

Most alternate assessments are not standardized. Scoring an alternate assessment can be very subjective and if it does not focus on the knowledge of the person tested, the assessment will have no value. It is important that the person(s) scoring any alternate assessment device be well trained in the use of the assessment and how to score it. The most commonly used method of scoring this type of assessment is to use a scoring rubric.

Scoring Rubrics

- Point system: Student responses are scored based on a predetermined set of points for each requested response.
- Checklists: Student performance of specific tasks are indicated and scored by checking each step completed correctly.
- Rating Scales: Analytic or holistic rating scales are used to rate either part or all of a required task or skill.

As stated previously, if an IEP team decides a student is unable to participate in a state or district assessment program even with accommodations, that decision, and the reasons for it must be documented in the IEP and the team must provide the student with an alternate assessment. Currently, the only alternate assessment available to schools and facilities is the Statewide Team-

led Alternate Assessment and Reporting System (STAARS). In order to participate in the STAARS a student's IEP team will need to follow eligibility criteria guidelines that are found in the materials used to administer this alternate assessment. A checklist has been developed that can be used by a student's IEP team when considering whether a particular assessment program is appropriate for the student or whether the student will need to be provided with the alternate form of assessment, STAARS. The checklist can be found on page 22 of this manual. To facilitate the implementation of the STAARS, Special Education Programs has provided districts with the "Statewide Team-led Alternate Assessment and Reporting System: Training Manual". Individuals may contact the office at (605) 773-3678 or visit our website at <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/Special/news/staars.htm> for this information.

As a reminder, the Dakota STEP is administered in grades 3 - 8 and 11, the Stanford Writing Assessment is administered in grades 5 and 9 and the NAEP is administered every other year in grades 4 and 8. At this time, no state assessments are mandated in grades 1, 2, 10 and 12. Should your district choose to assess students in those grades, the STAARS is to be administered, as the alternate assessment for those students whom the IEP team determines cannot participate in the regular district assessment with accommodations.

Critical Issues Surrounding Participation in Assessment Programs

- Start with the premise that all students must be accounted for and participate in the regular assessment programs of the state and district.
- Decisions about participation are made by the people who know the student best.
- The IEP team takes into account the student's current instructional goals, classroom modifications, learning style, and level of functioning exhibited by the student.
- Decisions are not based on category of disability or educational placement.
- The team considers including the student in a partial assessment, covering the areas in which the student is receiving instruction.
- Before providing alternate assessments, the district staff must make sure that all other options are considered. Overuse of alternate assessments is not recommended.
- Parents and students participate in the decision making process.
- The decision is documented in the student's IEP. If the student is excluded from participation the reason is documented and the alternate form of assessment is noted.

Please note that the STAARS is the only alternate assessment system that will be provided to school districts and facilities in South Dakota. It is also the only alternate assessment system that will be accepted as a replacement for the regular statewide assessments currently used in South Dakota. Please refer to the STAARS Training Manual for information on implementing the STAARS.

"A fundamental authentic assessment principle holds that students should demonstrate, rather than be required to tell or be questioned about, what they know and can do."

Cole, Ryan and Kick, 1995

Reporting Results of State and District-wide Assessments

President Bush's "No Child Left Behind Act" and The IDEA 1997 mandates that the performance of students with disabilities participating in large-scale assessment programs be reported with the same frequency as the performance of students without disabilities. Reporting results of participation is an important change because it ensures that students with disabilities are part of the state and district accountability system. However, reporting results of participation in large-scale assessments is not as easy as it might seem. Assessment results can be used in different ways and for different purposes. Educators may want to use the results to provide information about instructional practices, while others may see it as a way to compare schools, districts and states to each other.

In order to comply with state and federal requirements, the state and each district must now report the performance of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments. Assessment data from the Dakota STEP must be disaggregated into the following specific subgroups of students: students who are economically disadvantaged, students from major racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. Reporting the data must not disclose the identification of individual children. Therefore, in South Dakota, we use a required minimum number of 10 students in a subgroup before reporting to the public is allowed. The performance scores of those students on an Individual Education Plan who take the Dakota STEP with or without accommodations and those students who took the STAARS will be aggregated with the performance scores of all other students. The performance scores from the subgroup of students with disabilities will also be disaggregated out at the local and state level. If a subgroup is not of sufficient size at the local level to produce statistically reliable results, the State must still include students in that subgroup in its State totals.

Scores for students who participate in the STAARS will be aggregated into the total scores of the subgroup for students with disabilities. Test results will not be reported out to the public if the number of students in the subgroup is fewer than 10 for those grades tested in the testable grade span or school structure. The state will also incorporate additional rules to safeguard privacy of students in certain situations. Test results for each student must be shared with the student's parents and multidisciplinary team.

The following table provides an overview of how test scores of students with disabilities will be reported:

Type of Administration:	Scores Reported:	School/Facility Summary:
Students on an IEP with No accommodation needed	All individual student scores are reported	Scores aggregated with scores of all students taking the assessment and disaggregated
Students on an IEP Provided standard test accommodations	All individual student scores are reported	Scores aggregated with scores of all students taking the assessment and disaggregated
Students on an IEP	Will receive performance	Scores aggregated with scores of

Provided non-standard test accommodations	level scores of below basic	all students taking the assessment and disaggregated
Students on an IEP Provided the alternate assessment STAARS	Will receive performance level scores of below basic based on grade level standards at this time	Scores aggregated with scores of all students taking the assessment and disaggregated

Resources

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National Center on Educational Outcomes (1994). Implementation of Alternative Methods for Making Educational Accountability Decisions for Students with Disabilities. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

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Pennsylvania Department of Education (1996). Testing Accommodations to Encourage Participation by Students with Disabilities in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. Harrisburg, PA: Division of Evaluation and Reports.

Research Connections in Special Education (1998). State-Wide Assessment Programs. Reston, VA. The Council for Exceptional Children.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA WORKSHEET

Student: _____ District: _____ Grade/Age: _____ Date: _____

The student has an active IEP and is receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-97).	YES	NO
The student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum.	YES	NO
The student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application, as illustrated in the annual goals, short-term objectives and use of functional standards.	YES	NO
The student primarily requires direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize, and transfer the skills done in the naturally occurring settings of the student's life (e.g., school, community, home, vocational/career, and recreation and leisure).	YES	NO

If you answer “NO” to any of these questions, you must administer the Dakota STEP and the Stanford Writing Assessment with appropriate accommodations when needed by the student and documented in the student's IEP.

The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in the alternate assessment MAY NOT RESULT PRIMARILY FROM:

- Excessive or extended absence;
- Deaf/blindness, visual, auditory, and/or motor disabilities or any other specific category of disability;
- Social, cultural or economic difference;
- The amount of time receiving special education services;
- Achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers;
- Placement in an out-of-district program.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE IEP TEAM'S DECISION

- ☐ The student will participate in the assessment without accommodation(s).
- ☐ The student will participate, but only with the accommodation(s) noted in the student's IEP.
- ☐ The student will not participate in the assessment and will be assessed using the alternate assessment STAARS.

“....accommodations are fundamentally about how to validly measure what students know and are able to do.”

Gerald Tindal, University of Oregon