

# Introduction and Overview of the NYSAA

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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 that documents student performance.

The NYSAA is a datafolio-style assessment that measures the achievement of students with significant cognitive disabilities toward meeting the New York State learning standards at an alternate achievement level. All students, including those with significant cognitive disabilities, are required by federal law to have access to the general education curricula. The State Education Department (the Department) has aligned Alternate Grade Level Indicators (AGLIs) with the core curricula in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies for the administration of the NYSAA. The content-area subject matter assessed by the NYSAA is clearly related to the grade-level content. While the content is reduced in scope and complexity, students with significant 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 the NYSAA are in part designed to raise expectations for students' academic achievement. Students with significant 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 may not have been initially anticipated by school personnel or parents. Higher expectations require that students with significant cognitive disabilities must have access to the general education curricula and be provided with specialized instruction, and participate in national, state, and local assessment programs.

The general sequence of events for administering the 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 the NYSAA is administered and which specific AGLIs will be used to assess their child.
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 two of the three dates of student performance.
6. The teacher assembles a datafolio containing the evidence of student performance and documents 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 made available by school districts to parents of students assessed on the NYSAA.

### **WHAT IS THE NYSAA?**

The NYSAA is a datafolio assessment measuring the achievement of students with significant cognitive disabilities toward meeting the New York State learning standards. With the 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 curricula, please see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/cores.html>.

### **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. A CSE can use the datafolio to inform its members of a student's efforts in achieving 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 NYSAA 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 Coordinators for the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or Big Five City School Districts to be scored at regional locations within the State by qualified scorers. Student reports are typically available in the Fall of each school year.

In the Fall, every school district in New York State receives a master set of NYSAA administration materials. These materials are their primary resource and provide guidelines for administering the NYSAA. Training programs and on-going technical assistance are provided to each school district by Alternate Assessment Network Training (AATN) specialists. At least one Collegial Review of each datafolio is required during the administration period. This review helps a teacher complete quality, scorable datafolios. Keep in mind that a collegial review does not guarantee that the datafolio will receive a reportable score. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that all datafolio requirements are met.

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 the NYSAA may also be able to respond to your questions.