

Office of Educational Accountability

Newsletter - Issue III, September 2007

OEA Updates...

Changes to the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities

The new alternate assessment for Students with Disabilities is moving along at a fast and efficient pace. In May, numerous special and general educators worked to develop the new Extended Standards which are available at www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/assmt-waa.html. These standards, developed specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities, put an emphasis on academic content while adding functionality into the content areas.

On August 23rd -24th general and special educators reviewed all of the assessment items and suggested revisions to the items. Training for administering the new assessment will be conducted as a "Train the Trainers" workshop during the month of October. More information about the assessment and training will be available shortly.

The testing window for students participating in the WAA – SwD is January 7th – January 31st, 2008. This window has been set to allow teachers an opportunity to align their instruction to the new extended standards and to allow ample time for the development of this new assessment. Beginning next school year (2008 – 2009) the WAA-SwD testing window will occur at the same time as the fall WKCE testing window.

Update on Assessments for English Language Learners

Similar to last school year, English language learners will be participating in the WKCE. This year, however, the Office of Educational Accountability will be providing a translated script of the WKCE in Spanish and Hmong to use for those ELL students requiring language accommodations. The Decision Flowchart outlining participation and AYP information for English language levels 1 and 2 is available on the following site:
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/oea/doc/ell1-2wsas.doc>.

Test Security Training Modules

OEA has created two test security training webcasts. The first training, for District Assessment Coordinators, is a district overview of test security and the procedures involved. The main focus of this training is to improve overall understanding of test security procedures and to emphasize the importance of test security. The second training can be utilized by District and/or School Assessment Coordinators to improve the overall understanding of test security with proctors and school staff. Both trainings can be accessed through the OEA website "DAC Corner":
<http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/webcasts.html>.

OEA Calendar...

Assessment Windows for 2007 - 2008

October 8 – December 14	Testing window for NAEP Long Term Trend for 13-year-olds
October 22 – November 23	Testing window for the WKCE
December 3 – February 15	Testing window for the ACCESS for ELLs™
January 7 – January 31	Testing window for the WAA-SwD
January 7 – March 14	Testing window for NAEP Long Term Trend for 9-year-olds
January 28 – March 7	Testing window for NAEP Field Testing grades 4, 8, and 12 Testing window for NAEP Arts assessment grade 8
March 17 – May 23	Testing window for NAEP Long Term Trend for 17-year-olds

Other Important Dates

September 17	Pre-test workshop via mediasite
October 1, 4:00 PM	Deadline to update ALL WSLS records and ISES "Grade Level Placement" field for WKCE test labels
October 15	Deadline for schools participating in NAEP to complete the School Data Collection Form
October 29, 4:00 PM	Final day to update WSLS records
November 1	Deadline for schools participating in NAEP to submit their student e-file
November 26, 4:00 PM	Deadline to review and revise all ISES records before lockdown
December 3	Deadline for DACs to arrange for pick up of WKCE test materials
January 7	Record Editing System (RES) training
January 9 – January 18	Record Editing System Window

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OEA Updates...(continued)

New District Assessment Coordinators

Each year, many Wisconsin districts designate a new District Assessment Coordinator, or DAC, who serves as the central point of contact and the coordinator for statewide testing in their district. If you have been designated as the new DAC for your district there are several things that you should do.

- ✓ Complete the "DAC Update Form" located at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/daccontact.html>. This form provides us with your email address which is important in receiving timely information related to testing and accountability.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with OEA's website (located at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea>), specifically information posted in the DAC Corner. A master calendar of activities is posted under "DAC Responsibilities".
- ✓ Secure access to the Online Reporting System (ORS), which is a secure, password-protected site where you can view *Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE)* results. If you need assistance (username and/or password), contact Brad Carl at (608) 266-0890 or bradley.carl@dpi.state.wi.us.
- ✓ After logging onto ORS, check who has an account in your district and whether any of these accounts should be changed or deleted if someone has left the district and no longer requires access.

Welcome to your role as a new DAC. Don't hesitate to contact OEA staff if you have any questions at any time throughout the year. We appreciate all the work you do!

Reminder to UPDATE WSLs Data

The Department of Public Instruction creates student demographic pre-ID labels for WSAS test booklets. The labels are created using WSLs and ISES databases and will be shipped to districts before the fall 2007 test window. In order to make this process as easy as possible during the busy testing window, please do the following:

1. Update ALL WSLs records and ISES "Grade Level Placement" field before **4:00 PM on October 1, 2007**
2. Update all WSLs records before **4:00 PM on October 29, 2007**
3. Verify and lock all ISES records before **4:00 PM on November 22, 2007**

Students Moving During the Testing Window

The Office of Educational Accountability has recently created a document outlining how the mobility of students during the testing window impacts participation and accountability. This tool has been designed to assist districts and schools in following the appropriate protocol when students move between districts. This document is available on our website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/07stdsmov.pdf>.

Commercial Products Promoting Test Prep

The Office of Educational Accountability has received a number of phone calls from districts asking about the validity of commercial test prep products designed to enhance student performance on the WKCE. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not endorse these products and cautions the use of these tools. It is recommended that schools limit the amount of instructional time spent on test preparation activities. Suggestions for test preparation are available at the OEA website "DAC Corner": <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/dacnwtr.html>

New Accommodations Approval Form

The Office of Educational Accountability, working in conjunction with the Special Education Team, has developed a *WSAS Non-Standard Accommodations Request Form* in advance of WKCE testing for fall 2007. This form, which can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/dacforms.html>, should be completed and submitted to DPI any time a school or district proposes to use testing accommodations for any student that do not appear on the list of DPI-approved accommodations. This list can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/assessmatrix07.pdf>.

In selecting testing accommodations for students, please remember that NCLB accountability requirements do not allow for the inclusion of non-standard accommodations that affect the validity of test interpretation. In these instances, DPI is not able to approve the accommodation. If a school chooses to use a non-standard, non-approved accommodation for a student, the student will count as a non-participant for AYP purposes and no score will be received for those content areas where the accommodation is in use.

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"The WAA – SwD is changing from a portfolio assessment to a standardized alternate assessment. When a student with a significant cognitive disability has been determined to require an individualized education plan (IEP), why are we using a standardized assessment? Doesn't this type of assessment lead to a "standardization" of students' individualized programs?"

The changes that are being made to the WAA-SwD have been done in response to requirements of the U.S. Department of Education's Peer Review and the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*. The NCLB law requires that every state have specific standards in each grade level/grade cluster and that all students be exposed to and taught the content of these standards. Every year all states are required to have a standardized accountability assessment designed to monitor students' progress towards these standards. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, Wisconsin general and special educators recently developed extended standards which were derived from the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards. These extended standards, which contain the essence of the state standards, were then used to develop a new accountability assessment. This assessment is administered in a standardized manner and allows students to demonstrate their attainment of the extended standards through a series of performance tasks. This assessment is not designed to take the place of individualized classroom assessments that monitor students' progress towards specific IEP goals. The WAA-SwD is one piece of information that should be considered along with classroom assessments to document student academic growth.

Each student's IEP should be developed and implemented according to his/her individual needs. This is an extremely important process and we are not suggesting changes to the student's IEP development or programming process. The new WAA-SwD does not, and should not, "standardize" individual programs. It should re-emphasize the issue of state standards for all students and facilitate the development of grade-level expectations for students of all ability levels, even students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The WAA – SwD is being developed with teacher input. Wisconsin general and special educators developed the extended standards and have been involved in the development, revision, and approval of assessment items. The Department of Public Instruction is providing numerous professional development opportunities across the state and through an on-line component. If you have additional questions about this new assessment, please contact Brian Johnson, alternate assessment consultant at brian.johnson@dpi.state.wi.us or 608-267-1290.

FAQ... Test Participation

Q. Do I need to test students who are migrant or homeless?

Yes. All students enrolled at the time of testing must be assessed.

Q. Do I need to test a student who was expelled or suspended from school for the duration of the testing window?

Yes. The district/school is responsible for testing any expelled or suspended student who remains enrolled in the district during the testing window. They should be considered the same as any other student in your school.

Q. Am I accountable for testing a student housed in a juvenile facility (adjudicated student)?

Yes. All students enrolled at the time of testing must be assessed. If the student is not tested he/she counts as a non-test participant for AYP.

Q. Am I responsible for testing a student enrolled in the High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) Program?

Yes. However, a student must be 17 years old to be enrolled in an HSED program, which may place the student above grade 10. Districts may want to consider examining district policies for grade level assignments if this occurs.

Q. Who is responsible for testing students attending alternative schools or technical colleges?

The school district of enrollment is responsible for testing these students.

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Building Assessment Literacy..

"What is the difference between a test accommodation and modification?"

The terms *accommodations* and *modifications* are often used interchangeably; however, there is a significant difference between these terms. Differentiating between them is essential for providing appropriate supports to students and a valid interpretation of test scores.

Accommodations do not alter or change the construct that is being measured. Accommodations result in changes in the way an assessment is given or taken. The use of eye glasses is a great example of an accommodation. The glasses do not provide an unfair advantage to some students; rather, they allow students with vision problems to access the materials in a manner similar to their peers. Accommodations for the WKCE are provided in the assessment matrix at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/oea/pdf/assessmatrix07.pdf>. The allotted accommodations in the matrix, including practices such as changing the test setting or timing and/or the addition of assistive technology, maintain the same learning expectations for all students, yet lessen the effects of a student's language needs, impairment, and/or disability.

In contrast, *modifications* change what is measured by the assessment. For example, if administering a reading test designed to assess one's ability to decode, allowing the test to be read aloud by a proctor would change the construct being measured and be categorized as a "modification." Similarly, allowing a calculator on a computation test would change the assessment construct and be a "modification". In an assessment, modifications have a significant impact on the validity and reliability of assessment results. NCLB accountability requirements do not allow for the inclusion of modifications in a state accountability system. If modifications are used on the WKCE, students will count as non-participants for AYP purposes and no score will be received for those content areas where the modification is in use.

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