



Wyoming Department of Education

Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction

2020 Grand Avenue, Suite 500

Laramie, WY 82070

Phone 307-777-5296

Fax 307-777-6719

Website www.k12.wy.us

MEMORANDUM NO. 2009-161

TO: School District Superintendents
Special Education Directors
Principals

FROM: Charlene Turner, Director of Alternate Assessment
Bill Herrera, Director of Test Development and Research

DATE: October 2, 2009

SUBJECT: 2010 Requests for Alternate Assessment
WDE-667 Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students – Alternate (PAWS-ALT)

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TIME SENSITIVE UPDATED INFORMATION

The WDE-667 is used to submit requests from schools and accredited institutions for the 2010 Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students – Alternate (PAWS-ALT). This form must be submitted to the Wyoming Department of Education on or before **October 23, 2009. Each school and accredited institution that serves students in grades 3 - 8 or grade 11 is required to complete the form.**

Submission of the WDE-667 for the spring, 2010 PAWS-ALT administration includes reporting of assurances to the Wyoming Department of Education that:

- 1) The Requirements for Participation in Wyoming's Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities were utilized by the IEP team to determine each student's participation in alternate assessment;
- 2) Communication to parents/guardians of any state or district imposed consequences of a student's participation in PAWS-ALT and use of alternate achievement standards to measure student performance are documented; and
- 3) The request for alternate assessment for each student is consistent with academic instruction based on the extended Academic Content Standards and assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards essential to the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as determined and documented by the IEP team.

When a school will not be administering the alternate assessment, PAWS-ALT, submission of the form with the assurances checked confirms that requirements stated in the assurances were utilized in the IEP team's evaluation of assessment placement for IEP students or, in rare cases, that the school is not serving any IEP students during the 2009-10 school year.

School District Superintendents
Special Education Directors
Principals
Memo No. 2009-161
October 2, 2009
Page 2

Procedure for Completing the WDE-667:

1. Obtain the form at www.k12.wy.us under the Forms Inventory link under Popular Items on the home page.
2. Complete the identifying information on the form including School ID and Name, Contact Name, Contact E-Mail and Contact Phone.
3. Read and mark as completed each of the three assurance statements listed in field 1 per guidance provided above.
4. Submit demographic information for each student at the school or institution **who will be participating** in the 2010 PAWS-ALT in fields 2 through 5. Schools not testing any students via the PAWS-ALT will only complete the above assurances portion of the form.
5. Save the electronic file.
6. Submit the file to the individual with "Upload" rights at the district office.
7. The individual with upload rights uploads the file to the Wyoming Department of Education on or before October 23, 2009.

Completed electronic data should be uploaded on the web page:
https://wdesecure.k12.wy.us/pls/collection/data_collection.home.show
Access to the file upload form requires a valid user ID and password.

The **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN WYOMING'S ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT: PAWS-ALT** is attached. This document is to be utilized by IEP teams to determine if a student with an Individualized Education Program is appropriately assessed in the Wyoming Statewide Assessment System by administering the alternate assessment, PAWS-ALT.

The information in this memorandum is to be provided to Principals, Special Education Directors, Accredited Institution Directors, Special Education Teachers who administer the PAWS-ALT, and the person with "Upload" rights in your district.

Please contact Charlene Turner cturne@educ.state.wy.us if you have questions.

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Fall 2009 Update

**Requirements for Participation
in
Wyoming's Alternate Assessment:**

PAWS-ALT

A Guide for Educators and Parents/Guardians

**The Wyoming Department of Education
Dr. Jim McBride
Superintendent of Public Instruction**





Wyoming Department of Education

Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Hathaway Building, 2nd Floor, 2300 Capitol Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002-0050
Phone 307-777-7673 Fax 307-777-6234 Website www.k12.wy.us

Superintendent of Public Instruction Foreword

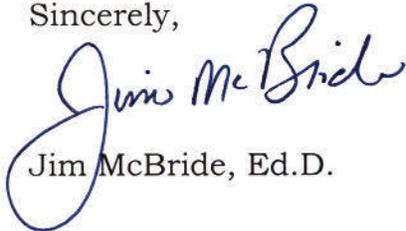
Fall 2009

Dear Educators, Parents, and Guardians:

I am pleased to present the fall 2009 update of the Requirements for Participation in Wyoming's Alternate Assessment: PAWS-ALT. The purpose of this document is to provide requirements and guidelines to educators and parents/guardians for the participation of students with significant cognitive disabilities in statewide accountability tests. Please use this document during IEP and 504 team meetings throughout the school year to make informed participation decisions for individual students that are consistent with participation requirements.

I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the policies and guidelines provided in this publication, and to contact the Standards and Assessment Unit at 307-777-7963 with any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,



Jim McBride, Ed.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Superintendent of Public Instruction Forward	
I. Overview of Wyoming’s Assessment System.....	1
A. Background.....	1
B. Definition of Student with Disability.....	2
C. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.....	2
D. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.....	3
II. Participation in State Assessments.....	3
III. Participation in Alternate Assessment.....	4
IV. PAWS-ALT Participation Criteria.....	4
A. Criteria To Determine Participation in the PAWS-ALT.....	5
B. Criteria That Do NOT Determine Participation in the PAWS-ALT.....	6
V. Calculating Adequate Yearly Progress.....	6
VI. Decision Tree for Student Participation in Wyoming’s Accountability Assessments.....	7

I. OVERVIEW OF WYOMING'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

A. BACKGROUND

Wyoming's alternate assessment, Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students – Alternate [PAWS-ALT], is designed for a small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is part of a statewide instructionally supportive assessment system which complies with the requirements of ***No Child Left Behind Act*** of 2001 (NCLB) and the ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act*** of 2004 (IDEA 2004).

Both federal and state laws require that all students with disabilities be administered assessments intended to hold schools accountable for the academic performance of students. IEP Team members must actively engage in a planning process that addresses:

- 1) The information contained within the Requirements for Participation in Wyoming's Alternate Assessment: PAWS-ALT was utilized by the IEP team to determine each student's participation in alternate assessment; and
- 2) Communication to parents/guardians of any state or district imposed consequences of a student's participation in PAWS-ALT and use of alternate achievement standards to measure student performance are documented.
- 3) The request for alternate assessment for each student is consistent with academic instruction based on the extended Academic Content Standards and assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards essential to the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as determined and documented by the IEP team.

In Wyoming, students participate in the regular Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students [PAWS] if they receive any instruction on the Wyoming Content and Performance standards which are assessed, regardless of where the instruction takes place. However, for a student with a most significant cognitive disability, Wyoming's assessment system does include an alternate assessment. The term "significant cognitive disability" is not a separate category of disability. It is a designation given to a small number of students with disabilities for purposes of their participation in the statewide student assessment system. Not all students with significant cognitive disabilities are appropriately assessed by the alternate assessment. Currently, less than 1% of Wyoming students identified with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in the alternate assessment. These students are working toward grade-level linked, extended Wyoming Academic Content Standards, which are reduced in complexity and breadth consistent with United States Department of Education guidance. They are required to participate in the alternate assessment, the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students – Alternate (PAWS-ALT). Results from

the alternate assessment are evaluated against Alternate Academic Achievement Standards to determine proficiencies for the grade in which the student is enrolled. The students are counted in the school and district accountability system for AYP.

B. DEFINITION OF STUDENT WITH DISABILITY

For the purposes of the PAWS-ALT, a student with a disability has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and **CHAPTER 7 SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**, or a plan provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Chapter 7 rules govern the operation of all special education programs and services provided to children with disabilities ages three (3) through the completion of the school year in which the child turns twenty-one (21), pursuant to Wyoming law, by a school district, by State and local juvenile and adult correctional facilities, and by other public agencies within the State of Wyoming.

C. NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT OF 2001

One of the basic reform principles of NCLB is stronger accountability for results of student achievement toward academic proficiency for all students. Through this federal legislation, assessments aimed at increasing accountability provide important information with regard to:

- how successful schools are including all students in standards-based education,
- how well students are achieving standards, and
- instructional needs of specific groups of children.

State assessments are the mechanism for checking whether schools have been successfully making progress towards setting high standards for improving academic achievement in order to improve the quality of education for all students as defined by the content standards. By 2005 – 2006, Wyoming was in compliance with NCLB by providing assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics for all students, including students with disabilities, in grades 3 – 8 and grade 11. School, district, and state accountability is based on measuring success in educating all of its students and determining what needs to be improved for specific groups of students. Under the NCLB, each State establishes a definition of "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) to use each year to determine the achievement of each school district and school in achieving standards for all students and designated subgroups each year. Schools, districts, and states are held accountable for improvements on an annual basis by public reporting and ultimately through consequences if AYP is not achieved.

D. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2004 (IDEA)

IDEA specifically governs services provided to students with disabilities. Accountability at the individual level is provided through an Individualized Education Program [IEP] developed on the basis of a child's unique needs. **IDEA** requires the participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments. Children with disabilities are included in general state and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations where necessary. **IDEA** requires that the IEP include a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of state or district-wide assessments (consistent with assessment measurement constructs) of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in these assessments. The decision about a student's participation in assessment is made by the student's IEP team and documented in the IEP. To document that alternate assessment is appropriate for an individual student, the IEP team should review all important information about the student over multiple school years and multiple instructional settings (e.g., school, home, community) as well as the consequences.

II. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

All students, including all students with disabilities, are to participate in the Wyoming assessment system. **In Wyoming, students participate in the regular Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students [PAWS] if they receive any instruction on the Wyoming Content and Performance standards which are assessed, regardless of where the instruction takes place.** Students with disabilities must participate in state and district assessments using the assessment format determined by their IEP team or 504 Team by participating in one of the following:

- PAWS without accommodations
- PAWS with standard accommodations
- PAWS-ALT

The Wyoming Content and Performance Standards and the extended Wyoming Academic Content Standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities need to be carefully examined against the student's present levels of performance, opportunities to learn, and long-term goals to determine the appropriate assessment to administer to the student. IEP teams must take into consideration how the extended Wyoming Academic Content Standards and PAWS-ALT fit into the curriculum structure, graduation requirements, and eligibility for a high school diploma if a student participates in alternate assessment.

III. PARTICIPATION IN ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Students who participate in the PAWS-ALT are those whose IEP teams have determined that their achievement levels (proficiencies) will be measured against Alternate Achievement Standards. Alternate Academic Achievement Standards define grade-level performance descriptions that are reduced in breadth, depth, and complexity as compared to the Achievement Standards used to determine proficiency levels of students who participate in the general assessment, Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS). Reasons for and consequences of participation in the PAWS-ALT must be discussed and documented on the student's IEP. To this end, the submission of the WDE-667 PAWS-ALT Requests, which is the form completed in the fall of each year by each school and accredited institution, provides the following assurances as stated above to the Wyoming Department of Education that:

- 1) The information contained within the Requirements for Participation in Wyoming's Alternate Assessment: PAWS-ALT were utilized by the IEP team to determine each student's participation in alternate assessment; and
- 2) Communication to parents/guardians of any state or district imposed consequences of a student's participation in PAWS-ALT and use of alternate achievement standards to measure student performance are documented.
- 3) The request for alternate assessment for each student is consistent with academic instruction based on the extended Wyoming Academic Content Standards and assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards essential to the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as determined and documented by the IEP team.

To aid IEP teams in their determination of individual student participation in the Wyoming state assessment system, the IEP team can guide their decision making process by evaluating the following criteria. These criteria are not provided to serve as a checklist, but rather as points of discussion by the IEP team to determine a student's eligibility in the alternate assessment, PAWS-ALT and determination of proficiency against Alternate Achievement Standards.

IV. PAWS-ALT PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

The Wyoming Department of Education has developed the following guidelines for Local Education Agencies to use in the determination of students for who PAWS, the general assessment, is inappropriate. Students in grades 3 – 8 and grade 11 must participate in either the PAWS or PAWS-ALT. The decision for which assessment is appropriate for an individual student is made by each student's IEP Team. **A student with the most significant cognitive disability will participate in PAWS-ALT if he or she meets each of the criteria described below.**

A. CRITERIA TO DETERMINE PARTICIPATION IN THE PAWS-ALT

CRITERIA TO DETERMINE PARTICIPATION IN THE PAWS-ALT	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student's access to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards is provided by the grade-level linked, extended Academic Content Standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities standards, which are reduced in breadth and depth at less complex levels with extensively modified instruction.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decisions are made by each student's IEP team by persons who are most familiar with the student's individual needs, not an administrative decision.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability, which results in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations and modifications.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student's proficiency levels are appropriately measured against Alternate Academic Achievement Standards.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student's IEP goals and objectives are based upon the grade-level linked, extended Academic Content Standards, which are reduced in breadth, depth, and complexity as compared to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student's IEP goals and objectives are based upon the grade-level linked, extended Academic Content Standards and define appropriate level of challenge given the student's present levels of performance, historical data, and rate of progress.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proficiency determined by Alternate Achievement Standards does not under challenge the student or limit the educational opportunity of the student.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The student cannot participate in the PAWS with or without accommodations, as appropriate, based on his or her IEP.
AND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The request for alternate assessment for each student is to ensure the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as determined and documented by the IEP team.

B. CRITERIA THAT DO NOT DETERMINE PARTICIPATION IN THE PAWS-ALT

CRITERIA THAT DO NOT DETERMINE PARTICIPATION IN THE PAWS-ALT

- | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program setting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Category of disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of time in the general education setting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of time in the special education setting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental level or mental age of the student |

V. CALCULATING ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

When measuring AYP, States and LEAs have the flexibility to count the proficient scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards—so long as the number of those proficient scores does not exceed 1.0 percent of all students in the grades assessed (about nine percent of students with disabilities) at the LEA and State levels.

The 1.0 percent cap does not restrict the number of students who may participate in an alternate assessment. It does limit the number of proficient and advanced scores based on alternate academic achievement standards that may be used in the calculation of AYP. A limit is required to ensure a thoughtful application of alternate achievement standards and to protect IEP teams from pressure to assign low-performing students to assessments and curricula that are inappropriately restricted in scope, thus limiting educational opportunity for these students.

School and district assessment results will be reported as one component in the accountability system and are then made available to policymakers, educators, parents, administrators, media, and the general public.

VI. Decision Tree for Student Participation in Wyoming's Statewide Assessment System

