

Facts About the Florida Alternate Assessment

Information for Teachers



2007–2008

What is the Florida Alternate Assessment?

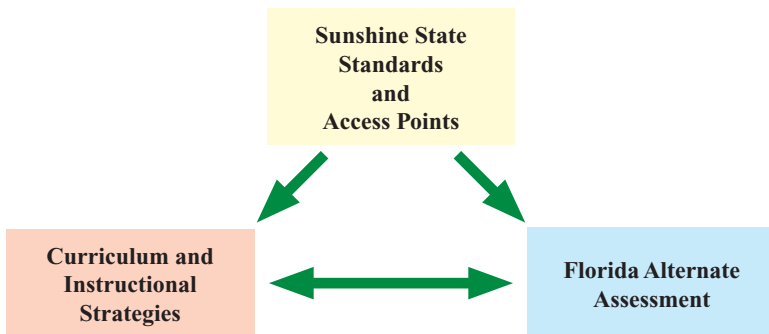
The Florida Alternate Assessment is a performance-based assessment. It is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities for whom participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) is not appropriate, even with accommodations. Using the Alternate Assessment Participation Checklist, Individual Educational Plan (IEP) teams may determine that the student should be assessed on the Florida Alternate Assessment if the following criteria are met:

- The student's demonstrated cognitive ability prevents him/her from completing required coursework and achieving the *Sunshine State Standards* even with appropriate and allowable course modifications, and
- The student requires extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application and transfer skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities (Rule 6A-1.0943 (1)(a) 1-2, Florida Administrative Code [FAC.]).

The Florida Alternate Assessment Participation Checklist can be obtained at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-1858/AA%20Check.pdf>.

What are Access Points?

The Florida Alternate Assessment is based on the *Sunshine State Standards Access Points* for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Access Points drive the curriculum, instructional strategies, and, ultimately, student outcomes as measured by the assessment.



Access Points are aligned to the *Sunshine State Standards* with reduced levels of complexity. They ensure access to the general curriculum at each grade level.

- Access Points describe the knowledge and skills required at each grade level.
- Access Points are written within three levels of complexity: Independent (In), Supported (Su), and Participatory (Pa), with Participatory level being least complex.



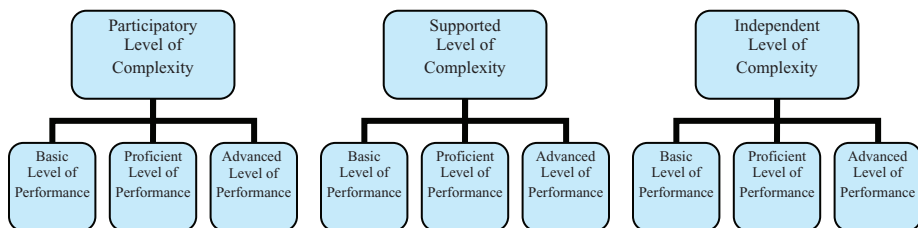
For more information about the Access Points, visit Florida's Department of Education Web site at www.flstandards.org.

What assessment results are provided to teachers and parents?

Individual student reports contain the following information:

- The grade level and content areas tested.
- The student's total score for each content area determines the level of complexity and performance level. The three levels of complexity are participatory, supported, and independent; and within these three levels of complexity are three performance levels: basic, proficient, and advanced.

To assist parents in understanding the Florida Alternate Assessment scoring system, please refer to the Administration and Scoring Process Flow Chart and the Scoring Rubric and Directions section in your Florida Alternate Assessment Test Administration Manual.



How can teachers use the assessment results?

Results of the Florida Alternate Assessment show educators how students with significant cognitive disabilities are progressing toward learning the knowledge and skills contained in the *Sunshine State Standards Access Points*.

The results can be used to assist the IEP team in developing annual goals and objectives. The IEP team should examine the results in conjunction with other information—such as progress reports, report cards, and parent and teacher observations—to see what additional instruction is needed and in what areas.

The results can also be used to improve instructional planning. For example, a student exhibiting skills within the participatory level of complexity at an advanced performance level may be ready for more difficult work and will most likely be instructed on a combination of Access Points at both the participatory and supported levels. Students' scores may also indicate a need to have the curriculum adjusted or for students to be provided with additional supports and learning opportunities.

Overall the assessment scores can be used to plan instruction in order to improve student outcomes.

Do the Florida Alternate Assessment results count toward my school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Yes, a student's alternate assessment score is included in the school and district's AYP calculation.

For more information about the Florida Alternate Assessment, contact your school district's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Administrator or the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, at 850.245.0475.



Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner of Education