

Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions on the Alternate Assessment of South Dakota Content Standards

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Introduction

This document is intended to help guide Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to determine whether an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards is the most appropriate assessment for an individual student. This assessment was developed to ensure that all students are able to participate in an assessment that is a measure of what they know and can do in relation to the grade level South Dakota Content Standards. This assessment was developed to be part of a system of curriculum, instructional, and assessment tools, so that students with significant cognitive disabilities are able to participate in content instruction and assessments that are aligned to the South Dakota Content Standards.

IEP teams must consider a student’s individual characteristics when determining whether a student with a disability should participate in the general assessment with or without accommodations, or in the alternate assessment. This document outlines steps that an IEP team should take in determining whether the alternate assessment is appropriate for a student. These include: (a) reviewing student records and important information across multiple school years and settings (e.g., school, home, community) and (b) determining whether the student fits all of the criteria for participating in the alternate assessment as outlined in this document.

What is an “alternate assessment”?

The majority of students with disabilities are able to participate in the general education curriculum, and will take the South Dakota English Language Arts (ELA), the South Dakota Math and the South Dakota Science Assessments with accommodations and other supports. However, a small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities cannot participate in the general education assessment even with accommodations. These students require a different kind of test in order for them to show what they know and can do.

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 assessment program. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) specifies a 1% cap statewide on participation, with States directed to work with LEAs who exceed the cap to better train their IEP team members so they can more accurately identify those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and be under the cap the following year. For a student to be considered as having a significant cognitive disability for purposes of participation in the alternate assessment, **ALL** of the criteria found on pg. 5 of this document must be true as determined by the evidence collected and considered by all members of the student’s IEP team.

Alternate assessments are designed around the unique needs of students that take into account motor, hearing, vision, and other physical disabilities as well as cognitive disabilities. While these assessments assess the Core Content Connectors, which are aligned to South Dakota Content Standards, the level at which the content presented is less complex and students receive more scaffolding and supports through the assessment than on the general education assessment. The number of standards assessed is also much fewer than the number assessed on South Dakota ELA, South Dakota Math or South Dakota Science.

The Design and Structure of the MSAA for English Language Arts and Mathematics

Grades Assessed: 3-8, and 11

Content Areas: English Language Arts (includes writing) (ELA) and Mathematics

Website: <http://doe.sd.gov/assessment/alternate.aspx>

The Multi-State Alternate Assessment is a collaborative of 10 states that will continue the work begun with the NCSC assessment. These states will continue to develop an alternate assessment that measures the State Content Standards in ways that are appropriate and challenging for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Much has been learned over the last decade of testing since No Child Left Behind was passed in 2001. This new test benefits from those lessons by including greater flexibility in how the test is administered while keeping the content essentially unchanged.

Multi-State Alternate Assessment Design

The MSAA is an assessment of English Language Arts (reading and writing) and Mathematics in grades 3-8, and 11. It is an on-demand assessment of approximately 30 test items that assess approximately 10 prioritized content targets per grade level. These content targets were identified for each grade based on learning progressions and alignment to the grade level State Content Standards. The assessment includes multiple choice and constructed response items. Each content target is assessed by items that have been carefully and intentionally designed to assess a range of ability and performance. All items were designed to take into account the wide range of student needs and communication methods students who take the alternate assessment use.

Multi-State Alternate Assessment Administration

The assessment is delivered via computer, with wide allowances for flexibility in administration. For example, a student may work and respond more effectively to a printed version of the test rather than to looking at the computer. A trained testing administrator familiar to the student (e.g., the student's teacher) facilitates the administration, presenting items via paper or manipulatives as appropriate for the student. Items are administered to the student over the course of one or more testing sessions as needed for a student to complete a content area assessment. Testing sessions are scheduled within a testing window of approximately two months with South Dakota's varying slightly from that set by the consortium.

The assessment uses a computer adaptive approach, meaning that each student receives items that have been determined to be an appropriate level of

challenge as they progress through the assessment. The administration script provides flexibility in the ways in which a student may interact with items so that what is being measured is not changed.

The South Dakota Content Standards, the Core Content Connectors (CCC), and IEP Goals

In order to create tests appropriate for students with significant cognitive disabilities that are also aligned to the State Content Standards, MSAA created a “bridge” called the Core Content Connectors (CCC). The CCCs were developed in ELA (reading and writing) and Mathematics to provide guidance for test item development. In addition, IEP teams should be aware of the following:

- The main goal of each State Content Standard is maintained but does not extend the skills or knowledge down. Rather, the CCCs divide the State Standards into smaller pieces.
- MSAA tests don't measure the full breadth of any State Content Standard. Only a portion of any State Standard or CCC is measured.
- Not all CCCs are tested on the MSAA
- The MSAA test does not meet the criteria for an on-grade level test because of the reduced complexity, breadth, and depth at which the standards are measured.
- **CCCs may be used to align intermediate goals on IEPs.** Teachers and IEP teams are encouraged to use the South Dakota Content Standards and the CCCs to guide the development of appropriate academic goals that allow maximum engagement with the general curriculum and typical peers with appropriate adaptations, simplifications, and modifications to grade-level materials and content.
- **Resource:** Instructional Supports for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities at <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/instructionalSCD.aspx>

South Dakota Science Assessment-Alternate Design and Structure (SDSA-Alt)

The SDSA-Alt is an assessment of Science in grades 5, 8, and 11. It is a computer based assessment that is aligned to Core Content Connectors tied to the State Content Standards in Science that were adopted in May 2015. While testing occurs in grades 5, 8, and 11, SDSA-Alt is actually an assessment of grade spans to better cover the standards. Grade 5 is assessed over grades 3-5 standards, grade 8 over grades 6-8 standards, and grade 11 over all high school standards.

The SDSA-Alt is a computer based assessment designed to be administered one-on-one with the student's certified teacher.

Students are assessed over the Core Content Connectors that were developed based on South Dakota's Science Standards.

South Dakota Science Content Standards with Core Content Connectors are located at <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/instructionalSCD.aspx>

Science Alternate Assessment website: <http://doe.sd.gov/assessment/alternate.aspx>

Participation/Eligibility Decisions

Step 1: Understanding the Eligibility Criteria for Alternate Assessments

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

All three of the following eligibility criteria must be met before a student can participate in the alternate assessments:

1. **The student has a significant cognitive disability.** Does student have a disability, or disabilities, that significantly impacts cognitive function and adaptive behavior? Review of student records and other evidence indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that prevent the student from meaningful participation in the standard academic core curriculum or achievement of the standards at their enrolled grade level. Additionally, the student’s disability causes dependence on others for many, and sometimes all, daily living needs, and the student is expected to require extensive ongoing support in adulthood.
2. **The student is learning content linked to (derived from) the State Content Standards.** Goals and instruction for this student is adapted to reflect the enrolled South Dakota Content Standards grade-level CCCs and

address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student. Life and job skills are also embedded and included as part of the student's instruction and may provide the context for access to the standards.

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

Step 2: Gathering Evidence

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

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

Below is a list of possible evidence that IEP teams should gather before deciding if the student meets the Participation Criteria. It is important to remember that no one piece of evidence should be used to make this decision and no one person

should be making the decision; it must be a decision reached and agreed to by all members of the IEP team.

List 1: Good sources of evidence and data to use for eligibility conversations

- Curriculum, instructional, and classroom evidence:
 - Examples instructional objectives and materials
 - Work samples and data on progress from both school- and community-based instruction
 - Classroom work samples and data
 - Teacher observations
- Assessment data and evidence:
 - Past state assessments to compare to classroom work
 - District-wide alternate assessments
 - Reading assessments
 - Any other academic achievement tests
 - Language assessments like ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs
 - Results of the initial or most recent evaluations of the student
 - Observations by teachers and other service providers
 - Observations by family members or guardians
- IEP information including:
 - Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, goals, and short-term objectives or post-school outcomes from the IEP
 - Considerations for students with specific communication needs or modes (from multiple data sources)
 - Considerations for students who may be learning English as a second or other language (i.e., English language learners)

List 2: Use these factors or evidence to create effective instructional plans; not for eligibility determinations

Using the following types of evidence in combination with other information can provide a more complete picture of the student's strengths and weaknesses. These additional pieces of information may provide insight into how to best support a student instructionally. Decisions should not be made using one piece of evidence.

- **Disability category (or categories):** There is no disability category that is able to predict 100% of a student's cognitive potential. Disability categories alone are not sufficient evidence to determine eligibility for the alternate assessment.
- **Cognitive ability of the student:** While most students being considered for eligibility for the alternate assessment will have an IQ test administered to

them and while these tests do provide important information about the student, IQ scores alone do not qualify a student for any assessment and should not be the sole basis for making a decision.

List 3: Do not use these factors or data to inform an eligibility decision.

The following factors are not appropriate to include in decision-making because they do not add to the IEP Team's understanding of what the student knows and can do. While some of the factors listed below do make it difficult for a student to come to school ready to engage and learn these issues should be addressed with staff that have appropriate expertise and experience in these areas.

- **Poor attendance or extended absences, for any reason:** Some students have medical conditions that prevent them from attending school regularly enough to receive instruction. While this is recognized as a factor that inhibits a child's exposure to educational experiences and meaningful instruction, it is not evidence of a child's ability or their potential to learn and must be addressed through the appropriate school resources.
- **Poor performance on the general education academic assessments:** Most students receiving special education services can and do participate in general education assessments like Smarter Balanced and Science with accommodations and other supports. Poor performance on these assessments is not an appropriate factor to use when making an eligibility decision. To consider accommodations and supports available on ELA, Math and Science, please refer to the Accommodations Manual: <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/sped-IEP.aspx> or contact Beth Schiltz, beth.schiltz@state.sd.us or 605-773-4257.
- **English Language Learner (ELL) status:** It is important to understand that a student's ability and their knowledge of English are not connected. How well a student understands and speaks English has an impact on their ability to learn; however it does not indicate a learning disability. Alternate methods of understanding what a student knows and can do may need to be investigated depending on the student's English proficiency level. Please contact your district ELL Director for options.
- **Impact of the student's test scores on the accountability score of the school and/or district:** How well or poorly a student may perform on any state assessment is not to be used as a deciding factor in determining which assessment is appropriate for a student.
- **Location of special education services in more restrictive settings:** The setting in which a student receives their education is not a factor in determining

cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. Districts routinely utilize staff with expertise in the challenges of a specific disability, behavior, or mental health issue, either within the school, district, or in another setting. Regardless of where a student accesses specialized care or services, meaningful academic instruction should always be given to the student. Because of this requirement, the educational placement of a student is not to be used as factor for eligibility.

- **Amount of time receiving special education services:** Students receive special education services in a variety of ways and in varying degrees of intensity. It is more meaningful to consider the type and intensity of the structures and supports the student requires in order to participate academically and socially in their school than it is to consider the amount of hours or days a student requires in order to receive appropriate special education services.
- **Variety of services a student receives:** Many students receive a variety of related services that address their physical, behavioral, or other challenges beyond their cognitive ability. The type of services a student receives does not indicate a significant cognitive disability.
- **Behavior issues, including test anxiety:** Behavior challenges can make learning difficult for some students and should be treated appropriately and professionally. Behavior issues are not always indicators of significant cognitive disabilities; however some disabilities have behavioral indicators. Behavior challenges should not be considered when deciding if a student meets the criteria for an alternate assessment as they are not indicators of cognitive ability.
- **Administrator decision:** Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a school, district, or program administrator to unilaterally make an eligibility decision without the full cooperation and consensus of the IEP team, of which the parents or guardians are equal participants, or without following all standard procedures regarding educational decision-making for a student.

Documentation of Evidence Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help IEP Teams match evidence to the specific criteria in order to help make decisions. It is not a required part of the decision-making process. If used, attach to the Eligibility Form.

Eligibility Criteria	Write Description of Documentation and Evidence Below	Sources of Evidence (check if used)
<p>1. Student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and adaptive behavior*</p> <p>*Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<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 language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>2. The student's instruction is aligned to the South Dakota Content Standards in ELA, Math, and Science but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core Content Connectors.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<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 <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<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 <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan for students age 16 or younger, if

		necessary <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
The student is eligible to participate in alternate assessment if ALL responses above are marked YES		

Step 3: Documenting the Decision

If Decision is Yes

If the IEP team determines that the student is eligible, they must document their decision using the *South Dakota Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines* and include it with the IEP. An IEP team LEA representative must sign the completed form and a copy must be attached to the IEP and placed in the student's file. **This must be completed each year at the time of the IEP annual review.**

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

If Decision is No

If the IEP team decides that the student is not eligible, then three things must happen:

1. The student must participate in the South Dakota ELA, Math and Science assessments with appropriate accommodations as determined by the IEP team.
2. The student's instruction must be aligned to the State Standards via the general education curriculum. Without access to the general education curriculum, students will not be able to learn the academic skills and knowledge assessed on the Smarter Balanced assessments.
3. Record of the decision must be recorded on the *South Dakota Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines*, attached to the IEP and placed in the student's file.

Review of Eligibility Determinations

The conversation around determining whether or not a student meets the criteria for eligibility is an important one. It drives the daily and long-term instruction a student receives as they prepare for options after high school. As such, it is paramount that students be engaged in the general education curriculum with appropriate modifications and the highest and most rigorous instruction appropriate. If we fall short of this goal, we risk shortchanging and second-guessing a student's ability to achieve academically as well as in other areas such as life and job skills.

With the 1% State-level cap on alternate assessment participation included in ESSA, States are required to specify a plan to support LEAs who consistently show a disproportionality in students who take the alternate assessment that contributes to putting the State over the 1% allowed limit. While the State cannot prohibit an LEA from assessing more than 1%, it must require an LEA to submit information justifying their need to assess more than 1% of its assessed students with the alternate assessment. The information provided by the LEA must be made publically available in such a way that does not reveal personally identifiable information about individual students. ESSA also requires States describe how they will monitor and evaluate LEAs over the 1% cap to ensure the LEA provides sufficient training for school staff who participate as members of an IEP team or other placement team so they understand and implement the guidelines established by the State so that all students are appropriately identified and assessed. To ensure that students are appropriately identified for the alternate assessments, and to ensure that guidance to the field from SD DOE is clear and leads to appropriate identifications, SD DOE will review data on eligibility determinations. SD DOE will use this data to identify schools and districts that may need additional training, support, and guidance to use the eligibility criteria to make valid and appropriate determinations.

Appendix A: Student Examples

Several student examples are provided here to show how evidence may be used to determine whether or not the three criteria are met.

Student Example A

Student A is 13 years old and uses an augmentative communication device with voice and print output to take part in classroom discussions and activities, as well as to participate in assessments. His primary disability diagnosis is autism.

READING: He reads using large print version of text and can answer some basic comprehension questions at grade level but has trouble with drawing conclusions or making inferences after reading. He prefers to be read to, rather than to read on his own. He can read simplified text and text at the 3rd grade level.

WRITING: This student can write simple stories with a beginning, middle, and end. His use of details is limited; fast/slow, light/dark, tall/short, loud/soft, etc. Because of his visual impairments, it takes him much longer than his classmates to complete writing assignments and this causes him to become frustrated at times.

MATHEMATICS: He requires a calculator for all math calculations and can get the correct answer by following step-by-step directions; however, he requires being reminded often about some basic numeracy concepts such as multiplication and division.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: He is very adept at using a computer and/or iPad to download videos and to play games and music. He has severe anxiety and requires extensive coaching, prompting, and breaks. Any testing requires several days to complete and due to severe Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), many times testing cannot be completed. Because of this, test results may not reflect this student's true knowledge and abilities.

Eligibility Criteria	Write Description of Documentation and Evidence Below	Sources of Evidence (check if used)
1. Student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and behavior YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<i>He can answer some basic comprehension questions at grade level but has trouble with drawing conclusions or making inferences after reading. He prefers to be read to, rather than to read on his own. He can read simplified text.</i> <i>This student can write simple stories with a beginning, middle, and his use of details is limited; fast/slow, light/dark, tall/short, loud/soft, etc.</i> <i>He requires a calculator for all math calculations and can get the correct answer by following</i>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results of informal assessments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results of individual reading assessments

	<p><i>formulaic directions</i> <i>Due to severe OCD, many times testing cannot be completed. Test results may not reflect this student's true knowledge and abilities.</i> <i>He is very adept at using a computer and/or iPad to download videos and to play games and music.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Results of district-wide alternate assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Results of language assessments Including English language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>2. The student's instruction is aligned to the South Dakota State Content Standards in ELA, Math, and Science but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core Content Connectors.</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>He can answer some basic comprehension questions at grade level but has trouble with drawing conclusions or making inferences after reading.</i> <i>He requires a calculator for all math calculations and can get the correct answer by following formulaic directions; however, he requires being reminded often about some basic numeracy concepts such as multiplication and division.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples <input checked="" 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 <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum</p> <p>YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>He can get the correct answer by following step-by-step directions and requires being reminded often about some basic numeracy concepts around multiplication and division.</i></p> <p><i>He requires extensive coaching, prompting, modeling, and breaks.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teacher collected data and checklists <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan for students age 16 or younger, if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

The student is eligible to participate in alternate assessment if ALL responses above are marked YES

Student A is not eligible for alternate assessment.

Student Example B

Student B is 9 years old. Her primary disability diagnosis is autism. She speaks using two- and three-word phrases after hearing answers modeled for her; she exhibits echolalia. Most of her speech consists of “yes/no” answers. She does not use an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device but is involved in a program to develop conversational speech skills and is showing some improvement. IQ test result score is 60.

READING: Student B is able to identify familiar pictures and picture symbols and has emerging sight word vocabulary of about 25 words. She can read somewhat independently, as long as the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher. Student B can understand texts closer to her grade level (not on grade level) with supports such as picture symbols and having the text read aloud by an aide or teacher and are about subjects she enjoys; animals, especially baby animals. She enjoys books that have tactile supports embedded in the text. She will only read if her teacher provides intensive supports like prompting, cueing, refocusing, in a one-on-one environment and with frequent breaks and the text is a subject she enjoys. Historical or informational texts are not interesting to her.

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

MATHEMATICS: Student B can count same-color blocks up to ten. She does not understand the concepts of subtraction or addition; she must re-count the blocks to arrive at an answer. “More/less” is a difficult concept when using numerals but she can tell which group of things is more or less than another group of the same things but not when the groups are different (group of pencils and group of erasers).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: On a computer, she can click and drag using an adapted mouse, but only when provided a model and a clear objective (like playing a simple game). Student B has difficulty when activities change from a set schedule; sometimes has difficulty sharing with other students in the class but not always. She understands sequences of events (first, next, last, etc.) but not the idea that something is scheduled to happen at 2:00, for example. She enjoys being outside.

Eligibility Criteria	Write Description of Documentation and Evidence Below	Sources of Evidence (check if used)
<p>1. Student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and behavior</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>She speaks using two- and three-word phrases after modeling answers. She can independently write her first and last name and can copy text but in most cases when she copies text, it is not clear if she understands what she is writing.</i></p> <p><i>Student B can count same-color blocks up to ten. She does not understand simple subtraction or addition; she must re-count the blocks to arrive at an answer. "More/less" is a difficult concept when using numerals.</i></p> <p><i>She has difficulty with understanding when activities change from a set schedule. She understands sequences of events but not the idea that something is scheduled to happen at 2:00.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Results of individual and group administered achievement tests</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results of informal assessments</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results of individual reading assessments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Results of district-wide alternate assessments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Results of language assessments including English language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:</p>
<p>2. The student's instruction is aligned to the South Dakota State Content Standards in ELA, Math, and Science but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core Content Connectors.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>She is 9 years old and can read somewhat independently, as long as the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher.</i></p> <p><i>She can understand texts closer to her grade level (not on grade level) with supports such as picture symbols and having the text read aloud by an aide or teacher and are about subjects she enjoys; animals, especially baby animals</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives from the IEP</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Data from scientific research-based interventions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring data</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:</p>
<p>3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the</p>	<p><i>She can read somewhat independently, as long as the texts are at the Kindergarten or pre-K level, include pictures and picture symbols, and she has intensive support from her teacher.</i></p> <p><i>She can understand texts closer to her grade level (not on grade level) with supports such as picture symbols and having the text read aloud by an aide or teacher and are about subjects she</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teacher collected data and checklists</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of</p>

grade-and age-appropriate curriculum YES ● NO ○	<i>enjoys; animals, especially baby animals. She will only read if her teacher provides intensive supports like prompting, cueing, refocusing, in a one-on-one environment and with frequent breaks.</i>	academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan for students age 16 or younger, if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>The student is eligible to participate in alternate assessment if ALL responses above are marked YES</p>		

Student B is eligible for alternate assessment.

Student Example C

Student C is 17 years old and in the 10th grade. His primary diagnosis is autism and he has some vision impairment that requires some adapted materials. He is in a self-contained classroom. He can vocalize but does not use words; he is essentially non-verbal. He has a new AAC device that both the student and the staff are learning. His fine motor skills are poor; however he enjoys finger painting along with other art projects. He enjoys music as well. So far, things seem to be improving in the area of communication for this student. The lack of a consistent mode of communication has made it difficult to determine his cognitive functioning. However, learning his new AAC device has provided motivation as he is learning that people will respond to him. In addition, he has a health condition that has led to many absences. Even though he is learning how to communicate with his new device, it is clear that his content knowledge and basic skills are far below his typical peers and instruction will remain at a remedial level for the foreseeable future; because of this the CCSS are far beyond his current ability.

READING: He can understand and recognize most of the pictures in his AAC device. He enjoys being read to (especially picture books about trucks, cars, and other automotive equipment and dogs). He takes a long time to look at the pictures. If you ask him to identify a type of car or a part on a car (e.g. tire, wheel, door, tractor, etc.) he can point to it accurately. During times when a movie is played in the classroom, he can order the events of the movie if they are in pictures. He can tell you if an event did not take place in the movie. He can mimic parts of the dialogue even though most of it is unintelligible; he mimics the sounds and inflection of people talking but cannot form the words.

WRITING: He does recognize his name and uses a name stamp that includes his entire first name and a separate stamp with his last name. His teacher has begun to use individual letter stamps to help him learn how to recognize the individual letters of his name. He can order events very well and reorder the events to produce a different ending/answer an open-ended question.

MATHEMATICS: Unknown at this time. His teacher has noticed that he understands when things are supposed to happen during his day (arriving at school, lunch, breaks, etc.) but it is not clear if he is reading the clock on the wall or if he is recognizing a pattern to his school day. Numbers are programmed in to his AAC device but have not been introduced; however, he did request that the teacher read three books to him one day and he used the number "3" on his AAC device. He is not interested in math.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: It is clear that he can understand the pictures displayed on his AAC device. There are no words matched with the pictures.

Eligibility Criteria	Write Description of Documentation and Evidence Below	Sources of Evidence (check if used)
<p>1. Student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and behavior</p> <p>YES ● NO ○</p>	<p><i>So much is unknown about this student's true ability. However, given his reaction to his new AAC device and other observations, it is clear that while he may have some kind of cognitive disability, the extent is not known. His disabilities however, do impact his adaptive behavior significantly and his level of learning is far below that of his typical peers. As the year progresses more formal and informal assessments will be given</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Results of individual and group administered achievement tests <input checked="" 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 language learner (ELL) language assessments if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<p>2. The student's instruction is aligned to the South Dakota State Content Standards in ELA, Math, and Science but is adapted to reflect the knowledge and skills in the Core</p>	<p><i>Yes. While it is largely unknown what this student knows and can do, it is clear that he is far below his typical peers. He can understand basic concepts of more/less (snacks), basic pictures both on his AAC device and in picture books. He can point out the correct picture when you ask "where is the tire, truck, door, dog, etc." after you read the book aloud.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives from the IEP <input type="checkbox"/> Data from scientific research-based interventions

<p>Content Connectors.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring data</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:</p>
<p>3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/></p>	<p><i>Materials are adapted because of his vision impairment. Because of his lack of communication and largely nonverbal status, much was done for this student. His student work samples are largely classroom observation.</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community based instruction.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teacher collected data and checklists</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transition Plan for students age 16 or younger, if necessary</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:</p>
<p>The student is eligible to participate in alternate assessment if ALL responses above are marked YES</p>		

Student C is eligible for alternate assessment.

Appendix B: Glossary

AAC: Augmentative and alternative communication (e.g., speech-generating devices such as text-to-speech communication aids, picture or symbol boards, etc.)

Accommodation: A change in materials or procedures that provide access during instruction and assessment. Accommodations do not change what is being taught or measured. Assessment accommodations are intended to produce valid results that indicate what a student knows and can do.

Adaptive behavior: Behavior defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.

Core Content Connector (CCC): A CCC is a representation of the essential “core” content of a standard in the CCSS. Each CCC was identified by examining hypothesized learning progressions aligned with the CCSS to determine the critical content for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Extensive direct individualized instruction: Concentrated instruction designed for and directed toward an individual student. This type of instruction is needed by students with significant cognitive disabilities to acquire knowledge and skills in content. Students with significant cognitive disabilities are likely to need this extensively to apply knowledge and skills in multiple contexts.

English Language Learner (ELL): An ELL is a student who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency. An ELL’s difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be a barrier to learning in classrooms instructed in English and to performance on assessments presented in English.

Learning progression: A learning progression is a description of the way that student learning of skills may develop and build over time.

Modification: A change in materials or procedures that may provide access during instruction and assessment, but that also changes the learning expectations in instruction and what an assessment measures. Modifications during instruction may

be appropriate on a temporary basis for scaffolding the student's understanding and skills. Assessment modifications result in invalid measures of a student's knowledge and skills and thus should be avoided.

Pervasive: Present across academic content areas and across multiple settings (including school, home, and community).

South Dakota State Content Standards: These are a set of content standards for English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and other subjects that define what students are expected to learn at each grade in order to leave school ready for college or careers. The state standards were developed by teachers, school administrators, and experts, with support from the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Substantial supports: Substantial supports include support from the teachers and others (e.g., aide) and various material supports within the student's environment. Examples of substantial supports in instruction include adapting text, using manipulatives and other concrete objects, and extensive scaffolding of content to support learning.

Substantially adapted materials: Substantially adapted materials include various classroom and other materials that have been altered in appearance and content from the materials that peers without disabilities use for instruction or assessment.

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

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

The IEP team makes the determination of how a student will participate in statewide assessments. The IEP team must follow the *South Dakota Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines* if they are to assign a student to participate in the MSAA or Science Alt. No one member of the IEP team makes this decision. Parents, teachers, and administrators make the decision based on evidence and adherence to the *South Dakota Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines*.

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

SD DOE does not define a “significant cognitive disability” in terms of a “cut off” IQ score. Most students with significant cognitive disabilities have intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, or autism, but not all do. And, not all students with these disabilities are considered to have a “significant cognitive disability”. Students demonstrating academic deficits or difficulties due to learning disabilities, speech-language impairments, and emotional-behavior disabilities do not qualify for participation in alternate assessment. Performing 3-4 grade levels below peers without disabilities is not, by itself, evidence of a significant cognitive disability. Academic deficits or difficulties alone do not indicate that a student has a significant cognitive disability. Further, a significant cognitive disability will be pervasive, affecting student learning across content areas and in social and community settings.

Students with autism or intellectual disabilities should be carefully considered for alternate assessment, but they should not automatically be assigned to the alternate assessment based on their identified disability category. Not all students with autism or intellectual disabilities have a significant cognitive disability. Many students eligible to receive special education and related services under these categorical labels are able to participate in general assessments, with accommodations.

Students receiving special education services who are identified as having orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, or traumatic brain injuries, do not necessarily have a significant cognitive disability. Determinations for student participation in statewide assessments must be evidence centered and made individually for each student by the IEP team.

Students demonstrating mild to moderate cognitive disabilities may be more appropriately placed in the general assessment system with accommodations. Anticipated or past low achievement on the general assessment does not mean the student should be taking the MSAA or Science Alt.

3. *How do I know if the alternate assessment is appropriate for an ELL with an IEP whose language proficiency makes it difficult to assess content knowledge and skills?*

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

4. *Why is it important to indicate that a student, participating in alternate assessment, is receiving instruction on content linked to the South Dakota Content Standards in ELA, Math, and Science and their performance measured against alternate achievement standards?*

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

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

All attempts should be made to find a route of communication with the student as soon as they are enrolled. If various approaches and technologies do not appear to demonstrate a route of communication, then consider that all behavior that the student exhibits is a form of communication, and use this as

the starting point. A critical element in assessing all students is a focus on communicative competency as the base for student access to the South Dakota Content Standards. Best practice would indicate that students should enter Kindergarten with a communication system that allows them to demonstrate an understanding of academic concepts prior to entering the third grade. However, with or without a communication system, students must still participate in the MSAA or Science Alt.

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

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

7. *Is it possible that a decision to participate in an AA-AAS could change as a student gets older?*

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

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are likely to continue to need supports to live as independently as possible throughout their adult lives after high school. Students who did not need early intervention services, or who are unlikely to need substantial daily supports in their adult lives, probably do not have a significant cognitive disability and would not be appropriately placed in the alternate assessment.

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

Contact SD DOE if you have any questions about participation decision making for the alternate assessment.

For information about the alternate assessments or assistance with instructions for students who participate in the alternate assessments contact:
<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/instructionalSCD.aspx> or call Office of Special Education Programs at 605-773-3678.

Appendix D: Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines

South Dakota's Participation Guidelines

The criteria for participation in the Alternate Assessment 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 Alternate Assessment participates in all content areas.

In addition, evidence for the decision for participating in the Alternate Assessment 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 Language Learner (ELL) 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 assessment process)

Participation Criteria	Participation Criteria Descriptors	Agree (Yes) or Disagree (No)? Provide documentation
1. The student has a significant cognitive disability	Review of student records indicate 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 State Content Standards	Goals and instruction listed in the IEP for this student are linked to the enrolled grade level State 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 measurable 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 alternate assessment if all responses above are marked Yes

Student Name: _____ DOB: _____

SSID: _____ IEP Meeting Date: _____