



Montana Comprehensive Assessment System

Alternate Accessibility Guidelines

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Alternate Montana Science Assessments

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INTRODUCTION

This document includes revisions through January 2020 and is intended to provide guidance for Montana school district personnel who must make decisions about testing special student populations on the Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA). This special student population includes students with significant cognitive disability identified as eligible for alternate assessment testing.

These *Guidelines* describe the accessibility features and accommodations available for the following assessments at this time:

- Alternate Montana Science Assessment for Grades 5, 8, & 11

The specific tools and accommodations approved by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) may change in the future if additional tools, supports, or accommodations are identified for the assessment based on experience and research findings.

Resources related to student supports and the administration of the Alternate Montana Science Assessment and Montana Science Assessment are available on the Montana Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal <https://mt.portal.cambiumast.com/>.

ABOUT THE ALTERNATE MONTANA SCIENCE ASSESSMENT

The Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA) is based on alternate academic achievement standards and is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The purpose of the AMSA is to maximize access for students with significant cognitive disabilities to the general education curriculum and to ensure that all of Montana's students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities, are included in statewide assessments and are part of the state educational accountability system. The AMSA is only for those students with documented significant cognitive disabilities and adaptive behavior deficits who require extensive support across multiple settings (such as home, school, and community). Typically, this student population consists of about 1% of the total student population.

INTENDED AUDIENCE AND RECOMMENDED USE

This document is intended for school-level personnel and decision-making teams, particularly Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, as they prepare for and implement the AMSA. The *Guidelines* provide information for educators and related services personnel to use in reviewing, selecting and administering the appropriate tools and accommodations offered to students on the AMSA test. The *Guidelines* are also intended for assessment staff and administrators who oversee the decisions that are made in instruction and assessment.

These *guidelines* apply to all AMSA-qualified students. They emphasize an individualized approach to the implementation of assessment practices for those students with significant cognitive abilities who have diverse needs and participate in large-scale content assessments. This document focuses on the tools and accommodations appropriate and offered for students taking the AMSA. It recognizes the critical connection between accessibility and accommodations in instruction and accessibility and accommodations during assessment. Students that may need additional supports or accommodations, may not necessarily qualify for the AMSA and can take the Montana Science Assessment with appropriate supports. For a comprehensive overview of tools, designated supports, and accommodations offered on the Montana Science Assessment, review the *Montana Universal Tools, Usability, and Accessibility Guidelines*.

SECTION I: ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES

WHAT ARE ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES?

Accessibility features are resources that are either provided as digitally-delivered components of the test administration system or separate from it. Accessibility features are available to all students based on student preference and selection. The accessibility features described in this section are not modifications. Accessibility features all yield valid scores that count as participation in assessments that meet the requirements of ESSA when used in a manner consistent with the *Guidelines*.

EMBEDDED ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES

The AMSA digitally-delivered assessments include a wide array of embedded accessibility features. These are available to all students as part of the technology platform by default.

[Table 1](#) lists the embedded accessibility features available to all students for computer-administered AMSA testing. It includes a description of each tool. Although these tools are available to all students, educators may determine that one or more might be distracting for a particular student, and thus might indicate that the tool should be turned off for the administration of the assessment to the student.

Table 1. Embedded Accessibility Features Available to All Students

Tool	Description
Audio Playback	Text is read aloud to the student via embedded audio files that includes audio playback of all items, passages/stimuli, and response options. Although test administration is designed primarily for one-to-one testing, some students who are able to navigate the test delivery system, independently, may be able to be tested in a small group setting. Therefore, these students need to either use headphones or be tested in a separate setting (see Separate Setting).
Expandable passages and stimuli	Each passage or stimulus can be expanded so that it takes up a larger portion of the screen.
Expandable items	Each item can be expanded so that it takes up a larger portion of the screen
Highlight text	Highlight text with the embedded feature, flashlight, pointer, highlight marker, or other means of focusing student's attention to the response options. Focusing attention must not prompt the student to the correct answer.
No Response	If no response is indicated or recorded by the student, the TA will need to access the context menu for the item and select the "No Response" option for that item. This will mark the item as a "No

Tool	Description
	Response” and the TA will be able to advance to the next test item for administration.
Zoom	A tool for making text or other graphics in a window or frame appear larger on the screen. The default font size for all tests is 14 pt. The student can make text and graphics larger by clicking the Zoom In button. The student can click the Zoom Out button to return to the default or smaller print size. When using the zoom feature, the student only changes the size of text and graphics on the current screen. To increase the default print size of the entire test, the print size must be set for the student in TIDE or set by the test administrator prior to the start of the test. This is the only feature that test administrators can set. The use of this universal tool may result in the student needing additional overall time to complete the assessment.

NON-EMBEDDED ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES

Some accessibility features may need to be provided outside of the computer test administration system. These tools, shown in [Table 2](#), are to be provided locally for those students. They can be made available to any student taking the AMSA.

Table 2. Non-embedded Accessibility Features Available to All Students

Tool	Description
Breaks	Breaks may be given as often as necessary at the discretion of the test administrator to reduce cognitive fatigue when students experience heavy assessment demands.
Magnification	Magnification allows increasing the size to a level not provided for by the zoom universal tool. This may include projection if testing is carried out in a separate setting. It may also include the use of a magnifying lens overlay.
Masking	Masking involves blocking off content that is not of immediate need or that may be distracting to the student. This can be done through the embedded onscreen feature or with an external manipulative such as a piece of paper. Students are able to focus their attention on a specific part of the answer option or item by masking.
Noise Buffers	Ear mufflers, white noise, and/or other equipment used to block external sounds.
Timing or scheduling	Students can be tested during their optimal time of day. Scheduling should account for a student who requires frequent breaks and rest periods, over an extended time period.
Translated test directions	Students who have limited English language skills can receive test directions in another language if this support is provided by a bi-literate adult trained in the administration of the AMSA.
Separate Setting	Test location is altered so that the student is tested in a setting different from that made available for most students. The AMSA is designed to be primarily administered in a one-to-one setting. Students who are easily distracted in the regular classroom setting, may need an alternate location to be able to take the assessment. Audio is a universal tool for these assessments, therefore students need to either use headphones or be tested in a separate setting. Allow students time to become familiar with the new testing location.

SECTION II: ACCOMMODATIONS

WHAT ARE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Accommodations are changes in procedures or materials that increase equitable access during the test administration. The accommodations described in this section are not test modifications. Accommodations all yield valid scores that count as participation in assessments that meet the requirements of ESSA when used in a manner consistent with the *Guidelines*. They allow students to show what they know and can do. For the AMSA, these accommodations are additional supports that may be applied to aid in the interaction with, or logging of student responses into, the test delivery system. The same accommodations should be used for instruction leading up to the assessment.

The OPI recognizes that accommodations could increase cognitive load or create other challenges for students who do not need them or who have not had experience using them. Because of this possibility, a student's parent/guardian should know about the availability of specific accommodations through a parent/guardian report. This would ensure that parents/guardians are aware of the conditions under which their child participated in the assessment. Information included in the parent/guardian report should not be the basis for any educational decisions nor for documenting/reporting the use of the accommodation elsewhere (such as on a transcript).

WHO MAKES DECISIONS ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS?

IEP teams and educators make decisions about accommodations. These teams (or educators for 504 plans) provide evidence of the need for accommodations and ensure that they are noted on the IEP or 504 plan.

The IEP team (or educator developing the 504 plan) is responsible for ensuring that information from the IEP is entered into TIDE so that all embedded accommodations can be activated prior to testing. This can be accomplished by identifying one person from the team, or by providing information to the test coordinator, who enters into TIDE all accommodations needed by individual students who have IEPs or 504 plans.

ACCOMMODATIONS

[Table 3](#) lists the accommodations available for the AMSA as documented in an IEP or 504 plan. The table includes a description of each accommodation.

Table 3. Accommodations

Accommodation	Description
<p>Alternate Response Options</p>	<p>Students taking the AMSA with TA assistance may respond using the mode of communication that they use during instruction. These response modes include, but are not limited to, an oral response, pointing, eye gaze, a response card, sign language, switches, paper test responses (w/ fixed form), scribe, sign language, or an augmentative communication device. Once the student has communicated a response, the TA may enter the student's response into the system. Consistent criteria must be used as basis for student response; i.e., TA cannot take orally provided answer on first item and then switch response on the next.</p> <p>For students that require this accommodation, TAs may request supplemental printed alternate response options to be shipped to the school. Contact OPI Assessment Help Desk for this request. See Appendix A for more information on this accommodation.</p>
<p>Read Aloud</p>	<p>The Read Aloud accommodation may be needed during the assessment for students who require a slower speed or more familiar-sounding audio delivery than is currently available via the online platform. If this accommodation is provided to a student, the in-test audio must first be played for the student via the Test Delivery System with the TA listening carefully to the script as it is read aloud. The TA may then carefully reread or restate the passage, question, and/or answer option(s) exactly as read aloud by the in-test audio. TAs must not make any changes, additions or deletions, intonation, or emphases that might inadvertently lead a student to the correct response.</p>
<p>Scribe</p>	<p>Students either indicate their response or do not respond to a test item and the Test Administrator then enters a [No Response] or the student's indicated response into the data entry interface. Responses must be entered as directly observed or represented verbatim. If a TA anticipates that their student will be non-responsive during testing the Scribe accommodation should be requested so that the [No Response] option may be entered by the TA for items to which the student is non-responsive.</p>

Accommodation	Description
Sign Language	Test content is translated into Sign Language. Human signer and the signed test content are viewed on the same screen. Some students who are deaf or hard of hearing and who typically use Sign Language may need this accommodation when accessing text-based content in the assessment. The use of this accommodation may result in the student needing additional overall time to complete the assessment. For many students who are deaf or hard of hearing, viewing signs is the only way to access information presented orally.

**APPENDIX A. ALTERNATE RESPONSE OPTIONS
ACCOMMODATION (PAPER SUPPLEMENTS)**

For students that require the alternate response options accommodation, supplemental paper materials to use to support the AMSA response options are available for request. This accommodation **must** be requested and approved by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Answer option cards and test visuals are provided and shipped as printed materials for this fixed form of the assessment. Student responses for this test must still be directly entered into the online test delivery system via the student interface through the secure browser, after the student selects their answer to each item using the paper answer option cards that are provided. These supplemental resources are intended for students that require an accommodation using physical or manipulative materials to be able to produce a response

TAs who would like to request approval of this accommodation for one or more of their students will need to contact the Assessment Division of the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Information	
Questions about state policies	Questions about technology and the overall administration procedures
<p>Montana OPI Accommodations, Test Policy, Testing Irregularities</p> <p>Name: OPI Assessment Phone: 844-867-2569 Email: OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov</p>	<p>Montana Help Desk Monday–Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mountain Time 1-877-365-7915 MTHelpDesk@cambiumassessment.co m</p>

APPENDIX B. ALLOWABLE ADAPTATIONS AND TEST SETTING ENVIRONMENTS

TESTING CONDITIONS

TAs must provide each student an appropriate testing environment during every testing session. TAs can ensure an appropriate testing environment by providing:

1. Optimal testing conditions for every student;
2. Appropriate student positioning;
3. Allowable adaptations appropriate for individual students;
4. Accommodations as defined in the student's IEP that are consistent with AMSA testing policies.

For the AMSA test administration, students may take as long as is needed to complete the assessment within the test administration window. It is recommended that this test be administered by the TA in a one-to-one test setting with the student. Arrange to administer the test to individual students in a familiar setting that is free of noise and distractions. The following adaptations of the testing environment are allowable for AMSA test administration.

ALLOWABLE ADAPTATIONS FOR THE MONTANA ALTERNATE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT

Allowable adaptations support student access to the Alternate Montana Science Assessment. The allowable adaptations need to be provided outside of the digital delivery system. There will not be place in TIDE to record the adaptations. The AMSA is designed to be administered by the TA with the student in a one-to-one setting. Allowable adaptations may include a change in the test setting, timing, response options, or presentation that does not alter what the test measures or the comparability of student scores. The purpose of an allowable adaptation is to enable a student to participate in an assessment in a way that allows knowledge and skills to be assessed, rather than the physical or communication abilities of the student. physical or communication abilities of the student.

[Table 4](#) provides a list of current allowable adaptations available for the AMSA test administration.

If you encounter a scenario where an adaptation is required for a student but it is not addressed by the list of allowable adaptations included below, please contact the Montana Office of Public Instruction for clarification.



TAs should become familiar with the allowable adaptations and may incorporate them into instruction prior to the administration of the test.

Table 4. Allowable Adaptations

Setting	
Allowable Adaptations	
<p>The AMSA was designed to be administered in a one-to-one setting. The following adaptations are examples of those that may be made to the test setting to address the student's needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing special lighting • Providing adaptive or special furniture <p>Please note that if the assessment is administered in a location other than the classroom (e.g., a conference room or office), ensure that the seating and lighting are appropriate to support the student's needs.</p>	
Timing	
Allowable Adaptations	
<p>The AMSA is an untimed test. It is recommended that the items are administered consecutively. However, students may take as long as is needed to complete the assessment within the test administration window. If multiple items are conducted in one day, attention to cognitive or physical fatigue must be considered.</p> <p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be assessed at a specific time of day (e.g., afternoon) • be provided frequent breaks • be administered the assessment over several days with one or several sessions per day 	
Response Options	
Allowable Adaptations	Description
Non-Verbal Selection of Answer Option	The student may indicate their selected answer option non-verbally (e.g., eye gaze, pointing, Augmentative and Alternate Communication [AAC] device).
Augmentative and Alternate Communication (AAC)	<p>The student may use the communication system and/or device typically used during instruction.</p> <p>Various methods of communication may be used to supplement or replace speech or writing for those with impairments in the production or comprehension of spoken or written language. These systems of communication may be aided or unaided.</p>
Assistive Technology (AT)*	<p>Includes hardware and software tools used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Assistive technology that is listed in the student's IEP and used routinely during instruction may be used to access the content and respond to task requests during the assessment. However, providing an accommodation or access to assistive technology only during the assessment will not ensure that the student will be able to use it effectively. Prior to the assessment, a student needs opportunity to</p>
*AT applies to both Allowable Adaptations Response Options and Presentation Options	

	use the technology during daily instruction to ensure that the student can use it appropriately and effectively during both instruction and for the assessment.
Presentation Options	
Allowable Adaptations	Description
Assistive Technology (AT)* *AT applies to both Allowable Adaptations Response Options and Presentation Options	<p>Hardware and software tools used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Assistive technology that is listed in the student's IEP and used routinely during instruction may be used to access the content and respond to task requests during the assessment. However, providing an accommodation or access to assistive technology only during the assessment will not ensure that the student will be able to use it effectively. Prior to the assessment, a student needs opportunity to use the technology during daily instruction to ensure that the student can use it appropriately and effectively during both instruction and for the assessment.</p>