



How to Include Students with Disabilities in The Montana Criterion- Referenced Test (CRT)

The Requirement

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that “The state has established goals for the performance of children with disabilities in the state that...are consistent, to the maximum extent appropriate, with other goals and standards for children established by the state.” IDEA further requires that all students be included in the state’s accountability systems.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that all students reach high standards and further establishes the requirements for participation and accountability for all students in state assessments used to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP). For students, who as a result of their disability cannot participate in the state’s regular assessment, the state education agency (Montana Office of Public instruction) is required to construct and implement guidelines for their participation in an alternate test. Montana has met this requirement by creating the Criterion-Referenced Test Alternate (CRT-Alternate) for those students who are unable to participate in the regular CRT. Results from the CRT-Alternate will be included in the state accountability system on a yearly basis.

Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

The Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) is administered in Reading and Math in grades 3-8 and 10 and in Science in grades 4, 8, and 10. It is aligned to Montana content standards and measures student achievement on these state standards. The test, consisting of multiple choice, constructed response items, and math short answers, was developed using a “universal design.” As such, it allows for a broad array of standard accommodations that include accommodations in setting, scheduling, response, and presentation. A list of accommodations, both standard and non-standard, can be found in the 2013 Accommodations Guidance Memo (<http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/Assessment/CRT/TA/13Accommodations-Guidance-Memo.pdf>). The CRT is also available in large print and Braille formats.

Because of the full range of standard accommodations allowed (those that do not change the intent or content of the test), it is expected that the vast majority of students with disabilities will be able to participate in the regular CRT. In those cases where an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team may have identified an accommodation that would be defined as a non-standard accommodation (a practice that changes what the test was intended to measure), the student would still be able to participate in the regular CRT. For AYP purposes, the student is considered a non-participant, and the student’s results are not included in AYP calculations.

Criterion-Referenced Test-Alternate (CRT-Alternate)

- The Criterion-Referenced Test-Alternate (CRT-Alternate) is an evidence-based test that is aligned to Montana content standards through extended benchmarks and measures student performance based on alternate achievement standards. It is expected that only those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will participate in the CRT-Alternate and that they will participate in all content areas.
- It is important to note that the scores of students with disabilities participating in the CRT-Alternate that fall into the proficient and advanced range, for purposes of determining adequate yearly progress (AYP), are limited to the 1 percent cap as defined in the final regulations under Title 1 (reference 34 CFR, Part 200). This cap applies at both the state and district levels, but not at the school level.

Assessment Options

Available for students with disabilities to participate in the Criterion-Referenced Assessment (CRT)

- Student takes the regular CRT with no accommodations
- Student takes the regular CRT with the use of accommodations
- Student takes the CRT-Alternate

Deciding How the Student with Disabilities Will Participate

The decisions as to whether a student with disabilities will participate in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate, and what accommodations, if any, are to be provided to the student must be documented in the student's IEP prior to administration of the CRT in the spring of each year. Participation in the CRT-Alternate is determined by considering each of the following questions:

- Does the student have an active IEP and receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?
- Do the student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum?
- Do the student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application of skills, as illustrated in the student's IEP annual goals and short-term objectives?
- Does the student require direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer new skills?

If the answer is NO to any of the above questions, the student must participate in the regular CRT. If all answers are YES, the student is eligible to take the CRT-Alternate and the student is considered to be a student with a significant cognitive disability.

The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in the CRT-Alternate **may not be based on:**

- Excessive or extended absence;
- Disability category;
- Social, cultural or economic difference;
- The amount of time receiving special education services; and
- Academic achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers.

To ensure that students with disabilities participate in the CRT in the appropriate manner, schools must do the following:

- If a special education student is in grades 3-8 and 10 or in an ungraded program and is of the chronological age of a 3-8 or 10th grade student, the student's special education teacher must review the student's current IEP, ensure that the IEP appropriately documents the student's participation in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate and also addresses the other requirements (see question/answer #13) under IDEA for documenting participation in the state assessment.
- If the student's IEP does not include all of the required assessment documentation for the CRT and/or it is felt that the student may participate in the assessment in a different manner than was previously determined (e.g., instead of the CRT-Alternate, the student can participate in the regular CRT, with or without accommodations), the IEP team must reconvene to address how the student will participate. It is permissible to hold this IEP meeting through a teleconference call with IEP team participants.

NOTES

- To assist IEP teams in addressing the assessment requirements under IDEA, an eligibility worksheet is included in this document on page 6.
- It is important that the IEP team understand that the regular CRT allows for an extremely broad range of accommodations. Therefore, it is expected that the vast majority of students with disabilities will participate in the regular CRT.

Common Questions Regarding Participation of Students with Disabilities in the Criterion-Referenced Tests: CRT or CRT-Alternate

The following question/answer format is designed to assist directors of special education, school administrators, test coordinators and other school personnel in understanding how students with disabilities can participate in the state Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT and CRT-Alternate).

1. Is the CRT-Alternate aligned with state achievement standards?

Yes. The CRT-Alternate is aligned with state achievement standards, but it is designed using expanded benchmarks and thresholds of performance which are judged against alternate performance standards.

2. If a student is in an ‘ungraded’ program, how do we decide if the student will participate in the state CRT assessment?

If the student is in an ungraded program and is of the same chronological age as students in grades 3-8 or 10, then he/she must participate in the state CRT assessment for that grade.

3. Can a student with a profound disability be excused from participating in the state assessment system?

No. All students must participate. It is likely that a student with profound disabilities would be administered the CRT-Alternate. Refer to the CRT Eligibility Criteria Worksheet for determining participation in the CRT-Alternate.

4. Who decides if a student with disabilities will participate in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate?

In accord with IDEA '97 requirements, it is the IEP team that makes the decision.

5. Can the IEP team decide that a student with disabilities will not participate in the state assessment?

No. In accord with state and federal requirements, all students with disabilities must be included in the state assessment system.

6. Is reading the reading test to the student for the CRT an allowed accommodation?

Yes, if the student's IEP team has determined that this accommodation must be provided. Such an accommodation is considered to be a non-standard accommodation.

7. If the reading test is read to the student, how is the student's score reported?

Reading the reading test to the student is considered a non-standard accommodation. Therefore, for AYP purposes, the student will be considered a non-participant. The student's score will not be included in calculations.

8. If a student takes the regular CRT using a non-standard accommodation, must the student also take the CRT-Alternate in that subject area?

No. The student's participation in the regular CRT, even with the use of a non-standard accommodation, is all that is required. Students either participate in the CRT or the CRT-Alt for all content areas.

9. How will the student receive the accommodation(s) determined appropriate by the IEP team to participate in the regular assessment?

The school is responsible for establishing a process that ensures students with disabilities receive the required accommodations identified as necessary by the IEP team. It is critical that the test administrator have such information prior to test administration. When accommodations are given, they must be reported on the student answer booklet in accord with instructions in the test administrator's handbook, the test coordinators manual, and accommodations guidance.

10. What documentation is required on the IEP to address a student's participation in state-level assessments?

In accord with 34CFR 300.347, the IEP must document (identify) if the student will participate in the regular state-level assessment (CRT) or the alternate assessment (CRT-Alternate) and

- If the regular assessment (CRT): The team must also document any individual accommodations, if any, that must be provided in order for the student to participate in the regular assessment.
- If the alternate assessment (CRT-Alternate): The team must also document the reason why the regular assessment (CRT) is not appropriate for the student; and the IEP team must also ensure that the student's parents are informed that their child's performance will be based on expanded benchmarks and alternate achievement standards [reference 34 CFR 200.6(A)(2)].

If the IEP does not include all of the required assessment documentation and/or it is felt that the student may participate in the assessment in a different manner than was previously determined (e.g., instead of the alternate, the student can participate in the regular assessment (CRT) with accommodations), the IEP team must reconvene to address how the student will participate. It is permissible to hold the IEP meeting through a teleconference call with IEP team participants.

11. Are the scores of students with disabilities who participate in the CRT-Alternate assessment included in AYP calculations?

Yes. In accord with the Title I final regulations found in 34 CFR, Part 200

12. Is it permissible for a student with disabilities to take the CRT-Alternate in one but not all subject areas?

No. The CRT-Alternate must be administered in all content areas.

13. Where can I find the final regulations for the inclusion of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Title I assessments?

The final regulations can be found at the following Web site:

www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/news.html

14. Where can I find information on allowable standard and non-standard accommodations?

Accommodations Manual

<http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/Assessment/CRT/TA/13AccommodationManual.pdf>

Accommodations Guidance Memo

<http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/Assessment/CRT/TA/13Accommodations-Guidance-Memo.pdf>

CRT Eligibility Worksheet

This form is intended to assist IEP teams in determining whether the student should participate in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate and to address documentation requirements under IDEA. The IEP team must decide on which assessment (CRT or CRT-Alternate) the student will participate. This form, when completed, must be attached to the student's IEP.

Student: _____ District: _____ Grade/Age: _____

For each of the statements below, circle yes or no		
Does the student have an active IEP and receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?	YES	NO
Do the student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum?	YES	NO
Do the student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application of skills, as illustrated in the student's IEP's annual goals and short-term objectives?	YES	NO
Does the student require direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer new skills?	YES	NO

If you answer "NO" to any of the above questions, the student must participate in the regular CRT. If all answers are yes, the student is eligible to take the alternate and considered to be a student with a significant cognitive disability.

The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in the CRT-Alternate may not be based on:

- Excessive or extended absence;
- Disability category;
- Social, cultural or economic difference;
- The amount of time receiving special education services; and
- Academic Achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers.