



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Jennifer Anderson, Director, Office of Early Learning and Literacy
Elizabeth Jones, Director, Office of Assessment
John R. Payne, Director, Office of Special Education Services

DATE: September 3, 2015

RE: 4K and 5K Readiness Assessments for Students with Disabilities

This memorandum serves as guidance on providing meaningful participation on the statewide 4K and 5K readiness assessments for students with disabilities. As you are aware, within the first 45 instructional days, all local educational agencies (LEAs) must administer the 4K and 5K readiness assessments to all students, including students with disabilities who are enrolled in 4K and 5K educational programs.

The intent of the 4K readiness assessments GOLD™ by Teaching Strategies, myIGDIs by Early Learning Labs, Inc., and PALS-Pre-K by CaseNEX and of the 5K readiness assessment *Developmental Readiness Assessment*® 2nd Edition Plus (DRA2+) is formative in nature. Most students with disabilities should be able to participate in the readiness assessments as presented, but there are some items that may be access-limited for students with specific access needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004 (IDEA) requires that individualized education program (IEP) teams determine testing accommodations that do not invalidate the results and that will ensure equal access for students with disabilities on statewide assessments.

South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) staff have worked with the three 4K readiness and the 5K readiness assessment publishers to develop guidance on administering the readiness assessments to students with disabilities. Instructions regarding access to specific subtests of the 4K and 5K readiness assessments for students who are blind, deaf, or non-verbal and use eye gaze or an Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) system to communicate are provided in the attachment to this memorandum. LEAs and IEP teams should carefully review this guidance for administering the 4K and 5K readiness assessments.

The 4K readiness assessments vary in the degree to which accessibility is afforded for some students with disabilities. After reviewing the accessibility guidance, LEAs or schools may determine the need to order a 4K readiness assessment that is different from the one selected by the LEA to ensure accessibility for a student(s) with disabilities. For example, using a 4K readiness assessment that relies heavily on picture identification is not appropriate for students who are blind or who have low vision. The LEA may determine that another readiness assessment may be more suited to meet this student's needs. According to guidelines provided by the vendor for the DRA2+, IEP teams are to refer to the child's IEP for the instructional accommodations listed on the IEP, and these will serve as the testing accommodations for the DRA2+.

In the attachment, alternative modes of presentation and/or response are recommended to provide access to the readiness assessments for students with disabilities. In some instances, due to the construct being measured, certain portions of the readiness assessment have been identified as access-limited, and it is recommended that the test administrator not administer this subtest to specific populations.

For students who have significant cognitive disabilities and may participate in future South Carolina alternate assessments, teachers should administer one of the 4K readiness assessments or the DRA2+ using guidance as provided in the attachment. The selected readiness assessments are intended to measure a student's basic skills; therefore, these readiness assessments will provide valuable instructional information to teachers of all students.

If after reviewing this attachment, the LEA determines a need to use a 4K readiness assessment to meet the specific access needs of a student(s) with disabilities that is different from the one selected by the LEA, please have your District Test Coordinator contact Susan Creighton in the SCDE Office of Assessment, screighton@ed.sc.gov. Please be aware that it may take some time to receive any alternative assessments.

If your LEA needs to obtain additional training on the use of one or more of these readiness assessments to meet the accessibility needs of students with disabilities, please contact Penny Danielson in the SCDE Office of Early Learning and Literacy, PDanielson@ed.sc.gov.

IEP Procedural Recommendations

The SCDE Office of Special Education Services, has developed a notice template, which is attached, for LEAs to send to the parents of each participating child with a disability. The notice indicates that, for the purposes of the 4K and 5K readiness assessments, the instructional accommodations outlined in each child's IEP that is in effect during the testing window, if applicable, will suffice as testing accommodations on these readiness assessments to the extent that the accommodations do not change the constructs that are being assessed. The notice also contains language that offers parents the opportunity to reconvene the IEP team at any time to review and discuss the accommodations.

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Depending upon the 4K readiness assessment administered and accommodations listed, IEP teams may need to reconvene for the purposes of determining students' meaningful participation. These instances should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Notwithstanding any changes made by an IEP team, the instructional accommodations listed on the child's IEP that is in effect during testing will serve as the testing accommodations for the 4K and 5K readiness assessments. As the state continues and expands these readiness assessments, IEP teams are encouraged to discuss these readiness assessments with parents during future routine IEP team meetings. LEAs are also reminded to ensure compliance for students covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in terms of accommodations for these readiness assessments.

We appreciate you and your staff's hard work in implementing these readiness assessments for our students with disabilities. Should you have any questions regarding IEP documentation, please contact Peter Keup, Special Education Team Lead for Oversight and Assistance, pkeup@ed.sc.gov. For additional questions, please contact Anne Mruz, amruz@ed.sc.gov, regarding testing accommodations and Jill Christmus, mchristmus@ed.sc.gov, regarding the inclusion of students who meet the eligibility criteria for alternate assessments.

cc: District Test Coordinators
District Test Coordinators for Alternate Assessment
District Special Education Directors

Attachments