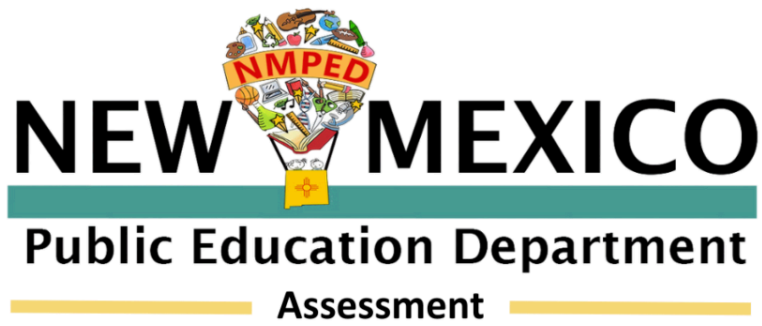
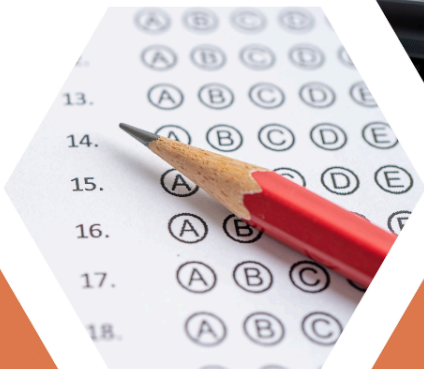




Alternate Assessment Monitoring and Support Guidance Manual



2025–26

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Attributions

The Ohio Department of Education and Kansas State Department of Education provided examples, references, and consultation.

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO)

PED Office of Special Education Policies and Guidance

The PED's Office of Special Education provides guidance for IEP teams regarding the development of IEPs, including appropriate assessment of students with disabilities. This monitoring plan aims to ensure alignment of IEP decision-making to OSE guidance regarding the PED's alternate assessment placement.

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REVISIONS TO THE 2025-26 MANUAL

Information about these topics has been added, removed, or enhanced in this version.

Topic	Starting Page	Notes
DLM Training Requirements for All LEAs	10	The requirement for Special Education leaders for LEAs in monitoring Phases 2 and 3 was removed. LEAs in these phases will identify Special Education staff to complete the annual required training.
DLM Training Requirements for All LEAs	10	Specific information about training requirements for new and returning users was updated.
Monitoring Plan - Phase 1	12	All DTCs must pass the required Alternate Assessment (DLM) 7 module training on DLM's Educator Portal. was changed to All District Test Coordinators (DTCs) and Test Administrators (TAs) successfully complete the annual required Alternate Assessment (DLM) training in the Kite Educator Portal.
Monitoring Plan - Phase 2	12	LEAs identify Special Education Directors (and other LEA-identified OSE staff) to take the Alternate Assessment (DLM) 7 module training. DTCs will roster SED staff. was changed to LEAs identify Special Education Department staff to complete the annual required Alternate Assessment (DLM) training in the Kite Educator Portal. DTCs will roster staff in the portal.
Monitoring Plan - Phase 2	12	LEA's DTC and OSE lead(s) present their practices, systems, and next steps during the PED's virtual audit. 1% Phase 2 and 3 Monitoring Slide Deck (Appendix E may be used in lieu of the Monitoring Deck.) was changed to Every other year, LEAs, DTCs, and

		Special Education Leaders present their practices, systems, and next steps during a virtual meeting with the PED. The 1% Alternate Assessment Participation Monitoring Form will be used to guide the conversation.
Monitoring Plan - Phase 2	12	LEAs complete Alternate Assessment Root Cause Report (Appendix B). (LEAs may substitute Appendix E for Appendices B and C and the Slide Deck presentation.) was deleted
Monitoring Plan - Phase 3	12	Complete Phase 3 Improvement Plan (Appendix C). (Appendix E may be used in lieu of Appendix C.) was deleted
2025-26 Timeline for Alternate Assessment Participation	13	Audits and onsite monitoring of LEAs in Phase 2 and Phase 3 will begin in February instead of November.
Appendix B: Alternate Assessment Disproportionality Root Cause	removed	This has been replaced with the 1% Alternate Assessment Participation Monitoring Form.
Appendix C: 2024-2025 >1% Alternate Assessment Improvement Plan	removed	This has been replaced with the 1% Alternate Assessment Participation Monitoring Form,
Links to Websites and Resources	throughout	Links were updated throughout the manual.

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

New Mexico Public Education Department's focus with this alternate assessment participation monitoring manual is to guide and monitor Local Education Agency (LEA) processes and to ensure students with the [*most significant cognitive disabilities*](#) are instructed and assessed using the appropriate standards.

NEW MEXICO'S ALTERNATE STANDARDS & ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities* are taught using alternate academic standards and assessed using an alternate assessment.

New Mexico's [state-adopted](#) alternate academic standards are the Essential Elements in [Math](#), [English Language Arts](#), and [Science](#). The Essential Elements (EE) are aligned to challenging academic content state standards to promote access to the general education curriculum and to reflect a professional judgment of the highest possible standards achievable. DLM measures student proficiency in the EEs of English Language Arts, Math, and Science. EEs are the state-adopted alternate standards aligned to the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, although at less-complex skill levels.

New Mexico uses Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessments designed for students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities* for whom, even with accommodations, the general state assessments are not appropriate. DLM assessments offer these students a way to show what they know and can do in Math, English Language Arts, and Science.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires children with disabilities to participate in all general state- and district-level assessments unless they cannot participate in these assessments as indicated in their Individualized Education Programs (IEP) ([20 U.S.C. § 1412\(a\)\(16\)\(C\)](#)). The implementing regulations of IDEA require states to adopt alternate academic achievement standards and to issue guidelines for determining who are the students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities* for participation in alternate assessments.

The goal of the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(2015\)](#) is to provide all children a significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education to close the achievement gaps. ESSA is designed to support all students, including students with disabilities, in expanding educational opportunities and improving students' outcomes. Title I of ESSA permits states to develop and adopt alternate assessment standards and to develop alternate assessments aligned to alternate standards.

Starting in 2017, federal law limited the total number of students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities* who are assessed statewide with a Reading/English Language Arts, Math, or Science alternate assessment to 1% of the total number of students in the state who are assessed statewide in each of these same subject areas ([ESEA section 1111\(b\)\(2\)\(D\)\(i\)\(II\)](#)). This 1% threshold raises the importance of ensuring that appropriate students participate in the alternate assessment, in part because of the additional requirements placed on states and districts when a state exceeds the threshold.¹

In 2019, New Mexico joined the [Dynamic Learning Maps](#), a multi-state alternate assessment consortium. New Mexico administers the DLM in Math, English Language Arts, and Science for students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities* in lieu of general education assessments.

¹ Hinkle, A. R., Thurlow, M. L., Lazarus, S. S., & Strunk, K. (2022). *State approaches to monitoring AA-AAAS participation decisions* (NCEO Report 432). National Center on Educational Outcomes.

WHY IS THE PED MONITORING LEAs' ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT RATES?

In recent years, New Mexico has exceeded the 1% threshold in one or more statewide-assessed content areas. States that anticipate exceeding the threshold are able to seek a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) in the fall prior to the spring assessment window. In order to submit a waiver, the PED must include assurances, one of which is that the PED has verified that each LEA that assesses more than 1% of its students in any subject using an alternate assessment has followed the state's guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment (34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)). A state requesting a waiver from the 1% requirement must provide details about what it will do with Local Education Agencies (LEA)² that are expected to exceed the threshold. This document and the tools within meet the following USED requirements:

- Develop a plan for supporting and providing oversight to those LEAs,
- Develop a timeline for providing additional support and oversight to those LEAs, and
- Provide an explanation of how the state will monitor and evaluate the LEA's training that is designed to ensure that IEP team members understand and implement the state's alternate assessment participation guidelines.

THE PED'S DEFINITION OF MOST SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITY

In August 2023, the PED issued a [Memorandum and Definition of Most Significant Cognitive Disability](#) for the identification of students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities*:

Students with the *most significant cognitive disabilities*

A. For a local education agency to classify a student as having a *most significant cognitive disability*, all of the following must be true:

- Student is already determined eligible for special education and has an IEP;
- Student demonstrates cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior which are significantly below age expectations even with program modifications and accommodations (typically characterized as having IQ or adaptive behavior scores 2.5 or more standard deviations below the mean);
- Student requires intensive, repeated, and direct individualized instruction and substantial supports in order to learn and generalize academic, functional, and adaptive behavior skills across multiple settings;
- Student requires substantial modifications to access the general education curriculum; and
- Student has a disability that results in dependence on others for meeting their daily living needs and they are expected to require considerable ongoing support into adulthood.

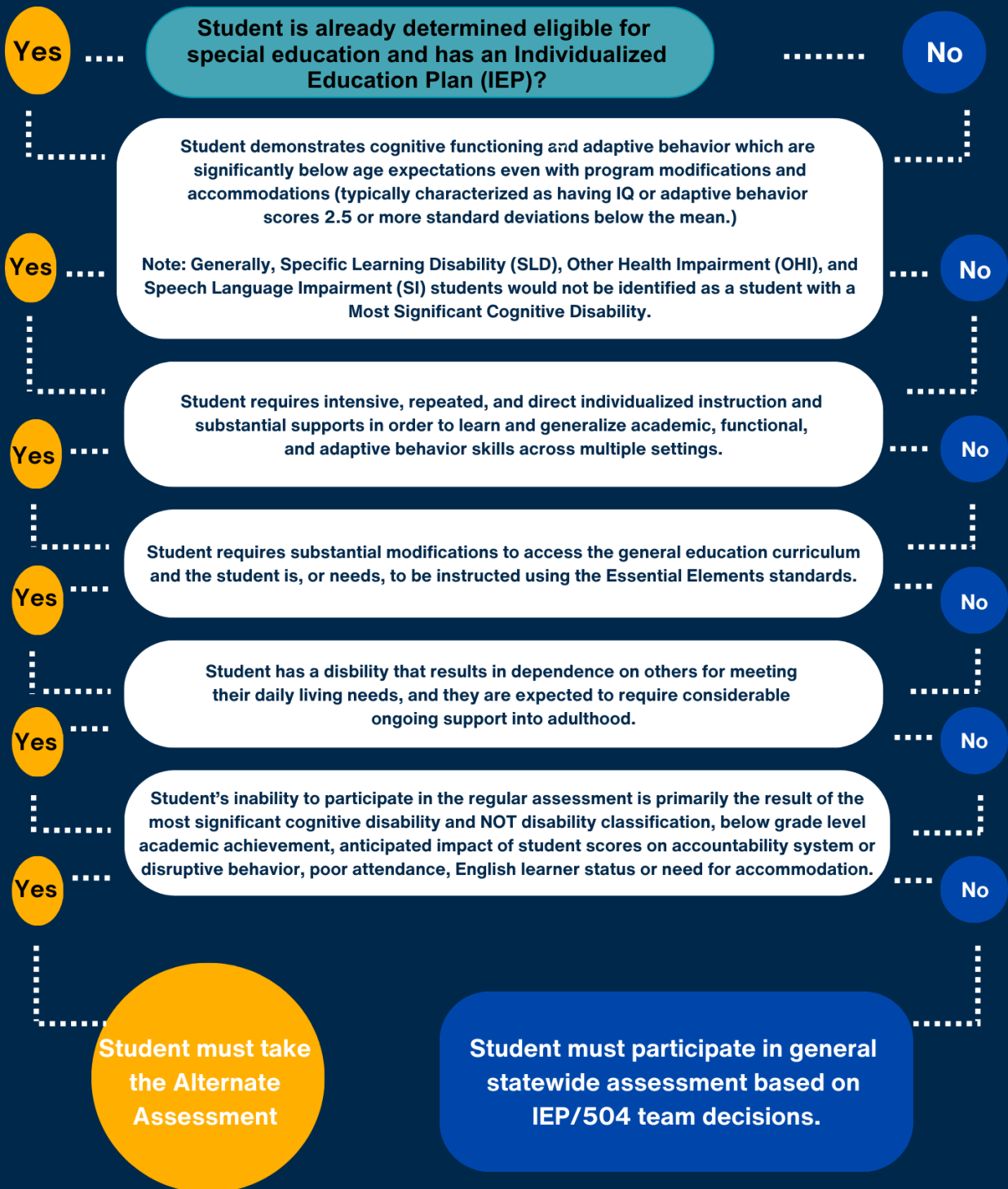
B. A local education agency shall not classify a student as having a *most significant cognitive disability* based solely on:

- disability classification;
- below grade level academic achievement;
- expected poor performance on the general assessment;
- anticipated impact of student's scores on accountability system;
- anticipated disruptive behavior if student takes general assessment;
- poor attendance;
- English learner status; or
- need for accommodations to participate in the general assessment.

² *Local education agencies include districts, charter schools, and state-supported schools.

THE PED'S ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT FLOW CHART

NMPED Alternate Assessment Flow Chart



DLM TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL LEAs

Educational leaders and staff who have eligible students for alternate assessment placement need to be familiar with the assessment options, accommodations, and Instructionally Embedded assessments.

In support of professionals who may need more information, [DLM Professional Development](#) can be assigned by the DTC.

LEAs who are projected for **Phase 2** and **Phase 3** monitoring will identify Special Education staff to complete the annual required training in the [Kite Educator Portal](#).

New users must successfully complete four modules with a passing score on each module's post-test. Modules are available one at a time in sequential order. Trainees must pass each post-test with a score of 80% or higher to access the next module. The total training time for new users is approximately two and a half hours. The topics of the modules are as follows:

- Module 1 - Overview of the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment
- Module 2 - Understanding and Delivering Testlets
- Module 3 - Test Administration and Scoring
- Module 4 - Becoming Familiar with DLM Resources

The training course for returning users is designed for users who completed all training requirements the previous school year. Returning users must successfully complete one module with a passing score of 80% or higher on all four parts of the post-test on the first attempt. Otherwise, additional training will be required. The required training for returning users takes approximately one hour to hour and 15 minutes to complete.

If any returning user training post-test section is not successfully completed on the first attempt, additional training will be required. The additional training may take an additional 30 minutes to four hours, depending on the areas in which the user was not successful on the first attempt.

DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS: FIRST CONTACT SURVEY

LEAs, via Special Education leads or District Test Coordinators (DTCs), are required to complete and submit the First Contact Survey on or near the 15th of November each year. The data from this survey provides details related to the student's disability category and placement, while also allowing the PED to project the number of students who will be taking an alternate assessment.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The PED Office of Special Education and Assessment Bureau will provide LEAs with training and technical assistance in regards to systems and policies that help support the placement of students in the most appropriate assessment. The PED will continue to monitor the effectiveness of their Alternate Assessment Monitoring and Support System by:

- Reviewing district feedback regarding the changes implemented due to the decision-making procedures and monitoring;
- Reviewing what practices were developed and implemented by districts after the decision-making procedures and monitoring were provided by the PED; and
- Evaluating how the decision-making procedures and monitoring contributed to alternate assessment participation decisions.

The PED's [Assessment website](#) and link for [DLM Resources](#) provide many resources for LEAs, staff, and parents.

OVERVIEW OF THE MONITORING PLAN

There are three phases to the PED's alternate assessment monitoring. Based on a review of an LEA's data, there are [PED phased requirements](#) for LEAs to evaluate systems and processes to ensure that students are assigned the correct assessment based on their IEPs and adhering to the 2024–25 guidance from the PED. **LEA rates are posted on the PED's [Alternate Assessment Monitoring website](#).**

Note: All LEA's must provide a justification form to the PED, including districts that have a participation rate that is below 1%.

For monitoring purposes, the highest rate in any subject area will determine the appropriate monitoring phase for the LEA.

LEA Monitoring Phase	Projected Threshold Ranges
Phase I	The LEA's projected Alternate Assessment participation rate for 2025–26 is $\leq 1\%$ of students in Math, Language Arts, and Science.
Phase 2	The LEA's projected Alternate Assessment participation rate for 2025–26 is $>1\%$ and up to 2% of students in either Math, Language Arts, and/or Science.
Phase 3	The LEA's projected Alternate Assessment participation rate for 2024–25 is $>2\%$ of students in either Math, Language Arts, and/or Science.

MONITORING PLAN

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Alternate Assessment participation rate predicted to be ≤1% of students (Language Arts, Math, and Science)	Alternate Assessment participation rate predicted to be between 1% and 2% of students (Language Arts, Math, and/or Science)	Alternate Assessment participation rate predicted to be >2% of students (Language Arts, Math, and/or Science)
All District Test Coordinators (DTCs) and Test Administrators (TAs) successfully complete the annual required Alternate Assessment (DLM) training in the Kite Educator Portal .	Complete all Phase 1 and Phase 2 requirements.	Complete all Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 requirements.
Complete the First Contact Survey by November 15 of each new school year. The PED will review this data.	LEAs identify Special Education Department staff to complete the annual required Alternate Assessment (DLM) training in the Kite Educator Portal . DTCs will roster staff in the portal.	Prepare for onsite compliance monitoring visits which include a review of the OSE IEP Addendum for Alternate Assessment, and respond to recommended steps or corrective action (if necessary). Appendix A: OSE IEP Addendum for Alternate Assessment
DTCs prepare to be randomly sampled for virtual audits conducted by the PED. During these audits, DTCs will present evidence of the LEA's and site's systems used to verify student participation in alternate assessments, including the completion of the OSE IEP Addendum for Alternate Assessment. Appendix A: OSE IEP Addendum for Alternate Assessment	Every other year, LEAs, DTCs, and Special Education Leaders will present their practices, systems, and next steps during a virtual meeting with the PED. The 1% Alternate Assessment Participation Monitoring Form will be used to guide the conversation.	
Complete and submit the 1% Justification Survey , including District Assurances, to the PED.		

2025–26 TIMELINE FOR ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION

Early Fall	Each LEA will have access to the 2024-25 Alternate Assessment Participation Rates and data will be published on the PED Assessment Department website.
Early Fall	DTCs will complete required training in the Kite Educator Portal . They must achieve the DLM pass rate required to receive a certificate.
August	LEAs will develop and use checklists, following NMAC 6.10.7 which requires District Test Coordinators to develop checklists and written procedures for internal use to: • ensure all procedures for standardized testing comply with 6.10.7.12 NMAC; and • collaborate with appropriately-licensed personnel to ensure appropriate accommodations and test placement for students with disabilities and English language learners.
August - Ongoing	LEAs will use the Most Significant Cognitive Disability Definition to verify the IEP documentation for participation in the alternate assessment. Also, LEAs will verify completion of the OSE Addendum for Alternate Assessment (Appendix A).
Early Fall	Review DLM Data for Current and Previous Years • LEAs will assess data for patterns or trends. • LEAs will know their 2024-25 Alternate Assessment Participation Rates. • LEAs will review data provided by the Accountability Bureau.
Fall	LEAs will complete the 1% Justification and Assurances Form based on Spring 2025 alternate assessment participation.
Fall	The PED will notify LEAs of Phase 2 and Phase 3 identification regarding alternate assessment participation data that exceeds 1%. LEAs will follow the monitoring plan.
November 15	First Contact Survey Deadline • Completion of the First Contact Survey is required before a test can be administered to a student using DLM.
February	Audits and onsite monitoring of LEAs in Phase 2 and Phase 3 will begin.
Spring	The PED Assessment Bureau will monitor assessment participation during the DLM administration window.
May	Audits and onsite monitoring of LEAs in Phase 2 and Phase 3 will conclude.
Ongoing	Review Data and Reports • Educators can access the First Contact Reports in the Kite Educator Portal. • LEAs can provide access to families in the Kite Educator Portal. • LEAs can access their Alternate Assessment Participation Rates.
Ongoing	Resources: PED Assessment Website

APPENDIX A: OSE IEP ADDENDUM FOR ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Also Located on [OSE Website](#) - IEP Addendum for Alternate Assessment

Addendum for Alternate Assessment §300.320(a)(6)

This addendum must be completed for any child who demonstrates a “most significant cognitive disability,” even if this is not identified as the child’s primary disability. This tool assists IEP teams in determining if the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular State or district wide assessment of student achievement and documenting that discussion and decision.

This addendum must be completed within the context of an IEP meeting. It is not appropriate for this addendum to be completed without participation of the full IEP team.

Note: IEP teams are encouraged to use the Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Tool when determining if a child is eligible for the Alternate Assessment.

Did the IEP team determine that this child demonstrates a “most significant cognitive disability” as evidenced by meeting the following criteria **and not** based solely on the following factors: *disability classification, below grade level academic achievement, expected poor performance on the general assessment, anticipated impact of student scores on accountability system, anticipated disruptive behavior if student takes general assessment, poor attendance, English learner status, or need for accommodations to participate in the general assessment*:

Cognitive functioning **and** adaptive behavior significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications and accommodations **and not based solely on the factors listed above**:

Does the child’s past and present performance in multiple settings (i.e., home, school, community, etc.) indicate that a disability(ies) is present that significantly impacts the child’s **intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior** (skills essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life)?

Justification and documentation:

Does the child require **intensive, pervasive, or extensive levels of support** in school, home, and community settings?

Justification and documentation:

Is the child primarily taught (or instructed) in alternative content standards (e.g., DLM Essential Elements) **and** require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum?

Justification and documentation:

*If the answer to **all three questions above** is “YES,” the IEP team may determine that the child is*

most appropriately assessed using an alternate assessment in one or more subject areas.

Has the IEP team determined that the child will participate in the alternate assessment in one or more subject areas?



If “yes,” specify which subject areas:

☐ English Language Arts ☐ Mathematics ☐ Science

A member of the IEP is responsible for communicating this decision with the District Testing Coordinator prior to rostering the student for the DLM to ensure the student has access to the appropriate assessment.

APPENDIX B LINK:

MOST SIGNIFICANT

COGNITIVE DISABILITY

DEFINITION

MEMORANDUM

APPENDIX C: 1% ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION

MONITORING FORM

(Download a fillable document at this [link](#).)

1% Alternate Assessment Participation Monitoring Form

(Root Cause Analysis and Improvement Plan)

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) requires all states to have an Alternate Assessment participation rate of below 1%. LEAs are permitted to be over 1%. The purpose of the monitoring process is to provide the LEAs with the opportunity to review their existing processes with the NMPED.

Form Completed by: (LEA Name/Representative)	
Date Completed:	
ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS SECTION	
Provide details of the LEA's unique factors or characteristics of your LEA which may impact your 1% Alternate Assessment (DLM) participation rate. Please type the answer into the box to the right.	Examples: Size of school (very small district), type of school, etc.
Describe all factors considered in the identification of students taking the Alternate Assessment (DLM). How do you identify the students that need to take the Alternate Assessment? Please type the answer into the box to the right.	Examples: IEP team, diagnostic evaluation, classroom observation. (Note: not mild-moderate disability.)

Describe LEA Alternate Assessment District Training. How do you Identify Most Significantly Cognitively Disabled students and who qualifies for Alternate Assessment? Who receives this training? Please type the answer into the box to the right.	Examples: DLM Modules, DTC/STC Training, NM PED Assessment Training attended, OSE training on Most Significant Cognitive Disability.
Describe how you track Alternate Assessment (DLM) data? Please type the answer into the box to the right.	Examples: How do you know how many students are taking the Alternate Assessment: NOVA tracking (flagged as Alternate Assessment in NOVA, how many taking DLM?)

Identify any Alternate Assessment (DLM) data trends that may be impacting your 1% participation rate?. Please type the answer into the box to the right.	Examples: Was data misidentified? Was there inaccurate data? Was the number of students taking assessments in the district incorrectly reported? Any other data factor that you feel affects your percentage rate?
Disproportionality: Identify if the LEA is over identifying any particular subgroup for Alternate Assessment testing. Please type the answer into the box to the right.	Examples: Subgroups can include groups such as Race/Ethnicity, English Language Learner, Gender. Also determine if there is an over-identification of one or more specific disability types such as Specific Learning Disability or Other Health Impairment being identified as Most Significantly Cognitively Disabled.

Here are some resources regarding disproportionality:

- [Equity in Special Education: Disproportionality](#)
- [National Center for Educational Outcomes Disproportionality Guidance](#)
- [Disproportionality Calculator from NCEO](#)

Improvement Plan Please write your 1% Alternate Assessment Improvement Plan in the boxes to the right.	1. Please provide the details of your LEA 1% Alternate Assessment Improvement plan by using any issues identified in your Root Cause Analysis above: Examples: Review IEPs for new state definition of MSCD, increase training, improve data management process, address disproportionality issues.
	2. Clearly indicate how these changes can impact your 1% rates. Examples: Include any factors LEA has identified in this Root Cause Analysis and LEA plan to address those factors. Examples: Improve training, correct data, or address disproportionality issues?

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