

## 2020-21 Statewide Summative Test Administration Guidance

### Purpose

The Agency of Education (AOE) is issuing the following guidance to support LEAs in their preparations for the possible administration of statewide summative assessments (ELA, Math, Science and English Language Proficiency). Please refer to vendor-provided testing manuals from [WIDA](#) and [Cambium](#) for additional information on administrative requirements and procedures.

### Participation

#### General Requirements

Federal requirements for SY21 assessment, accountability and reporting have not, at this time, been waived or made flexible, though guidance from the federal level is still evolving. All students enrolled in a public school and/or funded through public funding are required to participate in statewide assessment, as per usual.

This year schools and districts are facilitating a variety of instructional models. For clarity's sake, The AOE is addressing the requirements for participating in statewide assessments (in-person) by instructional model. Schools and districts should schedule testing to accommodate students accordingly, as no remote testing options are available.

- Fully in-person instruction model
  - Students are required to participate in testing in person
- Hybrid instruction model (i.e. rotating in-person and remote learning)
  - Students are required to participate in testing in person
- Fully remote instruction model (implemented by the local education agency (LEA) or elected by a specific student/family)
  - Students are required to participate in testing in person

Please note that all LEAs should adhere to state guidance related to COVID-19 while preparing to administer and administering assessments.

#### Special Circumstances

For a variety of reasons, in any given year, a student may be unable to participate in a statewide assessment even with all appropriate and valid attempts to provide an assessment opportunity. This year (2020-2021) presents novel situations when it comes to participation and we are prepared to address them using existing and newly developed procedures. Listed below are the types of special circumstances that the state of Vermont will consider during the 2021 administration of statewide summative assessments. Standalone guidance documents and forms are linked where applicable.

## **Medical Exemption**

A medical exemption may be requested, as in any other year, for a significant medical emergency that prohibits a student from testing during the testing window even with all appropriate and valid attempts to provide an assessment opportunity. Schools and districts can reference the [medical exemption guidance](#) and [request form](#) for more information. Please note that both a COVID-19 diagnosis and mandated quarantine due to state policies without a COVID-19 diagnosis will be considered a significant medical emergency, but only if it meets all criteria (e.g., prevents the student from testing during the entire window).

## **First Year English Learners**

English Learners (ELs) are also required to take statewide academic assessments. Recently arrived ELs are exempted from Smarter Balanced ELA assessments in their first year of enrollment, but must be included in Math, Science and ELP assessments. For any EL in their first year of enrollment who is not participating in the ELA assessment, District Test Administrators should indicate non-participation in TIDE.

## **Medical Fragility Special Circumstance Qualifier**

Some students may be unable to appear for in-person testing during the testing window because either the student is medically fragile or a household member is medically fragile. Medically fragile is defined as being unable to engage in in-person encounters outside of the home as a result of one or more pre-existing conditions. For assessments delivered by Cambium (general and alternate ELA, Math and Science), a special circumstance code will be available for indicating non-participation in an assessment for students who meet the following criteria:

1. Are receiving fully remote instruction, AND
2. Are medically fragile OR live with a medically fragile household member, AND
3. Are unable to appear for in-person testing at any time during the testing window, with all appropriate and valid attempts made to provide an assessment opportunity for the student.

## **Administration Considerations**

This guidance is not exhaustive and is intended to be used in conjunction with vendor-supplied documentation, LEA policies and state guidance related to COVID-19. LEAs, in all cases, should adhere to the [most recent Vermont guidance related to district/school](#) operations during the COVID-19 response. Test Coordinators/Administrators/Proctors should be trained on all guidance and procedures prior to test administration.

The following sections (Before Testing, During Testing, After Testing) provide guidance to be considered in preparing for administration of statewide assessments.

## **Before Testing**

Before the start of the testing window, LEAs should:

- Communicate with families about how COVID-19-related guidance will be adhered to during in-person administration of statewide assessments. This may include but is not limited to screening for COVID-19 symptoms, maintaining physical distance and mask requirements, and cleaning/disinfection procedures. Consult the most recent version of [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) for current state guidance.
- Review accommodations to identify potential challenges.
  - Some accommodations may conflict with guidance related to distancing. Special Education Coordinators should be consulted with to develop and communicate guidance on how to safely administer accommodations.
  - Some administration procedures for alternate assessments may conflict with guidance related to distancing. Special Education Coordinators should be consulted with to develop and communicate guidance on how to safely administer accommodations.
- Ensure technology is available and properly set up for testing (e.g., installation of secure browsers, postponement of automatic updates).

### **During Testing**

During the testing window, LEAs should follow all local and state guidance for in-person school operations. Such guidance may alter the typical test administration experience. Examples are provided below, though LEAs should consult testing manuals to determine the full impact of COVID-19-related guidance on the administration process.

- Those administering testing should maintain physical distance requirements between students and between students and proctor. This may be achieved in a variety of ways. Examples include:
  - Log students in for computer-based testing before students enter the testing room OR place log in information at students' stations before students enter the room.
  - Position computers 6 feet apart and facing in the same direction. Computer to be used by students Grade 6 or younger may be spaced a minimum of 3 feet apart.
  - Maintain appropriate distance when administering one-on-one tests (e.g., paper version of the speaking domain for the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0).
  - Develop systems to maintain distance when handling materials between student and proctor while maintaining test security.
  - Develop protocols to maintain appropriate distance between students and proctors during breaks (e.g., scheduled restroom breaks or as indicated by an accommodation).
- Proper hand washing, cleaning and disinfection protocols should be adhered to by staff and students. Consult the most recent version of [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) for more information.

- In some cases, the need to wear/provide personal protective equipment, such as masks, may require special attention.
  - The Speaking domain of the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment requires speaking into a headset microphone. Masks should be left on for this portion of the assessment. The test vendor has confirmed that masks will not interfere with sound quality.
  - Masks with clear plastic windows over the mouth area may be required for administration of certain accommodations or test sessions. Special Education Coordinators should be consulted to determine need.
- LEAs should train staff involved with statewide assessment on protocols related to identifying symptoms of COVID-19 during testing.
  - If a testing session is interrupted for a student for COVID-19-related reasons (e.g., student experiencing COVID-19 symptoms), materials must be stored securely until the student can return to testing. Gloves should be used to gather materials, and the testing area should be disinfected. Any materials that cannot be properly disinfected should be put in quarantine for no less than 3 days. See [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) for more information on what to do if signs and symptoms begin while at school.

If the student is unable to return to the test within the appropriate number of days (see relevant testing manual), standard procedures defined in the testing manual for the given assessment related to interrupted testing should be followed.

### **After Testing**

While competing processes and procedures related to ending testing, LEAs should follow all local and state guidance for in-person school operations.

### **Recommended Procedures**

In summary, there are a number of procedures that the AOE encourages LEAs to put in place while engaging in statewide assessment preparation and administration.

### **Communication**

Every LEA should engage in communications with families before and during testing windows. Prior to testing, LEAs should communicate with families to:

- Explain how state guidance will be followed during in-person statewide assessment administration.
- Remind caregivers and students that students will be [screened for symptoms](#) on their assessment days and should not come to school if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

For schools and districts operating in hybrid or remote models, giving clear direction and expectations will be essential for engaging in in-person testing. Please note that every effort should be made by LEAs to communicate with families in their home language.

A sample communication will be made available in the coming weeks on the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP) Portal in the Tools and Documents for School Leaders page.

### **Planning for Absenteeism**

LEAs may choose to proactively develop plans to address the potential for a test coordinator/administrator/proctor being suddenly unavailable for test administration. LEAs are encouraged to test students nearer the start of the testing window to allow for more flexibility in scheduling makeup testing for students or faculty who are absent during their originally scheduled testing session.

### **Adhering to State Guidance**

LEAs, in all cases, should adhere to [state guidance](#) related to safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.