

Understanding the Core Curriculum's Role in Alternate Assessment

Part A: Test Design

This section provides a basic summary of the test design process and alignment with the learning standards and core curriculum.

Process Summary

In 2006–07, the Department assembled stakeholders to review the core curriculum and general education assessment blueprints for ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. This alignment work was designed to promote higher expectations for students taking NYSAA. These groups determined priorities for NYSAA based on the core curriculum, assessment blueprints, and applicability for students with severe cognitive disabilities. These steps ensure alignment with the general education curriculum.

From these priorities, the groups discussed the actual depth and breadth of the alternate assessment requirements. During these discussions, and through on-going consultation, psychometricians from the Department and Measured Progress provided direction for maintaining a valid and reliable assessment.

The design, based on the NYSAA Frameworks, is briefly stated in the requirements summary below and explained in Part B: Grade Level Content Alignment of this section. These Frameworks can be found in the current NYSAA administration manual.

Requirements Summary

The NYSAA Frameworks include an introduction and the NYSAA test blueprints outlining the curriculum content of the alternate assessment for each grade. The test blueprints illustrate for each content area (i.e., ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies) the two major areas of curriculum focus teachers must assess at each grade. These two *required components* are further divided into specific curriculum topics called *choice components*. Teachers begin constructing a student's datafolio by selecting two of the four choice components within each content area's required components.

Teachers must identify one AGLI based on the student's assessed grade level for each of the two selected choice components at the student's assessed grade level. Thus, teachers must assess a student on two AGLIs for each content area. For each AGLI, the teacher must collect and document student performance data from an assessment task administered on three separate dates. One piece of verifying evidence must be submitted for each of the last two dates of student performance.

Part B: Alignment to Grade Level Content

This section provides a basic summary of how the AGLIs and assessment tasks align with the NYS Core Curriculum.

Flow of Alignment

The NYS Board of Regents has approved a set of learning standards that guides instruction and assessment. These standards represent the core of what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of instruction. These learning standards serve as a basis for the core curriculum in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The core curriculum provides information that specifically addresses the learning standards. Each core curriculum provides teachers with a focus for instruction. The curriculum for each content area is divided into the following components:

- ELA—key ideas and standards;
- Mathematics—strands and bands;
- Science—standards and key ideas; and
- Social Studies—standards and units.

Each component in a content area lists expectations for student performance. These expectations are called grade level performance indicators or content understandings.

The NYSAA Frameworks are aligned with the core curriculum components and expectations. The grade level expectations were distilled into essences. These essences are the “big ideas” of the grade level expectations. They focus on the essential knowledge, skills, and understanding that students should acquire through instruction. The assessment is based on the essences for each component of each content area. AGLIs are used to assess students with severe cognitive disabilities in a particular content area.

NYS Learning Standards

NYS learning standards are defined as the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students can and do habitually demonstrate over time as a consequence of instruction and experience.

Core Curriculum

The Department defines the core curriculum for each grade in ELA and mathematics and for elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels in science and social studies. The core curriculum for each content area expands upon the NYS learning standards and provides a basis for instruction. When planning to administer NYSAA, teachers should first identify the student’s assessed grade level using the birth date chart. Then, the teacher should review the core curriculum for that grade. NYSAA students must be assessed using the grade level curriculum determined by to the student’s chronological age, not the grade in which the student is enrolled.

Required Components

The NYSAA required components are based on the core curriculums and are the broad, unifying, general statements of what students need to know, do, and understand.

The required components differ for each content area as indicated below.

- ELA–Key Ideas
- Mathematics–Strands
- Science–Standards
- Social Studies–Standards

Choice Components

The choice components for NYSAA derive from the core curriculums and identify the grade level expectations for each content area.

The choice components differ for each content area as indicated below.

- ELA–Standards
- Mathematics–Bands
- Science–Key Ideas
- Social Studies–Units

Grade Level Indicators (GLIs)

Grade level indicators for each content area are grade level performance expectations. These indicators are intended to assist teachers in determining the outcomes of instruction for students in that grade. Each content area names these indicators a little differently:

- ELA–grade specific performance indicators
- Mathematics–grade-by-grade performance indicators
- Science–performance indicators
- Social Studies–content understandings

Essences

Essences are the “big ideas” distilled from the grade level core curriculum on which instruction and assessment are based.

Alternate Grade Level Indicators (AGLIs)

AGLIs describe performance expectations at varying levels of complexity for students with severe cognitive disabilities. AGLIs align with the grade level expectations through the essences derived from the core curriculum. AGLIs are the “entry points” to the grade level expectations. They are the knowledge, skills, and understanding on which the student will be assessed by NYSAA. AGLIs also represent the anticipated or desired outcome of academic instruction for students with severe cognitive disabilities.