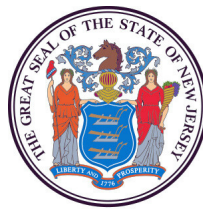


ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Roadmap To Determine Eligibility



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1

When to Make Eligibility Decisions

IEP teams should complete the formal eligibility process at some point in grade 2 and then each year after that at the annual IEP meeting.

2

Understanding the Eligibility Criteria for Alternate Assessment

Review the five (5) participation criteria for each subject for the student's current grade level.

3

Gathering Evidence

Use multiple pieces of evidence to inform the decision of eligibility in an alternate assessment.

4

Documenting the Decision

If the IEP team determines that the student is eligible, they must document their decisions using the *Participation Criteria* form and include it in the IEP.

5

If Decision is YES If Decision is NO

An IEP team LEA representative must sign the completed form.


If the IEP team decides that the student is not eligible, then the student takes the NJSLA with appropriate accommodations and accessibility features.

6

Review of Eligibility Determinations

To ensure that students are appropriately identified for the alternate assessments the eligibility determination must be reviewed annually..



Click on the info icon throughout for  additional information



1

When to Make Eligibility Decisions

Grade 2

Since state assessments begin at grade 3, IEP teams should complete the eligibility process at some point in grade 2. Try to avoid waiting to make eligibility decisions at grade 3. It is important the students have as much instructional time as possible aligned to the Essential Elements before taking the DLM assessments.

Grade 3-8, and 11

While there is no deadline for making eligibility determinations, it is important to do this as early in the school year as possible. Students found eligible at any point after the school year has started should take the DLM assessments for their designated grade level, however, if an IEP team reaches a decision two weeks or less before the start of the DLM tests, preparing for the DLM alternate assessments will be difficult.

Please ensure that IEP team decisions are made as far in advance as possible. Teachers run the risk of not being able to complete the required steps to administer the DLM assessments if decisions are made later in the school year.



[Return to Roadmap](#)

Understanding the Eligibility Criteria for the Alternate Assessment

2

Required Assessments

If the IEP team determines that the student is eligible for the alternate assessments, then the student must participate in the appropriate DLM alternate assessments in English language arts, mathematics, and science for their current grade level.

The term “significant intellectual disability” is not a category of disability. It is a designation given to a small number of students with disabilities for purposes of their participation in the state assessment program. For a student to be found as having a significant cognitive disability, each of the five (5) criteria must be true as determined by the student’s IEP team:

1

The student has a disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

A review of student records and other evidence indicates a disability or multiple disabilities that prevent the student from meaningful participation in the standard academic core curriculum or achievement of the standards at their enrolled grade level. Additionally, the student’s disability causes dependence on others for many, and sometimes all, daily living needs and the student is expected to require extensive, ongoing support in adulthood.

Regardless of a student’s disability category, evidence collected should show that the effect of the student’s disability significantly impacts their ability to function cognitively and adaptive behavior.

The student is primarily taught using the DLM Essential Elements.

2

IEP teams should review the student’s present levels of performance, short-term goals and objectives, and the performance targets for the student to ensure that the concepts and skills the student is working on not only reflect the skills and concepts in the Essential Elements but that the short-term goals closely align with the learning maps that will lead to grade-level performance targets.

- The short-terms goals and objectives reflect the skills and concepts contained in the learning map steps.
- The annual academic goals are closely aligned to the alternate achievement standards for the student’s current grade level.

3

The student requires extensive, repeated individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature.



Click to View

The student's demonstrated cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior across settings are significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications, adaptations, and accommodations. Criteria 3 addresses the aspects of learning and what the student needs in order to learn. In other words, the student requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and supports from teachers and other professionals. Transient is used to describe a situation that lasts only a short time or is constantly changing. Therefore, the instructional support needed is long-standing and there is a demonstrated history of required support across settings and content areas.

4

The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information.

The student's demonstrated cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior across settings are significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications, adaptations, and accommodations. Criteria 4 addresses learning materials and accessing information. The types of materials required in order for the student to learn. Materials are significantly modified, customized, and adapted in order to facilitate understanding. The student requires substantially adapted materials and customized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across multiple settings.

5

The student's significant intellectual disability will impact post-school outcomes (e.g., supported housing or employment).

The student has a significant intellectual disability that will affect their ability to live independently or find employment after they finish school. They may require ongoing support and assistance to secure appropriate housing or employment opportunities that align with their abilities and needs. This statement acknowledges that the student may require additional support beyond what is typically required for other students to achieve similar outcomes.

[Return to Roadmap](#)

3 Gathering Evidence

Using multiple pieces of evidence to inform the decision is important for two reasons:

1. It prevents decision-making that relies on one type, or an inappropriate type of evidence (e.g., IQ score or disability category), and
2. It provides a complete picture of the student both academically and in social settings.

Below is a list of possible evidence that IEP teams should gather **before** the decision if the student meets the participation criteria. It is important to remember that no one piece of evidence should be used to make this decision and no one person should be making the decision; it must be a decision reached and agreed to by all members of the IEP.

<p>Curriculum, Instructional, and Classroom Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Example instructional objectives and materials.• Work samples and data on progress from both school- and community-based instruction.• Classroom work samples and data.• Teacher observations.	<p>Assessment Data and Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Past state assessments to compare with classroom work.• District-wide alternate assessments.• Reading assessments.• Any other academic achievement tests.• Results of initial or most recent evaluations of the student.
<p>IEP Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, goals, and short-term objectives or post-school outcomes from the IEP.• Considerations for students with specific communication needs or modes.	<p>Evaluations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adaptive behavior assessments.• informal assessments.• Psychological assessments and evaluations, including information associated with IQ tests*• Speech and communication assessments.

* It is important to not use the IQ score as a qualifying measure but to use the descriptive information in the evaluation.

DO NOT USE THESE FACTORS OR DATA TO INFORM AN ELIGIBILITY DECISION.

The following factors are not appropriate to include in decision-making because they do not add to the IEP Team's understanding of what the student knows and can do. While some of the factors listed below make it difficult for a student come to school ready to engage and learn they cannot be considered when determining eligibility for the alternate assessment.

✘ English Language Learner (ELL) Status

It is important to understand that a student's ability to learn and their knowledge of English is not connected. How well a student understands and speaks English has an impact on his/her ability to learn; however, it does not indicate a disability.

✘ Anticipated disruptive behavior during testing

Behavior challenges can make learning difficult for some students and should be treated appropriately and professionally. Behavior challenges should not be considered when deciding if a student meets the criteria for an alternate assessment as they are not indicators of cognitive ability.

✘ 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, it is not evidence of a child's ability or their potential to learn and must be addressed through the appropriate school resources.

✘ Anticipated poor performance on the general statewide assessment

Most students receiving special education services can and do participate in general education assessments with accommodations and other supports. Poor performance on these assessments is not an appropriate factor to use when making an eligibility decision.

✘ Impact on the student's score on the accountability system

How well or poorly a student may perform on any state assessment may not be used as a deciding factor in determining which assessment is appropriate for a student.

✘ Need for accommodations to participate in the general statewide assessment

To consider accommodations and supports available on general statewide assessments, refer to the [New Jersey Student Learning Assessment: Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual](#) or reach out to the Office of Assessment at assessment@doe.nj.gov

✘ Administrative decision

Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a school, district, or program administrator to unilaterally make an eligibility 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.

The following factors may not be the **sole** criteria used to determine participation in the alternate assessment.

✘ Student's disability category

There is no disability category that is able to predict 100% of a student's cognitive potential. Disability categories alone are not sufficient evidence to determine eligibility for the alternate assessment.

✘ Percent of day in special education

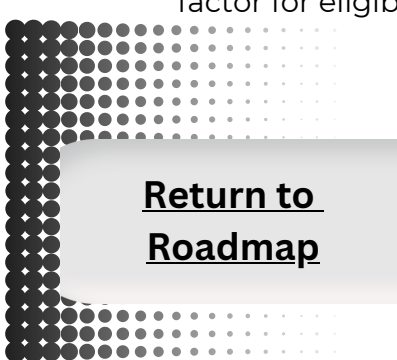
Students receive special education services in a variety of ways and in varying degrees of intensity. It is more meaningful to consider the type and intensity of the structures and supports the student requires in order to participate academically and socially in their school than it is to consider the number of hours or days a student receives special education and related services.

✘ Academic and related services the 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 disability.

✘ Instructional Setting

The setting in which a student receives his/her 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.



[Return to Roadmap](#)

4

Documenting the Decision Eligible or Not Eligible

5

IF THE DECISION IS YES


If the IEP team determines that the student is eligible, they must document their decision using the *Participation Criteria* form and maintain it in the student record. An IEP team LEA representative must sign the completed form and a copy must be placed in the student's file. The eligibility form must be completed annually.

This must be done regardless of grade level. For example, grade 9 students do not take an alternate assessment but the *Participation Criteria* form should be completed and kept with the student's IEP.

IF THE DECISION IS NO

If the IEP team determines that the student is not eligible, then three (3) things must happen:

1. The student must participate in the state assessments for their current grade level with appropriate accommodations and accessibility features as determined by the IEP team.
2. The student's instruction must be aligned with New Jersey Student Learning Standards via the general education curriculum. Without access to the general education curriculum, students will not be able to learn the academic skills and knowledge for their grade level which will be assessed through state assessments.
3. Record of the decision must be recorded on the *Participation Criteria* form, and maintained in the student record.



[Return to
Roadmap](#)

6 Review of Eligibility Determinations

To ensure that students are appropriately identified for the alternate assessments, and to ensure that guidance to the LEA and IEP teams is clear and leads to appropriate identifications, NJDOE Office of Special Education will conduct targeted monitoring and review data on eligibility determinations based on LEAs exceeding the 1% participation cap. NJDOE will use the percent of participation in an alternate assessment to identify schools and districts that may need additional support and guidance to use the eligibility criteria to make valid and appropriate determinations.



Click to View
Video

Contact



Office of Special Education
New Jersey Department of Education
www.nj.gov/education/specialed



(609) 376-9060



oseinfo@doe.nj.gov




Facebook
[@njdeptofed](https://www.facebook.com/njdeptofed)



Twitter
[@NewJerseyDOE](https://twitter.com/NewJerseyDOE)



Instagram
[@NewJerseyDOE](https://www.instagram.com/NewJerseyDOE)

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of dots in the bottom-left corner, transitioning from black to white.

[Return to
Roadmap](#)