The purpose of this brochure is to answer commonly asked questions and to provide parents with an understanding of how students with disabilities are included in State-wide accountability systems.

The Reauthorizations of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** of 1997 and 2004 require that all students with disabilities participate in statewide accountability systems. The reauthorization of **Title I legislation (Public Law 107-110), the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**, further reinforces the need to include all students in accountability systems. Nebraska complies with IDEA and No Child Left Behind requirements, which mandates standards-based reform and greater accountability for all students.

What is the purpose of State Assessments?

State assessments are given for the purpose of measuring school accountability. Individual test results provide information to parents and teachers about what the child knows. State assessments are aligned with the Nebraska Academic Standards.

Who needs to participate in State Assessments?

All students must be included. Public Law 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (IDEA '97), requires that each state establish goals for the performance of students with disabilities that are consistent, to the maximum extent appropriate, with goals and standards for all students established by each state.

Title 1 legislation in the No Child Left Behind Act mandates that all students be included in accountability systems and that all students reach the level of proficient by the year 2014. Therefore, all students must be included in state assessments with the provision of appropriate and necessary accommodations.

What assessments are included?

Nebraska State Assessments are required in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 11 for Math and Reading, and grades 5, 8, & 11 for Science. All Nebraska Schools are required to give the State Assessment at these grade levels on an annual basis.

The Nebraska State Assessment (NeSA) is the test that is administered to students with standard procedures. In addition, the state assessment system includes an *Alternate Assessment* for students whose disability is such that the *NeSA* would not measure what the student is being taught even with the appropriate accommodations.

Nebraska provides the following options for students with a disability to participation in State Assessment. These are:

1. The *NeSA* in the standard manner; or

2. The *NeSA* with approved accommodations; or

3. The *NeSA Alternate Assessment.*

Who decides how a student with disabilities is involved in state assessments?

The IEP team decides. Discussion about state assessments must take place at your child's IEP meeting with you, the parent(s), present. The team must document why one assessment option is appropriate and why others are not. Decisions must be documented in the IEP regarding accommodations the student needs for success in the classroom as well as during assessment.

How does the IEP team make the decisions on which assessment option is right for the student?

Several questions need to be asked in order to make an informed decision about what assessment needs to be given and what accommodations need to be provided for a student with disabilities to successfully demonstrate what he/she knows and is able to do.

The IEP Team Decision Making Guidelines document is available at: http://www.education.ne.gov/sped/assessment/IEP_Team_Guidelines_Word_03_form.pdf

Your child's IEP manager is encouraged to use this document at the IEP planning meeting to assist the team in making the most informed decisions about state assessment options.

What is the Nebraska Alternate Assessment?

The **NeSA-AAS** is intended for students with *severe cognitive disabilities* who will be assessed against alternate achievement standards.

What are the criteria for participation in a Nebraska Alternate Assessment?

If the student's cognitive ability and adaptive behavior prevent completion of part or all of the general education curriculum; **AND**

The student requires extensive, frequent and individualized instruction in multiple settings in order to maintain or generalize skills necessary to function in school, at home, in the community, and during recreation/leisure and vocational activities; **AND**

The student's curriculum is so individualized that the general assessment will not reflect what the student is being taught, the student should participate in the NeSA-AAS.

What accommodations are allowed with the state assessment?

The Nebraska State Assessment defines specific accommodations to be used during test administration. The approved accommodations document can be found at:

http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/Revised_August_2012_NeSA_Accommodations.pdf

If an accommodation is documented in a student's IEP and is used on a regular basis to support the student's education, and is an allowable accommodation, it should be used when assessing that child. This is to allow equal access to achievement measurements not to provide an advantage for that student.

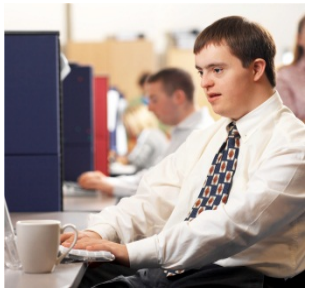
Who can I contact if I have more questions about the Nebraska State Assessment system?

Nebraska Department of Education
Assessment Office
402.471.2495

nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov
http://www.education.ne.gov/index.html

For Accommodation questions contact:
Nebraska Department of Education
Office of Special Education
402.471.2471

http://www.education.ne.gov/sped/index.html



Nebraska Department of Education

301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

Phone: 402.471.2295
Fax: 402.471.0117

Additional information and a copy of this brochure can be found at:

Nebraska Department of Education
Office of Special Education

http://www.education.ne.gov/sped/index.html

Phone: 402.471.2471 (Lincoln)
Fax: 402.471.5022
402.595.2177 (Omaha)
Fax: 402.595.2727

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NeSA-AA

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INFORMATION

FOR PARENTS

OF

STUDENTS WITH

DISABILITIES