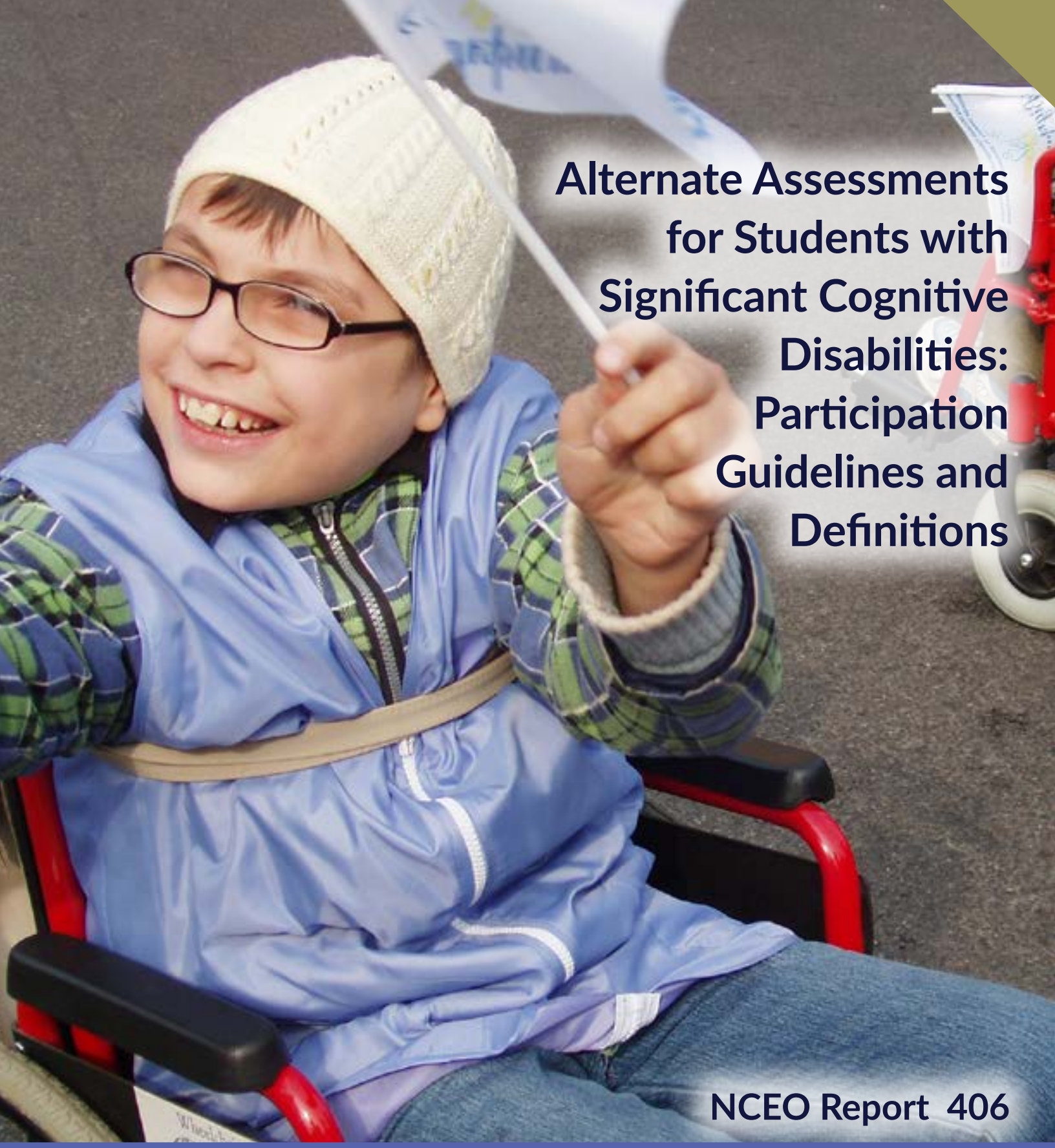
Alternate Assessments for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Participation Guidelines and Definitions

NCEO Report 406



NCEO
National Center on Educational Outcomes

NCEO Report 406

Alternate Assessments for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Participation Guidelines and Definitions

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Executive Summary

With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2015, renewed attention was paid to the importance of guidelines for participation in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) and to understanding of who the students are who have significant cognitive disabilities. The analyses presented in this report were conducted to highlight the alternate assessment participation guidelines and definitions of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that were in place just prior to the start of the 2017-18 school year.

Specifically, the report documents the status of states' participation guidelines and definitions as of August, 2017. The analysis includes the factors that states indicated should and should not be considered when making decisions about participation in the AA-AAS. It also documents the format of the guidelines that states made available to decision makers. Finally, it examines the extent to which states provided an explicit definition of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities."

Results indicated that at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, all states had participation guidelines for decision makers. The three most common characteristics included in the criteria were: (a) significant cognitive disabilities or low intellectual and adaptive functioning; (b) extensive, intensive, individualized instruction and supports; and (c) use of an alternate or modified curriculum. The most common factors not to be the basis for decisions mentioned in states' guidelines were basing the assessment participation decision on: (a) social, cultural, linguistic, or environmental factors, such as English learner status; (b) excessive absences; (c) poor performance or impact on the accountability system; or (d) disability label, placement, or services. The most common formats used were checklists to facilitate and document the decision-making process for individual students and the description of participation criteria in text form.

Analysis also indicated that 17 states provided explicit, publicly available definitions of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities." For this analysis, we included only explicit phrases that contained phrases such as "significant cognitive disabilities are characterized by…" or "students with significant cognitive disabilities are…" When a state did not include one of these phrases, it was counted as not having a definition of significant cognitive disabilities.

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Overview

Purpose of Report

Recent federal requirements have increased the importance of guidelines for participation in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS), as well as an understanding of who the students are who have significant cognitive disabilities. The analyses presented in this report were conducted to highlight the alternate assessment participation guidelines and definitions of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that were in place just prior to the start of the 2017-18 school year. Specifically, we documented the status of states' participation guidelines, including those factors that states indicate should and should not be considered when making decisions about participation in the AA-AAS. We also examined the current format of the guidelines that states made available to decision makers. Finally, this report documents the extent to which states provided an explicit definition of a "student with the most significant cognitive disabilities."

History and Context

Alternate assessments were first developed in response to the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which required that all states and districts develop, by the year 2000, alternate assessments for those students with disabilities unable to participate in regular assessments even with accommodations. IDEA did not define who the students were who could participate in an alternate assessment, nor did it use the term phrase "significant cognitive disability."

In 2003, regulations added to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) allowed states to count as proficient those students with significant cognitive disabilities who participated in the alternate assessment and met rigorous alternate achievement standards set by the state. It was at this time that the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS), also known as the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS), was first recognized. And, it was in connection with law and subsequent regulations that the term "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities" was first used. Also made clear was that the term did not refer to a specific category of disability, and that no category of disability would automatically make a student one with a significant cognitive disability.

These 2003 regulations also established a 1% cap on the percentage of students who could be counted proficient using the AA-AAS. This rule attempted to ensure that this assessment included only those students for whom it was most appropriate. As noted in the 2003 regulations (Section 200.6(a)(2)(iii):

> If a State permits the use of alternate assessments that yield results based on alternate academic achievement standards, the State must---
>
> (A)(1) Establish and ensure implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for Individualized Educational Program (IEP) teams to apply in determining when a child's significant cognitive disability justifies assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards…

As a result, states carefully crafted their guidelines for which students should participate in the AA-AAS. Language in the U.S. Department of Education's 2005 Non-Regulatory Guidance on Alternate Achievement Standards for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities added the following:

> **It is the State's responsibility to define which students have the most significant cognitive disabilities. It also is the State's responsibility to establish clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP teams to use when deciding if an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards is justified for an individual child.** These guidelines should provide parameters and direction to ensure that students are not assessed based on alternate achievement standards merely because of their placement outside the regular classroom, their disability category, or their racial or economic background.
>
> In most schools, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities represent a small portion of students with disabilities who would appropriately participate in an assessment based on alternate achievement standards; all other students with disabilities must be assessed against grade-level standards. In general, the Department estimates that about 9 percent of students with disabilities (approximately one percent of all students) have significant cognitive disabilities that qualify them to participate in an assessment based on alternate achievement standards. (emphasis added, p. 23)

State participation guidelines in 2007 were examined by Musson, Thomas, Towles-Reeves, and Kearns (2010). These authors conducted a pattern analysis of state's guidelines. They concluded that most states included requirements that (a) the students have a significant cognitive impairment; (b) the IEP team makes the decision; and (c) the student has a current IEP. Many states had other criteria in their guidelines, including that the student required individualized instruction, instruction in multiple settings, and additional instruction necessary for generalization. Limited adaptive skills were also noted by some states. The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) similarly has examined participation guidelines since 2005 (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995), with the most recent analysis of alternate assessment guidelines conducted on 2011 policies (Albus & Thurlow, 2012).

Despite the attention to developing guidelines, states' participation rates for their AA-AAS gradually increased over time to the point where approximately two-thirds of states had participation rates greater than 1% in 2014-15 (Thurlow & Lazarus, 2017). In addition, researchers were finding unusual patterns of participation in the AA-AAS and other assessments, including both the general assessment and the alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS) (Cho & Kingston, 2012, 2015). Other researchers describing the characteristics of students participating in the AA-AAS also were finding that students with learning disabilities and speech language impairments were included among those participating in the AA-AAS (Kearns, Towles-Reeves, Kleinert, Kleinert, & Thomas, 2011; Towles-Reeves et al., 2012; Towles-Reeves, Kearns, Kleinert, & Kleinert, 2009). Students with these labels were not expected to be among those participating in the AA-AAS, thus raising questions about the clarity of the states' AA-AAS participation guidelines.

These findings, along with what seemed to be inconsistent decision making related to participation in the AA-AAS, caused considerable concern in the field. The concern was heightened by evidence that students participating in the AA-AAS were more likely to be placed in segregated educational settings (Kleinert, Towles-Reeves, Quenemoen, Thurlow, Fluegge, Weseman, & Kerbel, 2015). Although the AA-AAS was the appropriate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, students without significant cognitive disabilities were also participating in it.

With the reauthorization of ESEA in 2015 as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), attention again focused on participation in the AA-AAS. ESSA established a **participation cap** rather than a cap on the percentage of students who could be counted as proficient on the assessment. Although states were to be held to a 1% cap, they could not set a cap on participation at the district level.

Assessment regulatons for ESSA, enacted in January 2016, included the following requirement to be explicit about participation criteria and to provide a definition of students with significant cognitive disabilities:

> (d) *State guidelines for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.* If a State adopts alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and administers an alternate assessment aligned with those standards, the State must—
>
> > (1) **Establish,** consistent with section 612(a)(16)(C) of the IDEA, and monitor implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP teams to apply in determining, on a case-by-case basis, **which students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards. Such guidelines must include a State definition of "students with the**

most significant cognitive disabilities" that addresses factors related to cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, such that—

> (i) The identification of a student as having a particular disability as defined in the IDEA or as an English learner does not determine whether a student is a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities;
>
> (ii) A student with the most significant cognitive disabilities is not identified solely on the basis of the student's previous low academic achievement, or the student's previous need for accommodations to participate in general State or districtwide assessments; and
>
> (iii) A student is identified as having the most significant cognitive disabilities because the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled…. (emphasis added, Section 200.6(a)(7)(iii)(d)(1))

Commentary included in the regulations stated:

> …we are not defining the term "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities;" rather, the regulations require States to define this term and establish criteria for States to adhere to in establishing their own definition. Further, given that an AA–AAAS, as described in section 1111(b)(2)(D) of the ESEA, is only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and that States must now ensure that no more than 1.0 percent of assessed students in the State take such assessments, we believe requiring a State to define "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities" in accordance with factors related to cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior is both consistent with and within the scope of the ESEA. (Federal Register, 2016, p. 88916)

These new requirements made it even more important for states to establish guidelines with participation criteria for the AA-AAS and provide definitions of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities."

Method

In May 2017, staff at NCEO searched the websites of state departments of education for publicly available online documents with information on (a) participation criteria for alternate assessments; and (b) definitions of "significant cognitive disability." The websites of all 50 states and

the District of Columbia (hereafter referred to as a state) were searched using the keywords *significant cognitive disability*, *alternate assessment*, and *participation criteria*.

This search yielded a variety of documents such as test administration manuals, accessibility and accommodation manuals, assessment participation guidelines, and forms used to document individual assessment participation decisions. When multiple documents were available for a state (for example, two sets of participation guidelines with different dates), researchers selected the document that was most recent. The selected documents were analyzed for: (a) criteria for participating in alternate assessment; (b) the format in which alternate assessment participation criteria were presented; and (c) definitions of "significant cognitive disability."

Criteria for alternate assessment participation included student characteristics that are considered when determining how students would participate in statewide assessments. Because some states also list characteristics that should *not* influence educators when determining participation in alternate assessment, we also included these exclusionary criteria in our analyses. In addition, we also noted the formats (e.g., text, checklist, decision tree) in which the participation criteria were presented.

For the analysis of whether a state had a specific definition of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities," we included only explicit phrases describing or explaining characteristics of the students. Phrases such as "students with significant cognitive disabilities are…" or "significant cognitive disabilities refer to…" introduced explicit definitions. The remaining states, including those with documents that provided a descriptor for significant cognitive disabilities without an explicit statement, were classified for this analysis as not having an explicit definition.

For our analyses, we compiled individual state profiles in June and July 2017. These profiles contained tables summarizing definitive characteristics of significant cognitive disabilities, participation criteria for alternate assessments, and the format of alternate assessment participation criteria and an excerpt of any state definitions of "significant cognitive disabilities." The state profiles were sent to state assessment and special education directors for verification in July 2017. A follow-up email reminder was sent to states that had not responded after two weeks. Appendix A shows the text of the email and Appendix B provides a sample state profile summary used in the verification process with state special education and assessment directors.

Thirty-five states responded to the verification request, either confirming the information in the profile as correct (N=9) or suggesting changes, with backup locations of the new information (N=26). The edits ranged from minor edits (e.g., clarifying that having an IEP was a criterion for participation in alternate assessment separate from having a disability) to more major edits (e.g., stating that a new document about participation in alternate assessment had been released in July or August). The high response rate to the verification request, along with the number of changes that states suggested, indicated that the topic was of high interest to states. Additional

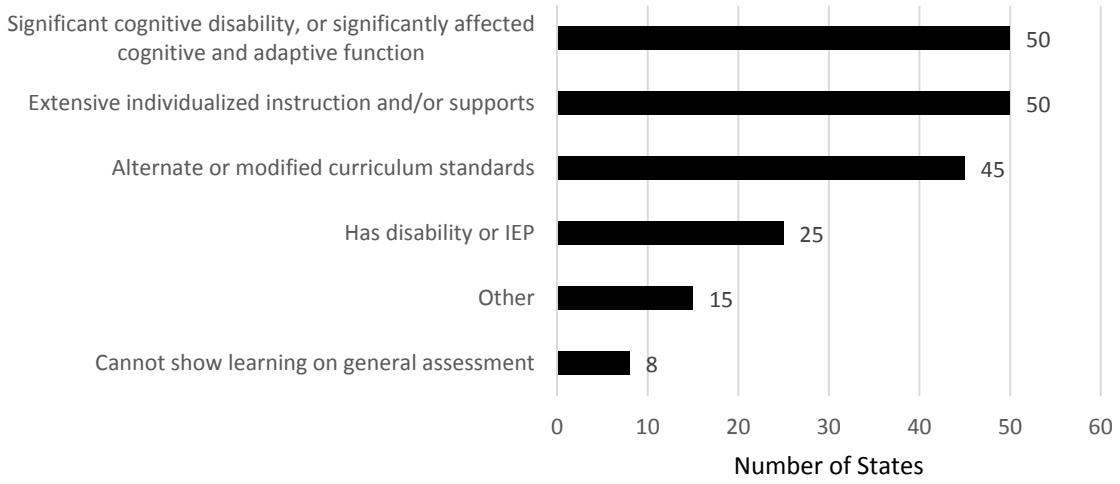
changes to state policies may have occurred that are not captured here. Nevertheless, this provides a snapshot of the status of states prior to the start of the 2017-18 school year.

Results

Participation Criteria for Alternate Assessment

The websites of all 51 states had documents that delineated the participation criteria for alternate assessments. The most frequently mentioned criteria are provided in Figure 1. Details on criteria by state are provided in Appendix C. The three most common characteristics included in the criteria were: (a) significant cognitive disabilities or low intellectual and adaptive functioning (N = 50); (b) extensive, intensive, individualized instruction and supports (N = 50); and (c) use of an alternate or modified curriculum (N = 45). Characteristics included less frequently in states' participation criteria were: presence of a disability or an IEP (N = 25) and the student's inability to show his or her learning on the general statewide assessment (N = 8).

Figure 1. Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria (N = 51)



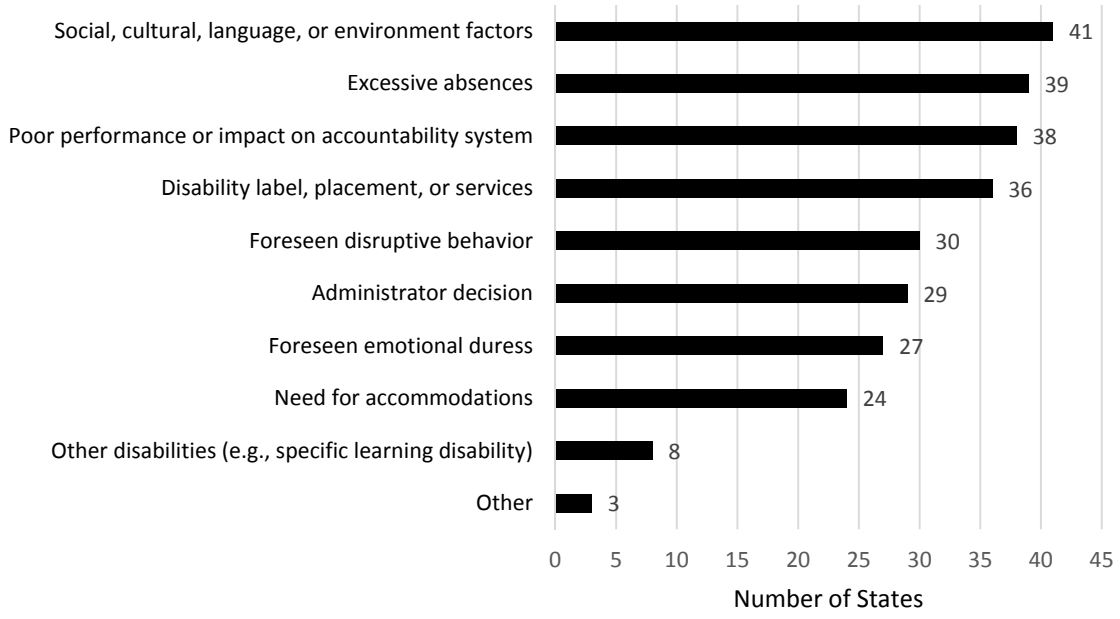
Fifteen states listed other considerations in their participation criteria. These considerations generally fell into the following categories:

- The student's parents provide consent after being provided with information about potential consequences of taking the alternate assessment.
- The student has significant difficulties communicating.
- The student has multiple disabilities concurrent with a significant cognitive disability.

- The student has a disability or disabilities that will impact post-school outcomes.
- The student has a disability or disabilities that will require lifelong family or community support.
- The IEP team considers longitudinal data while making the decision.
- The IEP team considers examples of the student's work.
- The IEP team determines that the alternate assessment will not under-challenge the student.

The participation criteria in 42 states had language describing which factors should *not* drive the decision to have a student participate in the alternate assessment (see Figure 2 and Appendix D). Almost all of these states (N = 41) cautioned against basing the assessment participation decision on social, cultural, linguistic, or environmental factors such as English learner status. Likewise, an overwhelming majority of states specified that participation decisions should not be based on excessive absences (N = 39), poor performance or impact on the accountability system (N = 38), or disability label, placement, or services (N = 36).

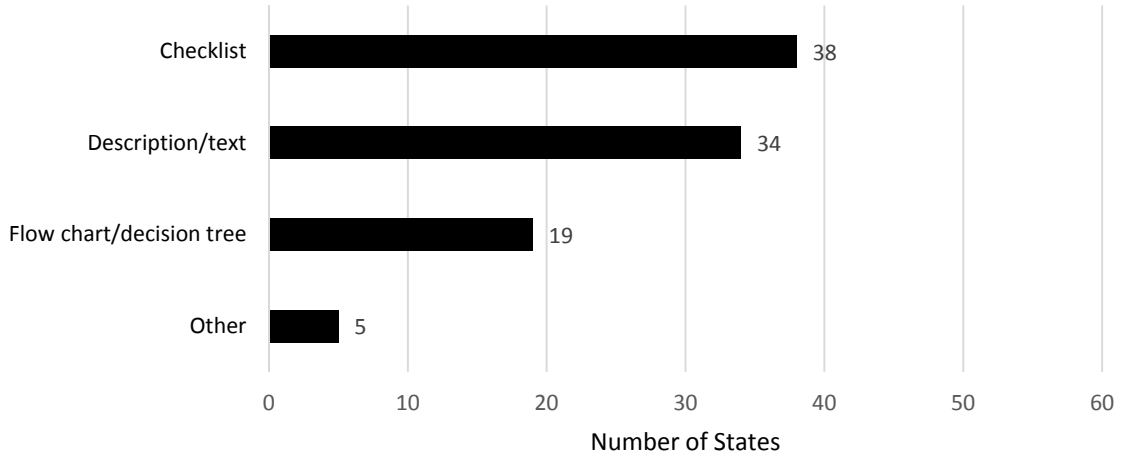
Figure 2. Factors Not to be Considered for Alternate Assessment Participation (N = 42)



Format of Participation Criteria for Alternate Assessment

We also examined the format that states used to present alternate assessment participation criteria (see Figure 3). Many states had online documents presenting their participation criteria in more than a single format (see details by state in Appendix E). As reflected in Figure 3, the most common format used in state documents was a checklist (N = 38) to facilitate and document the decision-making process for individual students. Many states (N = 34) also described participation criteria in text form, such as in a section of the state assessment manual. Fewer than half of the states (N = 19) had decision trees or flow charts. An example of a flow chart included in Appendix F. Other formats used by states included case studies, which illustrated the criteria with hypothetical student profiles and the best participation decisions for them. Examples of case studies are included in Appendix G.

Figure 3. Format of Criteria for Participation in Alternate Assessment (N = 51)

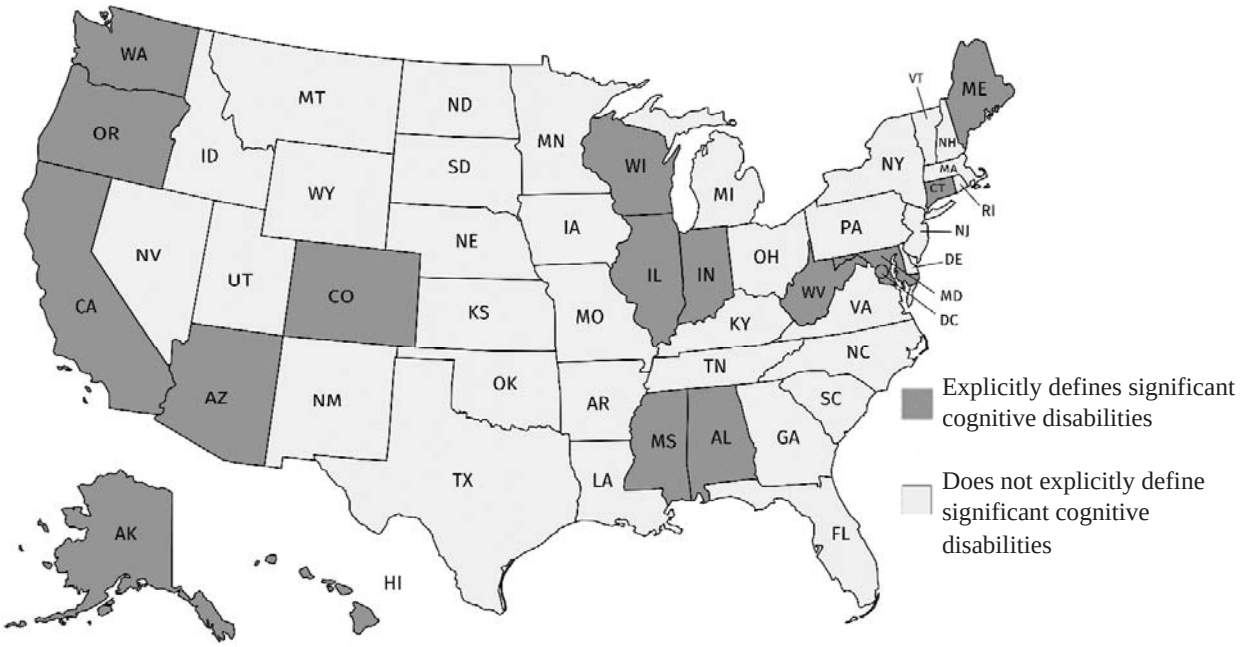


Definitions of Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Because the language in ESSA suggests that participation guidelines should include a definition of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities," we examined the extent to which states included a definition. As noted, we looked for explicit phrases describing or explaining characteristics of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; these contained phrases such as "significant cognitive disabilities are characterized by…" or "students with significant cognitive disabilities are…" When a state did not include one of these phrases, it was counted as not having a definition of significant cognitive disabilities, even though it might have a list of factors that could be combined to form a definition.

According to our criteria, we found publicly available explicit definitions of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in 17 states. The states with these definitions are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. States with Explicit Definitions of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities



The following are some examples of the definitions that states had on their websites:

- "A student with a significant cognitive disability is one who has records that indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is defined as actions essential for an individual to live independently and to function safely in daily life. Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined by an IQ test score, but rather a holistic understanding of a student." (Arizona)

- "Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are typically characterized by significantly below average general cognitive functioning. This commonly includes a student with intelligence test scores two or more standard deviations below the mean on a standardized individually administered intelligence test, occurring with commensurate deficits in adaptive behavior that are frequently also evident in early childhood. Further, the cognitive disability must significantly impact the child's educational performance and ability to generalize learning from one setting to another. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in general, require highly specialized education and/or social, psychological, and medical services to access an educational program. These students may also rely on adults

for personal care and have medical conditions that require physical/verbal supports, and assistive technology devices. These intensive and on-going supports and services are typically provided directly by educators and are delivered across all educational settings." (Oregon)

- "Students who are significantly cognitively challenged means those students who require intensive or extensive levels of direct support that is not of a temporary or transient nature. Students with significant cognitive challenges also require specially designed instruction to acquire, maintain, or generalize skills in multiple settings in order to successfully transfer skills to natural settings including the home, school, workplace, and community. In addition, these students score at least two (2) standard deviations below the mean on standardized, norm-referenced assessments for adaptive behavior and intellectual functioning." (Washington)

An example of something not counted as an explicit definition was the following checklist of questions to determine whether a student had significant cognitive disabilities:

- Do the student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum?
- Do the student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application of skills, as illustrated in the student's IEP annual goals and short-term objectives?
- Does the student require direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize, and transfer new skills?

When a state included a definition of significant cognitive disabilities only in documents that had restricted access, those also were not counted as having a definition. For example, the following definition, provided during verification, was not counted because it was not publicly available:

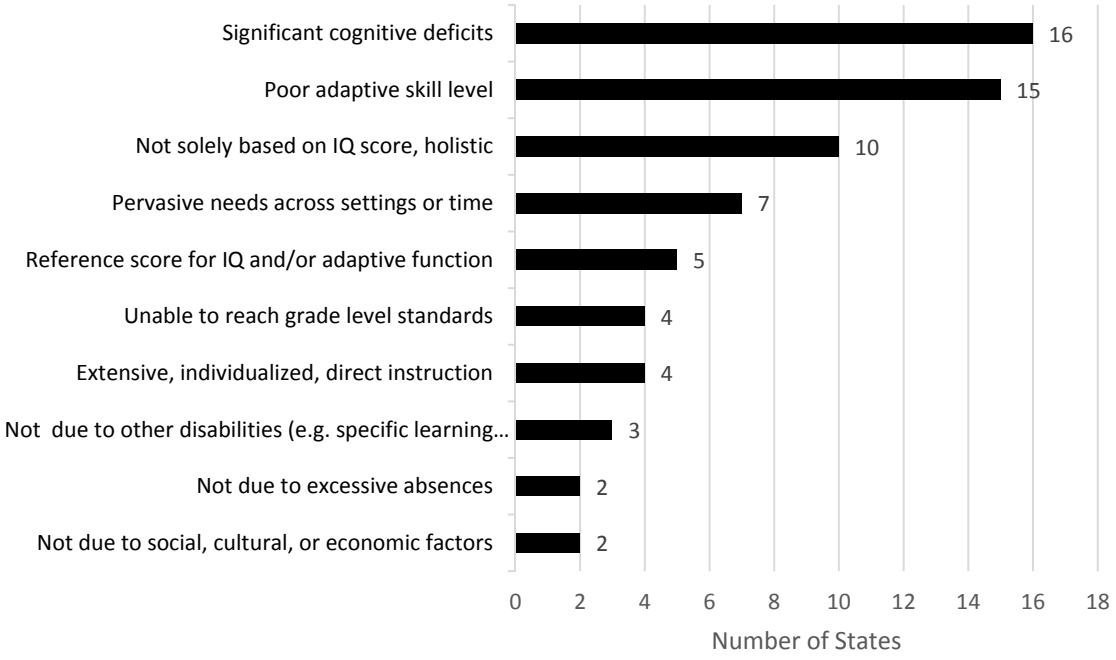
> "The student has a SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITY (i.e., exhibits severe and pervasive delays in ALL areas of conceptual, linguistic, and academic development and also in adaptive behavior areas, such as communication, daily living skills, and self-care)."

The full list of definitions in those states having explicit publicly available definitions is included in Appendix H.

Figure 5 breaks down the definitions of significant cognitive disabilities for the 17 states that provided an explicit definition. As evident in this figure, most of the definitions included references to significant cognitive or intellectual deficits (16 of 17) and poor adaptive skills (15 of 17). More than half of the definitions also indicated that the identification of significant cognitive disabilities should not be based solely on the estimated IQ (10 of 17). Nearly half of the definitions stressed the importance of the student exhibiting pervasive needs across settings or

time (7 of 17). Only a few definitions included an indication of the factors that should *not* be used (e.g., excessive absences, influence of social, cultural, or economic factors), though they often ientified these factors in other text. A full breakdown of state definitions of significant cognitive disabilities is included in Appendix I.

Figure 5. Components of State Definitions of Significant Cognitive Disabilities



Discussion

The shift in policy about participation in the AA-AAS, specifically the 1% cap, significantly increased the importance of states' guidelines for IEP teams to use in determining whether a student should participate in the state regular assessment or alternate assessment. Although previous studies have examined states' participation guidelines in the past (e.g., Albus & Thurlow, 2012; Musson et al., 2010; Thurlow et al., 1995), there have been no examinations of participation criteria recently. The assessment regulations also introduced the concept of a state definition of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities." Yet, states may not have been clear about whether this definition simply meant the guidelines or in fact was a separate, explicit statement that defined these students

This report provides an update on states' guidelines for participation in the AA-AAS just before the 2017-18 school year, one year after the passage of ESSA and the enactment of assessment regulations requiring guidelines and definitions of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. We gathered states' participation guidelines and also looked for explicit, publicly available definitions.

Results of our analyses indicated that all states had participation guidelines for IEP teams to use to determine whether individual students should participate in the AA-AAS, just as they have in the past several analyses of states' participation guidelines (Albus & Thurlow, 2012; Musson et al., 2010)). Further, as those previous reports indicated, the specific criteria included by states in their guidelines for the 2017-18 school year are quite similar to the criteria most evident in guidelines in the past. The AA-AAS participation criteria most commonly included across states were the presence of a significant cognitive disability, receiving individualized instruction or supports, and participating in alternate or modified curriculum standards. The factors not to be used in making a participation decision were most often social, cultural, language, or environmental factors (included in federal language), excessive absences, and poor performance or impact on the accountability system. States used a variety of formats for presenting their guidelines, including checklists, text descriptions, and flow charts.

In our analysis, fewer than half of the states had explicit, publicly-available definitions of "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities." The 17 states with definitions varied to some extent in the nature of their definitions. For example, some included specific IQ criteria while others indicated that IQ was not to be used as a determinant of having a significant cognitive disability. In addition, the definitions varied in length; some were relatively simple one-sentence definitions while others were extended paragraph-long definitions with many components to them.

We recognize that what we counted as an explicit definition was fairly narrow, and that several states that we did not count as having definitions believed that they did. It will be important to determine whether IEP teams find explicit definitions to be helpful in their decision making beyond what is provided by their states' guidelines. It will also be interesting to determine whether definitions are more helpful to parents than are states' guidelines for IEP teams.

A limitation of this analysis is that it was conducted at a time of frequently changing policies and practices in states. With attention to the 1% cap, many states indicated that they were reviewing or revising their guidelines and definitions. It is likely that some states did this after we gathered information, and thus are not reflected in this report. Nevertheless, this reports provides a good baseline of what states are doing in terms of their guidelines and definitions.

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Appendix A

Email Requesting Verification

The National Center on Educational Outcomes is examining the ways in which states address who participates in alternate assessment. Our goal is to examine:

a) Definitions of "significant cognitive disabilities" (SCD) (Note: Only states with documents that contain explicit phrases defining/explaining SCD, such as "students with SCD are…", "SCD are defined as…" etc., are identified as "defines SCD");

b) Participation criteria for alternate assessment;

c) Format of participation criteria for alternate assessment

To address this goal, we reviewed your state website for assessment participation guidelines and forms to document decision making during May to June 2017 and summarized them into tables, which are attached to this email, in July 2017.We have enclosed tables summarizing that review. **Please verify all included information. Specifically, please return the tables that we have attached, noting your changes to them and the website source for these changes.** Address your responses to Deb Albus via email [email address removed]. We thank Elena Kwong for her hard work in collecting and assembling these data for verification.

If you have any other questions about our request, please email Martha Thurlow or call at [phone number removed]. Please respond by July 28, 2017. Thank you for taking the time to provide this information.

Martha Thurlow, Director, NCEO

Sheryl Lazarus, Senior Research Associate, NCEO

Appendix B

Sample State Profile Sent for Verification (Wisconsin)

A. Definition of "significant cognitive disabilities":

Wisconsin defines "significant cognitive disabilities" as follows:

Essential Elements (EE) Frequently Asked Questions

Students who will participate in alternate academic achievement standards (Essential Elements) are students with the most significant cognitive disabilities:

Typically function at least three standard deviations below in the norm in both adaptive and intellectual functioning. The reference to "typically functioning at least three standard deviations below the norm" is to help distinguish between students with cognitive disabilities from the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Were characterized as having an intellectual disability, autism, or multiple disabilities. Use symbolic expressive and receptive communication, while about 10-11% use pre-symbolic communication or show no response to stimuli.

The IEP team is ultimately responsible for ensuring that student receives academic instruction that is the most appropriate and challenging based on the student's individual needs. The determination is not based on a categorical disability label.

Source: https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/topics/essential-elements/frequently-asked-questions

Based on the above, the following criteria are identified as definitive of "significant cognitive disabilities";

State	Significant cognitive/ intellectual deficits	Poor adap-tive skill level	Unable to reach grade level stan-dards	Extensive, individualized, direct instruc-tion	Pervasive needs across settings or time	Refer-ence score for IQ and/or adaptive function	Not solely based on IQ score, holistic	Not due to excessive absences	Not due to other disabili-ties (e.g. SLD)	Not due to social, cultural, or economic factors	
WI	X	X				X					

B. Participation criteria for alternate assessment

State	Has disability or IEP	SCD, or significantly affected cognitive and adaptive function	Alternate or modi-fied curriculum standards	Extensive individual-ized instruction and/ or supports	Cannot show learning on general assessment	Other
WI		X	X	X		

C. Factors not to be used for alternate assessment participation

State	Social, cultur-al, language or environ-ment factors	Disabil-ity label, placement or services	Excessive absences	Need for accomm-odations	Foreseen emotional duress	Fore-seen dis-ruptive behavior	Poor per-formance or impact on accountability system	Adminis-trator decision	Other dis-abilities (e.g. SLD)	Other
WI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

Source:
Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment (Form 1-7-A; checklist; https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/doc/form-i7a.doc)
Individualized Education Program: Participation in Statewide Assessments Form (Dynamic Learning Maps Form I-7 DLM; https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/doc/form-i7dlm.doc)

D. Format of participation criteria for alternate assessment

	Description /text	Flow-chart/ decision tree	Checklist	Other	Alternate Assessment
WI			X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)

Source:
Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment (Form 1-7-A; checklist; https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/doc/form-i7a.doc)
Individualized Education Program: Participation in Statewide Assessments Form (Dynamic Learning Maps Form I-7 DLM; https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/doc/form-i7dlm.doc

Appendix C

Participation Criteria for Alternate Assessment

State	Has disability or IEP	SCD, or significantly affected cognitive and adaptive function	Alternate or modified curriculum standards	Extensive individualized instruction and/or supports	Cannot show learning on general assessment	Other*
AL	X	X	X	X		
AK		X	X	X		
AZ		X	X	X		
AR		X	X	X		
CA		X	X	X		
CO	X	X	X	X		
CT	X	X	X	X		
DE		X	X	X		
DC		X	X	X		
FL	X	X	X	X		X
GA		X	X	X	X	
HI		X	X	X		
ID		X	X	X		
IL	X	X	X	X		
IN	X	X	X	X		
IA		X	X	X		
KS		X	X	X		
KY		X		X		X
LA	X	X	X	X		
ME	X	X	X	X		
MD	X	X	X	X		X
MA	X		X	X	X	X
MI		X	X			
MN	X	X		X	X	
MS		X	X	X		
MO	X	X	X	X		X
MT	X	X	X	X		
NE	X	X	X	X	X	X
NV	X	X	X	X	X	X

State	Has disability or IEP	SCD, or significantly affected cognitive and adaptive function	Alternate or modified curriculum standards	Extensive individualized instruction and/or supports	Cannot show learning on general assessment	Other*
NH	X	X		X	X	X
NJ		X	X	X		
NM		X		X		X
NY		X		X		X
NC	X	X	X	X		
ND		X	X	X		
OH		X	X	X		
OK		X	X	X		X
OR	X	X	X	X		X
PA		X		X		X
RI	X	X	X	X		
SC	X	X	X	X		
SD		X	X	X		
TN	X	X	X	X		
TX		X	X	X		
UT	X	X	X	X		
VT	X	X	X	X		
VA	X	X	X	X		X
WA	X	X	X	X	X	
WV		X	X	X		
WI		X	X	X		
WY		X	X	X	X	X
Total	**25**	**50**	**45**	**50**	**8**	**15**

* Other criteria included in states' participation guidelines were:

FL: The parent must sign consent in accordance with Rule 6A-6.0331(10), F.A.C.

KY: (a) The Admissions and Release Committee members all agree that the student meets the participation guidelines for Kentucky's Alternate Assessment. All data sources referenced can be verified with supporting documentation. Eligibility is determined on an annual basis and the process must occur in order to determine future participation in Alternate Assessment. The student will be excluded from other state-required assessment component for any year that he or she participates in the Alternate Assessment Program; (b)Student's current level of communication been determined through observations and evaluations, (c) Student's current and longitudinal data across settings in all academic areas includes progress monitoring (IEP data and progress in general education curriculum) AND adaptive behavior(s) have been reviewed and documents the Admissions and Release Committee decision; (d) Student demonstrates cognitive ability and adaptive behavior which prevent completion of the Kentucky Academic Standards without modifications that exceed the accommodations allowed in the general assessments as described in the Inclusions Document and set forth in 703 KAR 5:070.

MD: The IEP team must annually consider the following information to determine whether the Maryland Alternate Assessments are appropriate for an individual student: (a) Description of the student's instruction, including data on progress; (b) Classroom work samples and data; (c) Examples of performance on assessment tasks to compare with classroom work; (d) Results of district-wide assessments; (e) Results of individualized English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science assessments; (f) IEP information including: Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, goals, and short-term objectives; Considerations for students with individualized and substantial communication needs or modes (from multiple data sources); Considerations for students who may be learning English as a second or other language (i.e., English Language Learners) that may interfere with an accurate assessment of his or her academic, social, or adaptive abilities.

MA: While the majority of students who take alternate assessments have significant cognitive disabilities, participation in the MCAS-Alt is not limited to those students. When the nature and complexity of a student's disability present significant barriers or challenges to standardized computer- or paper-based testing, even with the use of accommodations, and even when the student may be working at or near grade-level expectations, the student's IEP team or 504 plan may determine that the student should take the MCAS-Alt in one or more subjects.

MO: The most significant cognitive disability impacts the student's post-school outcomes. The student's post-secondary outcomes for independent living will likely require supported or assisted living. The student may have a guardian when he/she turns age 18. The student would require moderate to significant supervision in order to access the community for recreation, employment, training and daily living. The student's post-secondary outcomes for education/training will likely include on-the-job training for sheltered or supported employment, as well as skill acquisition for social, communication and/or behavior. The student's post-secondary outcomes for employment will likely result in sheltered or supported employment, part-time employment, participation in day activity centers or home.

NE: Student is in grade 3-8 and 11.

NV: Has the IEP team informed the parent/guardian of the consequences of the student participating in the Nevada Alternate Assessment (e.g., modified diploma vs. standard diploma) and of being judged against alternate achievement standards?

NH: Does the historical data (current and longitudinal across multiple settings) confirm the individual student criteria listed above? What historical data were used to support items #2, 3, and 4 above? [items 2-4 refer to possession of a current IEP, inability to participate in the general assessment with allowable and appropriate accommodations, and documented evidence of SCD AND deficits in adaptive behavior skills that prevent them demonstrating learning in general assessment]

NM: 1) Does the student need intensive, pervasive, or extensive levels of support in school, home, and community settings? Explain below. 2) Do the student's current cognitive and adaptive skills and performance levels require direct instruction to accomplish the acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of skills in multiple settings (home, school, community)?

NY: The student requires educational support systems, such as assistive technology, personal care services, health/medical services, or behavioral intervention.

OK: Does the IEP team feel extensive family/community support will be a lifelong requirement, regardless of modifications, accommodations or adaptations implemented in the student's program?

OR: Students with significant cognitive disabilities may also rely on adults for personal care and have medical conditions that require physical/verbal supports, and assistive technology devices.

PA: The student is in grade 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8.

VA: Students who are appropriately identified as participating in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program may exhibit some or all of th e following characteristics: (1) Communication difficulties that affect self-determination, behavior, social interactions, and participation in multiple learning environments; (2) Uneven learning patterns in all domains including cognition, communication, socialization, and self-help; (3) Multiple disabling conditions concurrently with an intellectual disability, including physical disabilities, sensory challenges, and medical needs, that impact health, stamina, and engagement in learning tasks; (4) Motor impairments, in addition to cognitive/developmental delay, that makes participation in routine tasks challenging; (5) Difficulty learning new tasks, maintaining new skills, and generalizing skills to new environments; (6) Individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways (tactile, visual, auditory, and multi-sensory).

WY: Proficiency determined by Alternate Wy-CPS does not under challenge the student or limit the educational opportunity of the student: The student's IEP goals and objectives are based on grade-level extended

standards. These are reduced in breadth, depth, and complexity and define appropriate challenge given the students level of performance, historical data, and rate of progress.

Appendix D

Factors Not to Be Used as Participation Criteria for Alternate Assessment

State	Social, cultural, linguistic or environmental factors	Disability label, placement or services	Excessive absences	Need for accommodations	Foreseen emotional duress	Foreseen disruptive behavior	Poor performance or impact on accountability system	Administrator decision	Other disabilities (e.g. SLD)	Other*
AL	X		X				X	X		
AK	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
AZ	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
AR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
CA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
CO	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
CT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
DE	X	X	X			X	X			
DC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
FL**										
GA**										
HI	X	X	X			X	X		X	
ID**										
IL	X	X	X				X			
IN	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
IA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
KS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
KY			X						X	
LA	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
ME	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
MD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

State	Social, cultural, linguistic or environmental factors	Disability label, placement or services	Excessive absences	Need for accommodations	Foreseen emotional duress	Foreseen disruptive behavior	Poor performance or impact on accountability system	Administrator decision	Other disabilities (e.g. SLD)	Other*
MA**										
MI**										
MN	X	X					X			X
MS	X	X					X			
MO	X		X						X	
MT	X	X					X			
NE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
NV	X		X						X	
NH**										
NJ	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
NM**										
NY	X	X	X							
NC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
ND	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
OH	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
OK	X		X		X	X	X			
OR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
PA**										
RI	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
SC	X	X	X				X	X	X	

State	Social, cultural, linguistic or environmental factors	Disability label, placement or services	Excessive absences	Need for accommodations	Foreseen emotional duress	Foreseen disruptive behavior	Poor performance or impact on accountability system	Administrator decision	Other disabilities (e.g. SLD)	Other*
SD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
TN**										
TX	X	X	X				X			
UT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
VT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
VA	X		X			X	X			X
WA	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
WV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
WI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
WY	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Total	**41**	**36**	**39**	**24**	**27**	**30**	**38**	**29**	**8**	**3**

* Other factors that states indicated should not be used were:

MN: Placement and participation in a separate, specialized curriculum.

VA: The justification cannot be based on … [whether the student] does not need the test for promotion or graduation.

WA: Lack of access to quality instruction.

**State did not have factors not to be used as participation criteria for alternate assessment.

Appendix E

Format of Participation Criteria for Alternate Assessment

State	Description/ text	Flow chart/ decision tree	Checklist	Other	Name of Alternate Assessment
AL		X			Alabama Alternate Assessment (AAA)
AK			X		Alaska Alternate Assessment (AK-AA)
AZ	X	X	X		Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)
AR	X	X	X		Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)
CA	X				California Alternate Assessments (CAA)
CO	X	X	X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) AKA CoAlt ELA and Math CoAlt Science and Social Studies (Colorado developed and managed)
CT	X	X	X		Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA)
DE			X		Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA)
DC	X	X	X		Multi-State Alternate Assessment(MSAA)
FL	X		X		Florida Alternate Assessment
GA	X		X		Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)
HI	X	X	X	X (case studies)	Hawaii State Alternate Assessments (HSA-Alt)
ID	X				ID-NCSC Alternate Assessment
IL	X		X		Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA)
IN	X	X		X (FAQ, flowchart)	Indiana's Alternate Assessment (ISTAR)
IA			X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)

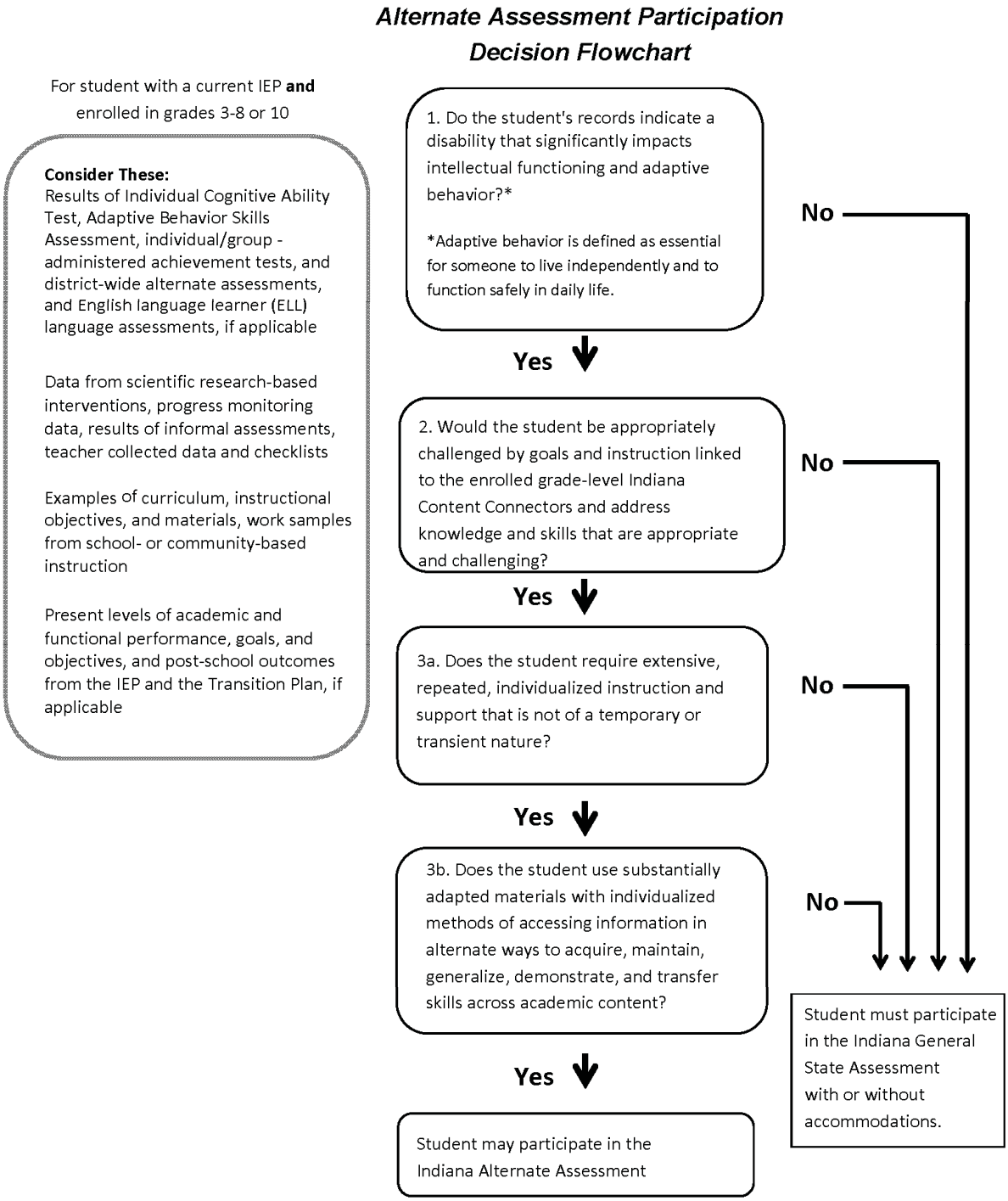
State	Description/ text	Flow chart/ decision tree	Checklist	Other	Name of Alternate Assessment
KS			X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
KY			X		Alternate K-Prep
LA	X		X		Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) Alternate Assessment, Level 1 (LAA1) and Level 2 (LAA2)
ME	X	X	X		Multi-State Alternate Assessment(MSAA)
MD	X	X	X		Maryland Alternate Assessments
MA	X	X			Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt)
MI		X			Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program (MI-Access)
MN	X				Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)
MS	X			X (decision table)	Mississippi Assessment Program-Alternate (MAP-A) – Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
MO	X	X	X		Missouri Alternate Assessment
MT	X		X		MontCAS Alternate Assessments
NE	X	X	X		Nebraska State Accountability Tests Alternate Assessment (NeSA Alternate)
NV			X		Nevada Alternate Assessment (NAA)
NH			X		New Hampshire's Alternate Assessment Programs (NH ALPs) - Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
NJ			X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
NM	X		X		New Mexico Alternate Performance Assessment

State	Description/ text	Flow chart/ decision tree	Checklist	Other	Name of Alternate Assessment
NY	X				Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
NC	X	X			North Carolina alternate assessments (NEXTEND 1)
ND			X		North Dakota's Alternate Assessments- NDAA (Dynamic Learning Map; DLM)
OH	X	X	X		Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)
OK		X	X		Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)
OR	X	X	X		Oregon Extended Assess-ments
PA	X				Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA)
RI	X		X	X (case studies)	Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
SC	X		X		South Carolina Alternate Assessments
SD			X		Multi-State Alternate As-sessment (MSAA)
TN		X			Multi-State Alternate Assessment(MSAA)
TX	X		X		STAAR Alternate 2
UT	X		X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
VT			X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
VA	X		X	X (deci-sion table)	Virginia Alternate Assess-ment Program (VAAP)
WA	X				Washington Access to Instruction and Measure-ment (WA-AIM)
WV	X		X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)

State	Description/ text	Flow chart/ decision tree	Checklist	Other	Name of Alternate Assessment
WI			X		Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
WY			X		Wyoming Alternate Assessment (Wy-ALT)
Total	**34**	**19**	**38**	**5**	

Appendix F

Sample Flow Chart (Indiana)



For additional information regarding Indiana's Assements, please access: www.doe.in.gov/assessment

Appendix G

Sample Case Studies (Rhode Island)

Appendix A: Student Examples

Several student examples are provided here to show how evidence may be used to determine whether or not the three criteria are met.

Student Example A
Student A is 13 years old and uses an augmentative communication device with voice and print output to take part in classroom discussions and activities, as well as to participate in assessments. His primary disability diagnosis is autism.

READING: He reads using large print version of text and can answer some basic comprehension questions at grade level but has trouble with drawing conclusions or making inferences after reading. He prefers to be read to, rather than to read on his own. He can read simplified text and text at the 3rd grade level.

WRITING: This student can write simple stories with a beginning, middle, and end. His use of details is limited; fast/slow, light/dark, tall/short, loud/soft, etc. Because of his visual impairments, it takes him much longer than his classmates to complete writing assignments and this causes him to become frustrated at times.

MATHEMATICS: He requires a calculator for all math calculations and can get the correct answer by following step-by-step directions; however, he requires being reminded often about some basic numeracy concepts such as multiplication and division.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: He is very adept at using a computer and/or iPad to download videos and to play games and music. He has severe anxiety and requires extensive coaching, prompting, and breaks. Any testing requires several days to complete and due to severe Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), many times testing cannot be completed. Because of this, test results may not reflect this student's true knowledge and abilities.

Participation Criteria	Description of Documentation and Evidence *(write specific evidence here)*	Sources of Evidence [check if used]
1. The student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and adaptive behavior. YES ○ NO ●	*He can answer some basic comprehension questions at grade level but has trouble with drawing conclusions or making inferences after reading. He prefers to be read to, rather than to read on his own. He can read simplified text.* *This student can write simple stories with a beginning, middle, and his use of details is limited; fast/slow, light/dark, tall/short, loud/soft, etc.* *He requires a calculator for all math calculations and can get the correct answer by following formulaic directions* *Due to severe OCD, many times testing cannot be completed. Test results may not reflect this student's true knowledge and abilities.* *He is very adept at using a computer and/or iPad to download videos and to play games and music.*	☐ Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test ☐ Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment ☐ Results of individual and group administered achievement tests ■ Results of informal assessments ■ Results of individual reading assessments ☐ Results of district-wide alternate assessments ☐ Results of language assessments including English language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable ☐ Other:
2. The student's instruction is aligned to the CCSS but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core Content Connectors. Instruction in science is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the NGSS. YES ○ NO ●	*He can answer some basic comprehension questions at grade level but has trouble with drawing conclusions or making inferences after reading.* *He requires a calculator for all math calculations and can get the correct answer by following formulaic directions; however, he requires being reminded often about some basic numeracy concepts such as multiplication and division.*	■ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples ■ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and short-term objectives from the IEP ☐ Data from scientific research-based interventions ☐ Progress monitoring data ☐ Other:

3. The student is unable to apply academic skills in home, school, and community without intensive, frequent, and individualized instruction in multiple settings. YES ○ NO ●	*He can get the correct answer by following step-by-step directions and requires being reminded often about some basic numeracy concepts around multiplication and division.* *He requires extensive coaching, prompting, modeling, and breaks.*	■ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction ■ Teacher collected data and checklists ■ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP and the Transition Plan for students age 12 and older □ Other:

Student Example B

Student B is 9 years old. Her primary disability diagnosis is autism. She speaks using two- and three-word phrases after hearing answers modeled for her; she exhibits echolalia. Most of her speech consists of "yes/no" answers. She does not use an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device but is involved in a program to develop conversational speech skills and is showing some improvement. IQ test result score is 60.

READING: Student A is able to identify familiar pictures and picture symbols and has emerging sight word vocabulary of about 25 words. She can read somewhat independently, as long as the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher. Student A can understand texts closer to her grade level (not on grade level) with supports such as picture symbols and having the text read aloud by an aide or teacher and are about subjects she enjoys; animals, especially baby animals. She enjoys books that have tactile supports embedded in the text. She will only read if her teacher provides intensive supports like prompting, cueing, refocusing, in a one-on-one environment and with frequent breaks and the text is a subject she enjoys. Historical or informational texts are not interesting to her.

WRITING: She can independently write her first and last name and can copy text but in most cases when she copies text, it is not clear if she understands what she is writing. She can write S-V sentences using word cards with picture symbols. She does not enjoy writing.

MATHEMATICS: Student A can count same-color blocks up to ten. She does not understand the concepts of subtraction or addition; she must re-count the blocks to arrive at an answer. "More/less" is a difficult concept when using numerals but she can tell which group of things is more or less than another group of the same things but not when the groups are different (group of pencils and group of erasers).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: On a computer, she can click and drag using an adapted mouse, but only when provided a model and a clear objective (like playing a simple game). Student A has difficulty when activities change from a set schedule; sometimes has difficulty sharing with other students in the class but not always. She understands sequences of events (first, next, last, etc.) but not the idea that something is scheduled to happen at 2:00, for example. She enjoys being outside.

Participation Criteria	**Documentation *(must be provided for each criteria)***	**Sources of Evidence [check if used]**
1. The student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and adaptive behavior. ● Yes O No	*She speaks using two- and three-word phrases after modeling answers.* *She can independently write her first and last name and can copy text but in most cases when she copies text, it is not clear if she understands what she is writing.* *Student A can count same-color blocks up to ten. She does not understand simple subtraction or addition; she must re-count the blocks to arrive at an answer. "More/less" is a difficult concept when using numerals.*	☐ Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test ☐ Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment ☐ Results of individual and group administered achievement tests ■ Results of informal assessments ■ Results of individual reading assessments

	She has difficulty with understanding when activities change from a set schedule. She understands sequences of events but not the idea that something is scheduled to happen at 2:00.	☐ Results of district-wide alternate assessments ☐ Results of language assessments including English language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable ☐ Other:
2. The student's instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core Content Connectors. Instruction in science is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the NGSS. ● Yes O No	*She is 9 years old and can read somewhat independently, as long as the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher.* *She can understand texts closer to her grade level (not on grade level) with supports such as picture symbols and having the text read aloud by an aide or teacher and are about subjects she enjoys; animals, especially baby animals*	■ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples ■ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives from the IEP ☐ Data from scientific research-based interventions ☐ Progress monitoring data ☐ Other:
3. The student is unable to apply academic skills in home, school, and community without intensive, frequent, and individualized instruction in multiple settings. ● Yes O No	*She can read somewhat independently, as long as the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher.* *She can understand texts closer to her grade level (not on grade level) with supports such as picture symbols and having the text read aloud by an aide or teacher and are about subjects she enjoys; animals, especially baby animals.* *She will only read if her teacher provides intensive supports like prompting, cueing, refocusing, in a one-on-one environment and with frequent breaks.*	■ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction ■ Teacher collected data and checklists ■ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP and the Transition Plan for students age 12 and older ☐ Other:

Student Example C

Student C is 17 years old and in the 10th grade. His primary diagnosis is autism and he has some vision impairment that requires some adapted materials. He is in a self-contained classroom. He can vocalize but does not use words; he is essentially non-verbal. He has a new AAC device that both the student and the staff are learning. His fine motor skills are poor; however he enjoys finger painting along with other art projects. He enjoys music as well. So far, things seem to be improving in the area of communication for this student. The lack of a consistent mode of communication has made it difficult to determine his cognitive functioning. However, learning his new AAC device has provided motivation as he is learning that people will respond to him. In addition, he has a health condition that has led to many absences. Even though he is learning how to communicate with his new device, it is clear that his content knowledge and basic skills are far below his typical peers and instruction will remain at a remedial level for the foreseeable future; because of this the GLEs/CCSS are far beyond his current ability.

READING: He can understand and recognize most of the pictures in his AAC device. He enjoys being read to (especially picture books about trucks, cars, and other automotive equipment and dogs). He takes a long time to look at the pictures. If you ask him to identify a type of car or a part on a car (e.g. tire, wheel, door, tractor, etc.) he can point to it accurately. During times when a movie is played in the classroom, he can order the events of the movie if they are in pictures. He can tell you if an event did not take place in the movie. He can mimic parts of the dialogue even though most of it is unintelligible; he mimics the sounds and inflection of people talking but cannot form the words.

WRITING: He does recognize his name and uses a name stamp that includes his entire first name and a separate stamp with his last name. His teacher has begun to use individual letter stamps to help him learn how to recognize the individual letters of his name. He can order events very well and reorder the events to produce a different ending/answer an open-ended question.

MATHEMATICS: Unknown at this time. His teacher has noticed that he understands when things are supposed to happen during his day (arriving at school, lunch, breaks, etc.) but it is not clear if he is reading the clock on the wall or if he is recognizing a pattern to his school day. Numbers are programmed in to his AAC device but have not been introduced; however, he did request that the teacher read three books to him one day and he used the number "3" on his AAC device. He is not interested in math.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: It is clear that he can understand the pictures displayed on his AAC device. There are no words matched with the pictures.

Participation Criteria	**Description of Documentation and Evidence** *(write specific evidence here)*	**Sources of Evidence [check if used]**
1. Student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and adaptive behavior. ● Yes O No	*So much is unknown about this student's true ability. However, given his reaction to his new AAC device and other observations, it is clear that while he may have some kind of cognitive disability, the extent is not known. His disabilities however, do impact his adaptive behavior significantly and his level of learning is far below that of his*	☐ Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test ■ Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment ☐ Results of individual and group administered achievement tests ■

	typical peers. As the year progresses more formal and informal assessments will be given.	Results of informal assessments ☐ Results of individual reading assessments ☐ Results of district-wide alternate assessments ☐ Results of language assessments including English language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable Other:
2. The student's instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core Content Connectors. Instruction in science is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the NGSS. ● Yes o No	*Yes. While it is largely unknown what this student knows and can do, it is clear that he is far below his typical peers. He can understand basic concepts of more/less (snacks), basic pictures both on his AAC device and in picture books. He can point out the correct picture when you ask "where is the tire, truck, door, dog, etc." after you read the book aloud.*	■ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples ■ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives from the IEP ☐ Data from scientific research-based interventions ☐ Progress monitoring data ☐ Other:
3. The student is unable to apply academic skills in home, school, and community without intensive, frequent, and individualized instruction in multiple settings. ● Yes o No	*Materials are adapted because of his vision impairment. Because of his lack of communication and largely nonverbal status, much was done for this student. His student work samples are largely classroom observation.*	■ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction ■ Teacher collected data and checklists ■ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP and the Transition Plan for students age 12 and older ■ Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment ☐ Other:

Appendix H

Definitions of Significant Cognitive Disabilities

State	Definition and Source
Alabama	*In Alabama, the definition of a student with significant cognitive disabilities is a student with an intelligent quotient (IQ) of three standard deviations below the mean, which is an IQ of 55 or below. IEP teams should use this as a guideline when determining if a student should take an alternate assessment. A student meeting this definition and receiving instruction on the Alabama Extended Standards, an extension of the grade-level state content standards, is eligible for the Alabama Alternate Assessment as determined by the student's IEP*. Source: Alabama State Department of Education Student Assessment Program Policies and Procedures for Students of Special Populations (p. 4) https://www.alsde.edu/sec/sa/Special%20Populations/Alabama_Special_Populations_1142016.pdf
Alaska	*Students with significant cognitive disabilities have a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behaviors are essential to live independently and to function safely in daily life. When adaptive behaviors are significantly impacted it means that the individual is unlikely to develop the skills necessary to live independently and function safely in daily life. In other words, significant cognitive disabilities impact students both in and out of the classroom and across life domains, not just in academic domains.* Source: Participation Guidelines for Alaska Students in State Assessments (p. 20) https://education.alaska.gov/TLS/Assessments/accommodations/ParticipationGuidelines.pdf
Arizona	*A student with a significant cognitive disability is one who has records that indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is defined as actions essential for an individual to live independently and to function safely in daily life. Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined by an IQ test score, but rather a holistic understanding of a student*. Source: Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions for the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (p. 5) https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=585019d1aadebe050c5743c1
California	*A student with a significant cognitive disability* is one whose school records indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is defined as actions essential for an individual to live independently and to function safely in daily life. *Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined by an IQ test score; rather, a holistic understanding of the student is required.* Source: Guidance for Individualized Education Program Teams California Alternate Assessments for English Language Arts and Mathematics: Participation Decisions (p. 2) http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/caaiepteamguidance.pdf

State	Definition and Source
Colorado	*… the designation of "the most significant cognitive disability" is left to the professional judgment of the school psychologist and other professionals contributing to the body of evidence gathered during the evaluation and considered by the IEP Team. Generally, such students can be characterized as having intellectual functioning well below average (typically associated with cognitive measures indicating an IQ below 55, / 3.0 standard deviations or more below the mean) that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive functioning. This reference is only offered to help distinguish between students who meet eligibility criteria to receive special education services as a student with an Intellectual Disability and students with the most significant cognitive disability. The words "typically associated with IQ below 55" allow for some district/ school flexibility; it is not intended to be an absolute requirement. For students with IQ measured in the 55-70 range, additional factors related to the severity and impact of the disability must be taken into account when considering the selection of alternate academic achievement standards and assessment.* Source: Participation Guidelines: Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Instruction and Alternate Assessment (pp.1-2) https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/altstandsassessparticipationguidelines
Connecticut	*Students with significant cognitive disabilities are a relatively small population who: (1) are identified with one or more of the existing categories of disability under the IDEA (for example: intellectually disabled, autism, multiple disabilities, and traumatic brain injury, which are the most common); and (2) have cognitive impairments which may prevent them from attaining grade-level achievement standards, even with systematic instruction and accommodations. Additionally, student records indicate a pervasive disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life. Intellectual functioning is not defined solely by an I.Q. score.* Source: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System (p. 1) http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/special/frequentlyaskedquestions_ct_alternate_assessment_system.pdf

State	Definition and Source
District of Columbia	*The term "significant cognitive disability" is not a new separate category of disability. It is a designation given to a small number of students with disabilities for the purposes of their participation in the DC CAs Alternate Assessment (DC CAS-Alt). IEP teams may consider the information below to help guide the discussion of whether or not a student has a significant cognitive disability.* *A history of poor performance on state assessment and/or deficient reading scores does not automatically qualify a student as having a significant cognitive disability. The US Department of Education estimates that the incidence rate of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be approximately one percent. When examining incidence data, this group typically includes moderate and severe intellectual disabilities as a primary, secondary, and/or tertiary disability; as well as classifications of multiple disabilities, autism, and deaf-blindness, where intellectual disabilities are moderate and/or severe. The following additional information represents what is traditionally found in the literature regarding the characteristics of children who have significant cognitive disabilities:* - *The student's demonstrated* cognitive functioning and adaptive *behavior in the home, school, and community environments are significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications, adaptations and accommodations.* - *The student's course of study is* primarily *functional and life-skills oriented.* - *The student* requires extensive direct instruction and/or extensive supports *in* multiple settings *to acquire, maintain and generalize academic and functional skills necessary for application in school, work, and community environments.* - *The student* demonstrates severe and complex disabilities and poor adaptive skills levels *(determined to be significantly below age expectations by that student's comprehensive assessment) that essentially prevent the student from meaningful participation in the standard academic core curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards established at grade level.* - *The student's* disability causes dependence on others for many, if not all, daily living needs, *and the student is expected to require extensive ongoing support in adulthood.* Source: Significant Cognitive Disability Guidance (pp. 1-2) https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Significant%20Cognitive%20Disability%20Guidance%2012%207%202010.pdf

State	Definition and Source
Hawai'i	*A student who is appropriately identified to be assessed by the HSA-Alt is expected to have significantly accommodated receptive and expressive communication systems (e.g., supplemented by pictures/symbols, assistive technology devices, etc.), expectations for performances that are significantly modified by reductions in difficulty and/or complexity from grade-level expectations, and materials which have been significantly modified in order to provide meaningful access to the general curriculum. These accommodations/modifications make how the student communicates, responds to the environment, and learns look significantly different from those same characteristics of peers without disabilities. An IQ score is not an acceptable criterion to determine if a student should participate in the HSA-Alt. The HSA-Alt has been developed solely for use by students who would be expected to score significantly lower than their peers without disabilities on standardized tests of knowledge and cognition (or may not achieve a valid score at all).* Source: Hawai'i State Alternate Assessments Test Administration Manual 2016 (pp. 7-8) http://alohahsap.org/HSA_ALT/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/HSA-Alt-Spring-2016-TAM_Updated_120415.pdf
Illinois	*The alternate assessment is intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These students have intellectual functioning well below average (typically associated with an IQ below 55) that exists concurrently with impairments or deficits in adaptive functioning (i.e. communications, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-directions, functional academic skills, work leisure, health and safety). The reference to "typically associated with an IQ of below 55" is to help distinguish between students with cognitive disabilities and significant cognitive disabilities from students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This means that many students with cognitive disabilities will not qualify for the IAA. By default, they must take ISAT/PSAE with or without accommodations. The inclusion of the words "typically associated with" allows for some district/school flexibility. It is by no means an absolute requirement.* Source: Illinois Alternate Assessment Participation Guidance (p.1) https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IAA_Partic_Gdlines.pdf.

State	Definition and Source
Indiana	*Most students with significant cognitive disabilities have intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, or autism, but not all do. And, not all students with these disabilities are considered to have a "significant cognitive disability." Students demonstrating academic deficits or difficulties due to learning disabilities, speech-language impairments, and emotional-behavioral disabilities do not qualify for participation in the Indiana Alternate Assessment. Performing 3-4 grade levels below peers without disabilities is not, by itself, evidence of a significant cognitive disability. Academic deficits or difficulties alone do not indicate that a student has a significant cognitive disability. Further, a significant cognitive disability will be pervasive, affecting student learning across content areas and in social and community settings.* *Students with autism or intellectual disabilities should be carefully considered for the Indiana Alternate Assessment, but they should not automatically be assigned to the alternate assessment based on their identified disability category. Not all students with autism or intellectual disabilities have a significant cognitive disability. Many students eligible to receive special education and related services under these categorical labels are able to participate in general assessments, with accommodations.* *Students receiving special education services who are identified as having orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, or traumatic brain injuries, do not necessarily have a significant cognitive disability. Determinations for student participation in statewide assessments must be evidence-centered and made individually for each student by the CCC. Students demonstrating mild to moderate cognitive disabilities may be more appropriately placed in the general assessment system with accommodations. Anticipated or past low achievement on the general assessment does not mean the student should be taking the Indiana Alternate Assessment.* Source: Participation Decision for Indiana's Alternate Assessment (ISTAR) Frequently Asked Questions (p. 1) http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/assessment/indiana-alternate-assessment-participation-guidance-faq-final-10-05-16.pdf
Maine	*A student with a significant cognitive disability is one who has documentation that indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is defined as actions essential for an individual to live independently and to function safely in daily life. Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined by an IQ test score, but rather a holistic understanding of a student.* Source: Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions for the Maine's Alternate Assessments (p. 5) https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi8x67l4tLWAhUJzoMKHaJRBFoQFggmMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.maine.gov%2Fdoe%2Falternate%2FMaineParticipationGuidance_Rev08_31.docx&usg=AOvVaw2BSLA6e_WFcMXkzn-2MzGRQ

State	Definition and Source
Maryland	*Maryland does not define "significant cognitive disability" in terms of a "cut off" IQ score. Most students with significant cognitive disabilities have intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, or autism, but not all do. Furthermore, not all students with these disabilities are considered to have a "significant cognitive disability." Many students eligible to receive special education and related services under these categorical labels may be able to participate in general assessments, with or without accommodations. A significant cognitive disability is pervasive, affecting student learning across all content areas and in social and community settings. Students demonstrating academic deficits or difficulties solely due to specific learning disabilities, speech-language impairments, other health impairments and emotional-behavioral disabilities do not qualify for participation in the Maryland Alternate Assessments. Students, however, may be from any of the disability categories listed in the IDEA. 34 CFR 200.1(f)(2). Performing three to four grade levels below peers without disabilities is not, by itself, evidence of a significant cognitive disability. Academic deficits or difficulties alone do not indicate that a student has a significant cognitive disability.* Source: Maryland Guidance for Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams on Participation Decisions for the Alternate Assessments (pp. 5, 13) http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/AlternateAssessmentParticipationGuide07012017.pdf p. 6
Mississippi	*Significant Cognitive Disability (SCD) – For a student to be classified as having a significant cognitive disability, all of the following must be true:* - *The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student's comprehensive assessment) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations.* - *The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills.* - *The student's inability to complete the standard academic curriculum is not the result of excessive or extended absences or primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities; emotional/behavioral disabilities; specific learning disabilities; or social, cultural, or economic differences.* Source: Testing Students with Disabilities Regulations (p. 5) http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/student-assessment/testing-students-with-disabilities-regulations-2012.pdf?sfvrsn=2

State	Definition and Source
Oregon	*Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are typically characterized by significantly below average general cognitive functioning. This commonly includes a student with intelligence test scores two or more standard deviations below the mean on a standardized individually administered intelligence test, occurring with commensurate deficits in adaptive behavior that are frequently also evident in early childhood. Further, the cognitive disability must significantly impact the child's educational performance and ability to generalize learning from one setting to another. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in general, require highly specialized education and/or social, psychological, and medical services to access an educational program. These students may also rely on adults for personal care and have medical conditions that require physical/verbal supports, and assistive technology devices. These intensive and on-going supports and services are typically provided directly by educators and are delivered across all educational settings.* Source: Oregon Extended Assessment Decision Making Guidance (p. 1) http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/testing/admin/alt/ea/orextassessguidance.pdf
Washington	*For purposes of the Washington Alternative Assessment System (WAAS), students who are significantly cognitively challenged means those students who require intensive or extensive levels of direct support that is not of a temporary or transient nature. Students with significant cognitive challenges also require specially designed instruction to acquire, maintain or generalize skills in multiple settings in order to successfully transfer skills to natural settings including the home, school, workplace, and community. In addition, these students score at least two (2) standard deviations below the mean on standardized, norm-referenced assessments for adaptive behavior and intellectual functioning.* Source: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) TEAM DECISION-MAKING GUIDELINES REGARDING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS (p. 2) http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/programreview/Monitoring/StudentPerformance/StudentParticipationStatewideAssessment.pdf
West Virginia	*Students with significant cognitive disabilities have a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact, intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behaviors are essential to live independently and to function safely in daily life. When adaptive behaviors are significantly impacted it means that the individual is unlikely to develop the skills necessary to live independently and function safely in daily life. In other words, significant cognitive disabilities impact students both in and out of the classroom and across life domains, not just in academic domains.* Source: Guidelines for Participation in West Virginia State Assessments (p.49) http://wvde.state.wv.us/assessment/GUIDELINESFORPARTICIPATION/DOCUMENTS/ParticipationGuidelines.pdf

State	Definition and Source
Wisconsin	*Students who will participate in alternate academic achievement standards (Essential Elements) are students with the most significant cognitive disabilities:* - *Typically function at least three standard deviations below in the norm in both adaptive and intellectual functioning. The reference to "typically functioning at least three standard deviations below the norm" is to help distinguish between students with cognitive disabilities from the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.* - *Were characterized as having an intellectual disability, autism, or multiple disabilities. Use symbolic expressive and receptive communication, while about 10-11% use pre-symbolic communication or show no response to stimuli.* *The IEP team is ultimately responsible for ensuring that student receives academic instruction that is the most appropriate and challenging based on the student's individual needs. The determination is not based on a categorical disability label.* Source: Essential Elements (EE) Frequently Asked Questions https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/topics/essential-elements/frequently-asked-questions

Appendix I

Criteria Included in Definitions of Significant Cognitive Disabilities

State	Significant cognitive deficits	Poor adaptive skill level	Unable to reach grade level standards	Extensive, individualized, direct instruc-tion	Pervasive needs across settings or time	Reference score for IQ and/or adaptive function	Not solely based on IQ score, holistic	Not due to excessive absences	Not due to other disabilities (e.g. SLD)	Not due to social, cultural, or economic factors
AL	X					X				
AK	X	X			X					
AZ	X	X					X			
CA	X	X					X			
CO	X	X				X	X			
CT	X	X	X				X			
DC	X	X	X	X	X		X			
HI		X	X				X			
IL	X	X				X	X			
IN					X				X	
ME	X	X					X			
MD	X	X			X		X		X	
MS	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
OR	X	X		X	X	X				
WA	X	X		X	X		X	X		X
WV	X	X			X					
WI	X	X				X				
Total	**16**	**15**	**4**	**4**	**7**	**5**	**10**	**2**	**3**	**2**

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