

# Alternate Assessment Eligibility

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**Vermont Agency of Education**

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# Alternate Assessment

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- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required alternate assessments and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) confirmed the alternate assessment is for students with most significant cognitive disabilities.
- Up to 1.0% of total tested state student population in a subject area may participate in the alternate assessment.
- Intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in the general assessment even with accommodations.
- Alternate Assessment is aligned to grade-level content in each subject area.

# Multi-State Alternate Assessment

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- 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.
- Measures academic content that is aligned to and derived from content standards and the Core Content Connectors (CCCs).
- 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.
- Administered in the areas of English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 3–8 and high school, and science in grade 11.
- Assessment window: March 10 - April 25, 2025

# Decisions

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- Eligibility decisions are made annually by the IEP team.
- Parents and guardians are members of the IEP team and need to remain engaged in the assessment process beyond determination of student eligibility for the MSAA.
  - Thus, they need to receive accurate information about the MSAA.
- Resources should be made available to all IEP team members including parents well before assessment participation decisions are made.

# Definitions

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- Significant Cognitive Disability:
  - indicates a disability, or multiple disabilities, that require intensive or extensive levels of direct support that is not of a temporary or transient nature.
  - requires specially designed instruction to acquire, maintain, or generalize skills in multiple settings - including the home, school, workplace, and community.
  - Has a significant impact on intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.
- Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined by an IQ test score, but rather a holistic understanding of a student.

# Who should participate?

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- Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in the Alternate Assessment.
- State participation guidelines should be followed.
- IEP team decides whether the student should participate in the general assessment or the alternate assessment.
- Decisions should not be based on the category of a student's disability, the setting in which a student receives instruction, or the percentage of time a student spends in a general education classroom.

# Criterion 1

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The student has an active Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Yes or No?

- » If yes, move to the next criterion.
- » If no, the student cannot participate.

[Vermont Alternate Assessment Student Eligibility Criteria Checklist](#)

# Criterion 2

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The student program includes extensions from grade-level academic standards in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and English Proficiency (if applicable).

Yes or No?

- » If yes, move to the next criterion.
- » If no, the student cannot participate.

[Vermont Alternate Assessment Student Eligibility Criteria Checklist](#)



# Criterion 3

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The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade-and-age-appropriate curriculum.

Yes or No?

- » If yes, move to the next criterion.
- » If no, the student cannot participate.

[Vermont Alternate Assessment Student Eligibility Criteria Checklist](#)

# Criterion 4

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The student meets the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment.

Yes or No?

- » If yes, the student is eligible for the alternate assessment, given the other criteria were "Yes."
- » If no, the student cannot participate.

Note: The IEP team needs YES for all 4 criteria in order for the student to be eligible for the alternate assessment.

[Vermont Alternate Assessment Student Eligibility Criteria Checklist](#)

# Not Allowable Considerations

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The following are NOT allowable (or acceptable) considerations for determining participation in an alternate assessment:

- a disability category label
- poor attendance or extended absences
- native language, social, cultural, or economic differences
- expected poor performance on the general education assessment
- academic and other services student receives
- educational environment or instructional setting
- percent of time receiving special education
- English Learner (EL) status
- Low reading level or achievement level
- Anticipated disruptive behavior by the student
- impact of student's scores on accountability system
- administrator decision
- anticipated emotional duress
- need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology) to participate in assessment

# Learner Characteristic Inventory

## **Learner Characteristics Inventory for Alternate Assessments Based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards**

The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) developed a comprehensive assessment system for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The goal of NCSC was to produce an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) using the best practice-oriented research available, along with supportive professional development and instructional modules for teachers. Part of this project was to create student profiles through the Learner Characteristic Inventory (LCI). The LCI is still used as a tool to document student's strengths and needs for the purpose of determining eligibility for alternate assessment and to plan instructional supports for the student. The LCI must be completed for students who are being considered for participation in alternate assessment and revisited at each annual IEP meeting to discuss both the growth of the student and continued participation in alternate assessments.

1. **Student's grade:**
2. **Student's age in years:**
3. **Student's primary IDEA disability label:**
  - Intellectual Disability (includes Mild, Moderate, and Profound)
  - Multiple Disabilities
  - Autism
  - Speech/Language Impairment

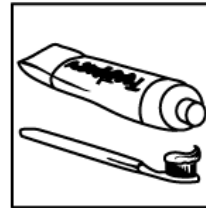
# Sample Items

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What is this story about?



going back to school



brushing your teeth

Would you like to read this question again, yes or no?

# SRC and ESR

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- SRC – Student Response Check
  - Definition: Student demonstrates preferred mode(s) of communication ensuring the student will be able to participate in the assessment and respond to test items.
- ESR – Early Stopping Role
  - Definition: Test may end early if student responses are not clearly observable or understood by Test Administrator.
- [Webinar: How to Administer the SRC and Implement the ESR](#)

# Resources

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- [Vermont Help and Support](#)
- [Sample Items](#)
- [MSAA State](#)
- [MSAA Cognia](#)
- Cognia Help:
  - For assistance, contact the MSAA Service Desk:
  - Phone: 866-834-8879
  - Email: [MSAAServiceCenter@cognia.org](mailto:MSAAServiceCenter@cognia.org)
  - Live Help: [Click to Chat](#)

# Important Dates

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Date	Task
2/18/25	MSAA Training Modules go live
2/19-4/25/25	MSAA Student registration
3/10-4/25/25	VTCAP and MSAA Testing Window
7/14-9/5/25	MSAA Online Reporting Window



# Fun Questions

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- Q: Should students at independent schools participate in statewide assessments?
  - Yes, in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. These laws mandate that all publicly funded students participate in assessments that measure student achievement on grade-level content standards. Determinations about whether students take the general or alternate assessment should be made locally using the state's Eligibility Criteria.
- Q: Does VT AOE have to approve students' LCI before a student can take the Alternate Assessment?
  - VT AOE does not approve or deny students to take the Alternate Assessment. Participation is an IEP team decision that should be made in consultation with the student's family.

# More Fun Questions

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- Q: Who can proctor the Alternate Assessment?
  - School or district staff who completes the training and passes the final quiz with at least an 80% than they are eligible to administer.
  - This may include Paraprofessionals, Behavioral Interventionists, etc.
- Q: What is the deadline to enroll students in the MSAA?
  - Student enrollment can occur until the end of the testing window.
  - For SY24-25, that would be until April 25, 2025.
- Q: Where do we bring our student-specific questions about accommodations, modifications, or test administration strategies?
  - Please send these questions to [Amanda.Hass@vermont.gov](mailto:Amanda.Hass@vermont.gov).