

Alternate Assessment (AA) Participation Guidelines

**Guidance for IEP Teams on Identifying Participation on the
Alternate Assessment of South Dakota State Content Standards**

Updated March 2023

Alternate Assessment (AA) Participation Guidelines

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Introduction

This document is intended to help guide Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in identifying if a student should participate in the statewide alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS). It outlines steps for IEP teams to follow to consider the student's individual characteristics in the three criteria used in determining student participation. A student must meet all three criteria to participate in the alternate assessment. Participating students partake in alternate assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act – IDEA Sec. 300.160 requires that “a state must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general state and district-wide assessment programs...with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary, as indicated in their respective IEPs.” The Every Student Succeeds Act Amendment to ESEA Sec.111(b)(2)(D) “limits the number of students assessed using alternate assessment to no more than 1% of the total number of students in the state.”

While most students with disabilities will participate in the regular state assessment in ELA, Math, and Science with accommodations and supports, a small number of students require an alternate assessment for them to show what they know and can do. Alternate assessment was developed to ensure that all students can participate in content instruction and assessments at their grade level. The alternate assessment assesses the Core Content Connectors, which are aligned to South Dakota Content Standards, however the grade level content has been reduced in complexity, breadth, and depth.

The conversation around student participation on the alternate assessment is an important one. Participation identification drives the daily and long-term instruction a student receives as they prepare for options after high school. It is paramount that students be engaged in the general education curriculum with appropriate modifications and the highest and most rigorous instruction appropriate. If we fall short of this goal, we risk shortchanging a student's ability to achieve academically and in the areas of life and job skills. Participation in the state alternate assessment affects a student's potential to obtain a high school diploma, however taking the alternate assessment does not exclude a student from attempting to complete the requirements for a regular high school diploma.

For more information regarding alternate assessment participation, please visit:

- [South Dakota Alternate Assessment Website](#)
- South Dakota Special Education Programs, Alternate Assessment Specialist, 605-773-3678

1% Cap on Statewide Participation in the Alternate Assessment

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Amendment to ESEA Sec.1111(b)(2)(D):

- Bases IEP team decision on States Alternate Assessment (AA) Identification Guidelines.
- Limits the number of students who may take an alternate assessment to no more than 1% of the total number of students in the state who are assessed in a subject.
- Requires districts to submit justification for 1% overage, and states to provide oversight and publicly post district data.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) specifies a statewide 1% cap on participation in the alternate assessment. States must specify a plan to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) who consistently show a disproportionality in students who take the alternate assessment that contributes to putting the State over the 1% allowed limit. States must describe how they will monitor and evaluate LEAs over the 1% cap to ensure the LEA provides sufficient training for school staff who participate as members of an IEP team or other placement team, so they understand and implement the guidelines established by the State so that all students are appropriately identified and assessed. While the State cannot prohibit an LEA from assessing more than 1%, it must require an LEA to submit information justifying their need to assess more than 1% of its assessed students with the alternate assessment. The information provided by the LEA must be made publicly available in such a way that does not reveal personally identifiable information about individual students.

To ensure that students are appropriately identified for the alternate assessments, and to ensure that guidance to districts from SD DOE is clear and leads to appropriate identifications, SD DOE will require districts that exceed the 1% cap to submit justification of their need to assess more than 1% of its assessment students with the alternate assessment. SD DOE will review data on the alternate assessment identifications in these districts. SD DOE will use this data to identify schools and districts that may need additional training, support, and guidance to use the participation guidelines to make valid and appropriate alternate assessment determinations.

For more information regarding 1% participation, please review the following forms on the South Dakota Alternate Assessment Website, under the heading "1% Participation Justification":

- [District 1% Participation Justification](#)
- [District 1% Participation Reflection](#)

Core Content Connectors (CCCs)

Core Content Connectors (CCCs) are Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AAAS) used for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in the alternate assessment. CCCs are a “bridge” of derived standards that are aligned to the South Dakota Content Standards. CCCs focus on the core content, knowledge, and skills in ELA, Mathematics, and Science to promote access to grade-level content standards. They identify priorities in each content area to guide the instruction and alternate assessment of students with significant disabilities. CCCs are used for state alternate assessment test item development.

Teachers and Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams are encouraged to use the CCCs to guide the development of appropriate academic goals and short-term objectives that allow students the maximum engagement with the general curriculum and non-disabled peers as possible, with appropriate adaptations, simplifications, and modifications to grade-level materials and content.

When an IEP team chooses alternate assessment for a student and utilizes CCCs when developing IEP goals and short-term objectives, the IEP team should be aware of the following:

- Participation in the state alternate assessment and the use of CCCs for IEP goals affects the student’s potential to obtain a high school diploma.
- CCCs maintain the main goal of each state standard, but CCCs do not fully extend the skills or knowledge. Rather, the CCCs divide the state standards into smaller pieces.
- The state alternate assessment assesses students with significant cognitive disabilities on grade level content that has been reduced in complexity, breadth, and depth. It does not measure the full breadth of the state standards.

For K-12 Core Content Connectors in ELA, Math, and Science, please visit the SD Alternate Assessment Website, under the heading “Core Content Connectors (CCCs)”:

- [South Dakota Alternate Assessment Website](#)

Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)

Grades Assessed: 3-8, and 11

Content Areas: English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics

The MSAA is an assessment of ELA (including reading and writing) and Math in grades 3-8, and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It measures academic content derived from the Core Content Connectors (CCCs) aligned to the 2018 South Dakota Content Standards in ELA and Math. The MSAA is a comprehensive assessment system designed to promote increasing higher academic outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities in preparation for a broader array of post-secondary outcomes.

The MSAA is delivered via computer and includes multiple choice and constructed response items. It contains many built-in supports that allow students to use materials they are most familiar with and communicate what they know and can do as independently as possible. Test items have been carefully and intentionally designed to assess a range of ability and performance and to consider the wide range of the cognitive, physical, and communications needs of students who take the alternate assessment. A certified teacher familiar to the student facilitates the administration one-on-one, presenting items via paper or manipulatives as appropriate for the student. Items are administered to the student over the course of one or more testing sessions as needed for a student to complete a content area assessment.

For more information regarding the MSAA, please visit:

- [MSAA Website](#)
- [MSAA User Website](#)

South Dakota Science Assessment - Alternate (SDSA-Alt)

Grades Assessed: 5, 8, and 11

Content Areas: Science

The SDSA-Alt is an assessment of Science in grades 5, 8, and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It measures academic content derived from the Core Content Connectors (CCCs) aligned to the 2015 South Dakota Content Standards in Science. While testing occurs in grades 5, 8, and 11, SDSA-Alt is actually an assessment of grade spans to better cover the standards. Grade 5 is assessed over grades 3-5 standards, grade 8 over grades 6-8 standards, and grade 11 over all high school standards.

The SDSA-Alt is a computer-based assessment that includes multiple choice questions. It contains many built-in supports that allow students to communicate what they know and can do as independently as possible. It is administered one-on-one with the student by a certified teacher who is familiar with the student and who has been trained in test administration. Items are administered to the student over the course of one or more testing sessions as needed for a student.

For more information regarding the SDSA-Alt, please visit:

- [South Dakota Cambium Assessment, Inc. Website](#)

Identifying Participation in the Alternate Assessment

When identifying participation in the alternate assessment, no one piece of evidence and no one person should make the decision. It must be a decision discussed and reached by the IEP team, including the student's parent/guardian. The [Alternate Assessment Participation Form](#) is a tool to help Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams with gathering evidence for determining if a student meets the three criteria for participation.

There are three steps to determining student participation in the alternate assessment:

1. Understanding Participation Criteria
2. Gathering Evidence
3. Documenting Decision

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

For a student to participate in the alternate assessment, they must meet **ALL THREE** of the following criteria, as determined by their IEP team:

- 1. Student has a significant cognitive disability.** The student has a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impacts intellectual functioning **AND** adaptive behavior. The student's cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior impacts academic, life, and job skills in home, school, and community. Review of student records and evidence from multiple years and settings indicate significant impacts on the following:
 - a. **Intellectual Functioning.** The student's disability or multiple disabilities prevents the student from meaningful participation in the standard academic core curriculum or achievement of the standards at their enrolled grade level. There is no cut off score, however IQ scores are significantly low.
 - b. **Adaptive Behavior.** The student's disability or multiple disabilities causes dependence on others for many, and sometimes all, functional daily living needs, and the student is expected to require extensive ongoing support in adulthood. There is no cut off score, however adaptive scores are significantly low.

The term "significant cognitive disability" is not a category of disability. It is a designation given to a small number of students with disabilities for the purpose of their participation in the state assessment program.

- 2. Student requires extensive instruction and support to acquire and maintain skills.** The student requires substantially adapted materials and intensive, repeated, direct support and instruction to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and generalize skills across settings, and to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum. The student's demonstrated cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior across settings is significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications, adaptations, and accommodations. This covers the three aspects of learning:
 - a. **What the student needs in order to learn:** The student requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and supports from teachers and other professionals.
 - b. **The types of materials required in order for the student to learn:** Materials are significantly modified, customized, and adapted in order to provide access and facilitate understanding.
 - c. **How the student demonstrates their learning:** Their need for substantial supports to achieve gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum requires substantially adapted materials and customized methods of accessing information in alternate ways to acquire, maintain,

generalize, demonstrate, and transfer academic and functional skills across multiple settings.

- 3. Student learns through alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS).** IEP goals, short term objectives, and instruction for the student are adapted and follow **Core Content Connectors (CCCs)**. CCCs are a “bridge” of standards that are aligned to grade-level South Dakota Content Standards. CCCs address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student. Life and job skills are also embedded and included as part of the student’s instruction and may provide the context for access to the grade-level CCCs.

STEP 2: GATHERING EVIDENCE

When the IEP team is gathering evidence to identify student participation in the alternate assessment, several data sources should be considered. No one piece of evidence should be used to make this decision. Gathering multiple pieces of evidence over multiple years in multiple settings is necessary to provide a complete picture of the student’s academic and adaptive strengths and needs and to prevent decision-making that relies on one type of evidence (e.g., IQ score or disability category). Evidence should be documented on the *Alternate Assessment Participation Form*.

USE MULTIPLE SOURCES from multiple years across multiple settings.

Several pieces of evidence are needed to have a full understanding of the student’s cognitive, academic, and adaptive functioning. The following are examples of sources of evidence to gather to guide participation conversations:

- Assessment data and evidence:
 - Results of ability AND adaptive behavior evaluations
 - Results of academic achievement tests
 - District-wide regular and alternate assessments
 - Language assessments such as ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs
 - Observations by teachers and other service providers
 - Observations by family members or guardians
- Curriculum, instructional, and classroom evidence:
 - Examples of classroom instructional objectives, materials, work samples
 - Examples of community-based instructional objectives, materials, work samples
 - Observations by teachers
- IEP information including:
 - Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, goals, short-term objectives
 - Post-school outcomes
 - Extended School Year (ESY)
- Data from various sources:
 - Progress monitoring/checklists
 - Scores from previous alternate assessment participation
 - IEP goal/short term-objective progress
 - Extended School year (ESY)

DO NOT use the below factors or data to inform a participation decision.

The following factors are not appropriate to include in decision-making. While some of the factors listed below do make it difficult for a student to engage and learn, they do not add to the IEP team’s understanding of what the student knows and can do.

- *Specific disability category (such as Cognitive or Autism):* There is no disability category that can predict 100% of a student’s cognitive potential. While a student may have a disability category of Cognitive Disability, the IEP team still needs to gather evidence to justify if the student’s academic and functional

needs indicate a “significant cognitive disability.” A disability category is not sufficient, sole evidence to determine participation for the alternate assessment.

- *Percent of time in specialized services:* Students receive special education services in a variety of ways and in varying degrees of intensity. It is more meaningful to consider the type and intensity of the structures and supports the student requires to participate academically and socially in their school than it is to consider the number of hours or days a student requires in order to receive appropriate special education services.
- *Educational placement or instructional setting:* The setting in which a student receives their education is not a factor in determining cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. Districts routinely utilize staff with expertise in the challenges of a specific disability, behavior, or mental health issue, either within the school, district, or in another setting. Regardless of where a student accesses specialized care or services, meaningful academic instruction should always be given to the student. Because of this requirement, the educational placement of a student is not to be used as factor for eligibility.
- *Variety of services a student receives:* Many students receive a variety of related services that address their physical, behavioral, or other challenges beyond their cognitive ability. The type of services a student receives does not indicate a significant cognitive disability.
- *Need for accommodations or assistive technology on the regular assessment:* Some students need accommodations and assistive technology for general education instruction and assessment per their IEP. Students’ needs for accommodations or assistive technology should never prevent them from accessing the regular assessment.
- *Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress:* Behavior challenges can make learning difficult for some students and should be treated appropriately and professionally. Behavior issues are not always indicators of significant cognitive disabilities. Behavior challenges should not be considered when deciding if a student meets the criteria for an alternate assessment as they are not indicators of intellectual ability.
- *Expected poor performance on the general education academic assessments:* Most students receiving special education services can and do participate in general education state assessments with accommodations and other supports. Poor performance on general education assessments is not an appropriate factor to use when making a participation decision.
- *Impact of the student’s test scores on district accountability system:* How well or poorly a student’s scores on any state assessment may affect the district/school accountability system is not to be used as a deciding factor in determining which assessment is appropriate for a student.
- *Administrator decision:* Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a school, district, or program administrator to unilaterally make an alternate assessment participation decision without the full cooperation and consensus of the IEP team, of which the parents or guardians are equal participants, or without following all standard procedures regarding educational decision-making for a student.
- *English Language Learner (ELL) status:* It is important to understand that a student’s ability and their knowledge of English are not connected. How well a student understands and speaks English has an impact on their ability to learn, however it does not indicate a learning disability. Alternate methods of understanding what a student knows and can do may need to be investigated depending on the student’s English proficiency level. Please contact your district ELL Director for options.
- *Poor attendance or extended absences:* Some students have medical conditions that prevent them from attending school regularly enough to receive instruction. While this is recognized as a factor that inhibits a child’s exposure to educational experiences and meaningful instruction, it is not evidence of a child’s ability or their potential to learn and must be addressed through the appropriate school resources.

STEP 3: DOCUMENTING DECISION

On the *Alternate Assessment Participation Form*, the IEP team documents their answers for each of the three criteria. A student must meet ALL THREE criteria to participate in the alternate assessment. Did the student meet all three criteria?

- **If Decision is “YES”**

If the IEP team determines that the student meets all three criteria for participation in the alternate assessment, the student will partake in alternate assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level. The IEP team should document their decision in the following locations:

1. **Alternate Assessment Participation Form** (on the following page): The *Alternate Assessment Participation Form* should be completed, attached to the student’s IEP, and placed in the student’s file. The form is recommended to show evidence and justify the team’s decision on student participation. A new form should be completed annually when the IEP team reviews alternate assessment participation.
2. **Individual Education Plan:** The decision of alternate assessment participation is required to be documented in the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) in the State Assessment section.
 - a. The box for “Student will be taking state and district-wide alternate assessments” must be marked, and the reasons (a,b,c) must be explained. Using the *Participation Form* evidence, criteria 1 explains “a”, criteria 1, 2, 3 explain “b”, and criteria 3 explains “c”.
 - b. The student’s instruction, IEP goals, and short-term objectives should reflect Core Content Connectors to prepare the student for the academic skills and knowledge assessed on the alternate assessment.
 - c. The IEP decision should also be noted in a prior written notice.
3. **Infinite Campus:** In infinite campus in the student’s Enrollment Tab, the district must mark the box “Participates in Alt Assessment.” This allows the DOE Assessment Office to enter the students into the alternate assessment platforms.

- **If Decision is “NO”**

If the IEP team determines that the student does NOT meet all three criteria for participation in the alternate assessment, the student will partake in the regular assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level, with appropriate accommodations as determined by the IEP Team. The IEP team should document their decision in the following locations:

1. **Alternate Assessment Participation Form** (on the following page): The *Alternate Assessment Participation Form* should be completed, attached to the student’s IEP, and placed in the student’s file. The form is recommended to show evidence and justify the team’s decision on student participation. A new form should be completed each time the IEP team reviews alternate assessment participation.
2. **Individual Education Plan:** The decision of regular assessment participation is required to be properly documented in the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) in the State Assessment section.
 - a. In the State Assessment section of the student’s IEP, the box for “Student will be taking state and district-wide assessments with or without accommodations” must be marked. Document any accommodations that the student will use for instruction and assessment.
 - b. The student’s instruction and IEP goals should be aligned to grade-level South Dakota

Content Standards to prepare the student for the academic skills and knowledge assessed on the regular state assessments.

- c. The IEP decision should also be noted in a prior written notice.

Student SSID: _____
 Student Name: _____
 Student DOB: _____
 Date form completed: _____

Alternate Assessment Participation Form

This Participation Form is a tool to help Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams with gathering evidence for determining if a student meets the three criteria for participation in South Dakota's alternate state assessment. Refer to [Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#) for full guidance.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA: <i>YES=student meets criteria</i> <i>NO=student does not meet criteria</i>	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: <i>Consider multiple sources over multiple years in multiple settings.</i>	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE: <i>Consider formal and informal results/ examples in adaptive AND all academic areas.</i>
<p>1. Student has a significant cognitive disability. Student's disability(s) significantly impacts both intellectual functioning AND adaptive behavior.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive/Ability evaluations <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior evaluations <input type="checkbox"/> Academic/Achievement evaluations <input type="checkbox"/> Informal assessments <input type="checkbox"/> District-wide assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Language assessments, including ELL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>2. Student requires extensive instruction and support to acquire and maintain skills. Student requires substantially adapted materials and intensive, repeated, direct support to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and generalize skills across settings.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<input type="checkbox"/> Data from IEP goals, short-term objectives, post-school outcomes, ESY <input type="checkbox"/> Data from present levels of academic AND functional performance <input type="checkbox"/> Data from progress monitoring/checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Data and examples of school and community-based curriculum, instructional objectives, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Data from research-based interventions <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>3. Student is learning through alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS). Student's academic goals, short-term objectives, and instruction follow Core Content Connectors (CCCs) and address skills appropriate and challenging for this student.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<input type="checkbox"/> IEP goals, short-term objectives, and post-school outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic AND functional performance <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum, instructional objectives, materials, work samples <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring and progress checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan (if 14 or older) <input type="checkbox"/> Past performance on Alternate Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

Evidence for determining alternate assessment participation is NOT based on the following: Specific disability category such as Cognitive or Autism, percent of time in specialized services, educational placement or instructional setting, low reading or achievement level, need for accommodations or assistive technology on the regular assessment, anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, expected poor performance on regular assessment, impact of student scores on accountability system, administrator decision, English Language Learner (ELL) status, poor attendance, or extended absences.

A student must meet ALL THREE CRITERIA to participate in the alternate assessment. Participating students partake in alternate assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level. Attach completed Participation Form to student's IEP. Document team decision in assessment section of student's IEP.

Student Examples

Student A Example:

Student is 13 years old and in the 7th grade. He 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 category is Autism.

Student 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.

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.

Student 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.

Student 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.

See Student A *Alternate Assessment Participation Form* on next page.

Student SSID:	AAAAAAAAAAAA
Student Name:	Student A
Student DOB:	A/AA/AAAA
Date form completed:	A/AA/AAAA

Alternate Assessment Participation Form

This Participation Form is a tool to help Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams with gathering evidence for determining if a student meets the three criteria for participation in South Dakota’s alternate state assessment. Refer to [Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#) for full guidance.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA: YES=student meets criteria NO=student does not meet criteria	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: <i>Consider multiple sources over multiple years in multiple settings.</i>	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE: <i>Consider formal and informal results/ examples in adaptive AND all academic areas.</i>
<p>1. Student has a significant cognitive disability. Student’s disability(s) significantly impacts both intellectual functioning AND adaptive behavior.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student has Autism. His intellectual functioning (IQ 85) and adaptive skills (scores ranging 75-85) are below grade-level. His academic scores range from 70-90. Student travels about freely in school and the community without adult assistance.</i></p>	<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cognitive/Ability evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Academic/Achievement evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal assessments <input type="checkbox"/> District-wide assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Language assessments, including ELL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: </p>
<p>2. Student requires extensive instruction and support to acquire and maintain skills. Student requires substantially adapted materials and intensive, repeated, direct support to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and generalize skills across settings.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student can answer basic comprehension at grade level, read simplified text, and write stories with beginnings, middles, and ending. Student can use a calculator so solve grade level equations. Student can get correct answers by following step-by-step directions and reminders. The student utilizes prompting and modeling to participate in and complete grade level materials.</i></p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Data from IEP goals, short-term objectives, post-school outcomes, ESY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from present levels of academic AND functional performance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from progress monitoring/checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Data and examples of school and community-based curriculum, instructional objectives, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Data from research-based interventions <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: </p>
<p>3. Student is learning through alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS). Student’s academic goals, short-term objectives, and instruction follow Core Content Connectors (CCCs) and address skills appropriate and challenging for this student.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student receives grade-level instruction in all his core academic classes, with use of accommodations. Student’s IEP goals are aligned to grade-level South Dakota Content Standards.</i></p>	<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IEP goals, short-term objectives, and post-school outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic AND functional performance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curriculum, instructional objectives, materials, work samples <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring and progress checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan (if 14 or older) <input type="checkbox"/> Past performance on Alternate Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: </p>

Evidence for determining alternate assessment participation is NOT based on the following: Specific disability category such as Cognitive or Autism, percent of time in specialized services, educational placement or instructional setting, low reading or achievement level, need for accommodations or assistive technology on the regular assessment, anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, expected poor performance on regular assessment, impact of student scores on accountability system, administrator decision, English Language Learner (ELL) status, poor attendance, or extended absences.

A student must meet ALL THREE CRITERIA to participate in the alternate assessment. Participating students partake in alternate assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level. Attach completed Participation Form to student’s IEP. Document team decision in assessment section of student’s IEP.

Student B Example:

Student is 9 years old and in the 3rd grade. Her disability category 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 55.

Student can identify familiar pictures and picture symbols and has emerging sight word vocabulary of about 25 words. She can read somewhat independently if the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher. Student 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. 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 with frequent breaks. Historical or informational texts are not interesting to her.

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

Student 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 both numerals and objects.

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 has difficulty when activities change from a set schedule. She sometimes has difficulty sharing with other students in the class. 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, however she needs direct supervision as she shows no awareness of safety concerns. For example, she wanders away from the group, runs into the street, and the parents have experienced her attempting to climb into the neighbor’s swimming pool fully clothed. A one-on-one paraprofessional assists her throughout the school day.

See Student B *Alternate Assessment Participation Form* on next page.



Student SSID: BBBBBBBBBBBBBB

Student Name: Student B

Student DOB: B/BB/BBBB

Date form completed: B/BB/BBBB

Alternate Assessment Participation Form

This Participation Form is a tool to help Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams with gathering evidence for determining if a student meets the three criteria for participation in South Dakota's alternate state assessment. Refer to [Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#) for full guidance.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA: <i>YES=student meets criteria</i> <i>NO=student does not meet criteria</i>	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: <i>Consider multiple sources over multiple years in multiple settings.</i>	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE: <i>Consider formal and informal results/ examples in adaptive AND all academic areas.</i>
<p>1. Student has a significant cognitive disability. Student's disability(s) significantly impacts both intellectual functioning AND adaptive behavior.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student has Autism. Her IQ is 55. Her academic skills are at PK/K level while she is in the 3rd grade. She requires 1:1 assistance to engage in academics and transition throughout the school, and she needs 1:1 supervision to safely move about her home and community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cognitive/Ability evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Academic/Achievement evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal assessments <input type="checkbox"/> District-wide assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Language assessments, including ELL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>2. Student requires extensive instruction and support to acquire and maintain skills. Student requires substantially adapted materials and intensive, repeated, direct support to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and generalize skills across settings.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student can write her first/last name and can copy texts. She can count objects to 10. She is unable to perform addition/subtraction or more/less concepts. Student needs extensive 1:1 support. Intensive intervention at school, home, and ESY have been attempted, however retaining and gaining new academic information is a challenge for Student.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from IEP goals, short-term objectives, post-school outcomes, ESY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from present levels of academic AND functional performance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from progress monitoring/checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Data and examples of school and community-based curriculum, instructional objectives, materials <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from research-based interventions <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>3. Student is learning through alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS). Student's academic goals, short-term objectives, and instruction follow Core Content Connectors (CCCs) and address skills appropriate and challenging for this student.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student is in the 3rd grade, however her academic performance is at PK/K level. Her academic work, IEP goals, and short-term objectives are adapted to align with the Core Content Connectors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IEP goals, short-term objectives, and post-school outcomes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic AND functional performance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curriculum, instructional objectives, materials, work samples <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring and progress checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan (if 14 or older) <input type="checkbox"/> Past performance on Alternate Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

Evidence for determining alternate assessment participation is NOT based on the following: Specific disability category such as Cognitive or Autism, percent of time in specialized services, educational placement or instructional setting, low reading or achievement level, need for accommodations or assistive technology on the regular assessment, anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, expected poor performance on regular assessment, impact of student scores on accountability system, administrator decision, English Language Learner (ELL) status, poor attendance, or extended absences.

A student must meet ALL THREE CRITERIA to participate in the alternate assessment. Participating students partake in alternate assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level. Attach completed Participation Form to student's IEP. Document team decision in assessment section of student's IEP.

Student C Example:

Student C is 17 years old and in the 10th grade. His disability category 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 has a new AAC device that both the student and the staff are learning. Learning his new AAC device has provided motivation as he is learning that people will respond to him. However, his academic skills are significantly typical peers and instruction will remain at the pre-preschool level for the foreseeable future. His fine motor skills are low, but he enjoys finger painting along with other art projects. He enjoys music as well. So far, things seem to be improving in communication for this student. The lack of a consistent mode of communication has made it difficult to acquire a reliable IQ score, however at his most recent evaluation, the school psychologist report stated that the student's expected IQ is likely <40.

Student can understand and recognize most of the pictures in his AAC device. He enjoys being read to (especially picture books about trucks, cars, 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 (tire, wheel, door, tractor) 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.

Student 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.

Student shows little interest in mathematics; he usually gives no response when presented with numerals, colors, or counting. He seems to understand 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 via the device.

See Student C *Alternate Assessment Participation Form* on next page.



Student SSID: _____	CCCCCCCCCCCC
Student Name: _____	Student C
Student DOB: _____	C/CC/CCCC
Date form completed: _____	C/CC/CCCC

Alternate Assessment Participation Form

This Participation Form is a tool to help Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams with gathering evidence for determining if a student meets the three criteria for participation in South Dakota’s alternate state assessment. Refer to [Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#) for full guidance.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA: <i>YES=student meets criteria</i> <i>NO=student does not meet criteria</i>	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: <i>Consider multiple sources over multiple years in multiple settings.</i>	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE: <i>Consider formal and informal results/ examples in adaptive AND all academic areas.</i>
<p>1. Student has a significant cognitive disability. Student’s disability(s) significantly impacts both intellectual functioning AND adaptive behavior.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student’s IQ is <40. His academic skills are pre-preschool. He requires 1:1 assistance at school, home, and in the community. Student’s Autism disability has a significant impact on both intellectual and adaptive functioning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cognitive/Ability evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior evaluations <input type="checkbox"/> Academic/Achievement evaluations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal assessments <input type="checkbox"/> District-wide assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Language assessments, including ELL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>2. Student requires extensive instruction and support to acquire and maintain skills. Student requires substantially adapted materials and intensive, repeated, direct support to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and generalize skills across settings.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student is in the 10th grade. Despite the repeated use of adapted materials, intensive, direct instruction since preschool, and ESY from grades K-8, he has difficulty acquiring and maintaining new academic and functional skills. His academic skills remain at the pre-preschool level.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from IEP goals, short-term objectives, post-school outcomes, ESY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from present levels of academic AND functional performance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data from progress monitoring/checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Data and examples of school and community-based curriculum, instructional objectives, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Data from research-based interventions <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>3. Student is learning through alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS). Student’s academic goals, short-term objectives, and instruction follow Core Content Connectors (CCCs) and address skills appropriate and challenging for this student.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Student is in the 10th grade, but his academic performance is at pre-preschool level. His IEP goals and short-term objectives follow the Core Content Connectors. His post-school outcomes include transition services through age 21.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IEP goals, short-term objectives, and post-school outcomes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic AND functional performance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curriculum, instructional objectives, materials, work samples <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring and progress checklists <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan (if 14 or older) <input type="checkbox"/> Past performance on Alternate Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

Evidence for determining alternate assessment participation is NOT based on the following: Specific disability category such as Cognitive or Autism, percent of time in specialized services, educational placement or instructional setting, low reading or achievement level, need for accommodations or assistive technology on the regular assessment, anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, expected poor performance on regular assessment, impact of student scores on accountability system, administrator decision, English Language Learner (ELL) status, poor attendance, or extended absences.

A student must meet ALL THREE CRITERIA to participate in the alternate assessment. Participating students partake in alternate assessment in all content areas (ELA, Math, Science) assessed at their grade level. Attach completed Participation Form to student’s IEP. Document team decision in assessment section of student’s IEP.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who decides that a student should participate in the alternate assessment?

The IEP team, including parents, teachers, and administrators, make the decision of how a student will participate in statewide assessment based on evidence and adherence to the South Dakota Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines. No one member of the IEP team makes this decision.

2. How do we know that a student has a “significant cognitive disability”?

SD DOE does not define a “significant cognitive disability” in terms of “cut off” IQ or adaptive scores. The student’s disability must demonstrate a history of significantly impacted intellectual and adaptive functioning across multiple years and settings. A “significant cognitive disability” will be pervasive, affecting student learning across content areas and in social and community settings. Students with “significant cognitive disabilities” are likely to continue to need supports to live as independently as possible throughout their adult lives after high school.

Students with autism or intellectual disabilities 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 can participate in general assessments, with accommodations. Students demonstrating academic deficits or difficulties due to learning disabilities, speech-language impairments, and emotional-behavior disabilities do not qualify for participation in alternate assessment. Performing three to four grade levels below peers without disabilities is not, by itself, evidence of a “significant cognitive disability.” 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.” Students demonstrating mild to moderate cognitive disabilities may be more appropriately placed in the general assessment system with accommodations. Students who did not need early intervention services, or who are unlikely to need substantial daily supports in their adult lives, probably do not have a “significant cognitive disability” and would not be appropriately placed in the alternate assessment.

3. How do we know if the alternate assessment is appropriate for an English Language Learning (ELL) with an IEP whose language proficiency makes it difficult to assess content knowledge and skills?

An ELL should be considered for the alternate assessment if (a) their intellectual functioning indicates a significant cognitive disability using assessments in their home language as appropriate, and (b) they meet the other participation guidelines for the alternate assessment. Assessments of adaptive behavior and communication should consider linguistic and sociocultural factors for valid interpretation of these assessments, alongside the information on goals and instruction in the student's IEP. If an ELL with an IEP does not meet the criteria for the alternate assessment, they should take the general assessment with accommodations as appropriate.

4. Why is it important to indicate that a student participating in alternate assessment is receiving instruction in alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS)?

The decision to align a student's academic program to the Core Content Connectors that are linked to the South Dakota Content Standards in ELA, Math, and Science, and to assign participation in the alternate assessment, limits a student's direct contact with the breadth of the South Dakota Content Standards for the grade level in which they are enrolled. This limited or modified exposure to the grade level standards may have significant impact on academic outcomes and post-secondary opportunities.

5. What if it is impossible to assess a student because the student does not appear to communicate?

All attempts should be made to find a route of communication with the student as soon as they are enrolled. If various approaches and technologies do not appear to demonstrate a route of communication, then consider that all behavior that the student exhibits is a form of communication. A critical element in assessing all students is a focus on communicative competency as the base for student access to the South Dakota Content Standards. Best practice would indicate that students should enter Kindergarten with a communication system that allows them to demonstrate an understanding of academic concepts prior to entering the third grade. However, with or without a communication system, students must still participate in the MSAA and Science Alt.

6. If a student has been tested in the past on an alternate assessment, but the current IEP team determines that the student does not meet the South Dakota Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines, can the student be assigned to the general assessment?

Yes, ensure that the student receives appropriate instruction on the South Dakota Content Standards and participates in the required general assessments for their current grade level with or without accommodations.

7. Is it possible that a decision to participate in the alternate assessment could change as a student gets older?

Participating in the alternate assessment requires that the student has a significant cognitive impairment and interacts with content that has been significantly modified from that which is provided to the student's typically developing peers. Even though students with significant cognitive disabilities often are identified early, prior to starting school, they may be able to participate in the general assessment during their elementary grades. IEP teams should be especially cautious about assigning students to the alternate assessment in their early school years. When the level of support needed for the student to participate in the breadth of the South Dakota Content Standards and the general assessment increases, the team may determine that participation in the alternate assessment is appropriate.

8. What are "Red Flags" on student alternate assessment participation?

If student data reveals the following Red Flags, then IEP teams should discuss/review that student's Alternate Assessment eligibility to determine if the student meets eligibility criteria. That student may be more appropriately challenged to reach their fullest academic potential with general education grade-level instruction and regular assessment.

- **Disability Category/IQ Score** – Is a student's disability category SLD, OHI, ED, or SL? Is the student's IQ score above 70? Does the student have adaptive skills across settings? *(If yes, does the student meet the "significant cognitive disability" criteria?)*

- **Classroom Setting/Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Placement** – Is a student’s Placement ‘0100: Regular Classroom’? Do a student’s IEP goals follow grade level standards instead of Core Content Connectors? *(If yes, should the student be taking the regular assessment instead?)*
- **Reading/Math Skills on MSAA** – Can a student ‘read fluently with critical understanding’ or ‘apply computational procedures’? *(If yes, should the student be more appropriately challenged with the regular state assessment?)*
- **ELA/Math Performance Level on MSAA** – Did a student score the highest level (Level 4) on the alternate assessment in Math or ELA? *(If yes, should the student be more appropriately challenged with the regular state assessment?)*

9. Who can we ask if we have questions about this important decision?

For information about participation in the alternate assessment or instruction of students with significant cognitive disabilities, contact the SD DOE Special Education Programs - Alternate Assessment Specialist at 605-773-3678.