

A Parent's Guide to Understanding the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program

The Virginia Alternate Assessment Program(VAAP)

The Virginia Alternate Assessment Program is a part of the Virginia assessment program. It is designed to evaluate the performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and high school. During the 2021-22 school year, the portfolio-based VAAP was replaced with a new multiple-choice assessment in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science. The first administration of the new VAAP was spring of 2022.

The Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning (VESOL) are academic content standards derived from the Standards of Learning (SOL) that have been reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity. The VAAP assesses students who are being instructed on the VESOLs. The VESOL will be used to guide instruction provided by special educators to those students who meet the participation criteria for the VAAP.

- [Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning \(VESOL\)](#)

VAAP Participation Criteria

Eligibility for VAAP participation is determined by the student's IEP team using the VAAP Participation Criteria. The VAAP Participation Criteria form along with the VAAP Participation Criteria and Determination of Significant Cognitive Disabilities Guidance document will continue to be used by IEP teams to determine eligibility for participation in the VAAP.

- [VAAP Participation Criteria Form](#) (Word document)
- [VAAP Participation Criteria and the Determination of Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) (Word document)

Assessment Format

The new VAAP is an assessment composed of multiple-choice items of varying complexity, beginning with easier items, and progressing to more complex items. Each item will offer three answer options. The assessment will be administered in an online or paper format.

VDOE has developed sample items from the reading, mathematics, and science content areas across various grade levels to be used by teachers, other school staff, and parents to familiarize them with item formats, the supports embedded in those items, the tools available in TestNav to accompany an online presentation, and the format of the paper presentation of test items. Sample items are not intended for student use. Both paper and online presentation sample items can be found on the [VDOE website](#). Click [Sample Items](#) to download the application required to access the online items.

Accommodations

Test accommodations deemed allowable by the VDOE and documented in the student's IEP will be permissible during the VAAP assessment. Accommodations should align with daily instruction and not be introduced for the first time during the administration of a state assessment. Supports, such as specific verbal prompts, frequent breaks, test over multiple sessions, augmentative communication, amplification, magnification, slant board, manipulatives, calculators, etc., no longer need to be marked as an accommodation for the VAAP as these are now considered test conditions.

Implications for Students

When IEP teams complete the Justification Statement on the VAAP Criteria it is important to address how the child's participating in VAAP will impact the child's promotion and/or graduation with a modified standard, standard, or advanced studies diploma. Below are implications to be considered:

- **Short-term:** Student's instruction is less in depth, breadth, and complexity than the instruction of other students.
- **Long-term:** Student may not meet the requirements for the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma.
- **Longer-term:** Student may not be eligible for some post-secondary training institutions, military service, or jobs.