

Navigating the Transition

Guidance for successfully transitioning students with disabilities from instruction on a modified curriculum and participation in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) to instruction in the general curriculum and participation in the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments.

Background

The [Virginia Alternate Assessment Program](#) (VAAP) Participation Decision-Making Tool was developed to guide and support Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams in determining whether a student is appropriately assessed using Virginia's alternate assessment. Although the participation criteria remain unchanged, the [VAAP Participation Decision-Making Tool](#) was designed to facilitate a more comprehensive discussion and support informed decision-making. The implementation of the new decision-making tool may result in changes to a student's previous assessment decision, and therefore, the student may no longer qualify for the alternate assessment. Students who do not qualify for the alternate assessment should be taught at the standard grade-level curriculum and assessed using Virginia's general assessment (i.e., SOL assessments). Per the joint memo issued, students who are not enrolled in a course but are auditing the course or being instructed in only part of the content do not take the End of Course (EOC) SOL assessment. In such cases, the course title and code should reflect the instruction being provided to the student (i.e., Algebra I-Part I (SCED 02053) or General Math (SCED 02002)).

Supporting a Successful Transition

Develop systems that support access to grade-level, standards-based instruction

Establishing inclusive, sustainable learning environments to support student transitions from participation in the VAAP to the SOL will require a coordinated approach. This may include developing local policies and procedures that support access to grade-level, standards-based content, adopting inclusive educational practices that support diverse learners, and providing appropriate special education services (specially designed instruction and other supports) to facilitate a successful transition.

Ensure grade-level instruction and assessments are accessible

- Collaboration between educators, families, and paraeducators is essential. Effective collaboration allows stakeholders to work together and share their expertise, perspectives, and resources to develop an inclusive and effective education program reflective of the student's strengths, needs, and IEP goals.
- [High-Leverage Practices \(HLPs\)](#) are the foundational strategies that are essential to effective teaching and student learning and are designed to promote positive educational outcomes.
 - It is the responsibility of IEP Teams to align a student's instructional needs with their identified course of study. The HLPs can assist teams by providing a framework of effective and evidence-based strategies.

- Learning environments, instructional practices, and assessments may require adjustments to ensure all learners have meaningful access to the general curriculum to engage in learning opportunities. The use of HLPs in addition to specially designed instruction and supports identified in the student's IEP can enhance access to grade-level instruction and assessments in the general curriculum.
- Assistive technology (AT) allows students with disabilities to participate more fully in the general curriculum and to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that align with their abilities as independently as possible. The [Virginia Assistive Technology, Tools, and Strategies \(VATTS\) Considerations Guide](#) can be used by IEP Teams to facilitate the AT consideration process.

Provide high-quality, focused professional development

Professional learning opportunities are essential to ensuring educators are fully equipped to support students with disabilities in this transition, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes and more inclusive learning environments. Training topics may include:

- Specially Designed Instruction.
- Establishing a consistent, organized, and responsive learning environment (HLP 6) and integrating positive behavioral interventions and supports within academic instruction to reduce the potential for interfering behavior and increase student engagement.
- Utilizing HLPs to plan and deliver instruction includes but is not limited to adapting curriculum tasks and materials (HLP 12), scaffolded supports (HLP 15), flexible grouping (HLP 17), and the use of accessible instructional and assistive technologies (HLP 19).
- Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to provide multiple means of engagement, ensuring content, materials, and activities are accessible to all students.
- Differentiating instruction and assessment practices to meet diverse learning needs and address gaps in student learning while simultaneously providing access to grade-level, standards-based instruction.
- Using multiple sources of data and information to inform instructional decision-making based on a comprehensive understanding of the students' strengths and needs (HLP 4).
- Understanding and applying federal and state regulations, local policies and procedures, regarding assessment participation decisions made by IEP Teams for students with disabilities and the influence of these decisions on the least restrictive environment (LRE) and their potential impact on a student's future, including access to general education curriculum and standard diploma eligibility.

Supporting Resources

Websites and Reports

- [VDOE K-12 Standards & Instruction](#)
- [VDOE Graduation](#)
 - [Credit Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [VDOE Secondary Transition Services for Students with Disabilities](#)

- [VDOE IEP & Instruction](#)
- [TTAC Online](#)
- [A Mixed Methods Study on Teaching Students Who Moved From the AA-AAAS to General State Assessment](#) (The MIDAS Project)

Online Learning Modules

- [Providing Instructional Supports: Facilitating Mastery of New Skills](#) (IRIS Center)
- Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) by Anne M. Beninghof
 - [3-Part Turn-Around Training Series on SDI](#)
 - [2-Part Training Series on SDI for Practitioners](#)
- [Teaching Diverse Learners Center](#) (Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence)

For Additional Information

Contact the Department of Special Education and Specialized Populations Office of Special Education Instructional Services at spedinstruction@doe.virginia.gov.