ONE PERCENT WAIVER REQUEST

2024-2025

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PUBLIC COMMENT

The MDE made its request for a waiver for the 2024-2025 school year from the 1.0% cap on the percentage of students participating in the alternate assessment available for public review and comment. The MDE's waiver request was posted to the MDE Office of Special Education website. The public review and comment period opened on November 27, 2024 and closed on December 7, 2024. All comments were sent to spedta@mdek12.org and were responded to by staff from the MDE OSE. A record of all public comments and responses can be found in Attachment A of this document.

MDE STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

MDE provides every Local Education Agency (LEA) with an LEA Data Profile (Attachment B) and a MAAP-A Participation Data Analysis, Justification and Assurances document (Attachment C). These documents are used by every LEA anticipated to exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A to review and analyze MAAP-A participation data; verify students participating in the MAAP-A meet the requirements of SCD; assessment options and SCD determination is documented on student IEPs; and to identify and address any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any student group participating in the MAAP-A. The MDE also employs on-site observations and file reviews as needed to verify that students participating in the MAAP-A meet the requirements.

LEA JUSTIFICATION

The MDE requires that any (LEA) anticipated to exceed 1% participation in MAAP-A to conduct an extensive data analysis, justification and assurances document. The LEA Data Profile includes the following data elements for review and completion of the MAAP- Participation Data Analysis, Justification and Assurances document:

- Total percentage of students with a SCD enrolled in the LEA in 2023-2024
- Total percentage of students with an SCD that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year
- LEA Mississippi Academic Achievement Program (MAAP) and MAAP-A assessment participation data by subject area and assessment group
- 2023-2024 total student enrollment data
- 2023 December 1st child count data
- Total number of students that participated in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window(s)
- Total number of students with disabilities that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window(s)
- Number of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by grade and subject area
- Number and percentage of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by eligibility
- Percentage of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by subgroup

The MAAP-A Participation Data Analysis, Justification, and Assurances document requires any LEA anticipated to exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A to engage in and document responses to the following guided activities/questions including providing justifying the need to exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A.

- Data review and analysis of data included in the LEA Data Profile
- After a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview, list any identified patterns, trends or themes in the data. List any potential root causes for the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview.
- List any additional data that would help **explain or justify** the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview and related potential root causes including any special programs that the LEA oversees that would explain the LEA exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A.

- After a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup, list any identified patterns, trends or themes in the data, specifically over/under representation of a particular subgroup.
- List any potential root causes for the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup.
- List any additional data that would help **explain or justify** the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup and related potential root causes, including any special programs that the LEA oversees that would explain over/under representation and/or the LEA exceeding 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A.
- For specific eligibility categories the LEA must provide the number of students in that eligibility category that participated in the MAAP-A during the school year and for whom evidence verifying the student's identification as having an SCD must be submitted to MDE via SharePoint.
- After the data review and analysis, the LEA must describe the LEA's Action Plan for working toward a MAAP-A participation rate of 1.0% or less. The Action Plan must include a professional development component aligned and in compliance with Process Standard 15 of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards (MPSAS).*

Every LEA is required to make annual assurances. The assurances are designed to ensure that all Individualized Education Program (IEP) Committees follow the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) when making assessment participation decisions. Required assurances are listed below:

- The LEA has developed and implemented processes/procedures that LEA staff use to determine and verify that all students participating in the MAAP-A meet the criteria for SCD (evidence of processes and procedures must be submitted to MDE via SharePoint)
- The LEA has provided professional development and/or guidance to LEA staff regarding the determination a student with a disability as a student with SCD (evidence of professional development must be submitted to MDE via SharePoint)
- The LEA assures that only students that meet the criteria for SCD will be participating in the 2024-2025 MAAP-A and understands that students participating in the 2024-2025 MAAP-A and that **do not** meet the criteria for SCD, will have test scores invalidated in accordance with Appendix F of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards.*

A statement on the MDE OSE website notifies the public that LEA justifications are available to the public upon request. Requests should be submitted to the MDE Office of Public Reporting.

MDE PLAN OF ACTION

In July 2024, the MDE engaged in a series of intensive technical assistance activities, in partnership with the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). Participants included various MDE staff from the Office of Special Education (OSE) and the Office of Student Assessment (OSA) and included both the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Accountability Officer. The purpose of the technical assistance was to conduct an in-depth review of current policies and practices that may contribute to the current alternate assessment participation rates. Furthermore, through this partnership with NCEO, an in-person workshop was conducted which included participants from four local school districts. During this time, the MDE refined existing activities and developed additional strategic activities to assist districts in lowering MAAP-A participation rates. Specifically, the MDE more clearly defined its tiered system of support for districts who exceed the 1.0% alternate assessment participation cap. Those activities are organized into each tier below and describes how the MDE will provide oversight to each Local Education Agency (LEA) that exceeds the 1.0% threshold to ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in the MAAP-A. Additionally, the State Education Agency (SEA) has clearly indicated which activities are continued and which activities will be implemented during the 2024-2025 school year.

Tier 1 Supports

Continued Activities:

- The MDE recently updated its justification and assurance process for LEAs anticipated to exceed 1.0% as well as updates to required activities for all LEAs. Updates are included in the process described below and new activities can also be found in the **New Activities** section of this document.
- The MDE requires all LEAs anticipated to exceed the 1.0% participation to conduct a data review and analysis, provide any necessary justification, develop an action plan, and make assurances. The LEA MAAP-A participation analysis and justification includes the following guided questions/activities that must be completed by an LEA team:
  - After a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview, list any identified patterns, trends or themes in the data.
  - List any potential root causes for the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview.
  - List any additional data that would help **explain or justify** the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview and related potential root causes including any special programs that the LEA oversees that would explain the LEA exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A.
  - After a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup, list any identified patterns, trends or themes in the data, specifically over/under representation of a particular subgroup.
  - List any potential root causes for the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup.
  - List any additional data that would help **explain or justify** the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup and related potential root causes, including any special programs that the LEA oversees that would explain over/under representation and/or the LEA exceeding 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A.
- Any LEA anticipated to exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A, must complete the following action: For specific eligibility categories LEAs must provide the number of students in that eligibility category that participated in the MAAP-A during the previous school year and for whom evidence verifying the student's identification as having an SCD has been uploaded to SharePoint. The eligibility categories that require additional evidence for verification include Emotional Disability, Hearing Impairment, Language/Speech Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, and Visual Impairment.

- After the data review and analysis, any LEA anticipated to exceed 1.0% participation in the MAAP-A are required to describe the LEA's Action Plan for working toward 1.0% or less of its student population participating in the MAAP-A. The Action Plan must include a professional development component aligned with and in compliance with Process Standard 15 of the Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards (MPSAS).
- All LEAs must make assurances annually. In addition, the assurances are designed to ensure that all Individualized Education Program (IEP) Committees follow the IDEA when making assessment participation decisions. All assurances and justifications are submitted to the MDE prior to the opening of the spring testing window. The assurances require LEAs to describe the processes/procedures that are used to determine and verify that all students participating in the alternate assessment meet the criteria for significant cognitive disability. All LEAs must make the following assurances annually:
  - The LEA has developed and implemented processes/procedures that LEA staff use to determine and verify that all students participating in the MAAP-A meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability.
  - The LEA has provided professional development and/or guidance to LEA staff regarding the determination of a student with a disability as a student with a significant cognitive disability.
  - The LEA assures that only students that meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability will be participating in the 2024-2025 MAAP-A and understands that students participating in the 2024-2025 MAAP-A that **do not** meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability, will have test scores invalidated in accordance with Appendix F of the MPSAS.
- It should be noted that LEAs will be required to upload evidence of processes and procedures and the provision of professional development/guidance along with signed assurances.
- Justifications and assurances are publicly available upon request by contacting the MDE Office of Public Reporting (OPR). Contact information and instructions for OPR can be found on the MDE website (www.mdek12.org/OPR/Reporting/Request).
- The MDE conducts training for a comprehensive audience across the State to include superintendents, administrators, test coordinators, and special education directors.
  - The OSA provides three assessment trainings annually for LEAs.

    (1) In fall and spring each year, a training is conducted for the District Test Coordinators (DTC) that includes an overview and updates for the MAAP-A program. This training is focused on the requirements of Federal law (ESSA Section 1111(b)(1)(E)(i)(IV) with an overview of the 1% regulations (ESSA Section 1111(b)(2)(D)(i)(I) and how the OSA and Office of Special Education (OSE) at the MDE collaborate to ensure that the students taking the alternate assessment are the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

    (2) In January each year, the MDE and the vendor for the MAAP-A assessment provides an in-person training for the DTCs, one or two School Test Coordinator(s), and the Special Education Director. This training is presented jointly by the vendor and MDE staff. This four-hour training is recorded and uploaded on the vendor site for future review and training other school and district personnel who could not attend.

    (3) A third four-hour training session is provided via webinar for the Test Administrators who will be administering the assessment to students.

    All training provides the use of the online platform, instructions for completing the Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI), transcribing scores into the system, and any new policy updates. The MDE also utilizes this opportunity to discuss the 1% MAAP-A participation cap, implications, criteria, and support provided to the LEA by the MDE.
  - Prior to the spring 2024 administration, the OSA implemented additional data quality analysis by working alongside the testing vendor for MAAP-A (NWEA) and the MDE Office of Technology and Strategic Services (OTSS) to ensure that student information

data was reported accurately. OTSS provided a data file of all students per district and school who are identified as SCD in grades 3-8 and high school assessments. These students comprise the pre-ID file that is submitted to the vendor for uploading into the testing platform. Prior to the opening of the testing window, the vendor provided enrollment counts per district to the MDE for comparison. It was noted during the Spring 2024 assessment window that approximately 864 students were loaded into the vendor system by the districts during the testing window. These students were not included in the pre-ID file upload from the MDE student database. OSA's verification of appropriate SCD student enrollment for the MAAP-A assessment will continue in 2025.

o The MDE requires that all high school students are identified by course code enrollment to populate the pre-ID files which are submitted to vendors. Students must be enrolled in the Alternate Biology, Alternate Algebra, and Alternate English II courses to take the associated MAAP-A high school assessments. Prior to spring 2024, the data analysis from OTSS and OSA indicated that 168 students were enrolled in the course codes that require high school assessments and were included in the pre-ID file. These students had already received credit in the course associated with the test and had previously taken and passed the required alternate assessment. The OSA emailed the districts (see example below) explaining that these students should not be administered these assessments because they have already met the course and assessment requirement.

MAAP-A High School Students

Jackie Sampsell
To ○ monica.thornton@smithcountyschools.net

☺ ↩ Reply ↩ Reply All → Forward ⬜ ⋯

Thu 4/4/2024 9:11 AM

Monica,
The MDE is investigating the number of students who take MAAP-A assessments. In our research into MAAP-A students testing for SY23-24, we found that your district had students in the pre-ID file who have either passed or scored proficient in a high school MAAP-A assessment. See the list for your district with Subjects/MSIS numbers below.

Content Area	MSIS	DIST	School
Algebra I (Alt)	1208297	6500	8
Algebra I (Alt)	1204510	6500	8
Algebra I (Alt)	1207790	6500	8
Algebra I (Alt)	1210176	6500	12
Algebra I (Alt)	1338747	6500	12
Algebra I (Alt)	1093242	6500	12
Biology (Alt)	1210176	6500	12
Biology (Alt)	1322793	6500	12

If you have not tested these students this spring, they should not test. If you have tested the student, please note that the score for 2024 will not be loaded into MSIS.
Thanks,
Jackie

- The MDE continues to require LEAs to complete the Learning Characteristic Inventory (LCI) of the MAAP-A prior to the test window. The LCI is designed to enhance the demographic data collection for the test and when used appropriately, provides additional data to consider in the preparation to participate in the MAAP-A assessment.
- The MDE has provided and will continue to provide extensive Statewide support in the areas of professional development around the alternate assessment. Sessions regarding the identification, instruction, and assessment of students identified as having a SCD were provided at the Statewide Time is Right Conference in June 2024. Training was

also conducted at the quarterly Special Education Directors meetings in Spring 2024. Additionally, the MDE has conducted extensive training for special education directors, school administrators, and district administrators regarding the appropriate identification of students with SCD and those who may need to participate in the alternate assessment. SCD determination and instructional support professional development and individual coaching has been provided to individual districts and in weekly virtual office hours with special education directors. These activities will continue to be available through the professional development menu of services at individual LEA's request.

- The MDE has provided various training opportunities across the state including training at regional administrator meetings, the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS) conferences, and the Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA) conference during the 2023-2024 school year. These sessions included small and large group gatherings in both virtual and in-person format.

- The MDE hosts a monthly 1.0% Community of Practice (CoP). This CoP addresses disproportionate representation among the 1.0%, the identification of students as students with SCD, data analysis, and instructional best practices. To ensure that all students are appropriately assessed, the MDE has developed and continues to implement a three-pronged approach that involves LEA data analysis, LEA support, and a plan of correction for the SEA and LEAs.

- The MDE provides ongoing professional development and technical assistance for SCD determination and classroom practices for serving students determined as having met the criteria for SCD. The MDE, OSE has developed and made available to all LEAs a five-episode professional learning resource entitled Significant Cognitive Disabilities Webinar Series which provides guidance regarding the accurate identification of students with SCD, instructional strategies, and least restrictive environment.

- Through collaboration with the Office of Professional Development, the MDE has a professional development coordinator (PDC) who specializes in the identification of and instruction for students with SCD. The PDC provides professional development and individual coaching to any school district in need of support. The MDE may direct the use of this coaching, or districts may request coaching and technical support through the Office of Professional Development.

- Teacher Resource Guides for all the Mississippi Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (MS-AAAS) have been developed to provide valuable instructional strategies, sample lessons, and activities for teachers. Teacher Resource Guides were developed by groups of stakeholders currently serving students meeting the criteria of having a SCD. As any academic standards are reviewed and updated by the MDE, the MS-AAAS and companion Teacher Resource Guides are subsequently revised and revised as appropriate on OSE MDE's website.

- The MDE has provided to LEAs a Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Guidance Document. This all-inclusive guidance includes the identification and support for students meeting the criteria for SCD.

- The MDE has developed and published the Family Guides to Special Education. This 14-volume resource includes a family friendly guide for each of the 13 special education eligibility categories and an additional volume for SCD determination. The guides help families support their students with disabilities from identification to adulthood. Additionally, the MDE has developed and released two additional guidance documents to support students who meet the criteria for SCD with the All Things

[Assessment Guidance Document](#) and the [Compass for College Guidance Document.](#) Both documents provide support to educators and families as they implement instruction and support to students.

- The MDE will continue to provide LEA-level District Determination Reports for special education that includes assessment data profiles that detail student participation rates, SCD participation percentages, and the numbers of students with disabilities by IDEA disability eligibility category. The MDE will continue to identify any disproportionality in the percentage of students taking the MAAP-A at each LEA address disproportionality in the percentage of students in each subgroup participating in the MAAP-A. The MDE collects alternate assessment data for the following subgroups:
  - American Indian/Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black
  - Hispanic
  - White
  - Other Pacific Islander
  - Economically Disadvantaged
  - English Language Learner

For each district, the MDE identifies the subgroup's data by dividing the proportion of MAAP-A participants in a particular subgroup (e.g., race/ethnicity, socio-economic status) by the proportion of students in the same subgroup who are non-participants.

Newly Developed Activities:

- The MDE has recently revised the previously published [SCD Determination Guidance Document](#). The [updated guidance](#) expands on the previous guidance to include examples and a formalized breakdown of each requirement. The updated guidance also includes a visual progression through the SCD determination process, as well as a comprehensive breakdown of adaptive skills and assistive technology. The purpose of these changes is to assist IEP committees in appropriate decision making and to guide and support the discussion with families. The revised guidance was developed by a team of stakeholders which included teachers, administrators, individuals with disabilities, child advocates, legal counsel, parents, and diagnosticians. Additionally, the revised guidance was field tested with a group of currently practicing teachers, and two listening feedback sessions were held to ensure that the document is comprehensive and provides the necessary guidance. The MDE will continue to receive feedback on the revised guidance to ensure that it provides strong support to IEP committees when considering if a student meets the criteria for SCD. Training activities began in June 2024 and will continue to be provided across the State in virtual and in-person formats throughout the upcoming school year.

- The MDE is in the process of upgrading its statewide student information system. The Mississippi Student Information System 2.0 (MSIS 2.0) will record SCD determination data directly from each student's IEP via the LEA IEP vendor. This data will be updated nightly. The percentage of students identified as having an SCD will be displayed on a data dashboard for each LEA. Additionally, this new feature will ensure that only students identified as meeting the criteria for SCD will be included in the MAAP-A Pre-ID assessment files based on their grade or the course in which he/she is enrolled.

- The MDE has added two additional personnel positions within the agency to specifically support efforts to reduce participation in alternate assessments. There will be a position housed in the Office of Student Assessment and the Office of Special Education. Both positions will work closely with one another across offices to ensure that the MDE is working strategically across offices to work toward meeting the 1.0% cap on participation in the alternate assessment. These positions will be responsible for working with LEA administrators, district test coordinators, special education directors and other relevant LEA staff to provide guidance, support, training and monitoring in this area.

- The MDE added additional requirements to its updated justification and assurances process as outlined above. New requirements to the justification and assurances process include:
  - A more thorough data review and analysis of MAAP-A participation data, including a data review and analysis of subgroups.
  - A requirement that all LEAs provide evidence of processes and procedures related to participation in the MAAP-A.
  - A requirement that all LEAs provide evidence of the provision of professional development and/or guidance as it pertains to the identification of students as having an SCD and student participation in the MAAP-A.
- While conducting on-site annual test security audits, MDE staff will request SCD determination documentation included in the students' IEPs to verify the student is eligible to be assessed on the MAAP-A assessment.
- The OSA reviews grade change requests and course enrollment data from LEAs to ensure that the student placement is correct.
- Beginning with the Spring 2025 administration, the MDE will develop a process to review and approve manual MAAP-A administration entries for students not initially included in the Pre-ID file as SCD.

Tier 2 Supports
The SEA conducts targeted systems of oversight for districts whose MAAP-A participation rates exceed 2% in the most recent testing year.

Continued Activities:
- Prior to the opening of the spring testing window the MDE identifies LEAs anticipated to exceed the 1.0% threshold based on the most recent assessment participation data. LEAs who exceed the 1.0% threshold are required to submit detailed justifications for exceeding the 1.0%. As outlined in the Tier 1 supports above. Additionally, all LEAs are strongly encouraged to participate in a 1.0% Community of Practice conducted monthly by the Office of Special Education, Bureau of Data and Compliance.
- The MDE will continue to conduct in-depth data analysis of students included in the Pre-ID files, and review IEP documentation during on-site test security audits.

Newly Developed Activities:
- The MDE conducted a MAAP-A Regional Work Session in the fall of 2024 for Superintendents, DTCs, and Special Education Directors in LEAs. This was a required training for any LEA that assessed greater than 2% of the tested population using the MAAP-A. The objective of the training was to ensure the LEAs understand how to properly identify SCD students in the new MSIS database, ensure that they are marked as SCD, and have the correct evidence included in the IEP to be included in the MAAP-A administration. Additionally, LEAs were provided their 2023-2024 participation data and given a step-by-step tutorial on the use of the MAAP-A Data Analysis, Justification, and Assurances process.
- The MDE will provide guidance to the LEAs regarding the appropriate evidence to be made available to MDE assessment auditors upon arrival in the school for students who are participating in MAAP-A assessments.
- Annual training provides guidance to LEAs regarding the requirement for high school students to be enrolled in the corresponding courses and assessments. This training includes directions for students who pass the assessed course but does not pass the associated end-of-course assessment.
- Beginning with the Spring 2025 administration, the MDE will review pre-ID files to ensure that all high school MAAP-A students do not have a previous passing score on the associated assessment.
- Beginning with the Spring 2025 administration, the MDE will monitor and approve manual MAAP-A administration entries for students not initially included in the pre-ID file as SCD.

Tier 3 Supports
Continued Activities:
- Should the LEA fail to comply with the requirements of the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System as outlined in Process Standard 16 and Appendix F of the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*, the MDE Office of Accreditation will be notified and the LEA is subject to the downgrade of accreditation status in accordance Accreditation Policy 2.5.

Newly Developed Activities:

- During the 2024-2025 School Year, the MDE requires participation in the 1.0% CoP for any LEAs whose participation rate is higher than 2%. Through the 1.0% CoP, the MDE, OSE works with LEAs to analyze data regarding students identified as SCD, provide important guidance, updates, and reminders issued by the MDE, Office of Special Education and Office of Student Assessment, answer frequently asked questions, and troubleshoot issues that arise in LEAs. The MDE, OSE continues to verify that each LEA follows the State's guidelines.
- Annually, the Office of Special Education will conduct a file review of IEPs Eligibility Reports, and Assessment Team Reports from a random sample of students in each of the LEAs with the highest percentage rates of students participating in the alternate assessment. Results from these file reviews will be shared with the Office of Student Assessment and the Office of Accountability and may result in the invalidation of test scores in accordance with Process Standard 16 and Appendix F of the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*. It should be noted that the OSE conducted a file review of 2023-2024 data in September 2024 and provided a summary report to each of the LEA for which a file review was conducted.

MAAP-A PARTICIPATION DATA

TABLE 1: Overall Rates of Assessment Participation for School Year 2023-2024

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS		
Group	**All Students Grades 3-8 & High School**	**Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 & High School**
Students Assessed	230,912	38,227
Students Enrolled	235,642	39,182
Assessment Participation Rate	98.0	97.6
MATHEMATICS		
Group	**All Students Grades 3-8 & High School**	**Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 & High School**
Students Assessed	225,030	36,619
Students Enrolled	228,106	37,622
Assessment Participation Rate	98.7	97.3
SCIENCE 230,912		
Group	**All Students Grades 3-8 & High Schoo235,642l**	**Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 & High School**
Students Assessed	102,426	15,687
Students Enrolled	103,689	16,119
Assessment Participation Rate	98.8	97.3

TABLE 2: MAAP-A Participation Numbers and Percentages by Subgroup for School Year 2023-2024

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 2023-2024			
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School	Number of Students Taking MAAP-A Grades 3-8 and High School	Percent of Students Taking MAAP-A Grades 3-8 and High School
All Students	235,642	4,139	1.8%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	490	10	2.0%
Asian	2,885	45	1.6%
Black or African American	111,754	2,343	2.1%
Hispanic	12,565	467	1.3%
Other Pacific Islander	152	2	1.3%
Two or More Races	10,707	151	1.4%
White	97,089	1,421	1.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	158,661	3,206	2.0%
English Learner	7,446	139	1.9%
Male	120,777	2,728	2.3%
Female	114,865	1,411	1.2%
MATHEMATICS 2023-2024			
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School	Number of Students Taking MAAP-A Grades 3-8 and High School	Percent of Students Taking MAAP-A Grades 3-8 and High School
All Students	228,106	4,083	1.8%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	485	9	1.9%
Asian	2,755	44	1.6%
Black or African American	106,310	2,295	2.2%
Hispanic	12,131	174	1.4%
Other Pacific Islander	152	2	1.3%
Two or More Races	10,617	155	1.5%
White	95,656	1,404	1.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	153,164	3,168	2.1%
English Learner	7,156	144	2.0%
Male	116,784	2,709	2.3%
Female	111,322	1,374	1.2%

TABLE 2: MAAP-A Participation Numbers and Percentages by Subgroup for School Year 2023-2024 (continued)

SCIENCE 2023-2024			
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 5 & 8 and High School	Number of Students Taking MAAP-A Grades 5 & 8 and High School	Percent of Students Taking MAAP-A Grades 5 & 8 and High School
All Students	103,689	1,958	1.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	238	3	1.3%
Asian	1,260	17	1.3%
Black or African American	50,086	1,114	2.2%
Hispanic	5,584	83	1.5%
Other Pacific Islander	65	1	1.5%
Two or More Races	4,243	69	1.6%
White	42,213	671	1.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	69,412	1,527	2.2%
English Learner	2,557	60	2.3%
Male	53,412	1,259	2.4%
Female	50,277	699	1.4%

TABLE 3: MAAP-A Participation Rates by Subject by Year

School Year	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science
2017-2018	1.4	1.5	1.4
2018-2019	1.4	1.4	1.5
2020-2021	1.4	1.2	1.6
2021-2022	1.6	1.6	1.8
2022-2023	1.7	1.7	1.7
2023-2024	1.8	1.8	1.9
2024-2025 (ESTIMATE)	1.6-1.8	1.6-1.8	1.6-1.8

ATTACHMENT INDEX

- **Attachment A – Public Comment**
- **Attachment B – LEA Data Profile**
- **Attachment C – MAAP-A Participation Data Analysis, Justification and Assurances Document**
- **Attachment D – Significant Cognitive Disability Determination Guidance Document**

ATTACHMENT A:

LEA DATA PROFILE

2023-2024 MAAP-A PARTICIPATION
DISTRICT NAME, CODE
LEA PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH A SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABTILITY 2023-2024

Total percentage of students with an SCD enrolled in the LEA in 2023-2024	Total percentage of students with an SCD that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year
All grades, all year	Average of the 3 subjects

LEA ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION 2023-2024

Assessment Type	Assessment Group	Assessment Area	Participation Rate
MAAP	All	English Language Arts	Overall rate ex: 95%
MAAP	Students with Disabilities	English Language Arts	
MAAP-A	Students with an SCD	English Language Arts	
MAAP	All	Math	
MAAP	Students with Disabilities	Math	
MAAP-A	Students with an SCD	Math	
MAAP	All	Science	
MAAP	Students with Disabilities	Science	
MAAP-A	Students with an SCD	Science	

LEA 2023-2024 MAAP & MAAP-A DATA OVERVIEW

2023-2024 Total Student Enrollment (Based on Month 8)	
2023 December 1 Child Count	
Total number of students that participated in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window(s)	
Total number of students with disabilities that participated in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window(s)	
Total number of students with disabilities that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window(s)	

LEA 2023-2024 MAAP & MAAP-A DATA OVERVIEW (continued)

Number of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by grade/subject area							
SUBJECT AREAS	3RD GRADE	4TH GRADE	5TH GRADE	6TH GRADE	7TH GRADE	8TH GRADE	HIGH SCHOOL
ELA							
MATH							
SCIENCE							
ALGEBRA I							
BIOLOGY I							
ENGLISH II							
U.S. HISTORY							

Number and percentage of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by eligibility		
Eligibility Category	Number	Percentage
Autism		
Deaf/Blind		
Developmentally Delayed		
*Emotional Disability		
*Hearing Impairment		
Intellectual Disability		
*Language/Speech Disability		
Multiple Disabilities		
Orthopedic Impairment		
*Other Health Impairment		
*Specific Learning Disability		
Traumatic Brain Injury		
*Visual Impairment		

*The 2024-2025 MAAP-A Participation Data Analysis, Justification, & Assurances document will require evidence that any students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A and are in one of the eligibility categories below meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability.

LEA 2023-2024 MAAP & MAAP-A DATA BY SUBGROUP

Percentage of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by eligibility				
Subgroup	Percentage participating in MAAP	Percentage participating in MAAP-A	Difference	Disproportionality Identified
American Indian/Alaska Native				
Asian				
Black or African American				
Hispanic/Latino				
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander				
Two or More Races				
White				
Socio-economic Status				
English Language Learner				
NOTE: +/- 3% is considered over/under representation				

2024-2025 MAAP-A PARTICIPATION

DATA ANALYSIS, JUSTIFICATION, & ASSURANCES

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE FORM:

All LEAs that exceeded 1% participation in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year must complete sections 1-6 of this document. LEAs that had less than 1% participation in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year must complete sections 5-6.

LEA IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

SECTION 1			
District Name:		District Code:	
Total percentage of students with a significant cognitive disability enrolled in the LEA during the 2023-2024 school year.		Total percentage of students with a significant cognitive disability that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year	

LEA MAAP-A DATA OVERVIEW

SECTION 2			
2023-2024 Total Student Enrollment		2024-2025 Estimated Total Student Enrollment as of Month 02	
2023 December 1 Child Count		2024 Estimated December 1 Child Count	
Total number of students that participated in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window		Estimated number of students participating in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2024-2025 testing window	
Total number of students with disabilities that participated in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window		Estimated number of students participating in the MAAP or MAAP-A during the 2024-2025 testing window	
Total number of students that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 testing window		Estimated number of students participating in the MAAP-A during the 2024-2025 testing window	

Number of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by grade/subject area							
SUBJECT AREAS	**3RD GRADE**	**4TH GRADE**	**5TH GRADE**	**6TH GRADE**	**7TH GRADE**	**8TH GRADE**	**HIGH SCHOOL**
ELA							
MATH							
SCIENCE							
ALGEBRA I							
BIOLOGY I							
ENGLISH II							
U.S. HISTORY							

LEA MAAP-A DATA OVERVIEW (continued)

Provide the number of students that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year by eligibility category		Provide the estimated number of students by eligibility category that will participate in the MAAP-A during the 2024-2025 school year.	
Autism		Autism	
Deaf Blind		Deaf Blind	
Developmentally Delayed		Developmentally Delayed	
Emotional Disability		Emotional Disability	
Hearing Impairment		Hearing Impairment	
Intellectual Disability		Intellectual Disability	
Language/Speech Impairment		Language/Speech Impairment	
Multiple Disabilities		Multiple Disabilities	
Orthopedic Impairment		Orthopedic Impairment	
Other Health Impairment		Other Health Impairment	
Specific Learning Disability		Specific Learning Disability	
Traumatic Brain Injury		Traumatic Brain Injury	
Visual Impairment		Visual Impairment	

For each eligibility category listed below, provide the number of students in that eligibility category that participated in the MAAP-A during the 2023-2024 school year and for whom evidence verifying the student's identification as having an SCD has been uploaded to SharePoint. Examples of evidence include, but are not limited to, Assessment Team Report, Eligibility Determination, SCD Determination Guidance Document, IEPs, etc.

____ Emotional Disability   ____ Hearing Impairment   ____ Language/Speech Impairment

____ Other Health Impairment   ____ Specific Learning Disability   ____ Visual Impairment

_____ N/A

LEA MAAP-A DATA BY SUBGROUP

Percentage of students that participated in the 2023-2024 MAAP-A by subgroup				
Subgroup	Percentage participating in MAAP	Percentage participating in MAAP-A	Difference	Disproportionality Identified
American Indian/Alaska Native				
Asian				
Black or African American				
Hispanic/Latino				
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander				
Two or More Races				
White				
Socio-economic Status				
English Language Learner				
NOTE: +/- 3% is considered over/under representation				

LEA MAAP-A PARTICIPATION ANALYSIS AND JUSTIFICATION

SECTION 3
After a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview, list any identified patterns, trends, or themes in the data.
List any potential root causes for the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview.
List any additional data that would help **explain or justify** the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data Overview and related potential root causes including any special programs that the LEA oversees that would explain the LEA exceeding 1% participation in the MAAP-A.

SECTION 3
After a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup, list any identified patterns, trends, or themes in the data, specifically over/under representation of a particular subgroup.
List any potential root causes for the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup.
List any additional data that would help **explain or justify** the data patterns, trends, and themes emerging from a review of the LEA MAAP-A Data by Subgroup and related potential root causes, including any special programs that the LEA oversees that would explain over/under representation and/or the LEA exceeding 1% participation in the MAAP-A

LEA MAAP-A PARTICIPATION ACTION PLAN

SECTION 4

Describe the LEA's Action Plan for working toward 1% or less of its student population participating in the MAAP-A. Include the LEA's plan to provide professional development in the area of SCD determination.

LEA MAAP-A PARTICIPATION ASSURANCES

		SECTION 5
YES	NO	The LEA has developed and implemented processes/procedures that LEA staff use to determine and verify that all students participating in the MAAP-A meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability. Upload evidence of processes and procedures to SharePoint via the following path: *LEA Special Education SharePoint Folder>District Data>1% Data>FY25 1% Justification and Assurances*
YES	NO	The LEA has provided professional development and/or guidance to LEA staff regarding the determination of a student with a disability as a student with significant cognitive disability. Upload evidence of professional development and/or guidance to SharePoint via the following path: *District Special Education SharePoint Folder>District Data>1% Data>FY25 1% Justification and Assurances*
YES	NO	The LEA assures that only students that meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability will be participating in the 2024-2025 MAAP-A and understands that students participating in the 2024-2025 MAAP-A that **do not** meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability, will have test scores invalidated in accordance with Appendix F of the Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards.

LEA SIGNATURES

	SECTION 6	
_____ Superintendent	_____ Superintendent Signature	_____ Date
_____ Special Education Director	_____ Special Education Director Signature	_____ Date
_____ District Test Coordinator	_____ District Test Coordinator Signature	_____ Date

ATTACHMENT D

MISSISSIPPI SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITY (SCD)

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT
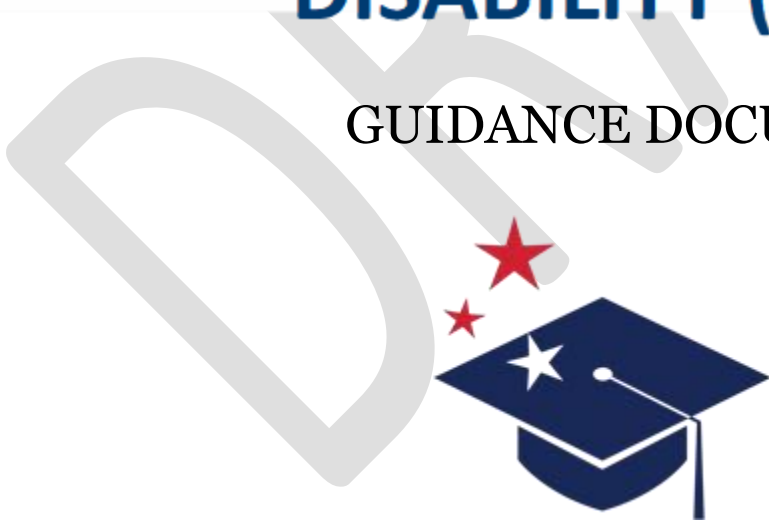
Overview and Background

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law and replaced and updated the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The purpose of ESSA "…*is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps*." As part of the assessment provisions of the ESSA, the law requires the majority of students take a state's general assessment at various grade levels, as this helps to measure educational progress. To help maintain a critical focus on educational equity and excellence for all students, only students with the significant cognitive disabilities can take an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. ESSA limits the number of students who may take such assessments to 1% of all tested students in a given subject. CFR 200.6

To guide and support individualized education program (IEP) committees in determining if a student qualifies as having a significant cognitive disability (SCD) and thereby can participate in the alternate assessment, the Mississippi Department of Education has developed this decision-making tool.

How to Use

Each year the IEP committee should review this decision-making tool to appropriately determine if a student is 1) significantly cognitively disabled (SCD) and 2) if they should participate in the alternate assessment.
This tool is divided into four parts, Part A through Part D. IEP committees should work though the document, starting with Part A. At the end of each part, the committee should review if the student meets the criteria. If, after reviewing the information, a student does not meet the eligibility criteria in all sections, the student is not SCD and is not eligible to participate in Mississippi's alternate assessment program. The decision-making tool should remain with the student's educational records.

Throughout the tool, IEP committees should review multiple sources of information, including the student's IEP, comprehensive evaluations, and other data, such as results from formative assessments, evidence-based interventions, assistive technology assessment and the student's educational records documenting supports and services.

SCD Determination: Decision-Making Tool

Student:		DOB:	

MSIS #:		Date:	

Part A – Determining SCD Status

Directions: Complete the three questions to determine if the student may meet the criteria to be classified as a student having a significant cognitive disability.

1. Does the student have a current individualized education program (IEP)?	
No, the student does not have an IEP.	Yes, the student has a current IEP.
Stop here. The student may not be classified as having a significant cognitive disability.	Proceed to the next statement.

2. Review the student's eligibility category.	
Student meets the state eligibility criteria under the following disability categories:	Student meets the state eligibility under the following disability categories:
Specific Learning Disability Speech or Language Impairment Emotional Disturbance Orthopedic Impairment Visual Impairment Hearing Impairment Developmentally Delayed	Autism Deaf-blindness Intellectual Disabilities Multiple Disabilities Other Health Impairment Traumatic Brain Injury

Stop Here. The student may not be regarded as having a significant cognitive disability.	Proceed to the next statement.

3. Does the student have an IQ score two or more standard deviations below the mean using a preponderance of evidence?	
NO	**YES**
Stop here. The student does not meet the criteria for significant cognitive disability.	Proceed to Part B

Part B: Analysis of Adaptive Skills

Directions: Select the column in each of the three adaptive skills domains *(Conceptual, Social and Practical)* that best describes the student's daily functioning. After reviewing all available data, if the committee still struggles to decide between two columns, **presume competence** and select the column to the left. For example, if the committee is trying to decide between 2 points or 3 points, select 2 points.

Conceptual Domain: This domain covers skills needed to communicate, apply academic skills, and manage and accomplish tasks.			
1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**	**4 Points**
❑	❑	❑	❑

The student is on grade level academically in English Language Arts and math most of the time, **And** The student has age appropriate receptive and expressive communication skills, including conversational skills (verbally or through a communication device), **And** The student expresses and makes independent choices, exhibits self-control, and takes responsibility for choices at an age-appropriate level.	The student has difficulty learning grade level academic content aligned to Mississippi's College and Career Readiness standards, but is making progress with appropriate supports and interventions as specified in the IEP, **And** After learning new content, the student may need additional practice with direct instruction to generalize the new skills into daily living activities, **And** The student has some age-appropriate receptive and expressive communication skills (verbally or through a communication device), uses and understands simple, nonverbal communication and can usually follow simple, age-appropriate directions and routines with prompting.	The student has difficulty learning grade-level academic content across all subject areas and may require multiple tiers of intervention, accommodations and/or modifications, **And** The student may struggle to generalize skills outside the classroom, even with assistance and practice, **And** The student has some difficulty communicating wants, needs, thoughts and ideas but receptively understands messages, **And** The student usually struggles to follow directions and routines without significant assistance.	The student has significant difficulty with learning academic content and requires instruction through adapted/modified grade-level standards, **And** The student may be unable to clearly express wants and needs and may not seem to understand the messages conveyed by others. The student likely requires maximum adult assistance to communicate, **And** The student requires layers of support to follow directions and daily routine activities.

Social Domain: This domain covers behaviors needed to engage in interpersonal interactions, act with social responsibility and use leisure time appropriately. This includes social competence, self-esteem, awareness, caution, social problem-solving, following rules/obeying laws and avoiding being victimized.

1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points
❑	❑	❑	❑
The student displays age appropriate social, communication and leisure skills most of the time, **and** The student can usually initiate and maintain friendships, express and recognize emotions with peers who are the same age, **and** The student engages in play and recreational activities without additional support most of the time.	The student may have some difficulty with social interactions compared to same age peers (for example, may misinterpret peers' social cues or others may consider the student's actions as immature), **and** The student's communication, language and conversation skills are occasionally more concrete or immature than peers who are the same age, **and** The student may have challenges in regulating emotion and behavior in an age-appropriate manner, and these challenges may be noticed by peers and adults.	The student has social, behavior and communication skills markedly different from peers who are the same age, **and** The student is able to be understood, but uses a mode of communication that is less elaborate than peers who are the same age (for example pointing, gesturing, etc.), **and** The student may use behaviors to communicate, **and** The student may not perceive or interpret social cues accurately, **and** The student often needs significant support to engage in social situations and/or use communication skills, **and** The student may be easily persuaded to do things that go against the rules or safe boundaries.	The student often (frequently) uses behaviors to communicate, **and** The student has limited awareness of other people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences; empathy, making and maintaining friendships, and social judgements, **and** The student requires extensive direct supervision for daily social tasks.

Practical Domain: This domain covers behaviors needed to address personal and health needs; home, classroom or work settings; and function in a school or community.			
1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**	**4 Points**
❑	❑	❑	❑
The student is able to follow safety rules and functions in the community and classroom setting similarly to peers who are the same age with little to no assistance, **and** The student independently performs self-care activities such as eating, dressing, and taking care of personal hygiene with little to no assistance.	The student often functions age appropriately in personal care daily living activities and using community resources, **and** The student displays recreational skills typically on the same level as peers, although some additional support may be needed, **and** The student may need some support in navigating the school and community and may need reminders about being mindful of safety hazards.	The student may need some support to care for personal needs (for example, eating, dressing, toileting needs), may have needed an extended period of explicit teaching in these areas and may require some prompting or cues, **and** The student often requires additional support and learning opportunities for leisure activities, **and** The student requires intensive support to safely navigate the school and community.	The student requires significant support and direct instruction across all activities of daily living (meals, dressing, bathing, toileting needs) or may be dependent on others for all aspects of physical care, health, and safety, **and** The student requires intensive teaching and ongoing support for recreational, directional, and safety skills, not because of physical ability but because of significant cognitive needs. The student requires supervision at all times.

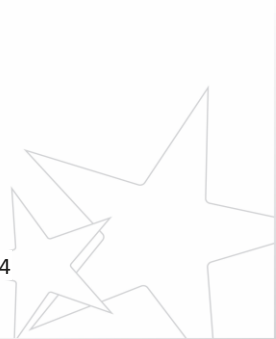| **Determining Significant Cognitive Disability**	
The characteristics of students with significant cognitive disability will fall almost exclusively in the 4-point range, with no more than one characteristic in the 3- point range.	
The student scores 10 or fewer points	The student scores 11 points or more. The student has a significant cognitive disability.

Stop here. The student does not meet the criteria for significant cognitive disability.	Proceed to Part C.

Part C – Determining if the student requires direct individualized instruction aligned to Mississippi's Alternate Academic Achievement Standards and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

Directions: Select the column that best describes the student's grade-and age-appropriate curriculum, instruction, supports, accommodations, and assistive technology. After reviewing all available data, if the committee is still struggling to decide between two columns, presume competence and select the column to the left. For example, if the committee is trying to decide between 2 points or 3 points, select 2 points.

Curriculum, Instruction, Supports, Accommodations and Assessments		
1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**
❑	❑	❑
The student's present levels of performance on the IEP indicates deficits, but current data indicates that present levels are closely aligned with grade-level standards, concepts and skills.	The student's present levels of performance on the IEP indicates deficits **and** the student's IEP requires Specially Designed Instruction that is standards-based and includes explicit instruction in all content areas on grade-level standards.	The student's IEP includes present level of performance statements that align student data with grade-level standards through Mississippi Alternate Academic Achievement Standards.

Assistive Technology			
1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**	**4 Points**
❑	❑	❑	❑

The student's IEP committee has determined the student does not need any assistive technology, **or** the student had an assistive technology evaluation completed, and it was determined that no assistive technology is required as indicated in the check box on the IEP.	The student requires low-tech assistive technology supports and adaptive services (i.e. pencil grips, picture schedules, positioning cushions, etc.) The student may or may not have gone through a formal assistive technology evaluation.	The student's IEP outlines low to mid-tech assistive technology supports and services, and an assistive technology assessment may have been used or is in the process of being used to feature match individualized, assistive technology to support academic instruction, communication, daily living, seating/positioning, mobility, sensory and/or motor needs, etc., **or** the student currently is learning to use or is independently using assistive technology as a scaffold to access learning in their environment.	The student's IEP describes complex physical, sensory, or medical needs across most of the assistive technology domains. It may be challenging to determine access for the use of assistive technologies, and the student currently requires person-dependent supports or scaffolds that may be replaced with assistive technology once feature matching is determined.

*For additional information regarding Assistive Technology, visit US-DOE AT Guidance.

Determining whether the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports:	
The student scores 4 or fewer points	The student scores 5 points or more. The student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction with learning targets aligned to Mississippi's Alternate Academic Achievement Standards and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.
Stop here. The student does not meet the criteria for significant cognitive disability.	**Proceed to Part D.**

Part D – Additional Considerations

The determination of a significant cognitive disability is made after reviewing the entire decision-making tool and the collection of evidence used in parts A, B, and C. The SCD determination is NOT made based solely on any of the following considerations:

Disability category, educational environment, or instructional setting.

Student's instructional reading level is below grade level.

Expected poor performance on the general education assessment.

Administration decision or anticipated impact of student scores on the accountability system.

Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional duress if taking general assessments.

Poor attendance or extended absences.

The fact the student is an English learner or other social, cultural, or economic differences.

GLOSSARY

Accommodation: Tool that enables a student with a disability to better access the general curriculum. Some accommodations are applicable to instruction only (for example, an assignment that is shortened but still addresses the state standard); others are permitted for both instruction and assessment (for example, change in formatting or timing).

Adaptive skills: Practical, everyday skills needed to function and meet the demands of one's environment, including the skills necessary to effectively and independently take care of oneself and interact with other people (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2017). Those used in daily living such as eating, dressing, and toileting. These are also referred to as self-help skills.

Assistive technology: An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of that device.
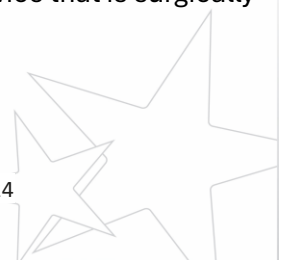
Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC): All forms of communication (other than speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. examples include visual schedules, first-then schedules, alphabet charts, picture boards, etc.

English Learner (EL): English learners are students whose primary or home language is other than English who need language assistance to effectively participate in school instructional programs.

Comprehensive Evaluation Report: The Comprehensive Evaluation Report is the summary of testing for the initial evaluation and/or reevaluation.

Modes for communication: Can include, but are not limited to, sign language, bilingualism, cued speech, verbal therapy, braille, assistive technology devices and written language.

Modification: Adjustment to an assignment, test, or activity in a way that significantly simplifies or lowers the standard or alters the original measurement. Modifications change what a student is taught or expected to learn, and most are applicable to students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Significant cognitive disability: In order for a student to be classified as having a significant cognitive disability, all the following criteria must be true:

> (1) The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student's comprehensive evaluation) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations and modifications. **all** (2) The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills.
> **all** (3) The student's inability to complete the standard academic curriculum is neither the result of excessive or extended absences nor is primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities, emotional behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or social, cultural, or economic differences.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): Universally required component that defines special education and stipulates that students with disabilities receive instruction that includes changes in content, methodology, and/or delivery. It is not dependent on setting and is a primary responsibility of special education professionals.

Autism Is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three (3), that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Additional characteristics often associated with Autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. It is not necessary for the student to exhibit all of these additional characteristics to meet the criteria.

Intellectual disability means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

> a.   Significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning is defined as two (2) standard deviations or more below the mean, including a standard score of 70, on a measure of cognitive ability.

b. A child with an eligibility of ruling of Intellectual Disability exhibits learning problems that vary in degree from mild to severe. Delays in cognitive abilities, adaptive behavior, and developmental milestones must have been evidenced during a child's developmental period and, upon entering school, such delays must have adversely affected a child's educational performance.

Deaf-Blind means concomitant hearing and visual impairments that adversely affect a child's educational performance, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Hearing Impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Emotional Disability means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors (e.g., intellectual disability, severe auditory/visual disorders, chronic health concerns-medications, etc.).

b. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers (e.g., disregards the feelings of others, avoids social interactions, difficulty making and keeping friends, hurts or threatens others when confronted, initiates or picks fights, appears unaware of how others feel about him/her, anxious or uncomfortable around others, gets taken advantage of by peers, etc.).

c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances (e.g., difficulty controlling anger, jumps from one thing to another when talking or performing tasks, fails to show remorse, refuses to speak, overreacts, fails to react appropriately, self-injurious, speaks in disorganized ways - makes no sense, refuses to eat, poor hygiene, etc.).

d. Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia.

Multiple disabilities include concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability blindness or intellectual disability, orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that children cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Although disabilities in two (2) or more areas may exist in the following categories, Deaf-Blindness, Specific Learning Disability, Developmental Delay or Language or Speech Impairment, these categories do not constitute Multiple Disabilities, in and of themselves. Language/speech, along with another disability, is generally viewed as a secondary condition, not Multiple Disabilities.

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that:

a. is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia and Tourette syndrome; and

b. adversely affects a child's educational performance.
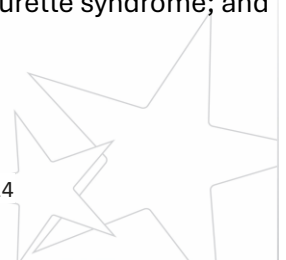
Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly (e.g. clubfoot or absence of one or more members), impairments caused by disease (for example, poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis) and impairments from other causes (for example, cerebral palsy, amputations and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

Specific learning disability

a.	Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

b.	Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural differences or economic disadvantage.

Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Speech disorders include impairments in articulation, fluency, and/or voice. Language disorders include developmental or acquired impairments in receiving, sending, processing, and comprehending or verbal, nonverbal, and graphic symbol systems. A communication disorder may range from severity from mild to profound and may appear in combination with other communication disorders. A communication disorder may be the primary disability or secondary to other disabilities.

Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problemsolving; sensory, perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Visual impairment including blindness, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Individualized Education Program A document written for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with State and Federal policies.

Cognitive Skills The ability to think, learn, and solve problems. It is how your child explores the world around them with their eyes, ears, and hands. This includes attention spans, memory, logic, and reasoning as well as processing information

FAQ
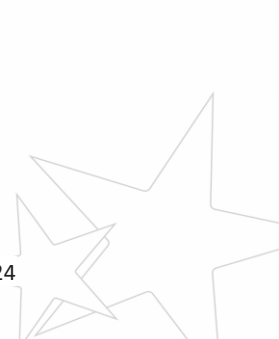
Question 1 asks, "Does the student have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP)?" If the IEP committee is considering participation for the student as part of the initial IEP, does that count as current?
Yes. If this is the student's initial IEP or the IEP is being reviewed, the committee should consider the student having a current IEP for alternate assessment participation decision-making.

What is a significant cognitive disability?
Significant cognitive disability is not a disability category under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
A student with a significant cognitive disability:
(1) The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student's comprehensive evaluation) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations and modifications.
 and (2) The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills. **and** (3) The student's inability to complete the standard academic curriculum is neither the result of excessive or extended absences nor is primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities, emotional behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or social, cultural, or economic differences.
Students are eligible to participate in the alternate assessment if they meet all the criteria is sections 1 through 3 of the tool.

What does presume competence mean? In 2005, Cheryl Jorgensen published an article titled The Least Dangerous Assumption: A Challenge to Create a New Paradigm. In this article, she quoted another respected researcher in special education, Anne Donnellan, who in 1984 wrote, "the criterion of least dangerous assumption holds that in the absence of conclusive data, educational decisions ought to be based on assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the likelihood that students will be able to function independently as adults." She went on, "we should assume that poor performance is due to instructional inadequacy rather than to student deficits." Thus, Dr. Jorgensen argued that presuming competence when addressing students with significant cognitive disabilities is the least dangerous thing to do because to do otherwise is more likely to result in harm through fewer educational opportunities, inferior literacy instruction, a segregated education, and fewer choices as an adult. In the decision-making tool, presuming competence means that in the absence of a clear choice between two columns, it is more beneficial to the student to assume the student can do more rather than less.

Who is eligible to participate in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards?
Only students with significant cognitive disabilities may be assessed based on alternate achievement standards.
The Every Student Succeeds Act §200.6 expands on the idea of students with the significant cognitive disabilities.
(d) State guidelines for students with significant cognitive disabilities: if a state adopts alternate academic achievement standards for students with 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 committee to apply in determining, on a case-by-case basis, which students with the significant cognitive disabilities will be assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards. Such guidelines must include a state definition of "students with the 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 significant cognitive disabilities;

      ii. A student with the 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 district-wide assessments; and (iii) A student is identified as having the 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.

Why can't a student identified with a specific learning disability or a speech or language impairment qualify for participation in the alternate assessment?
A student with a specific learning disability, by definition, does not have an intellectual component to his or her disability and therefore cannot be a student with a significant cognitive disability. The definition of specific learning disability reads, "Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage."
A speech or language impairment is a communicative disorder that impacts a student's learning. It also does not have an intellectual aspect.

Does the student's cultural and socioeconomic context matter when determining placement in a column for adaptive behavior?
Yes. When determining limitations in adaptive behavior for students, committees should be careful to separate intellectual disabilities from external factors that are not related to students' cognitive functioning.
For example, in some scenarios, due to a student's home situation, the student may not have good hygiene, but this is not related to the student's intellectual level. The student may not have been taught or had access to resources for hygiene or good personal hygiene might not have been viewed as a cultural priority (as the student's parents, family and/or friends may be similar).

Does the decision-making tool need to be completed every year? Does it need to be signed and kept in the student's file or attached to the IEP?
IEP committees should review the decision-making tool at least annually if participation in the alternate assessment is being considered and at each IEP meeting where participation in the alternate assessment is discussed. All members of the IEP committee listed on the tool should sign the tool.

Does there have to be data to support each decision-making point?
Yes. For all parts of the decision-making tool, decisions must be data driven. Exactly what data evidence is used depends on what is being considered. Examples of data include results from formative assessments, data from evidence-based interventions, information from multiple sections of the IEP, assistive technology assessment data, learner profile or cumulative folder data documenting supports and services, and more.

What does the committee do when it is having difficulty in determining which column to select?
Go back to the data to review current evidence. It may be necessary to collect additional information. In the absence of additional data, presume competence and select the column that represents the present evidence.

When considering which column best describes a student, the committee should take a holistic approach to the student's characteristics. Do not tally the number of characteristics in each column to make a decision, rather consider which column overall best represents the student.

What should the IEP committee do if the student has taken the alternate assessment in previous years but the committee determines the student no longer is eligible to participate in the alternate assessment?
Sometimes IEP committees determine that a student who previously participated in the alternate assessment no longer qualifies. If a student does not qualify for the alternate assessment, the committee should switch the student to the general assessment, most likely with accommodations. The committee also should consider other elements of the student's program, such as whether the student requires new or additional assistive technology and whether the student should be moved to a more inclusive setting. Instructional practices and support services should be considered that may allow the student to make progress in the general education curriculum. Committees should continue to hold high expectations for all students with disabilities and focus on each student's individual strengths, understanding that all students with disabilities first and foremost are general education students.

After the IEP committee completed the decision-making tool, the student does not qualify for participation in the alternate assessment. However, the committee believes the student is unable to take the general assessments and show what the student knows and can do. Can the student still take the alternate assessment?
No. Only students who meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment may take the alternate assessment.

In our school, students in our self-contained classrooms for students with intellectual disabilities take the alternate assessment. Do the IEP committees of these students have to use the decision-making tool to determine if each of these students qualify for participation in the alternate assessment?
Yes. Participation in the alternate assessment is an IEP committee decision for each individual student. Where a student is placed is not a criterion for participation in the alternate assessment. Only students who meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment may take the alternate assessment.

The IEP committee feels the student it is considering for alternate assessment will not perform well on the general assessments and this will impact the school and district report cards and reflect poorly in teacher evaluations. Since the district has less than 1% of the total student population participating in the alternate assessment, is it okay to include additional students who do not meet all criteria for alternate assessment participation to the alternate assessment until the district reaches the 1% threshold?
Only students who meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment may take the alternate assessment. Some districts will have less than 1% participation in the alternate assessment. Districts and schools should not try to maximize their 1% threshold to improve school and district report cards or teacher evaluations. Student participation in the alternate assessment must not be based on anticipated negative impact on school or district report cards or teacher evaluations.

The IEP committee is considering a student for participation in the alternate assessment. This student "melts down" when confronted with difficult tasks, such as taking the general assessments. The student does not meet all the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment, but the committee feels it would be better for the student emotionally. May the student take the alternate assessment?
Only students who meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment may take the alternate assessment. If a student does not meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment but struggles taking the general assessments, it is imperative the IEP committee consider all available testing accessibility features. For a student who gets frustrated easily during testing, the committee may consider features such as

one-on-one test administration, a familiar test administrator, music, white noise or ear plugs, the time of day the student will test, taking frequent breaks and the location the student will test. The student also may benefit from assistive technology and frequent opportunities to practice test taking.