



State Spotlights: Reducing AA-AAAS State-Level Participation Rates to Meet the 1.0% Threshold, 2016-17 to 2017-18

NCEO Report 421



NCEO

National Center on
Educational Outcome:

State Spotlights: Reducing AA-AAAS State-Level Participation Rates to Meet the 1.0% Threshold, 2016-17 to 2017-18

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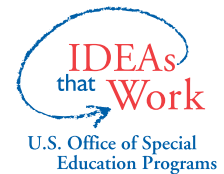
July 2020

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Strunk, K., Thurlow, M. L., & Arner, J. (2020). *State spotlights: Reducing AA-AAAS state-level participation rates to meet the 1.0% threshold, 2016-17 to 2017-18* (NCEO Report 421). National Center on Educational Outcomes.



The Center is supported through Cooperative Agreements (#H326G160001) with the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. The Center is affiliated with the Institute on Community Integration at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. The contents of this report were developed under the Cooperative Agreement from the U.S. Department of Education, but does not necessarily represent the policy or opinions of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it. Readers should not assume endorsement by the federal government.



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Acknowledgments

This report was developed through a truly collaborative process with the 48 states participating in the 1% Cap CoP during its bi-weekly webinar calls in 2019. Although the CoP was formed at the request of states to provide them the opportunity for private state conversations, it was with mutual agreement among the CoP, including the states highlighted here, that this report should be shared publicly on the NCEO website.

The states participating in the 1% Cap CoP are listed here. Many of the states had multiple representatives on the CoP webinar calls. This report would not exist had it not been for their active participation and sharing during the CoP calls.

Alabama	New Mexico
Arizona	New York
Arkansas	North Carolina
California	North Dakota
Colorado	Ohio
Connecticut	Oklahoma
Delaware	Oregon
Florida	Pennsylvania
Georgia	Rhode Island
Hawaii	South Carolina
Idaho	South Dakota
Illinois	Tennessee
Indiana	Texas
Iowa	Utah
Kansas	Vermont
Kentucky	Virginia
Louisiana	Washington
Maine	West Virginia
Maryland	Wisconsin
Massachusetts	Wyoming
Michigan	
Minnesota	
Mississippi	
Missouri	
Montana	
Nebraska	
New Hampshire	
New Jersey	

Executive Summary

This report highlights the work of states in the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) 1% Community of Practice (CoP) that reduced their alternate assessment participation rates from school year 2016-17 to school year 2017-18. At the time this report was developed, these were the most recent data verified by the U.S. Department of Education. Data were available for reading/language arts and mathematics; participation data for science assessments were not available to us.

U.S. Department of Education data for those states over the required 1.0% alternate assessment participation rate indicated that 11 states had a reduction of at least 0.1 percentage points in either reading/language arts, mathematics, or both. The 0.1 percentage points criterion is used by the U.S. Department of Education as a significant reduction in the participation rate.

Five states volunteered to share information on their approaches to decreasing the state-level participation rate in their states' alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). The states highlighted in this report are Arkansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. Each state provided information on the strategies that it took; several provided examples of some of the materials they used (see appendices).

The report concludes with a discussion of additional considerations. These include the definition of "substantial progress," the 95% assessment participation requirement, and meeting the 1.0% threshold in science AA-AAAS.

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Introduction

The 2015 reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) placed a state-level 1.0% threshold on student participation in the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standard (AA-AAAS). ESSA also stipulated that state education agencies (SEAs) may not impose on any local educational agency (LEA) a cap on the percentage of students administered an alternate assessment. Nevertheless, LEAs are required to submit information to the SEA justifying the need to exceed 1.0% and SEAs must provide appropriate oversight of these districts.

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), at the request of states, initiated a 1% Cap Community of Practice (CoP) as a private forum for regular videoconferences. A password-protected website was established by NCEO so that the 1% CoP states could learn how other states were approaching implementation of the ESSA 1.0% requirements, including oversight of LEAs, and to share resources and information with and among states that would further the purpose of the ESSA legislation in this regard. Since that time states have been addressing the challenges of meeting the 1.0% requirement and searching for and implementing strategies that would help ensure that all students, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, are assigned to the appropriate assessment.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the work of states in the 1% CoP that have successfully reduced their alternate assessment participation rates of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. We used the criterion of at least a 0.1 percentage point decrease in the percentage of students for a subject area that the U.S. Department of Education (2019) established as a benchmark for a state making “substantial progress” in reducing the number of students taking alternate assessments. The states included in this report also met ESSA’s requirement to assess 95% of all students and students with disabilities.

This report identifies the strategies, challenges, resources, and plans for the future of five states that volunteered to share these with the CoP in an effort to provide a collective base of knowledge about “what works” to reduce alternate assessment participation and improve appropriate assessment participation decision making for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

The Data

The data used to identify states for this report were those reported to the U.S. Department of Education via the EdFacts system. We examined the difference between the state-level percentage in 2017-18 and the state-level percentage in 2016-17 for those states that were over 1.0% in any subject area. The year 2017-18 was the most recent year for which data verified by the U.S.

Department of Education were available to us. We examined the data for reading/language arts and mathematics. We did not have access to science data at the time this report was developed.

Table 1 shows those states that were over 1.0% that had any reduction of at least 0.1 percentage points in at least one subject area. All but two states met the decrease of 0.1 percentage point criterion in both reading/English language arts and mathematics. One of the states that did not meet the 0.1 percentage point decrease criterion did not meet it in reading/language arts and one did not meet it in math. Also notable in the table is that the degree of difference in rates from 2016-17 to 2017-18 ranged from just over -0.1 percentage points to just over -0.4 percentage points. Most changes in rates, though, ranged from -0.15 percentage points to -0.20 percentage points.

Table 1. States with Significant Reductions in the State-Level Percentage of Students Participating in the AA-AAAS (2016-17 to 2017-18)^a

State	Reading/Language Arts			Mathematics		
	2017-18	2016-17	Difference	2017-18	2016-17	Difference
Arkansas	1.21	1.37	-0.16	1.21	1.38	-0.17
Illinois	1.12	1.10	NA	1.12	1.54	-0.42
Louisiana	1.30	1.54	-0.24	1.30	1.54	-0.24
Maine	1.00	1.19	-0.19	1.00	1.20	-0.20
Massachusetts	1.45	1.56	-0.11	1.47	1.58	-0.11
Michigan	2.08	2.28	-0.20	2.15	2.32	-0.17
Missouri	1.06	1.27	-0.21	1.06	1.26	-0.20
Nebraska	1.12	1.25	-0.13	1.12	1.26	-0.14
South Dakota	1.15	1.33	-0.18	1.15	1.33	-0.18
Virginia	1.16	1.30	-0.13	0.99	0.97	NA
Wisconsin	1.01	1.16	-0.15	1.00	1.16	-0.16

^aThe U.S. Department of Education definition of a significant reduction being at least 0.1 percentage points was used here.

We asked volunteer states in the NCEO 1% Cap CoP to provide us with information they believed was relevant to their success in decreasing the state-level participation rate. In this report, we provide information shared by Arkansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.

State Spotlights

States are using a variety of approaches to reduce their state-level AA-AAAS participation rates. The five states we showcased here were included because they reduced their rates more than 0.1 percentage points in at least one subject area and provided us with information on their strategies, challenges, resources, and plans for the future.

Arkansas

Data

Arkansas showed a decrease in percentage points of 0.16 in reading/language arts and 0.17 in mathematics from 2016-17 to 2017-18. Arkansas started in 2016-17 with participation rates of 1.37% in reading/language arts and 1.38% in mathematics for its alternate assessment, the Arkansas Alternate Assessment.

Strategies

Arkansas engaged in two general strategies to work on its AA-AAAS participation rates: (a) focused training, and (b) tier-based training and technical assistance. The specific approaches that Arkansas used under each of these general strategies are listed here.

Focused Training

- Arkansas provided 19 trainings in the summer and 15 in the fall (2019).
- Trainings included a focus on:
 - o The state's definition of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, addressing the cognitive and adaptive characteristics separately.
 - o The difference in adaptive behavior and maladaptive behavior (districts indicated students with behavioral problems could not participate in a regular classroom). Many districts used a tool that worked well identifying maladaptive behaviors but not adaptive behaviors.
 - o Comparing the number of students, including students in all types of facilities, in the all students group, the students with disabilities group, the students with significant cognitive disabilities group, and the student with the most significant cognitive disability group (used a graphic representation).
 - o Addressing Arkansas' finding that the highest percentage of students who participated in the alternate assessment were the youngest students. Arkansas trained educators to ensure students are identified correctly in early grades. The state borrowed from

Donnellan's (2012) theory of "least dangerous assumption" (Donnellan, 1984), which supports the idea that educators should first assume a student would be able to participate in the regular assessment, and only after that consider participation in an alternate assessment. Included a video to illustrate this concept.

- o Using NCEO's 1% CoP state resources (i.e., reviewed Kentucky's student profiles and compared West Virginia's and Idaho's participation criteria).

Tier-based Training and Technical Assistance

- Arkansas provided training using a need-based tiered approach to training.
 - o Level 1 - 1.01-1.49%
 - Training for all special education staff
 - Student list with eligibility categories
 - o Level 2 - 1.5-1.99%
 - Training for all special education staff
 - Individual Student Information
 - o Level 3 - 2.00% and up
 - Training for all special education staff
 - Individual Student Information
 - Onsite review of students

Arkansas brought in a five- to six-member team for at least a full day for folder review of two large districts. A report was created and shared back with the districts. The review was conducted student by student, and when needed, a suggestion was made that the IEP teams review decisions.

Challenges

Arkansas identified a few challenges that it had encountered as it worked to reduce state-level participation rates in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment.

- There were a high number of districts with high alternate assessment participation rates.
- Educators needed to better understand who the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are.
- Some district administrators were reluctant about having IEP teams move students from the alternate assessment to the general assessment for fear that proficiency rates would drop.

Resources

Arkansas has made numerous resources available. Some were used during training. Others were also posted online. Some of these resources are listed here:

- PowerPoint Training and Link to the training video: <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/special-education/presentations>. Select the last item on the page to view the video.
- Guidance for IEP Teams: [http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Student%20Assessment/DLM/Guidance for IEP Teams on Alternate Assessment 2018-2019.pdf](http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Student%20Assessment/DLM/Guidance_for_IEP_Teams_on_Alternate_Assessment_2018-2019.pdf)
- Arkansas Participation Guidelines: <http://adecm.arkansas.gov/Attachments/LS-16-084--ArkansasAlternateAssessmentParticipationDecisionGuidelines.pdf>
- List of Arkansas Districts Over the 1.0% Threshold: [Districts required to provide justifications for alternate assessment participation rates](#)
- LEA Justification Documentation: [LEA Alternate Assessment Justification Documentation](#)

Plans for the Future

- A workgroup will convene to determine if the state's alternate assessment criteria should be updated. If it is determined that the criteria should be updated and made more specific, the workgroup will draft new criteria.
- A presentation will be recorded to explain which students should participate in the alternate assessment: <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/special-education/presentations>.
- Two presentations will be provided statewide during the summer. One will focus exclusively on the alternate assessment participation criteria, IEP development, and instruction for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The other will focus on inclusive practices.

Massachusetts

Data

Massachusetts reduced AA-AAAS participation by 0.11 percentage points in both reading/language arts and mathematics between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, after starting 2016-17 with a relatively high alternate assessment participation rate of 1.56% in reading/language arts and 1.58% in mathematics.

Strategies

Massachusetts undertook two general strategies to work to reduce its AA-AAAS participation rates: (a) work directly with the highest-percentage districts, and (b) clarify participation guidelines to help IEP teams make appropriate assessment participation decisions. The specific approaches used by Massachusetts for each of these general strategies are listed here.

Work Directly with Districts

- Focused intensive technical assistance on about 25 districts with high percentages (i.e., more than 2.5 percent) of assessed students taking the MCAS-Alt. Massachusetts noticed that larger, primarily urban districts had much higher percentages of students participating in the alternate assessment than did smaller districts; and that changes in assessment decision-making for students in larger, higher-percentage districts would yield more dramatic reductions than would similar intervention in smaller districts.
- Made site visits to 12 districts in 2017-2018 and an additional 10 site visits in 2018-2019 (i.e., districts with more than 500 students assessed overall, and 2.5 percent or higher taking the MCAS-Alt), meeting specifically with IEP team chairs as a primary targeted group, plus special education administrators and principals as available. Data were presented and information on state- and district-wide patterns and discrepancies that existed between state and district percentages within each disability and “level of need” category (“level of need” is a metric collected by the state for each student with a disability).
- Clarified AA-AAAS participation guidelines with districts and the criteria that should *not* be used in designating students for the alternate assessment (e.g., excessive absences, previous failure on the standard assessment, or undue pressure on the IEP team to designate the AA for accountability reasons). The state reviewed the importance of appropriate assessment participation decisions, with a focus on:
 - o The state’s graduation requirements, which students taking the AA-AAAS cannot achieve. Students with less significant cognitive disabilities (SCDs), or who do not have SCDs,

may yet be capable of earning a diploma as a result of good instruction, district support, and perseverance, but only if they participate in the grade-level curriculum and take the standard assessment.

- o Subgroup participation in the AA-AAAS, especially regarding disproportionate representation of students in specific subgroups.
 - o Comparing state and district AA participation numbers and percentages in each primary disability category and by level of need.
- Encouraged districts to analyze their data and identify students taking the AA-AAAS as possible candidates for designation to standard assessments. Focused districts on making progress in lowering their participation rate for the coming year, rather than attempting to achieve 1.0 percent all at once.

Help IEP Teams Make Appropriate Decisions

- Developed a Decision-Making Tool to guide IEP teams to begin the assessment discussion at the team meeting and reach appropriate decisions efficiently. Districts have reported they find the tool helpful during conversations about assessment participation. The tool makes clear that students who take the MCAS-Alt in high school will not earn a Competency Determination in the assessed subject and therefore will not be eligible to earn a high school diploma.
- Posted a spreadsheet to the Internet listing all Massachusetts districts and their rate of AA-AAAS participation in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Districts use these to assess their progress in lowering their number of students taking the MCAS-Alt each year.
- Made sample parent notification letter (translated into five languages) available.
- Developed presentation for annual IEP team training.

Challenges

Massachusetts noted some challenges:

- There was a need to increase awareness about the AA-AAAS and provide ongoing technical assistance in clarifying the requirements of ESSA in this regard.
- A higher number and percentage of students taking alternate assessments exists overall in large districts taking the AA-AAAS, plus additional demographic challenges (e.g., economic disadvantages) in urban districts, requiring additional and ongoing technical assistance, although smaller districts also need assistance with this effort.

Resources

Three tools that Massachusetts provides to its districts are listed here and included in Appendix A.

- Decision-Making Tool
- Statewide MCAS-Alt Participation by Percent in each Disability Category (Circle graph)
- Sample MCAS-Alt District Data Display

Massachusetts used the data displays to focus on comparisons between the district and state, highlighting areas in need of further reflection and investigation by the district.

The data displays Massachusetts shared with districts show information based on the following metrics (see Appendix A):

- Total number taking MCAS and MCAS-Alt, plus district's overall percent AA participation rate; and progress made since the prior year
- Nature of Disability of students taking the MCAS-Alt (District and State)—Autism, Intellectual, Communication, Emotional, Specific Learning, etc.
- A comparison between District and State numbers and percent for students taking MCAS-Alt by disability category
- Level of Need (1 through 4)—A comparison between District and State number of hours and intensity of services provided to students taking the MCAS-Alt

Plans for the Future

Massachusetts indicated that it expects to continue decreasing its statewide percent over the next 2-3 years, as long as it maintains technical assistance and pressure on districts. However, the rate of decrease will likely diminish over time since most of the likely candidates for re-designation have already been removed from the alternate assessment. The state would need to re-designate an additional 2,000 of 7,000 students now participating in the AA-AAAS for it to reach one percent, which may not be possible or realistic. Massachusetts will continue to target specific districts for individualized site visits and assistance, plus send out annual letters requesting justification and other information if the district will continue to exceed one percent in the coming year.

Despite concerns about *future* rates of decrease in AA-AAS participation, Massachusetts has reported a decrease from 1.6 percent in 2017-2018 to 1.4 percent in 2018-2019, a reduction of about 1,000 students taking alternate assessments over the past two school years.

Michigan

Data

Michigan showed a decrease in percentage points of 0.20 in reading/language arts, from 2.28 in 2016-17 to 2.08 in 2017-18. It also showed a decrease of 0.17 percentage points in mathematics, from 2.32 in 2016-17 to 2.15 in 2017-18.

Strategies

Michigan employed several strategies to reduce the state-level participation rate in the AA-AAAS, as listed here.

- Developed online “Assessment Selection Guidelines Training,” that includes case studies
- Developed a decision making flowchart: “Should My Student Take the Alternate Assessment?”
- Developed an Assessment Selection Interactive Decision-Making Tool for IEP teams to use during meetings
- Developed a tiered monitoring approach and involved regional Intermediate School Districts to help with the work
- Asked districts to review students who were flagged for disproportionality, for example, economically disadvantaged
- In the first two years of review, in each year, the MDE 1% Cap team reviewed approximately 900 justification forms and 56 Intermediate School District (ISD) Summaries and provided individualized feedback to ISDs for each member district

Challenges

Michigan identified several challenges that it had encountered, including the following:

- Need for awareness and training

- Need for training to target all educators involved in IEP team process
- Need for opportunities for parents to learn about alternate standards, the alternate assessment, implications for student participation in the alternate assessment, and the impact on receiving a regular high school diploma
- The extremely large number (900) of district justifications to be reviewed by only three or four SEA staff members
- Although, at the state level, there were no sub-groups in which the risk-ratio would indicate a concern with disproportionality, 33 LEAs were identified as having risk ratios for a particular sub-group indicating an issue with disproportionality. Those LEAs are targeted for future activities and discussions with the ISDs and SEA

Resources

Michigan has resources that are publicly available, as noted here. In addition, three resources are provided in Appendix B.

- Assessment Selection Guidelines Training: <https://mdoe.state.mi.us/mdedocuments/AssessmentSelectionGuidelinesTraining/index.html>
 - o The training can be done in group(s) or as a self-study.
 - o The training provides specific attention to a decision-making flowchart (*Should My Student Take the Alternate Assessment?*).
 - o The training includes six case studies to apply and practice.
- Assessment Selection Interactive Decision-Making Tool for IEP teams <https://mdoe.state.mi.us/MDEDocuments/InteractiveDecision-MakingTool/index.html>
- Flowchart: “Should My Student Take the Alternate Assessment?” https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Should_My_Student_Take_the_Alternate_Assessment_556705_7.pdf

Michigan noted that in addition to its significant change in AA-AAAS participation rates from 2016-17 to 2017-18, it has projected its rates for 2018-19 (see Display in Appendix B), as follows:

- ELA: 1.97% (a 0.11 percentage point decrease from 2017-18, and a 0.31 percentage point decrease from 2016-17)
- Math: 2.0% (a 0.13 percentage point decrease from 2017-18, and a 0.3 percentage point decrease from 2016-17)

- Michigan also saw improvement in their State Determination Part B Results Matrix (the matrix considers what percentage of students take the regular assessment when compared to ALL students assessed. These data consider only 4th and 8th grade in Math and ELA).
- Michigan has committed to several activities in the future, with the continued intent to significantly “move the needle” on the alternate assessment participation rate.

Plans for the Future

- Explicitly define “Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities.”
- Increase LEA use of their own data in justification forms. Justification forms, as of February 2020, are electronically available for completion on the office of special education monitoring system. This will provide easy access to member districts and ISDs to complete, submit, and review data. This system also ensures the final response will be in an accessible format for public posting.
- Increase collaboration between the state and ISD on justification review in a train the trainer model.
- Focus on ensuring students are having instruction targeted correctly.
- Ask IEP teams to look critically at students identified to take Michigan’s Functional Independence assessment (Michigan has three levels for their alternate assessment. The Functional Independence assessment aligns most closely to the high range of complexity of Essential Elements or Extended Grade Level Content Expectations/Benchmarks) to determine if there are any students who should participate in the general assessment with accessibility features and accommodations.
- Enhance the focus, beyond assessment selection, to include a collaborative process for developing IEP team guidance for properly targeting instruction for students with disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for educators to share instructions, resources, and supports with each other.

Nebraska

Data

Nebraska saw a decrease in AA-AAAS reading/language arts participation rates from 1.25% in 2016-17 to 1.12% in 2017-2018 (a 0.13 percentage point decrease), and a decrease in AA-AAAS mathematics participation rates from 1.26% in 2016-17 to 1.12% in 2018 (a 0.14 percentage point decrease).

Strategies

Nebraska identified several strategies that it has used to support the reduction in AA-AAAS participation rates, as noted here:

- Conducted district monitoring for identified students and added this to department's monitoring of IEPs
- Required districts to submit a justification regardless if they will be over the 1% or not (also asked districts to submit information on identified students along with the justification)
- Held in-depth conversations with district special education directors and educational service unit directors on identification and training
- Implemented statewide multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)
- Some of Nebraska's larger districts implemented their own in-house process for checking that the student meets all of the criteria for the alternate assessment. This process functions as an internal checks and balances approach. The first year a Nebraska district implemented this process the district reduced the number of students participating in the alternate assessment by 77 students. Districts communicated with other districts to share how to use this process.

Challenges

Nebraska identified several challenges it is addressing as it works to reduce the state's alternate participation rate:

- Small districts with small numbers (116 out of 244 districts had one to four students identified for alternate assessment in the 2017-18 school year)
- High number of students identified to participate in the alternate assessment (115 out of 244 districts were over the 1% threshold in 2018 and 110 out of 244 were over in 2019)

- Teachers’ need for knowledge in effectively using the alternate assessment criteria
- Changes of staff at local level
- Providing appropriate evidence to support why a student is participating in the alternate assessment
- Some districts are not addressing “adaptive behavior.” When doing reviews this past year we found that some districts said the students met all of the criteria, but did not have any data to support that there is an impact on the student’s adaptive behavior or that an adaptive assessment was even completed on students. The next step will be to reach out to school psychologists to provide more information on what adaptive behavior is (districts may also use guidance with their staff).

Resources

Nebraska has developed many resources. The ones listed here are available in Appendix C.

- Letter to Superintendents and Special Education Directors (explains district justifications for exceeding the 1.0% threshold on the alternate assessment)
- District Justification Form (see NSCAS Alternate Documents): <https://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/nscas-alternate-summative-assessment/#1574203734112-50356b4d-9bc8>
- District Justification Support Worksheet (see NSCAS Alternate Documents): <https://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/nscas-alternate-summative-assessment/#1574203734112-50356b4d-9bc8>
- Nebraska Definition of “Significant Cognitive Disability”
- Engaging Educators Training (this will be posted on Nebraska’s website soon)
- Nebraska Department of Education: Training PowerPoint for Alternate Assessment

Plans for the Future

- Nebraska noted that in addition to its significant change in AA-AAAS participation rates from 2016-17 to 2017-18, it has projected its rates for 2018-19, continuing to reduce alternate assessment participation (see Display in Appendix C). Also shown in Appendix C is a display of Nebraska’s data by disability category for 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18. Projections through 2018-19 are also provided.

- Nebraska will continue to monitor district participation by disability and do periodic checks to see that districts are following the NDE guidance on identification.
- Nebraska requires that districts train all staff that may be part of an IEP/MDT (multidisciplinary evaluation team) to be trained on the NDE Guidance/Guidelines on the identification of students who would qualify for the Alternate Assessment. Districts were required to provide evidence that this was completed. Districts are also required to do some type of refresher every year for all staff and provide evidence for this.

Wisconsin

Data

Wisconsin showed a decrease in percentage points of 0.15 in reading/language arts and 0.16 in mathematics from 2016-17 to 2017-18. Wisconsin's alternate assessment participation rates in 2016 were 1.16 in both reading/language arts mathematics.

Strategies

Wisconsin undertook a number of strategies to work on its alternate assessment participation rates. These strategies were:

- Wisconsin strengthened focus on definition of students with a most significant cognitive disability by promoting use of IEP form *Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment*.
- Prior to 2017-18 test window (January-February 2018), email blasts reviewing ESSA requirements were sent to all special education directors in the state. The emails also included state department webpage links to information highlighting the state definition of students with a most significant cognitive disability and to guides for IEP teams. As a result of the email blast, many directors requested additional information and guidance.
- Special Education Consultants met periodically with regional support network staff to share the same information sent to special education directors and to request their support in providing guidance to the directors in their regions.
- Throughout the year, state Special Education Consultants participated in workshops or break out presentations at as many statewide conferences as possible, sharing the guidelines.

Challenges

Wisconsin has addressed several challenges in its work to lower AA-AAAS participation rates.

- Wisconsin has findings that many IEP teams might not have had the information needed to make appropriate decisions. IEP teams may need to consider if a re-evaluation is needed to gain evidence to support if the student is a student with a most significant cognitive disability.
- There is frequent turnover of teachers, special education teachers, district assessment coordinators, and staff across the state; therefore, there is a need for ongoing professional development.

Resources

Wisconsin has made the following resources available:

- IEP forms I-7A: *Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment*
- *Guide to Determining Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disability*
- *Webpage: Students with a Most Significant Cognitive Disability*

Plans for the Future

Wisconsin reported that the state did see a decrease in AA-AAAS participation rates from 1.0% in 2017-18 to 0.9% in 2018-19.

New for 2019-20:

- Adding to IEP form I-7A for IEP teams to consider evidence matching the criteria guidance
- Planning a closer look of AA-AAAS performance results and compare with those districts exceeding 1%
- Changing the 1% notification and verification process to an online application process
- Continuing to work with regional support network directors and provide presentations at many statewide conferences
- Developing a module for webpage explaining ESSA 1.0% requirement by summer 2020

Additional Considerations

What is Substantial Progress?

In 2019 the U.S. Department of Education established that substantive progress is defined as having at least a 0.1 percentage point decrease in the percentage of alternate assessment participation for a subject area. Although this report highlights five states that met this criterion in both reading/language arts and mathematics, other states in the NCEO 1% Community of Practice shared evidence of progress in their plans, strategies, guidance, timelines, and district oversight activities, along with their expectation that these efforts would lead to reductions in AA-AAAS participation rates in the future. Examples include Idaho's initiative to update its participation criteria and provide intensive technical assistance to districts with high participation rates. Another example is Kentucky's requirement for mandatory participation in online statewide training modules for administrators and educators with a training emphasis on IEP simulation using student case scenarios.

95% Assessment Participation Requirement

Some states are grappling with their assessment participation rates for all students and for students with disabilities. States that wish to apply for a waiver or waiver extension (if the state expects to exceed the 1.0% AA-AAAS participation threshold) must meet this requirement [**§200.6(c)(4)(ii)**] in order to be approved for a waiver or waiver extension. Opting out movements in some states have contributed to the state's inability to meet the 95% participation rate requirements. There is currently little to no guidance, research, or best practices to help states address this problem. Nevertheless, it will undoubtedly receive more attention in the future.

Meeting the 1.0% Threshold in the Science AA-AAAS

The U.S. Department of Education's 1.0% threshold requirements apply to reading, math, and science. Some states are finding it more difficult to meet the threshold in science. Education leaders have suggested that a history of exclusion of students with disabilities from science coursework has contributed to this issue.

Conclusion

As states continue to address the requirements of meeting the 1.0% threshold in the AA-AAAS they find the NCEO 1% Community of Practice state sharing of approaches, ideas, questions, discussion, and resources to be an invaluable support to the 1.0% work in their own state. The 1% CoP and NCEO's sharing of state spotlights to highlight successes (through this and future

reports) hopefully will continue to contribute to states' efforts to address AA-AAAS participation rates.

Appendix A

Arkansas Resources

PowerPoint Training Slide Examples and Link to the Training Video

Guidance for IEP Teams

Arkansas Participation Guidelines

List of Arkansas Districts Over the 1.0% Threshold

LEA Justification Documentation

Arkansas Resource 1: Selected Slides (identified as Examples A, B, and C) from PowerPoint Training and Link to the training is at <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/special-education/presentations>. Select the last item on the page to view the video.

Slide A Example:

Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities



Definition: Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

(1) The term "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities" means a child with a disability or disabilities that are not temporary in nature and that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are students who require repeated, extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains across all content areas and settings.

(2) The term "adaptive behavior" is defined as those skills that are essential for someone to live and function independently and safely in daily life.

Additionally,

(i) The specific category of eligibility, as defined in IDEA, shall not be the sole determining factor of whether or not a student is a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

(ii) Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities must not be identified based solely on the student's previous low academic achievement or the student's previous need for accommodations to participate in general State or districtwide assessments. Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined solely by an IQ test score, but rather a holistic understanding of a student

Slide B Example:

Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Behavior: What's the difference?

Adaptive Behaviors (Life Skills)

A collection of skills people use to function in everyday life.

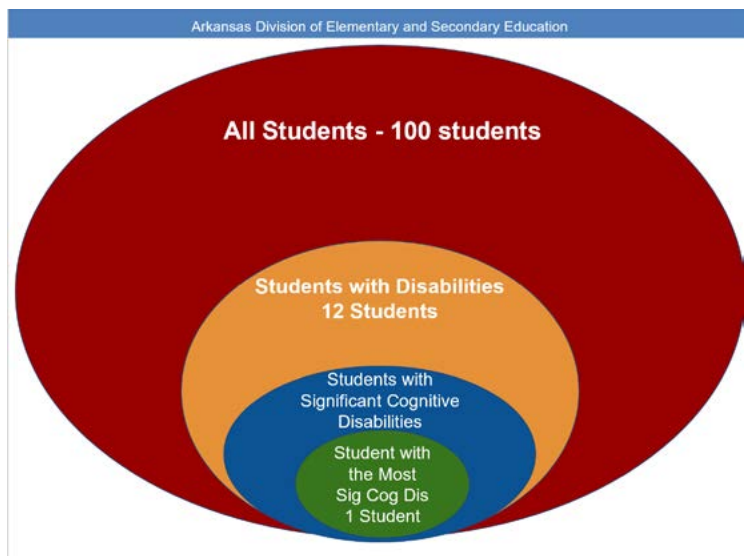
Examples:
Personal care skills
Independent living skills
Social skills
Communication
Self-direction

Maladaptive Behaviors

Behaviors which inhibit a person's ability to adjust to different situations.

Examples:
Ritualistic behaviors
Self-injurious behaviors
Aggressive behaviors
Non-Attentive behaviors
Attention-seeking behaviors
Addictive behaviors

Slide C Example:



Arkansas Resource 2: Guidance for IEP Teams at http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Student%20Assessment/DLM/Guidance_for_IEP_Teams_on_Alternate_Assessment_2018-2019.pdf



**Guidance for IEP Teams
on
Participation Decisions
for the
Arkansas Alternate
Assessment Program**

2018-2019

Arkansas Resource 3: Arkansas Participation Guidelines at <http://adecm.arkansas.gov/Attachments/LS-16-084 ArkansasAlternateAssessmentParticipationDecisionGuidelines.pdf>

Arkansas Participation Guidelines

The criteria for participation in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program reflect the pervasive nature of a significant cognitive disability. All content areas should be considered when determining who should participate in this assessment. Thus, a student who participates in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program participates in this assessment for English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science.

In addition, evidence for the decision for participating in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program is **not based** on:

1. A disability category or label
2. Poor attendance or extended absences
3. Native language/social/cultural or economic difference
4. Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
5. Academic and other services student receives
6. Educational environment or instructional setting
7. Percent of time receiving special education services
8. English Learner (EL) status
9. Low reading level/achievement level
10. Anticipated disruptive behavior
11. Impact of student scores on accountability system
12. Administrator decision
13. Anticipated emotional duress
14. Need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology/AAC) to participate in the assessment process

Participation Criteria	Participation Criteria Descriptors	Agree (Yes) or Disagree (No)? Provide documentation for each
1. The student has a significant cognitive disability	Review of student records indicates a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. <i>*Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.</i>	Yes / No
2. The student is learning content linked to (derived from) the Arkansas State Content Standards	Goals and instruction listed in the IEP for this student are linked to the enrolled grade level content standards and address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student.	Yes / No
3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measureable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum.	The student (a) requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature and (b) uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate and transfer skills across multiple settings.	Yes / No

The student may participate in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program if **all responses** are marked YES.

Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program

Participation Decision Documentation

To meet the criteria for the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program, the student must meet **ALL** participation criteria descriptors.

Participation Criteria	Participation Criteria Descriptors	Sources of Evidence [check if used]
<p>1. The student has a significant cognitive disability</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NO</p>	<p>Review of student records indicates a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.</p> <p><i>*Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test <input type="checkbox"/> Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Results of individual and group administered achievement tests <input type="checkbox"/> Results of informal assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Results of individual reading assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Results of district-wide alternate assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Results of language assessments including English learner (EL) language assessments if applicable
<p>2. The student is learning content linked to (derived from) the Arkansas State Content Standards.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NO</p>	<p>Goals and instruction listed in the IEP for this student are linked to the enrolled grade-level Arkansas State Content Standards and address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples <input type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives from the IEP <input type="checkbox"/> Data from scientific research-based interventions <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring data
<p>3. The student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measureable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NO</p>	<p>The student</p> <p>(a) requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature and</p> <p>(b) uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate and transfer skills across academic content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher collected data and checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP and the Transition Plan for students age 12 and older

If all responses above are marked YES, the student may participate in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program.

Additional Considerations Not to Use in Reviewing Evidence	
1.	A disability category or label
2.	Poor attendance or extended absences
3.	Native language/social/cultural or economic difference
4.	Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
5.	Academic and other services received
6.	Educational environment or instructional setting
7.	Percent of time receiving special education services
8.	English Learner (EL) status
9.	Low reading level/achievement level
10.	Anticipated disruptive behavior
11.	Impact of test scores on accountability system
12.	Administrator decision
13.	Anticipated emotional duress
14.	Need for accommodations, e.g., assistive technology/AAC to participate in assessment process
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evidence shows that the decision for participating in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program was not based on the above list- (check ✓)

IEP Team Statement of Assurance: Our decision was based on multiple pieces of evidence that, when taken together, demonstrated that the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program is the most appropriate assessment for this student; that his/her academic instruction will be based on the Core Content Connectors (CCC) linked to the State Content Standards; that the Additional Considerations listed above were not used to make this decision; and that any additional implications of this decision were discussed thoroughly.

Each of us agrees with the participation decision in the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program:

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Arkansas Resource 4: List of Arkansas Districts Over the 1.0% Threshold at Districts required to provide justifications for alternate assessment participation rates

Districts over 1% (public doc) ☆ ↻

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help

🖨️ 🏠 100% 🛡️ View only

fx | District_lea

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	District_lea	District_name	ELA Alt %	Math Alt %	Science Alt %	All Documentation Received

Arkansas Resource 5: LEA Justification Documentation:
[LEA Alternate Assessment Justification Documentation](#)



Justification for Exceeding the One Percent Threshold for Participation in the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject using the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities does not exceed one percent (1.0%) of the total number of students in the state assessed with Arkansas statewide assessments. States that anticipate that they will exceed 1.0 percent in alternate assessment participation must submit a waiver request to the US Department of Education ninety (90) days prior to the beginning of the State's alternate assessment testing window. Furthermore, the ESSA requires that each district complete and submit a justification when it exceeds 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject with the alternate assessment.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the State's participation rate on the alternate assessment was approximately 1.32 percent of all students assessed with 45% of Arkansas districts exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold. Justifications by each district will be reviewed by the Arkansas Department of Education. **As required by ESSA, all district justifications will be posted and made publicly available.**

Do not submit any student identifiable information in this form.

Appendix B

Massachusetts Resources

Decision Making Tool

MCAS-Alt Participation by Percent in each Disability Category (Circle Graph)

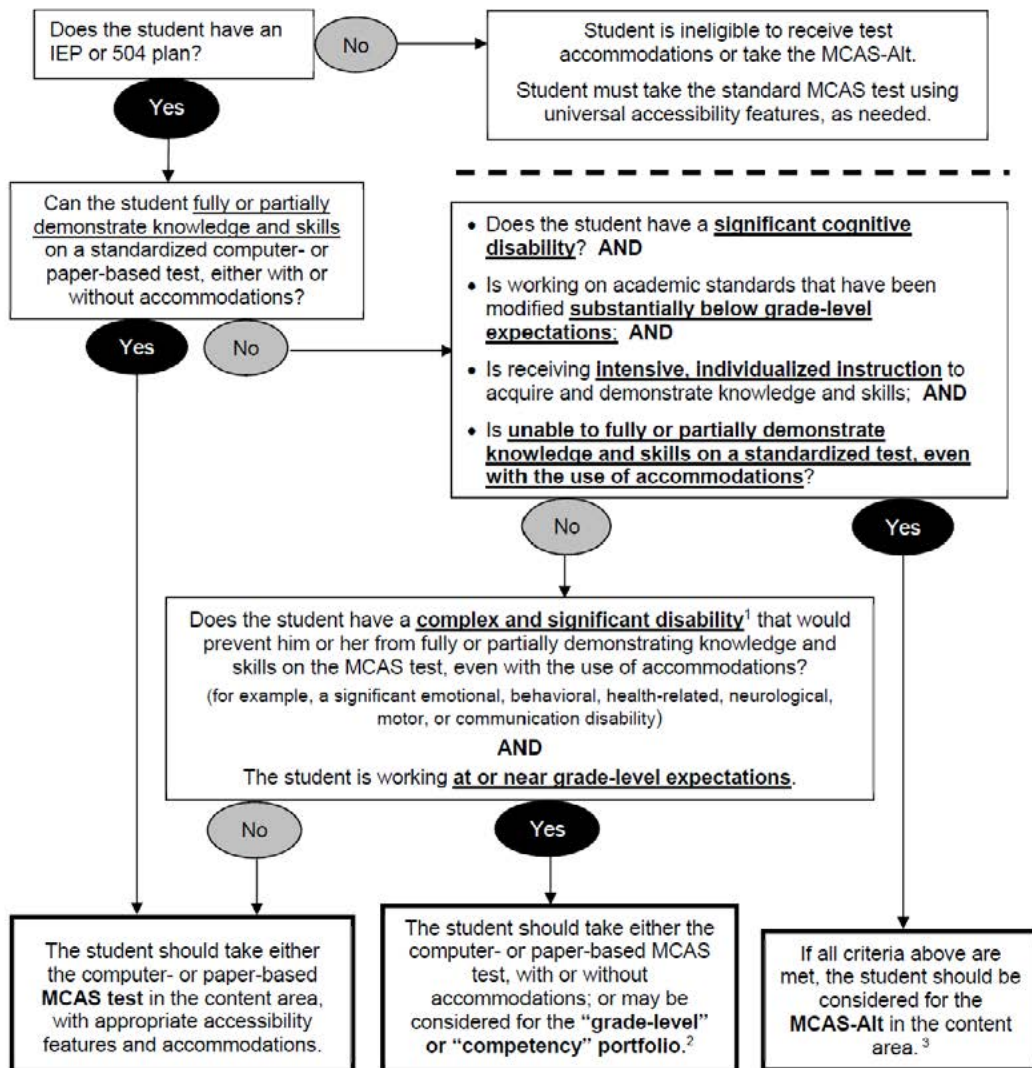
Sample MCAS-Alt District Data Display

Massachusetts Resource 1: Decision-Making Tool

Decision-Making Tool for MCAS Participation by Students with Disabilities

UPDATED for 2019-2020

The decision chart shown below may be used by IEP teams and 504 plan coordinators to make annual decisions regarding appropriate student participation in MCAS. Make separate decisions in *each content area* being assessed: ELA, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.



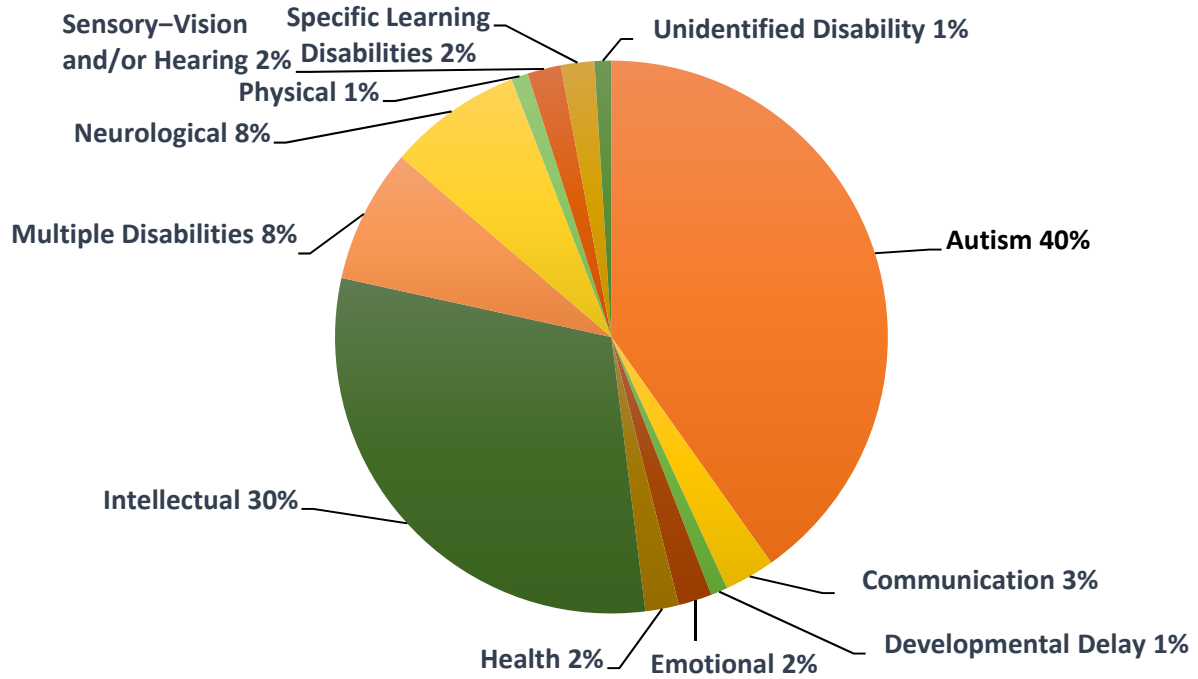
¹ See the [Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt](#) under Guidelines for IEP Team Decision-making for additional details on "complex and significant disabilities."

² See the [Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt](#) for details on submission of "grade-level" and "competency" portfolios.

³ Students who take the MCAS-Alt in high school will not earn a Competency Determination in the assessed subject and therefore will not be eligible to earn a high school diploma.

Massachusetts Resource 2: 2019 MCAS-Alt by Disability

2019 MCAS-Alt by Disability



Massachusetts Resource 3: Sample MCAS-Alt District Data Display

2018 MCAS-Alt Participants by Nature of Disability and Level of Need

District	Nature of Disability	# Standard MCAS District	# MCAS-ALT District	% ALT State	% ALT District	Level of Need			
						1	2	3	4
(7,897 students taking MCAS)	Autism	55	49	29%	47%	1	2	2	47
	Communication	110	18	2%	14%			3	15
	Developmental Delay	34	30	8%	47%	2	1	2	25
	Emotional	181	26	1.3%	12.6%	1		5	20
	Health	244	19	1.1%	7.2%			1	18
	Intellectual	128	93	50%	42%	2	1	11	79
	Multiple Disabilities		9	41%					9
	Neurological	36	12	9.5%	25%			2	10
	Physical	2	1	7.3%	33.3%				1
	Sensory/Deaf-blind	1		30.6%					
	Sensory/Hard of Hearing or Deaf	8	3	11%	27.3%				3
	Sensory/Vision Impairment or Blind	1	1	7.7%	50%				1
	Specific Learning Disabilities	462	23	0.5%	4.7%	1		5	17
	Total		1262	284 (3.6% of students taking MCAS)			6 (2%) (State=.5%)	2 (0.7%) (State=.5%)	31 (11%) (State=12%)

KEY = district percentage in this category significantly deviates from the state average.

Appendix C

Michigan Resources

Assessment Selection Guidelines Training

Flowchart: “Should My Student Take the Alternate Assessment?”





Interactive Decision-Making Tool

Data Display: 1% Cap – Where is Michigan Now?

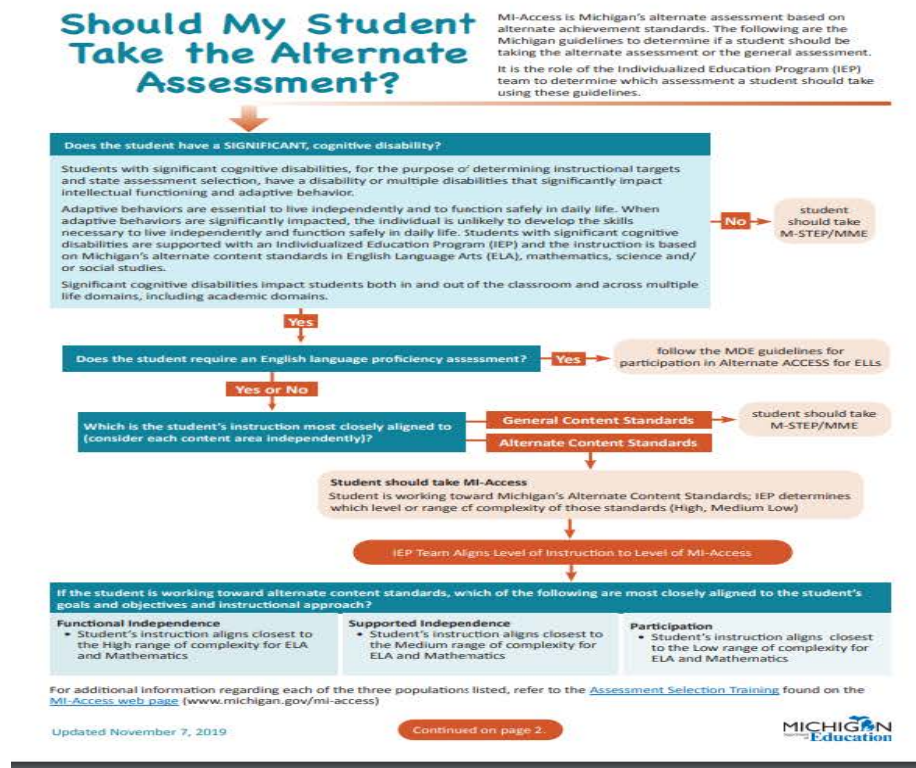
Michigan Resource 1: Assessment Selection Guidelines Training at <https://mdoe.state.mi.us/mdedocuments/AssessmentSelectionGuidelinesTraining/index.html>

The screenshot shows the top portion of a web-based training module. At the top left is the Michigan Department of Education logo. The main title is "Assessment Selection Guidelines Training" in a blue banner. Below the banner is a navigation menu with four items: "Introduction", "Selection Guide", "Alternate Standards", and "Case Studies". The "Selection Guide" item is highlighted. In the top right corner, there are icons for a home page and an exit button, along with the text "Page 2 of 20". Below the navigation menu, a welcome message reads: "Welcome to the Michigan Department of Education's online learning module: **Assessment Selection Guidelines**".

Navigation Buttons

	Home	The Home Button (or up arrow on your keyboard) will take you the start of the training.
	Exit	The Exit Button (or Cmd + w on mac/Ctrl + w on PC) exits the training program.
	Next	The Next Button (or arrow right on your keyboard) takes you to the next page.
	Back	The Back Button (or arrow left on your keyboard) takes you to

Michigan Resource 2: Flow Chart, “Should My Student Take the Alternate Assessment?” at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Should My Student Take the Alternate Assessment 556705 7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Should_My_Student_Take_the_Alternate_Assessment_556705_7.pdf)



Factors to Consider (all should be true)	Factors NOT TO BE USED in consideration (none should be used)
Student has an IEP Student's disability impacts the student across multiple life domains	Social, cultural, linguistic, or environmental factors
Student has a significant cognitive disability which also affects adaptive function	Disability eligibility category, placement, or services
Student's primary instruction is based on alternate content standards (such as the Essential Elements with Michigan Range of Complexity)	Need for Accommodation
Student requires extensive individualized instruction and/or supports	Foreseen emotional issues
Student cannot show learning using the general assessment (cannot show learning is not the same as scoring proficient)	Foreseen disruptive behavior
	Poor performance of impact on school accountability determination
	Administrator decision
	Student's predicted performance on the general assessment

Special Note: MI-Access is not designed for most students whose primary disability is a specific learning disability, speech language impairment, emotional impairment or other health impairment.

Parent Notification: If the IEP team determines that MI-Access is the most appropriate state level assessment for any given student, the school must provide information to that student's parents regarding any implication this decision may have on the student completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma.

Michigan Resource 3: Interactive Decision-Making Tool at <https://mdoe.state.mi.us/MDEDocuments/InteractiveDecision-MakingTool/index.html>

Welcome to the Michigan Assessment Selection Guidance Interactive Decision-Making Tool.

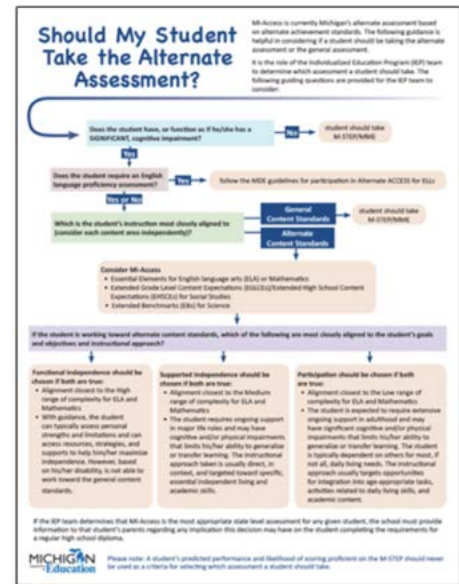
This tool is an interactive version of the assessment selection flow chart, **Should My student Take the Alternate Assessment.**

It is designed for use by Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in making decisions about student participation in state summative assessments.

In particular, it helps IEP teams determine if the student should take the general (M-STEP/MME) or alternate assessment (MI-Access).

It is important to note that such a decision is to be made by the IEP **team**, and never made by one individual.

[Go to Next Page](#)



Michigan Resource 4: Data Display: 1% Cap – Where is Michigan Now?

Subject	Spring 2017		Spring 2018		Spring 2019	
	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
ELA	2.28	17,867	2.08	15,875	1.97	14,825
Mathematics	2.32	18,151	2.15	16,388	2.02	15,179

Subject	Percent Change	Count change
ELA	-0.31	-3,042
Mathematics	-0.30	-2,972

Appendix D

Nebraska Resources

Letter to Superintendents and Special Education Directors

District Justification Form

District Justification Support Worksheet


Data Projections

Nebraska Definition of “Significant Cognitive Disability”

“Engaging Educators” Training

Nebraska Department of Education: Training PowerPoint for Alternate Assessment

Nebraska Resource 1: Letter to Superintendents and Special Education Directors



NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

www.education.ne.gov
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
TEL 402.471.2295
FAX 402.471.0117

TO: Superintendents, Special Education Directors
FROM: [REDACTED] (Assessment Office), [REDACTED] (Title I Office),
[REDACTED] (Special Education Office)
RE: Justification for Exceeding the 1.0 Percent Threshold (Alternate Assessment)
DATE: **November 20, 2019**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject, using the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System Alternate Assessment (NSCAS-AA), does not exceed 1.0 percent of the total number of all students in the state who participate in Nebraska's Student-Centered Assessment System.

States that anticipate that they will exceed 1.0 percent in alternate assessment participation must submit a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education 90 days before the beginning of the testing window.

Furthermore, ESSA requires each district to complete and submit a justification for when it anticipates exceeding 1.0 percent participation of students assessed with the alternate assessment in a subject.

All Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11, including those with disabilities, must participate in Nebraska Statewide Assessments. The NSCAS Alternate Assessments (NSCAS-AA) provide testing access to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. ***The students who are administered the alternate assessments are typically fewer than 1% of the student population, so the vast majority of students with disabilities should be administered the general education tests with accommodations, not the alternate assessments.***

Districts are required to complete the **Justification for Exception to the 1.0 Percent Threshold** along with any other documents included in this communication. *This will inform NDE what your projection will be for the coming year of how many students will be participating in the NSCAS-Alternate Assessment.* If you will be exceeding the **1.0 Percent Threshold**, provide evidence that supports why your district will be exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold and **that the** set of assurances are being **implemented** at the district.

Any district submitting evidence may be contacted to provide further information to the Department to obtain clarification on the information submitted.

The data below indicates the number and percentage of students who participated on the NSCAS-Alternate Assessments in 2019. This determination was based on your total student population in grades 3-8 and 11 who participated in NSCAS and ACT in 2018.

District: [REDACTED]			
Total Number Students Assessed	Reading: 436	Math: 436	Science: 195
Number of AA Students Assessed	Reading: 5	Math: 5	Science: 0
Percentage Assessed	Reading: 1.15%	Math: 1.15%	Science: 0.00%

You must complete all forms enclosed and return them by **December 19, 2019** to:

Sharon Heater
Special Education Office
sharon.heater@nebraska.gov
Phone: 402-471-4356

Nebraska Resource 2: District Justification Form

<https://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/nscas-alternate-summative-assessment/#1574203734112-50356b4d-9bc8>.

See NSCAS Alternate Documents.

Nebraska Department of Education
 Assessment and Accountability Office
 Special Education Office
 P.O. Box 94987
 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4987

NDE #06-098
 April 12, 2020

DISTRICT PROJECTION FOR 1.0 PERCENT "PARTICIPATION" THRESHOLD ON NSCAS ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT FOR THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR

1.

District Name	County
Name of District Superintendent	Telephone (Include Area Code)
E-Mail	Fax (Include Area Code)

2. The number of students at the state level reported as "participating" on the NSCAS Alternate Assessments may not exceed 1.0 percent of all students assessed in grades 3-8 and 11 per subject area. Does your district anticipate that the students participating on the NSCAS Alternate Assessments will exceed the 1.0 percent in grades 3 – 8 and 11 per subject area?

- YES – complete all sections, sign and return form.
- NO – have students participating on the alternate assessment, complete all sections, sign and return form. NO – no students participating on the alternate assessment, complete section 4, sign and return form.

3. Provide information that contributes to a higher enrollment of students with significant cognitive disabilities that would result in a participation rate in that exceeds the 1% threshold ((D)(ii)(II)).

Respond to the applicable guiding questions and provide the required evidence. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

GUIDING QUESTIONS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
--------------------------	----------------------------

	<p><u>Size of Student Population</u></p> <p>Does your LEA have a small overall student population that increases the likelihood of exceeding the 1% threshold?</p>
	<p><u>Programs and Services in LEA and Community</u></p> <p>Does the LEA include school, community, or health programs that draw large numbers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?</p>
	<p><u>Other Factors That May Affect Your Percentage</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students in restrictive settings. 2. Students newly identified. 3. Contracted-in students. 4. Other circumstances that may affect participation.
	<p>Science assessment is the only area over the 1%.</p>
	<p>Include the process that is followed to determine which students are administered the Alternate Assessment.</p>

4. **The district ensures that it is fully and effectively addressing the requirements of 34 CFR § 200.6. Please initial each box that pertains to your district.**

- The district uses appropriate guidelines when IEP teams determine that the student's most significant cognitive disability justifies taking NSCAS alternate assessments. These guidelines are consistent with the Nebraska Department of Education's *IEP Team Decision Making Flow Chart: Nebraska Statewide Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities, Alternate Assessment Criteria and IEP Team Decision Making Guidelines for NSCAS Assessments* posted on the Department's website. <http://www.education.ne.gov/sped/assessment.html>
- The student's IEP meets the requirements in **Rule 51 007.07A3, 007.07A7, 007.07.A7a and 007.07A7b.**
- Students with most significant cognitive disabilities (taking NSCAS Alternate Assessments) are included in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible. Curriculum and instruction is aligned to the extended indicators for grade level content.
- The district ensures the use of appropriate accommodations throughout the district.
 - IEP teams select accommodations based on the individual student's needs.
 - General education and special education teachers collaborate to determine appropriate accommodations that ensure access to the general education curriculum at grade level.
 - Accommodations are disseminated to all appropriate staff to ensure accommodations are provided as outlined in the IEP.
- The district takes steps to ensure that parents participate in the IEP team meeting. Through the IEP process, parents are knowledgeable about their child's curriculum is based on extended indicators. Parents understand the NSCAS system and their child's participation in the alternate assessments may delay or affect their child from completing requirements for graduation.

_____ Date of Submission

_____ Signature of District Superintendent

Any district submitting a justification may be subject to further review by the Department to obtain additional clarification on the submitted information.

Nebraska Resource 3: District Justification Support Worksheet at <https://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/nscas-alternate-summative-assessment/#1574203734112-50356b4d-9bc8>. See NSCAS Alternate Documents.

Justification Support Worksheet

School Name	Completed by

Projected Disability Categories of NSCAS Alternate Assessment Participants

- Provide the projected count of students identified in each of the following disability categories that will be participating in NSCAS Alternate Assessment for 2019-2020.
- Return to Sharon Heater at sharon.heater@nebraska.gov by December 3, 2019.

Disability as Identified in IDEA	Projected NSCAS Alternate Assessment Participation Count
1. Multiple Disabilities	
2. Intellectual Disability	
3. Autism	
4. Other Health Impaired	
5. Emotional Disturbance	
6. Deaf/Blind	
7. Traumatic Brain Injury	
8. Hearing Impairment	
9. Visual Impairment	
10. Orthopedic Impairments	
11. Specific Learning Disability	
12. Speech/Language Impairment	

Explain why the students with disabilities identified in categories 3 through 12 above are assigned to the alternate assessment.

Select all that apply.

- IEP teams use the *Alternate Assessment Criteria* (https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Alternate-Assessment-Criteria-Updated-11_29.pdf) for determining eligibility for the alternate assessment.

- IEP teams determine eligibility for the alternate assessment using the *IEP Team Decision Making Flow Chart* (<https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IEP-Team-Decision-Making-Flow-Chart-Alternate-Assessment-11-21.pdf>) and *Most Significant Cognitive Disability Definition* (<https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Most-Significant-Cognitive-Disability-Definition.pdf>) for guidance.

- All alternate assessment test administrators have the required training for administering the alternate assessment.
- All school staff who participate as a member of an IEP team/and or placement team have been trained on NDE guidance on Alternate Assessment documents and making appropriate decisions on who qualifies for participation on the alternate assessment.

Describe the training that was provided to all school staff who participate as members of an IEP team and/or placement team so that they understand and implement alternate assessment guidelines established by the state for placement on the alternate assessment appropriately and meet the criteria for participation. Include evidence that supports your training (ex. Sign in sheet, handouts, powerpoint, etc.)

- IEP teams ensures that the decision for a student to participate in the alternate assessment are NOT based on the following criteria;

1. Disability Category
2. Poor/extended absences
3. English Learner status
4. Anticipated emotional duress
5. Educational/Instructional setting
6. Low achievement level
7. Academic and other services the student receives
8. Native language, social or cultural or economic differences

9. Expected poor performance on the general assessment
10. Impact of student scores on the accountability system
11. Percent of time receiving special education services
12. Administration decision
13. Anticipated disruptive behavior
14. Need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology; augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) to participate in the assessment process)

Nebraska Resource 4: Data Projections

Participation Data NSCAS Alternate Assessment							
	2017		2018		2019		2020 Pro- jections
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
ELA	2054	1.27	1833	1.12	1716	1.04	1778
MATH	2058	1.27	1831	1.12	1715	1.04	1778
SCIENCE	892	1.30	817	1.19	733	1.04	785

Most Significant Cognitive Disability Definition

The term “significant cognitive disability” is not a separate category of disability. It is a

designation given to a small number of students with disabilities for purposes of their participation in the statewide student alternate assessment program who are (1) within one or more of the existing categories of disability under the IDEA and (2) whose cognitive impairments may prevent them from attaining grade-level achievement standards, even with systematic instruction.

For a student to be determined as having a most significant cognitive disability for the purpose of participation in the alternate assessment system, the IEP team must consider all of the following guidelines when determining the appropriateness of a curriculum based on Nebraska College and Career Ready Academic Standards with Extended Indicators and the use of the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System - Alternate Assessment. (NSCAS – AA)

- **The student requires extensive, pervasive, and frequent supports in order to acquire, maintain, and demonstrate performance of knowledge and skills.**
- **The student’s cognitive functioning is significantly below age expectations and has an impact on his/her ability to function in multiple environments (school, home and community).**
- **The student’s demonstrated cognitive ability and adaptive functioning prevent completion of the general academic curriculum, even with appropriately designed and implemented modifications and accommodations. (* Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.)**
- **The student’s curriculum and instruction is aligned to the Nebraska College and Career Ready Academic Standards with Extended Indicators.**
- **The student may have accompanying communication, motor, sensory, or other impairments.**

Nebraska Resource 6: Engaging Educators Training (this will be on Nebraska’s website soon)


Selected slides are shown below, labeled as A. B. and C.

Slide A Example:



Slide B Example:

- The 1.0 percent Threshold is now based on participation rate instead of proficiency.
- The 1.0 percent Threshold placed on the state is in each content area (it is based on the total number of all students assessed).
- Reporting is be done in ELA, Math and Science.
- The 1.0 percent Threshold is placed on the state, not individual districts.
- LEA's who assess more that 1.0 percent in any subject must submit justification to SEA explaining the need to exceed the 1.0 percent threshold in their district.



Slide C Example

Examples of Documentation to Meet Criteria

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The student has a most significant cognitive disability. | 1. Bayley Scales of Infant Development-II score of 58; 2017: Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales-Fifth Edition - Abbreviated Full Scale IQ of 62; Student's expressive language includes a high degree of echolalia. Vineland Adaptive Behavior Composite 65 (teacher), 50 (parent) |
| 2. The student's course of study is aligned to the Extended Indicators of the Nebraska College and Career Academic Standards. | 2. Progress through learning objectives are documented in the Life Skills Rubric. |



Nebraska Resource 7: Nebraska Department of Education: Training PowerPoint for Alternate Assessment (this will be on Nebraska’s website soon)

Selected slides are shown below, labeled as A. B. and C.

Slide A Example:

Nationwide data shows that most (but not all) of the students who participate in the alternate assessment fall into these 3 disability categories:

- a. Intellectual Disability
- b. Multiple disabilities
- c. Autism (some students but not all)

Slide B Example:

Overall Numbers	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2019 Projection
Autism	470	484	460	443
Deaf-Blindness	1	1	1	2
Developmental Delay	4	3	1	0
Emotional Disturbance	37	21	11	8
Hearing Impaired	7	7	5	7
Intellectual Disability	1010	975	866	793
Multiple Impairments	189	202	205	197
Orthopedic Impairment	15	8	11	6
Other Health Impairment	280	249	231	183
Specific Learning Disability	121	78	34	9
Speech Language Impairment	26	23	10	3
Traumatic Brain Injury	30	32	26	21
Visual Impairment	6	3	1	3

Slide C Example:

Questions to think about when determining if a child needs to be administered the Alternate Assessment:

- ✓ Did the IEP team first consider the student's ability to access the NSCAS, with or without accommodations?
 - ✓ Did the IEP team review the student's instructional program to ensure that the student is receiving instruction linked to the general curriculum?
 - ✓ Does the student's disability or multiple disabilities significantly affect intellectual functioning AND adaptive behavior?
 - ✓ Does the student have a disability that presents "unique and significant" challenges to participate productively in the everyday life activities?
-

Appendix E

Wisconsin Resources

IEP forms I-7A Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment

Guide to Determining Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disability

Webpage: Students with a Most Significant Cognitive Disability

Wisconsin Resource 1: IEP forms I-7A Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment
This may resource may be accessed at [Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment](#).

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT
Form I-7-A (Rev. 05/2019)

Name of Student _____

IEP teams are responsible for deciding whether students with disabilities will participate in general education assessments with or without testing accommodations, or in the alternate assessment with or without accommodations. In a given year, a student must participate in either all general education assessments or all alternate assessments, not parts of both.

Participation in the alternate assessment must not be based solely on any of the following:

1. A disability category or label
2. Poor attendance or extended absences
3. Native language/social/cultural or economic difference
4. Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
5. Academic and other services student receives
6. Educational environment or instructional setting
7. Percent of time receiving special education
8. English Learner (EL) status
9. Low reading level/achievement level
10. Anticipated student's disruptive behavior
11. Impact of student scores on accountability system
12. Administrator decision
13. Anticipated emotional distress
14. Need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology/Augmentative and Alternative Communication) to participate in assessment

Wisconsin Resource 1: IEP forms I-7A Participation Guidelines for Alternate Assessment

Participation Criterion	Participation Criterion Descriptors	Agree (Yes) or Disagree (No)?	Document evidence used to make determination
<p>1. The student has a most significant cognitive disability.</p>	<p>In order to define a student as having a most significant cognitive disability, the IEP team must review student records and agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is typically characterized as functioning at least two and a half to three standard deviations below the mean in both adaptive behavior and cognitive functioning; and • The student performs substantially below grade level expectations on the academic content standards for the grade in which they are enrolled, even with the use of adaptations and accommodations; and • The student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains, across all content areas and settings. 	<p>Yes / No</p>	
<p>2. The student is instructed using the alternate achievement standards across all content areas.</p>	<p>Goals listed in the IEP for this student are linked to the enrolled grade level alternate achievement standards and address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>	

<p>3. Parent/guardian notification</p>	<p>The parent(s)/guardian(s) and LEA have discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differences between the alternate achievement standards and academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled, and • That the student's achievement will be measured based on alternate achievement standards, and • How the student's participation in alternate standards and assessment(s) may delay or otherwise affect the student from completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma. 	<p>Yes / No</p>	
<p>The IEP team agrees that all three of the criteria describe the student, and determined the student must participate in alternate assessment(s).</p>		<p>Yes / No</p>	

Wisconsin Resource 2: *Guide to Determining Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disability*: This resource may be accessed at: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/mscd-guide-to-determining-students-with-mscd.pdf>



GUIDE TO DETERMINING STUDENTS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITIES



Guide to Determining Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Developed by
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The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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This publication is available from:
Office of Special Education and Office of Student Assessment
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
Madison, WI 53703
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/program/students-most-significant-cognitive-disabilities>

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Wisconsin Resource 3: Webpage, *Students with a Most Significant Cognitive Disability* at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/program/students-most-significant-cognitive-disabilities>

The screenshot shows the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website. At the top left is the logo for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. A search bar is located at the top right. On the left side, there is a navigation menu for 'Special Education Program Areas' with various categories like Autism, Emotional Behavioral Disability, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, etc. The main content area is titled 'Students with the most significant Cognitive Disabilities' and includes an 'Overview' section with a quote from a Dear Colleague Letter, a 'State Definition' section with bullet points, and sections for 'Participation in Alternate Academic Achievement Standards' and 'Participation in Alternate Assessment'. At the bottom of the main content area is a green button that says 'Contact Special Education'. The footer contains navigation links (About Us, Accessibility, Contact Us, Copyright, DPI Home, Employee Intranet, Non-Discrimination, Privacy, Web Edit), social media icons, and contact information for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, including the name Carolyn Stanford Taylor, State Superintendent, and the address 125 S. Webster Street, Madison, WI 53703. Contact numbers are listed as (608) 266-3390 and (800) 441-4563, with a note that language assistance is available. A note about telephone accessibility for deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing users is also present.

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