



Alternate Assessment Participation

Definitions and Criteria

DEFINITION OF ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS

Alternate Assessments (AAs) are a statewide testing option intended only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, in place of the general education assessment (with or without supports and accommodations).

Participation in an AA reflects the **pervasive** nature of a student's disability and requires meeting **all** participation criteria. Students eligible for AAs represent roughly **1%** of the total student population.

DEFINITION OF SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITY

A significant cognitive disability designation is given to a small number of students with disabilities for the purpose of determining eligibility for alternate assessments.

This designation is **not** based solely on IQ test scores or a specific disability category. Instead, it reflects a **comprehensive understanding** of a student's complex needs.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities typically:

- Have one or more disabilities that significantly affect **both** adaptive skills and intellectual functioning.
- Perform well below average in at least two adaptive skill areas.
- Have intellectual functioning well below average (typically associated with an IQ below 55).

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION

The IEP team must document the student's testing status in the appropriate sections of the IEP and review the student's participation in AAs **annually** using the criteria below.

Participation Criteria

The IEP team must be able to answer “yes” to all four of the following criteria for a student to qualify for an Alternate Assessment:

1. **The student has a significant cognitive disability** (as defined above).
 - Significant impact on both adaptive skills and intellectual functioning.
 - Adaptive skills well below average in two or more areas.
 - Intellectual functioning well below average (typically IQ below 55).
2. **The student receives functional academic instruction** at a level not typically measured by the Idaho Content Standards.
 - Instruction and IEP goals focus on knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for the student.
3. **The student’s course of study is primarily adaptive skills-oriented**, rather than aligned to state or district assessments.
 - Adaptive skills include motor skills, socialization, communication, personal care, self-direction, functional academics, and personal health and safety.
4. **The student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports** to make measurable progress in grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.
 - Consistently needs individualized instruction in both academic and adaptive skills at a substantially lower level than other students with disabilities.
 - Has extreme difficulty acquiring, maintaining, generalizing, and applying skills in multiple settings—even with intensive, high-quality instruction.
 - Requires pervasive supports, significantly adapted materials, and alternative methods of accessing information to learn and transfer skills across settings.

Non-Participation Criteria

A student may not qualify for an Alternate Assessment solely for any of the following reasons:

1. Having a disability.
2. Poor attendance or extended absences.

3. Primary language, social, cultural, or economic differences.
4. Expected poor performance or a history of low performance on the general assessment.
5. Academic or other services the student receives.
6. Educational environment or instructional setting.
7. Percent of time receiving special education services.
8. English Language Learner (ELL) status.
9. Low reading or achievement level.
10. Anticipated disruptive behavior.
11. Concerns about the effect of scores on accountability measures.
12. Administrative decision alone.
13. Anticipated emotional distress.
14. Need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology or AAC) to participate in the assessment.

For Questions Contact

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