

Introduction and Overview - NYSAA

This information describes the process for assessing the academic achievement of students with severe cognitive disabilities and for constructing a New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) datafolio documenting student performance.

NYSAA is a datafolio-style assessment measuring the achievement of students with severe cognitive disabilities toward meeting the New York State learning standards at alternate achievement levels. All students, including those with severe cognitive disabilities are required by federal law to have access to the general education curriculum. The State Education Department (the Department) has aligned Alternate Grade Level Indicators (AGLIs) with the core curriculum in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies for the administration of NYSAA. The content area subject matter assessed by NYSAA is clearly related to the grade level content. While the content is reduced in scope and complexity, students with severe cognitive disabilities are held to high expectations in order to achieve the New York State learning standards. AGLIs afford students the opportunity to experience a richer learning experience.

School districts across the United States are required to assess all students according to federal statute and State regulations. Assessment results tell educators how students are progressing and signal where changes may need to be made in curriculum and/or instruction at the district, school, and classroom levels. Teachers should assess students in all areas (academic, social, etc.) on an on-going basis as part of the instruction cycle.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and NYSAA are in part designed to raise expectations for students' academic achievement. Students with severe cognitive disabilities, when given the appropriate instruction and access to the general education curriculum, have demonstrated progress in their knowledge, skills, and understanding in academic content areas that were not initially anticipated by school personnel or parents. Higher expectations require that students with severe cognitive disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum and be provided with specialized instruction, and participate in national, state, and local assessment programs.

The general sequence of events for administering NYSAA is highlighted below. See the current NYSAA administration manual for further details.

Summary of NYSAA Events

1. Each student's Committee on Special Education (CSE) determines how a student participates in the New York State Testing Program. The CSE uses Department guidelines regarding eligibility and participation criteria to guide their decision-making.
2. For each content area assessed, the student's instructional team, headed by the Lead Special Education Teacher (teacher) provides academic instruction, so that the student can achieve proficiency on two different AGLIs in each content area assessed. Two AGLIs are required for each content area assessed (ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies).
3. Parents meet with the teacher to discuss how NYSAA is administered and which specific AGLIs will be used to assess their child. Parents also complete the Parent/Family/Guardian Survey.

4. For each AGLI, the student is required to perform one assessment task connected to the AGLI on three different dates.
5. Members of the student's instructional team conduct assessment tasks and document and rate student performance. This process includes collecting evidence on the last two dates of student performance.
6. The teacher assembles a datafolio containing the evidence of student performance and the ratings of the student's level of accuracy and level of independence. The completed datafolio is submitted to the building administrator for shipping to the scoring center on the last day of the administration period.
7. The NYSAA datafolios are scored at regional NYSAA scoring institutes.
8. Student reports are created and are made available to school districts, teachers, and parents.

WHAT IS NYSAA?

NYSAA is a datafolio assessment measuring the achievement of students with severe cognitive disabilities toward meeting the New York State learning standards. With NYSAA, students are assessed on their performance of tasks based on AGLIs that are aligned with the New York State Core Curriculum in each assessed content area. For more information about the core curriculum, please see <http://emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/cores.htm>.

WHAT IS A DATAFOLIO?

A datafolio is a collection of evidence of a student's academic performance compiled by the student's instructional team and scored by qualified scorers. Instructional team members document student performance by rating the student's level of accuracy and level of independence as they perform an assessment task on three different dates within the administration period. To verify this documentation, each datafolio must include student work products, Data Collection Sheets, photographs or video tape and/or audio tape recordings. Teachers complete the required forms and submit all documentation and evidence in a three-ring binder or fastened folder for regional scoring. Detailed information about the content of and procedures for developing the datafolio are presented in the current NYSAA administration manual.

Teachers gather data to provide parents/family/guardians, educators, and others with a better understanding of the knowledge, skills, and understanding that the student demonstrates. The students' CSE can use the datafolio to increase its knowledge and understanding of the student's achievement in meeting the learning standards. Also, the datafolio can be used by the CSE in the development of the student's individualized education program (IEP). Datafolios are scored, and results are included in the school district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of all students for school accountability and reporting purposes.

Teachers must complete and submit datafolios to school building administrators by the close of business on the last day of the administration period. No changes or additional work may be done on the datafolio after this date. Building administrators then forward all datafolios to the designated Score Site Coordinator for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or Big Five City School District to be scored at a regional location within the State by qualified scorers. Student reports are typically available in the Fall of each year.

In the Fall, every school district in New York State receives a master set of NYSAA administration materials. These materials are the primary resource and provide guidelines for administering NYSAA. Training programs and on-going technical assistance are provided to each district by a regional network of alternate assessment training network (AATN) specialists. Collegial reviews of “datafolios-in-progress” are required throughout the administration period to help teachers complete quality, scorable datafolios. Keep in mind that a collegial review does not guarantee that the datafolio will be scored. It is the responsibility of the teacher to make sure all datafolio requirements are followed.

For further information and assistance, contact your local AATN or the Regional Lead Trainer (RLT) in your area.

District and building administrators and colleagues experienced with NYSAA may also be able to answer your questions.