



Assessments Technical Assistance Plan

The Maine Department of Education Assessment Team

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Purpose

Technical assistance supports School Administrative Units (SAUs) and schools with areas of challenge while also highlighting and sharing areas of excellence. Through collaborative partnerships, the Maine Department of Education (DOE) and SAUs work together to improve the opportunity for all students to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to grade level academic content. To ensure this process is purposeful and meaningful while also meeting federal requirements set forth by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), the Maine DOE has outlined a plan for what assessment technical assistance may include across the state.

ESSA includes the expectation all assessment administration practices be reviewed and supported within the State system: the general academic assessments, the general English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessments, the alternate academic assessments, and the alternate ELP assessments. Additionally, equitable access to assessment participation for all students falls within the larger framework of inclusive education. Inclusive education takes place when all students are deemed competent and worthy of a high-quality and challenging education.

The Assessment Technical Assistance Plan is a critical element in supporting SAUs in the implementation of state-required assessments. The levels of support and practices outlined in this plan are designed to support and improve the validity and reliability of student results. This procedural method of looking at SAU practices is an opportunity for Maine DOE and SAUs to work together to ensure standardized assessment administration, fairness, equity of access to the assessment, and assessment security of the highest caliber.

Federal and State Assessment Requirements

Federal Law Requirements

- All states test students annually in reading or language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. Students to be tested in science once in each of the following grade spans: 3 to 5, 6 to 9, and 10 to 12.
- Assessments must include appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners (in Maine, multilingual learners or MLs). These assessments are required as a part of federal accountability provisions.
- All states administer an annual assessment of English language proficiency for all English language learners (MLs) in grades K-12. The assessment must be aligned to the State's English language proficiency standards. The English proficiency assessments are required as part of federal accountability provisions.
- All states and selected schools to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP is administered to a sample of students, not to every student, in a state. Mathematics and reading assessments are administered every other year; other NAEP subject assessments are administered more intermittently. NAEP is often referred to as "The Nation's Report Card." It measures trends in national student performance over the past 30 years and allows student achievement comparisons across states.

Additionally, the State provides for the participation all students in such assessments, including appropriate accommodations, such as interoperability with assistive technology, for children with disabilities (as defined in section 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1401(3))))). A State must also provide an alternate assessment aligned with the challenging State academic standards and alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, necessary to measure the achievement of such children.

State Law Requirements

The commissioner shall establish a statewide assessment program to measure and evaluate on a continuing basis the academic achievements of students on the accountability standards set forth in [section 6209](#) and in department rules implementing that section and other curricular requirements. This assessment applies to students in the public elementary and secondary schools, in public charter schools, as that term is defined in [section 2401, subsection 9](#), and in all private schools approved for tuition whose school enrollments include at least 60% publicly funded students. The assessment program must be adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities as defined in [section 7001, subsection 1-A](#) or other students as defined under rules by the commissioner.

Statewide Assessment Technical Assistance – Levels of Support

There are three levels of technical assistance provided to Maine SAUs. Below, the selection criteria (if applicable) are described at each level:

Level 1 – All Maine Educational Assessments

Level 1 technical assistance is available upon request to all Maine SAUs. SAU District Assessment Coordinators and administrators can reach out to the appropriate Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator requesting assistance based on local need. Assistance can be provided in the form of virtual/in-person meetings, on-site training, support with developing resources, etc. Maine SAUs can also request an in-person assessment observation by a Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator.

To request targeted Level 1 technical assistance, please complete the following request form. A team member will follow up within two weeks of receipt:

[Technical Assistance Request Form](#)

Level 2 – All Maine Educational Assessments

Level 2 technical assistance is assigned based on a 10-year, randomly selected cohort cycle. The Maine DOE Assessment Team is required to provide assessment technical assistance and monitor the reliable and valid administration of state assessments across Maine.

SAUs randomly selected for the upcoming cohort year will complete the following steps:

- ✓ After receiving the initial email notification, set up a virtual meeting with the Maine DOE Assessment Team to walk through requirements.
- ✓ During the initial meeting, the SAU leadership will receive the Assessment Administration Observation Checklist Tool. The SAU will also have the opportunity to request specific support from the team, based on local need.

- ✓ During the administration window, SAU leadership will conduct at least one local observation across the Maine Educational Assessments (MEA) and submit notes via the Checklist Tool. This includes one observation of a general assessment, an alternate assessment, and where applicable an ELP assessment. These visits should be conducted across grade spans, student populations, content areas, and assessments
- ✓ Following the administration windows the Maine DOE Assessment Team will schedule a meeting with SAU leadership. This is designed to be a reflective and collaborative conversation around lessons learned, challenges, and celebrations observed during local observations.

SAUs which have been randomly selected for Level 2 will receive initial notifications at the beginning of the academic school year.

Level 3 – General Assessments in Reading, Math, & Science

Level 3 technical assistance is the highest level of support for Maine SAUs and schools. The focus of Level 3 technical assistance is participation of eligible students and secure administration of state assessments.

Participation

In Spring 2024, the US Department of Education (US ED) provided outreach to the Maine DOE Assessment Team around the immediate need for improved and targeted technical assistance related to assessment participation. The threshold established by US ED was the following:

- ✓ Schools with <80% participation in required assessments and ≥ 20 students enrolled

In response to the outreach from US ED, the Maine DOE Assessment Team established the following protocol for providing Level 3 support to the applicable Maine Schools:

- ✓ Initial virtual meeting with the school to provide confirmation of prior assessment participation, discuss challenges to participation the SAU is facing, and development of an action plan.
- ✓ The appropriate Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator will communicate and coordinate with the school leadership around timelines for action plan elements, before, during and after administration.
- ✓ During the administration window, the Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator may conduct an on-site observation of assessment administration, which will include a debrief with the school leadership following observation.
- ✓ The Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator will provide follow-up communication to the school around the participation rates of eligible students and as appropriate make arrangements for continued technical assistance.

The letter from US ED can be viewed here: [US ED Participation Letter](#)

Security

Assessment security is a critical element of the valid and reliable administration of state assessments. In the event that assessment security is violated, it calls into question the validity of student results. Therefore, technical assistance around assessment security can also be assigned level 3 support.

For detailed information around State of Maine assessment security requirements and best practices here is a link to the [Maine DOE Assessment Security Handbook](#).

Level 3, in addition to support around assessment participation and security, can also be assigned in the event of documented assessment irregularities

Level 3 – Alternate Assessments of English Language Proficiency and Alternate Assessments in Reading, Math & Science

Level 3 technical assistance is the highest level of support for Maine SAUs and schools. The focus of Level 3 technical assistance is participation of eligible students and secure administration of state assessments.

The inclusion of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, who have been found eligible to participate in an alternate assessment aligned to the state academic content standards and alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS), is a federal requirement under both ESSA and IDEA.

The annual assessment of the English language proficiency of multilingual learners is also a federal requirement under ESSA as well as the US Department of Justice Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

The Maine DOE Assessment Team collaborates with the following offices and teams across the Department to ensure all students eligible for alternate assessments and/or ELP assessments have the equitable opportunity to participate:

- ✓ Federal Monitoring Team
- ✓ State Agency Programs Team
- ✓ Transition Team
- ✓ Office of Teaching and Learning

The threshold for Level 3 support related to alternate assessments is different from that for general assessments, as less than 1% of students statewide are eligible for alternate assessments. The threshold is:

<80% participation of eligible students in alternate assessments and ≥5 students enrolled (SAU level enrollment)

>5 students with the Early Stopping Rule applied in a single SAU (alternate academic assessments only)

Any students with a Spring 2024 Test Status of **Early Stopping Rule Misapplied (ESM)** (alternate academic assessments only)

The Maine DOE Assessment Team established the following protocol for providing Level 3 support to the applicable Maine Schools:

- ✓ Initial virtual meeting with the school to provide confirmation of prior assessment participation, and ESR/ESM as applicable, to discuss challenges the SAU may be facing, and development of an action plan.
- ✓ The appropriate Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator will communicate and coordinate with the school leadership around timelines for action plan elements, before, during and after administration.

- ✓ During the administration window, the Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator may conduct an on-site observation of assessment administration, which will include a debrief with the school leadership following observation.
- ✓ The Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator will provide follow-up communication to the school around the participation rates of eligible students and as appropriate make arrangements for continued technical assistance.

It is important to note that participation of eligible students in alternate assessments aligned to alternate academic achievement standards is also now incorporated as a finding related to the monitoring process, conducted by the Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education (OSSIE). For more information, please reach out to the Federal Monitoring Team (public SAUs) or the Special Purpose Private School/State Agency Team.

Federal Monitoring Team: Monitoring.DOE@maine.gov

Special Purpose Private School/State Agency Team: sppsgss.doe@maine.gov

Local Observations

Monitoring administration of state assessments is the joint responsibility of the local assessment coordinators and the Maine DOE Assessment Team. The information collected through assessment observations provides contextual data to be used in conjunction with quantitative sources to provide a more comprehensive picture of assessment administration practices across the State.

Any irregularities observed during local review should be immediately reported as described in the Assessment Security Handbook. When reported quickly, the SAU may be able to resolve the irregularity and avoid potential downstream effects such as the invalidation of student assessment results.

All SAUs are encouraged to conduct local observation(s) and to submit the online Assessment Administration Observation Checklist Tool. The checklists are provided as tools to support the consistent administration of the assessment and in some cases, provide additional information to assist with gauging the assessment experience of the student.

A link to the online checklist can be found here: [Assessment Administration Observation Checklist](#)

A hard copy of the observation checklist is included in Appendix A of this document.

Assessment Administration

Administering assessments with fidelity to the processes, directions, and manuals ensures that valid and reliable data is available for each student. This includes following the test administrator scripts.

Training of SAU employees for the assessment administration must include supporting school assessment coordinators and the thorough training of assessment proctors. Each of the state assessments include assessment-specific manuals and training for both coordination and administration. These resources are requirements for coordinators, administrators, and proctors.

Appendix A: Sample Online Maine Science and General ELA and Mathematics Assessment Observation Form via Qualtrics Survey

** Note that the observation forms all contain similar elements that take place before, during, and after the assessment, but the individual assessment specific surveys also contain elements that are specific to the assessments. This form is the most basic form of the survey.

Assessment Administration Observation Checklist

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| School Name: | |
| Assessment Administrator: | Proctor/TA/AA(s): |
| Observer: | Assessment: |
| Date of Observation: | Grade/Subject |

| | Item | Code* | Comments |
|---|---|-------|----------|
| 1 | Instructional materials that may provide clues or answers are not visible in the room. | | |
| 2 | The desks/tables are arranged with enough space between them to minimize opportunities to review each other's work. | | |
| 3 | Desks/tables are clear of all materials except what is allowed in the assessment administrator manual. | | |
| 4 | Electronic devices were collected or otherwise stored away and unavailable for student use. | | |
| 5 | The Assessment Administrator read directions clearly, loudly, and exactly as printed in the Assessment Administration Manual. | | |
| 6 | Students worked independently of each other. | | |
| 7 | The assessment room was free of disruptions (talking, fire drills, intercom announcements). | | |

*Use Codes: NA=Not Applicable 1=Exemplary 2=Acceptable 3=Minor Issue 4=Major Issue UO=Unable to Observe

| | Item | Code* | Comments |
|----|--|-------|----------|
| 8 | Booklets/tickets were distributed to and collected from the students individually by the Assessment Administrator/Proctor(s) and not passed by students. | | |
| 9 | The Assessment Administrator answered only questions related to the directions. | | |
| 10 | Students were provided a break individually, (where applicable) during an assessment session with close supervision. | | |
| 11 | Students worked on appropriate sections of the assessment and did not return to or go forward to other sections. | | |
| 12 | All students remained quiet as everyone completed the assessment session. | | |
| 13 | Assessment tickets/booklets, answer documents, and scrap paper were never left unattended. | | |
| 14 | The assessment room was supervised at all times. | | |
| 15 | The Assessment Administrator/Proctor(s) were actively monitoring the room at all times. | | |
| 16 | Assessment signs were posted on room doors (e.g., Do Not Disturb, Electronic Devices Not Allowed, Quiet Please Assessments in Progress). | | |
| 17 | List any observed accommodations provided to students | | |

*Use Codes: NA = Not Applicable 1=Exemplary 2=Acceptable 3=Minor Issue 4=Major Issue UO=Unable to Observe

Is this the TA's first time administering the assessment?

- Yes
 No

TA's level of confidence administering the assessment.

- High
 Neutral
 Low

Does the proctor/TA/AA feel they received sufficient training and support to administer the assessment?

Yes

No

If no, please explain.

Was the student(s) provided an opportunity to participate in a practice session?

All students were provided the opportunity

Some students were provided the opportunity

None of the students were provided the opportunity

Were any of the students, or the specifically observed student observed hurrying through the assessment?

Yes

No

If yes, was it related to any of the following?

Test content

Test preparation

Student characteristic

TA/Proctor/AA behavior

Environment

Unknown

Were any of the students observed using the universal tools provided in the assessment?

Yes

No

If yes, how did the student appear to be using the tool(s)?

- Appropriately utilizing the tools
- Trying the tool out
- Playing around (tool appeared to be a distraction)

Other, please describe.

Please provide any insight including specific topics for additional assessment training offered by the Maine Department of Education.

Appendix B: Laws and Regulations Related to Monitoring

Please note that Maine DOE is taking a collaborative approach to providing the technical assistance process that is not highlighted in the monitoring requirements as described by US ED. Federal documents are likely to use the term “monitoring” rather than the term “technical assistance” used by Maine DOE.

Federal Requirements

Section 1111(b)(2)(B) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 requires the same assessment be used to measure the achievement of all public elementary and secondary school students in the state.

Section 1111(b)(2)(B) Requirements: The assessments under subparagraph (A) shall - (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (D), be

(I) The same academic assessments used to measure the achievement of all public elementary school and secondary school students in the State; And (II) Administered to all public elementary school and secondary school students in the State;

Section 1111(c)(4)(E) of ESSA indicates: (E) Annual Assessment of Achievement - (i) Annually measure the achievement of not less than 95 percent of all students, and 95 of all students in each subgroup of students, who are enrolled in public schools on the assessments described under subsection (b)(2)(v)(I). (ii) For the purpose of measuring, calculating and reporting on the indicator described in subparagraph (B)(i), include in the denominator the greater of
(I) 95 percent of all students, or 95 percent of all such students in the subgroup, as the case may be; or
(II) The number of students participating in the assessments (III) Provide a clear and understandable explanation of how the State will factor the requirement of clause (i) of this subparagraph into the statewide accountability system.

Federal statute requires that parents receive a notification indicating their right to request the districts policies and procedures regarding student participation in state and local assessments. When this information is requested, the district will provide all applicable information to families. The district should be prepared to provide families with their assessment related policies and procedures, this would include an non-participation (opt-out) procedure if the district and school has such a procedure in place.

Section 1112(e)(2)(A) of ESSA indicates: (2) Testing transparency

(A) In general At the beginning of each school year, a local educational agency that receives funds under this part shall notify the parents of each student attending any school receiving funds under this part that the parents may request, and the local educational agency will provide the parents on request (and in a timely manner), information regarding any State or local educational agency policy regarding student participation in any assessments mandated by Section 1111(b)(2) and by the State or local education agency, which shall include a policy, procedure, or parental right to opt the child out of such assessment, where applicable.

Part B. Assistance for All Children with Disabilities of IDEA indicates: Participation in assessments Sec. 300.160

(a) General. A State must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general State and district-wide assessment programs, including assessments described under section 1111 of the ESEA, 20 U.S.C. 6311, with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary, as indicated in their respective IEPs.

Additional Guidance from Maine DOE:

Maine policy and practice guidance from Maine DOE Office of Special Services provides a [Maine State Special Services Required Forms Procedural Manual](#) that includes guidance on the integration of assessment information into a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Links to Requirements:

[ESSA](#)

[20 USC Ch. 33: EDUCATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES \(house.gov\)](#)

[Title 20-A, §6202: State assessment program established; content \(maine.gov\)](#)