



GUIDANCE DOCUMENT: INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS FOR THE WRITING ALIGNED STANDARDS OF LEARNING (ASOL)

For the 2010-2011 Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), new Aligned Standards of Learning (ASOL) are being implemented for writing. A student's English VAAP collection of evidence for grades 5, 8 and 11 will now require evidence of student achievement for these new writing ASOL. This document has been prepared in an effort to provide special educators with a basic understanding of the accommodations and modifications that might be considered for use in delivering writing instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Writing is an essential component of literacy instruction for all students. To be successful readers and writers it is critical that this skill become a regular part of a student's daily instruction. Students with significant cognitive disabilities are no different, but are often at the very early stages of emerging literacy and need very specialized instruction. It is important to note that regardless of their ability, there should be no prerequisites to writing. Students do not need to be ready to write, but they may need modifications or accommodations to demonstrate their achievement in the area of writing. Literacy skills, including writing should be taught in the student's preferred mode of receptive and expressive communication. Communication and literacy instruction should not be mutually exclusive; these two important skills go hand in hand.

A different understanding of the traditional means of expressing competency in writing will be required for these students. Use of pens, pencils or computer keyboarding may not be possible for many students with significant cognitive disabilities. Augmentative and alternative writing methods will be required. Often described in research as "alternative pencils", these include, but are not limited to:

- Picture symbols with print, eye gaze systems, IntelliKeys overlays, augmentative communication devices, writing software applications, Sign Language, stamps, adaptive keyboards, adapted pens/pencils, and

manipulatives with print.

These “alternative pencils” will be the means by which a student will be able to demonstrate their achievement on the writing ASOL. Each student with a significant cognitive disability is unique and the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) should identify the specialized accommodations and modifications necessary for a student to access their curriculum. The accommodations and modifications identified in the student’s IEP will be allowed for use on the VAAP.

The use of a number of instructional strategies and modifications can also be used to make literacy instruction more effective for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These include, but are not limited to:

- Graphic Organizers, instructional scaffolding and the use of instructional print materials provided in alternate formats:
 - Large print
 - Braille
 - Audio
 - Electronic text

For more information please visit:

T/TAC Online and review the VAAP Instructional Strategies:

http://www.ttaonline.com/staff/assessment/vaap_resources.asp

Center for Literacy and Disability Studies:

<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds>

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)

<http://cast.org/>

The Access Center

<http://www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php>

For additional information and training please contact:

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Check with your regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) for training offerings and library resources:

http://www.ttaonline.com/staff/s_contactregion.asp