



Guidance for Use of Alternative Assessment for Non-Verbal Students

Idaho Reading Indicator

The purpose of this document is to provide statewide guidance to districts and schools on whether an alternative assessment for the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) may be appropriate for students who are non-verbal. Alternative assessments are designed to ensure equitable access while maintaining the validity and reliability of IRI results.

Non-verbal is defined as not non-communicative but instead rely on various non-speaking forms of communication such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, vocalizations, or Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices to express their needs and wants. The IEP addresses these communication differences by setting goals that foster understanding and interaction through a "total communication" approach.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

An alternative IRI assessment for non-verbal students may only be considered under the following conditions:

1. Student Support Plan Requirement

- The student must have an active **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** or **Section 504 Plan** that documents the student's communication needs and supports.
- The decision to use an alternative IRI assessment must be made by the student's IEP or 504 team, documented in the plan, and reviewed annually.

2. Non-Verbal Communication Needs

- The student demonstrates a documented inability to produce verbal responses necessary for participation in the standard IRI, even with appropriate accommodations.

3. Exclusions

- **English Learners** may not be considered for an alternative IRI assessment solely because they are not yet proficient in English. Lack of English proficiency is not a valid reason for alternative testing.
- Students who are able to participate in the standard IRI with accommodations should not be placed in an alternative assessment.

TEAM DECISION-MAKING

- The IEP or 504 team must first review all available options for accessibility and accommodations before recommending this non-verbal alternative IRI assessment.
- The decision must be supported by **data and documentation** of the student's communication abilities and needs.
- Alternative IRI assessments should only be considered when it has been determined that no combination of accommodations allows the student meaningful access to the standard IRI.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Once approved by the IEP or 504 team, the decision to use an alternative IRI must be entered into the student's testing plan and followed consistently during statewide IRI testing.
- The alternative assessment used must align with state-approved options and be administered according to state guidelines.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Districts are responsible for ensuring appropriate use of alternative IRI assessments. Misuse, such as placing students without IEPs or 504 plans or English Learners with limited English skills into alternative assessments, is not permitted, and the score will be invalidated.

DECISION-MAKING FLOWCHART: ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS FOR THE IDAHO READING INDICATOR (IRI)

Step 1.

Is the student non-verbal with a documented communication need?

- **No** → Student is **not eligible** for an alternative IRI assessment.
- **Yes** → Go to Step 2.

Step 2.

Is the student being considered for an alternative IRI assessment **solely because they are an English Learner who is not yet proficient in English?**

- **Yes** → Student is **not eligible** for an alternative IRI assessment. English language proficiency alone is not a valid reason.
- **No** → Go to Step 3.

Step 3.

Does the student have an active **IEP** or **504 Plan**?

- **No** → Student is **not eligible** for an alternative IRI assessment.
- **Yes** → Administer the NonVerbal Assessment.

Step 4. Outcome:

Student participates in the **state-approved alternative IRI assessment** according to state testing guidelines.

For Questions Contact

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