

Guidelines for Including Students with Special Needs in State & District Assessment

Bremen High School District has moved to an inclusive state assessment program. Districts are accountable for the assessment of all students, regardless of disability type or severity, including those receiving special services via an IEP or 504 Plan.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides federal funds to assist states and schools in making a free and appropriate education available to all students identified with an educational disability as defined under IDEA. This act provides clear direction for including students with disabilities in state assessment as well as district-wide assessments.

With regard to assessment programs, IDEA requires:

- States establish goals and standards for the performance of students with disabilities that, to the maximum extent appropriate, are consistent with the goals and standards established for all children in the state.
- States establish performance indicators that can be used to assess student progress toward meeting those goals and standards.
- Children with disabilities included in state and district assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations provided as necessary.
- States develop guidelines that allow children with disabilities who cannot participate in the regular assessment participate in an alternate assessment.
- States develop and begin to conduct alternate assessments for students who cannot participate in the regular assessment program by no later than July 1, 2000.
- States report to the public on the progress of students with disabilities with the same frequency and in the same detail as they report on the assessment of non-disabled students.
- The IEPs of all students with disabilities specify how the child will be assessed (regular or alternate assessment), the reasons for this decision, and the accommodations needed.

In order to comply with federal laws and state mandates, Bremen High School District has developed the following guidelines for including students with special needs in state and district assessments.

Decisions regarding participation in state-level testing and accommodations will be made annually, based on a student's instructional goals, curriculum, current level of functioning, skills, and learning characteristics. Students with special needs will participate in the one of three ways:

- **Without Accommodations:** Students with disabilities for whom this option is appropriate would participate in assessments under the same conditions as other students. They would not use accommodations, so there would be no modifications in testing procedures.
- **With Accommodations:** Students with disabilities for whom this option is appropriate would participate, but accommodations or modifications in testing procedures would be made to prevent their disabilities from interfering with their test performance.
- **Illinois Alternate Assessment:** A very small number of students with significant disabilities will not be able to participate in the state assessments even with accommodations. These students will participate in the Illinois Alternate Assessment.

Section 504 protects the rights of students with disabilities, ensuring that free appropriate public education will be provided to each qualified student with a disability. Pursuant to Section 504 and the ADA, a person with a disability is defined as a person with a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Under these two laws, the definition of a person with a disability also includes (a) a person who has a record of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, and (b) a person who is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.

Specific accommodations and/or modifications in testing are allowed for eligible students if determined necessary and appropriate by a group of individuals knowledgeable about the student (504 team). Tests are administered so as best to ensure that, when a test is administered to a 504 eligible student, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other fact the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impairment (except where those skills are the factors that the test purports to measure).