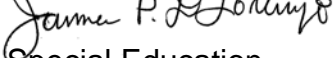




August 2006

To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public Schools
Building Principals
Administrators of Charter Schools
Directors of Approved Private Schools
Superintendents of State-Operated and State-Supported Schools
SETRC Professional Development Specialists
Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education Services

From: David Abrams 
Assistant Commissioner
Office of Standards, Assessment and Reporting

James DeLorenzo 
Statewide Coordinator for Special Education
Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities

Subject: Important Changes Regarding Administration of the New York State Alternate Assessment for 2006-07

This memorandum summarizes important changes being implemented during the 2006-07 school year regarding the chronological ages for participation of students with severe cognitive disabilities in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), administrative procedures and the content of NYSAA. These changes are required as a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I Assessment Peer Review by the United States Department of Education (USDOE). The State Education Department (SED) must align NYSAA alternate achievement standards with the grade level expectations for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science for the administration of NYSAA during 2006-07. SED is also revising NYSAA for social studies. The test administration period is from January 2 to March 9, 2007.

The appropriate participation of NYSAA eligible students, including the accurate completion of datafolios submitted for scoring, is reflected in your accountability data for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Therefore, it is important to test all students with severe disabilities on the appropriate assessment. We encourage you to review the following information carefully with your staff and to take advantage of in-service training that will be offered during the coming months.

Critical Changes in NYSAA Administration for 2006-07

- There will be one test administration period from January 2 to March 9, 2007 for ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. The formats for these assessments will be revised in accordance with the new alignment with the standards. School administrators should plan ahead for these administrations.
- Birth date criteria for participation in NYSAA have been adjusted for 2006-07 to be one year earlier than what was posted previously on the web site in spring 2006. Some students expected to take NYSAA in 2006-07 will not participate at the grade levels posted on the web in spring 2006; other students who were not expected to participate must now do so. The table contained in this memorandum will need to be referenced carefully in determining how these changes affect assessment plans for individual students.
- Previously, the elementary-level social studies component of NYSAA was administered at the fourth grade level. Beginning in 2006-07, social studies will be administered at the fifth grade level.
- NYSAA procedures regarding the evidence collected for the datafolio will no longer be different based on grade level. The amount of evidence collected at each grade level will be the same. NYSAA training specialists will provide detailed information regarding datafolio requirements to teachers during the fall training sessions.

Determining Eligibility for NYSAA and Documenting on the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

1. Only students with severe cognitive disabilities are eligible for NYSAA. The Committee on Special Education (CSE) determines whether or not a student with a severe cognitive disability is eligible to take NYSAA based on the following criteria:
 - The student has a severe cognitive disability and significant deficits in communication/language and significant deficits in adaptive behavior; and
 - The student requires a highly specialized educational program that facilitates the acquisition, application, and transfer of skills across natural environments (home, school, community, and/or workplace); and
 - The student requires educational support systems, such as assistive technology, personal care services, health/medical services, or behavioral intervention. For further information see <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/alterassessment/>.
2. The IEP must identify if the student will be participating in an alternate State assessment (i.e., NYSAA), and the IEP must state why the student cannot participate in the general State assessment and why the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the student.
3. Students eligible for NYSAA must be assessed on the grade appropriate content that is consistent with the student's chronological age in accordance with the following chart.

Age Ranges for Testing on NYSAA in 2006–07		
Assessment	Birth Date	Reaches Age Given Between September 1, 2006 and August 31, 2007
Grade 3 ELA, Math	September 1, 1997—August 31, 1998	9
Grade 4 ELA, Math, Science	September 1, 1996—August 31, 1997	10
Grade 5 ELA, Math, Social Studies	September 1, 1995—August 31, 1996	11
Grade 6 ELA, Math	September 1, 1994—August 31, 1995	12
Grade 7 ELA, Math	September 1, 1993—August 31, 1994	13
Grade 8 ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies	September 1, 1992—August 31, 1993	14
Secondary-Level ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies	September 1, 1988—August 31, 1990	17* or 18

***Note:** NYSAA-eligible students with disabilities who will be leaving school before they reach their eighteenth birthday are encouraged to take the secondary-level NYSAA before they leave school (i.e., when they are 17-years-old).

Assuring that Key Personnel Know About the Changes

NYSAA-eligible students may attend public, private, or charter schools, Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) programs, or State-operated or State-supported schools within or outside of the district. Districts that are responsible for the education of these students are required to share this memorandum and review it with appropriate staff internally and externally who are providing instruction to their students. This includes Directors of Special Education, CSE Chairpersons, Directors of Pupil Personnel Services, principals, teachers and other instructional staff, as appropriate.

Technical Assistance

An administration manual is being prepared to assist teachers with conducting the assessment and creating scorable datafolios and will be available this fall in hard copy and on line at <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/alterassessment/>. The Alternate Assessment Training Network (AATN) specialists located at your regional BOCES or within the administrative structure for the Big Five Cities will provide training sessions for teachers in late November and early December 2006. Training and administration manuals for NYSAA in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies will be available at the time of training. Because of the changes to NYSAA in 2006-07, we encourage you to send your staff, even those with prior experience in administering NYSAA, to the training sessions for your area when they are announced.

In addition to your AATN specialist, there are five Regional Lead Trainers who can assist you with accessing the training support your students' teachers may need.

- **Key Locke – Rochester/Buffalo Region** (kathryn_locke@STEV.net)
- **Linda Rohlin – Syracuse/Watertown/Binghamton Region**
(lrohlin@caybores.org)
- **Janet Stravitz – Albany/Upstate Region/NYC Regions 1, 2 and 10**
(janetstravitz@aol.com)
- **Ron Miller – District 75/NYC Regions 5, 7 and 8** (rmiller68@nyc.rr.com)
- **Robert Bedford – Long Island/NYC Regions 3, 4, 6 and 9**
(bribob@aol.com)

If you have any questions regarding data collection and reporting, please contact the Office of Information and Reporting Services at (518) 474-7965. All other questions may be directed to the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), Special Education Policy and Partnerships Unit at (518) 474-7566.

c: Jean C. Stevens
Rebecca H. Cort
Big Five City Data Coordinators
Big Five City Scan Center Coordinators
Regional Information Center Directors
Regional Information Center Coordinators
Directors of Special Education
Pupil Personnel Directors
Committee on Special Education Chairpersons
NYSAA Advisory Committee
NYSAA Score Site Coordinators
NYSAA Training Network Specialists
NYSAA Regional Lead Trainers
Special Education Quality Assurance Regional Offices