

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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PENN*LINK

TO: School District Superintendents
School District Special Education Administrators
Charter School Chief Executive Officers
Charter School Special Education Administrators
Intermediate Unit Executive Directors
Intermediate Unit Special Education Directors
Approved Private School Executive Directors
Approved Private School Special Education Administrators

FROM: Ann Hinkson-Herrmann, Director
Bureau of Special Education

SUBJECT: 2018 Writing Assessment for Students Enrolled in the Pennsylvania
Alternate System of Assessment

This PENN*LINK provides clarification on the role of the local educational agency (LEA) or service provider in administering an alternate writing assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities eligible for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA).

Prior to school year 2017-18, a statewide alternate writing assessment was not available. Historically, the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) provided guidance suggesting that at the local level the teacher would administer an individualized writing assessment unique for a student and maintain it as part of the student's educational record. This practice met the federal requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act under 34 CFR § 300.160 Participation in Assessments.

The practice of maintaining an individualized writing assessment in the student's educational record has changed with the incorporation of writing items into the 2017-18 English Language Arts (ELA) PASA. While the ELA PASA continues to assess reading, it now contains ten embedded writing field test items. Students assessed on the ELA PASA will continue to receive a score and an individual student score report for reading. The student will not receive a score associated with writing this year. Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, the ELA PASA will be operational, and the student's performance in writing will be scored as part of the ELA PASA and performance will be included on the individual student score report.

As a result of writing being incorporated in the ELA PASA, the LEA and/or service provider is no longer required to administer an individualized writing assessment unique

for the student and maintain it as part of the student's educational record for purposes of the statewide alternate assessment requirement. Participation in the ELA PASA meets the federal requirement for participation in an alternate writing assessment. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams may continue to use individualized writing assessments unique to the student for purposes of curriculum-based assessment and instruction or to meet the requirements of an IEP.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Lisa Hampe, Special Education Adviser for Assessment, at lihampe@pa.gov or 724.425.3000, or Lynda Lupp, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network Consultant, at llupp@pattan.net or 800.441.3215.