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CONNECTICUT
Education

2024-2025

Ensuring Appropriate Student Identification and Eligibility Criteria for Participation in the Connecticut Alternate Assessments

October 30, 2024

Connecticut State
Department of Education



Presenters

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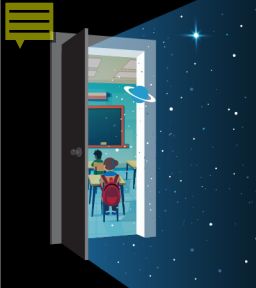


Review of Federal Legislation

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Regulations for Part B of the IDEA require states to make available to eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities an alternate assessment designed to measure their knowledge and skills (34 CFR §§ 200.1(d) and 300.160 (c)).





ESSA Requirements

- ESSA placed a 1.0% cap on the state participation rate for each subject, based on the total number of all students in the state assessed in the subject (34 CFR 200.6(c)(2)). This is to ensure that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities have access to the grade level, general education standards.
- The CSDE is here to provide guidance and support to districts in making appropriate alternate eligibility determinations.



“The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.”

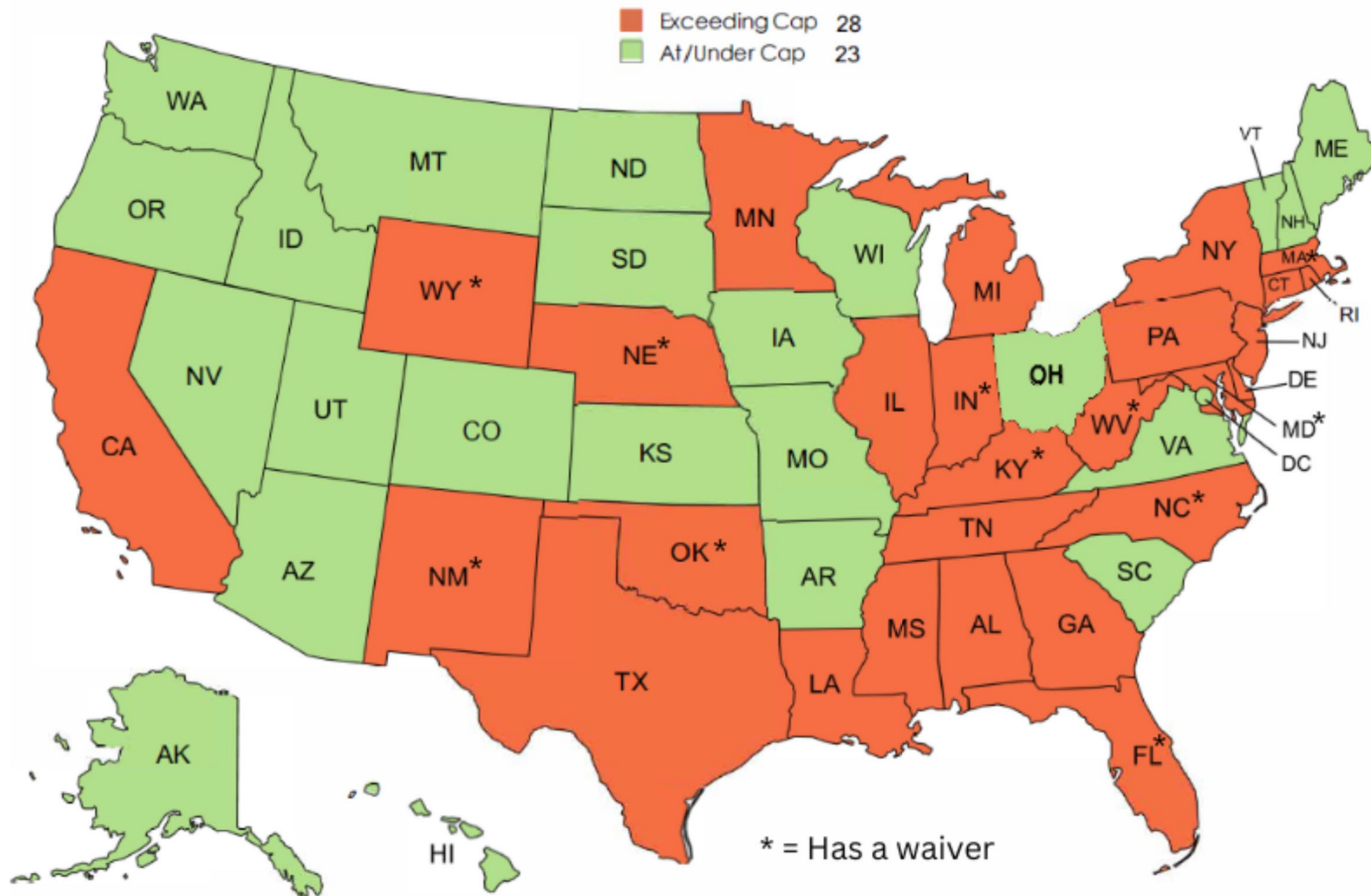
~Michelangelo



Connecticut's Alternate Assessment Eligibility Prevalence Data

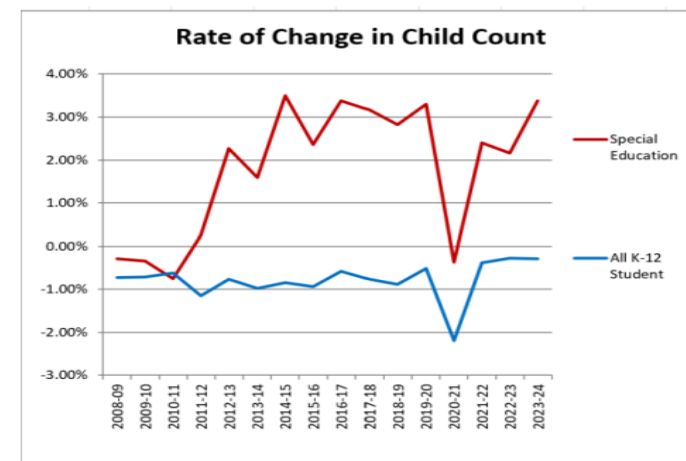
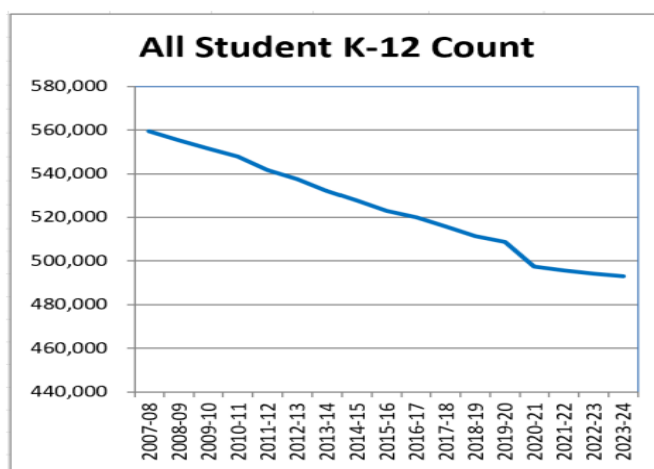
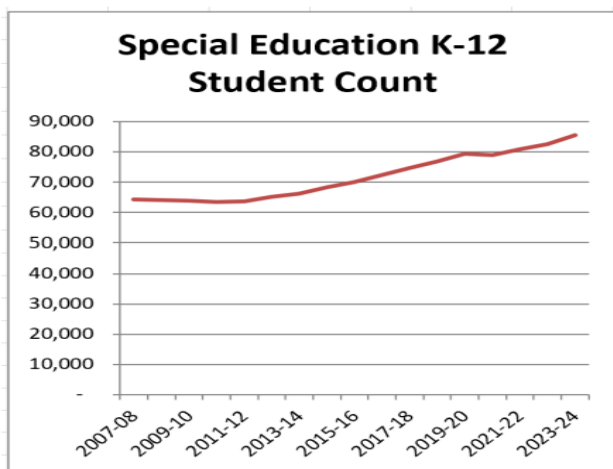
National Prevalence Data for Students Taking Alternate Assessments

Status of 1% Cap on Alternate Assessments :: 2023-2024

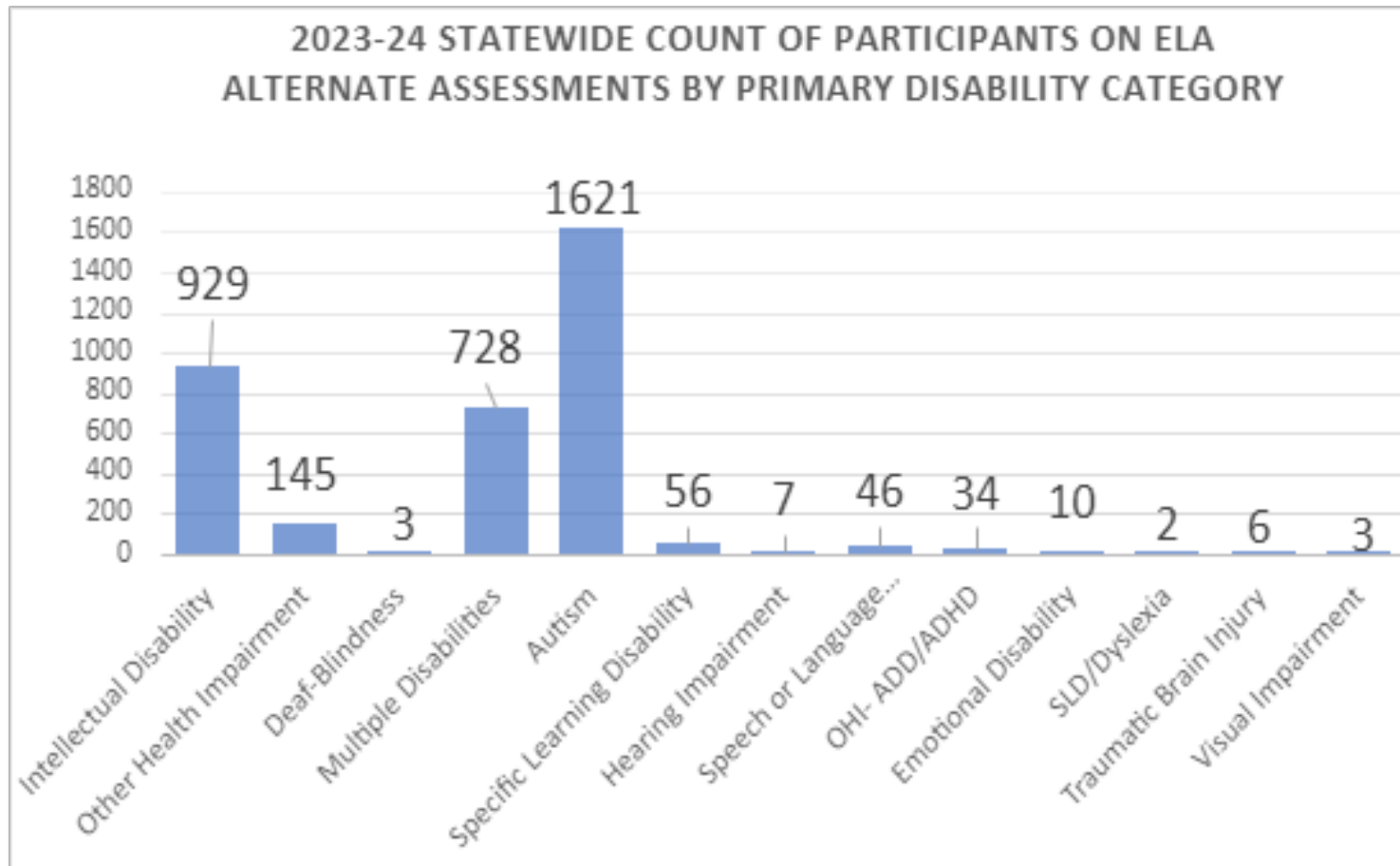


Connecticut's Special Education Prevalence Data

Special Education K-12 Prevalence Data



Looking at Statewide Alternate Assessment System Participation Trends by Disability Category



2023-24 Demographics of Students Participating on Alternate Assessments

2023-24 Demographics for Students Participating on the Connecticut Alternate Assessments (CTAA and CTAS)

Subgroup		All Grade %	Grade						
			3	4	5	6	7	8	11
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%
EL/ML	N	86.0	82.4	85.0	83.9	86.7	87.5	87.0	89.4
	Y	14.0	17.6	15.0	16.1	13.3	12.6	13.0	10.6
Free and Reduced Lunch	F/R	60.0	65.6	61.2	60.1	58.9	58.5	58.9	56.2
	N	40.0	34.4	38.8	39.9	41.1	41.5	41.1	43.8
Race	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.4	0.2
	Asian	6.3	7.1	6.7	4.7	7.1	6.1	7.2	5.1
	Black or African American	19.0	20.5	18.3	18.2	18.4	19.9	17.6	19.8
	Hispanic/Latino of any race	36.9	41.6	38.3	38.6	35.5	34.5	38.0	31.7
	Two or More Races	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.7	4.9	4.4	4.7	4.7
	White	33.1	26.3	31.9	33.6	34.0	35.1	32.2	38.6



What is the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System?



Based on grade-level learning standards developed for students with the **most significant cognitive disabilities**, the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System adjusts for:

Depth (the level of cognitive complexity of the knowledge, skills, and abilities within the standard),

Breadth (how many standards are measured), and

Complexity (describes the difficulty of content with built-in scaffolding to support accessibility needs).

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Incorporates:



- Optimal testing conditions that must be provided to all students who take the test
- Accessibility features that must be provided to students as needed
- Accommodations and assistive technology that students should receive per their Individualized Education Program (IEP) (if applicable) in conjunction with CSDE testing policies and procedures

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System is comprised of three assessments:

- The Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA) for English language arts and mathematics (Grades 3-8 and 11)
- The Connecticut Alternate Science (CTAS) Assessment (Grades 5, 8, and 11)
- The Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP) (Grades K-12)





Start with the End in Mind



Start with the End in Mind

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System is designed for a very small number of children with the **most significant cognitive** disabilities. When planning for the alternate assessment, and the subsequent programming that aligns to that profile, we need to be cognizant of possible implications to the student's future. We should always strive for the highest degree of competencies and opportunities for all students.



Graduation



Further Education
and Training



Military Service



Employment



Considerations and Eligibility Criteria

Connecticut's Statewide Assessment Program

GOAL: 1% or less of the state's total tested population participate in alternate assessments

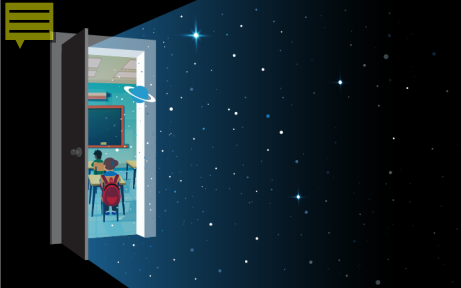
**Connecticut
Alternate
Assessment System
(CTAA, CTAS, & CAAELP)
based on alternate
achievement standards**

**Smarter Balanced Assessments*,
Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)
Assessment *, and the CT SAT School Day with
accommodations**

**Smarter Balanced Assessments*, Next Generation Science
Standards (NGSS) Assessments*, and the CT SAT School Day**

**Standard
grade-level
assessments
based on
academic
achievement
standards**

***Designated supports are available for these subtests.**



Five Things to Consider When Making Decisions About Student Participation on State Alternate Assessments

1. Disability

Only children with the **most** significant cognitive disabilities can take the alternate assessment.

2. Yearly

Every year the PPT should make the determination of which assessment is **most appropriate** based on the students dynamic learning profile.

3. Guidelines

PPT members use the **Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form** to determine if there is current evidence to support the student taking the alternate assessment.

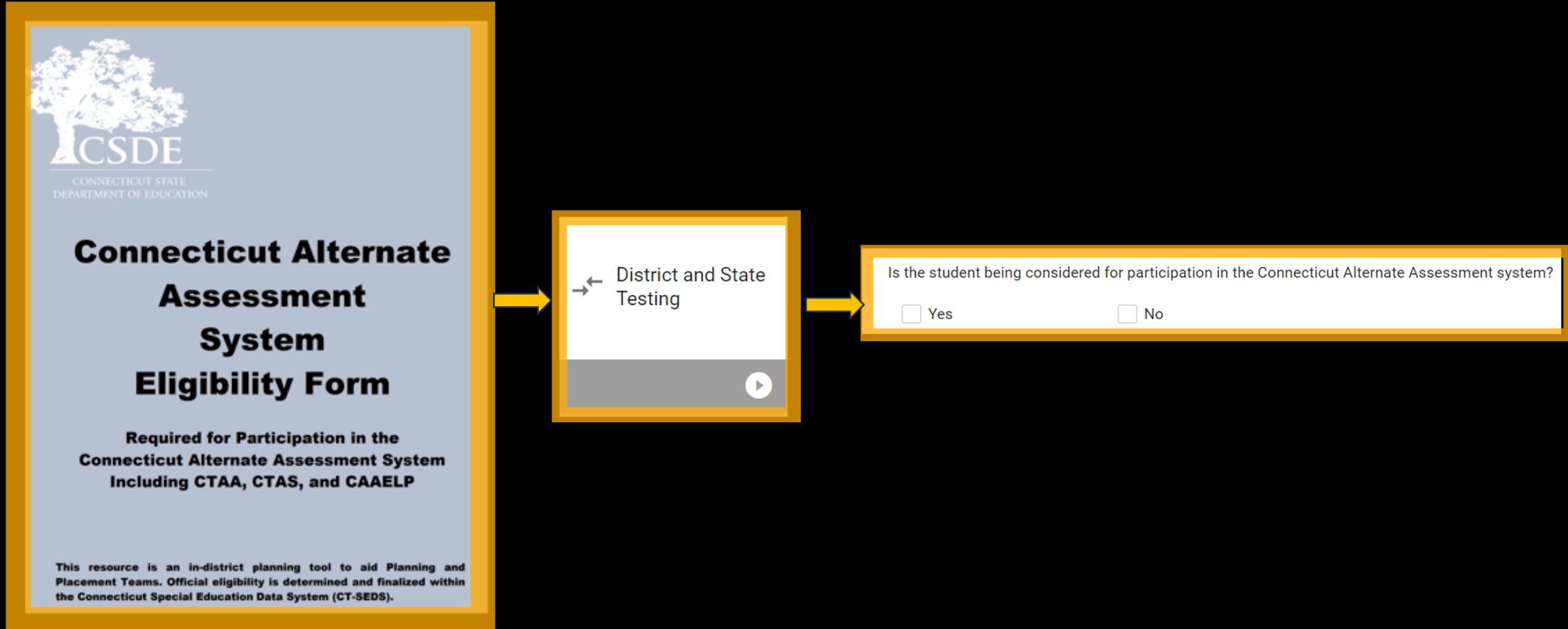
4. Agreement

Each PPT member is aware of implications and should agree that the student meets all of the eligibility criteria for taking the alternate assessment.

5. Instruction

All children are taught academic content for their enrolled grade level. Students who take the alternate assessment may need content presented in reduced depth, breadth, or complexity.

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form in CT-SEDS



Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form in CT-SEDS

Is the student being considered for participation in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment system?

Yes

No

The Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form is required. The form must be used to determine the student's eligibility to participate in the Alternate Assessment system.



Alternate Assessment Eligibility

 The student must meet all criteria outlined below to participate in [Connecticut Alternate Assessments](#).

Primary Disability
Autism

The student has a significant cognitive disability, as evidenced by

1. Student has an intellectual impairment.

- A. No evidence exists to support that this student has an intellectual impairment.
- B. In the absence of standardized, cognitive assessments/scores, there is evidence to substantiate the presence of an intellectual impairment.
- C. Results of cognitive testing (e.g., Full-Scale IQ score < 70, developmental age).

2. Student has adaptive behavior well below age-level expectations.

(Adaptive behavior is defined as those conceptual, social, and practical skills necessary to meet the common demands of everyday life across multiple settings.)

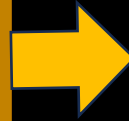
- A. Student has adaptive behaviors necessary for the student to live independently and function safely in daily life for their age group (34 CFR §§ 200.1(d) and 300.160 (c)).
- B. Results of adaptive behavior assessment(s) (e.g., scored more than 1.5 standard deviations below average)

3. Student requires intensive instruction and significant supports.

- A. Student does not require extensive, repeated, individualized instruction.
- B. Student requires extensive, repeated instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature, and uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and transfer skills.

Verification

SAVE



Verification

The PPT verifies that supporting evidence related to the student's eligibility for the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System.

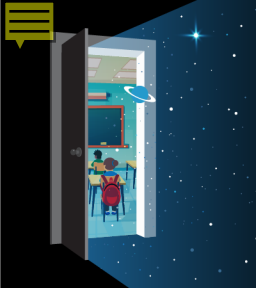


Characteristics of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities



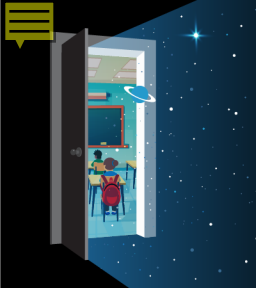
Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria

For participation in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System, the identification of a significant cognitive disability **is not based on** IDEA disability category or English learner/multilingual learner status; **nor is it based on** previous low academic achievement or need for accommodations to participate in general state assessments.



What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities?

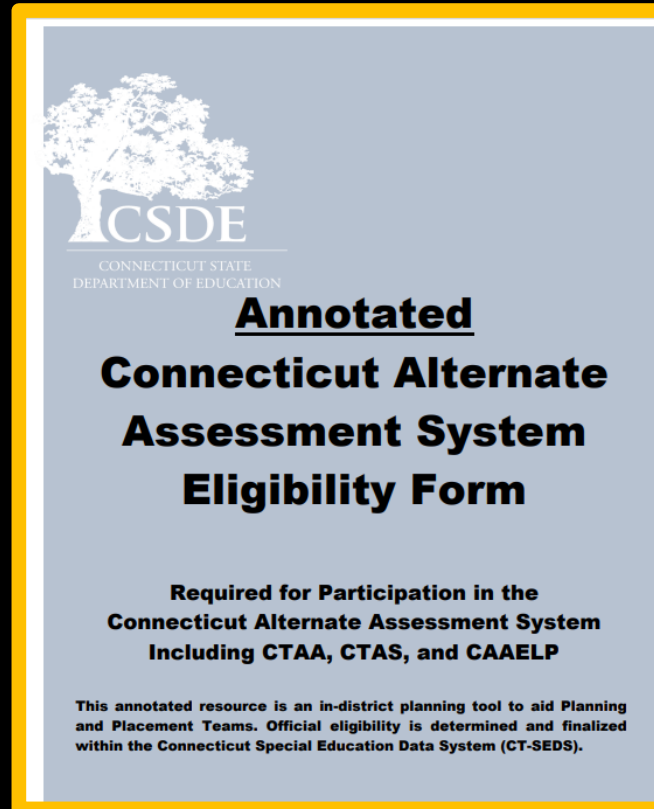
- Students in this group are heterogeneous in their characteristics and current skill levels.
- Many, but not all, are identified prior to entering kindergarten.
- A small percentage of these students do not yet have a communication system.
- Students may often use augmentative communication devices or assistive technology for access to their environment, daily living, and instruction.



What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities?

- Students that are identified with one or more of the existing categories of disability under the IDEA
- Significant Intellectual Impairment
- Functional adaptive skills are well below age level expectations
- Student requires intensive instruction and significant supports.

An In-Depth Look at Eligibility Criteria





Eligibility Criteria

#1 Identification under IDEA

While a student may not be determined to have a significant cognitive disability based solely on an IDEA classification, individuals with an intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, autism, or traumatic brain injury are more likely to be eligible for an alternate assessment.

For more information, refer to Sections 34 CFR 300.309 (3)(a)(1) and (2) and 300.8(c)(4)(i) of IDEA.



Specific Learning Disability (SLD), SLD/ Dyslexia, and Emotional Disability

- Students with a primary disability category of SLD, SLD/Dyslexia, and Emotional Disability may not have evidence supporting a significant cognitive disability that is pervasive in nature.
- Sections 34 CFR 300.309 (3)(a)(1) and (2) and 300.8(c)(4)(i) of the IDEA requires that intellectual factors/impairments be ruled out in order to qualify for special education services under the categories of a specific learning disability or emotional disability.
- These students should participate on standard assessments with the provision of designated supports, accommodations, and assistive technology (if applicable).

Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria

#2 Student has an Intellectual Impairment

- To qualify, the PPT must determine that the student has an **intellectual impairment**.
- This determination is documented through an assessment of cognitive functioning, that places the individual significantly below age/grade-level expectations.
- Results of cognitive testing (e.g., Full-Scale IQ score < 70).
- Assessment results should be within 3 years of the triennial IEP.

Common Cognitive Assessments Used:

Cognitive Assessment System (CAS)
Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI)
Differential Ability Scales (DAS)
Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC)
Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)
Pictorial Test of Intelligence (PTI)
Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS)
Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (SB)
Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI)
Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT)
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC)
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Spanish
Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV)
Wechsler Preschool & Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI)
Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities (WJ)

Documenting Intellectual Impairment in CT-SEDS

The student has a significant cognitive disability, as evidenced by

1. Student has an intellectual impairment.

- A. No evidence exists to support that this student has an intellectual impairment.
- B. In the absence of standardized, cognitive assessments/scores, there is evidence to substantiate the presence of an intellectual impairment.
- C. Results of cognitive testing (e.g., Full-Scale IQ score < 70, developmental age).

Assessment Used

Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (1 v

Date Completed

03/05/2024



Composite Score

55

Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria

#1 Student has an Intellectual Impairment

- In the absence of standardized cognitive assessments/scores, there is evidence to substantiate the presence of an intellectual impairment.
- Evidence should be:
 - Documented throughout the IEP especially in Present Levels of Performance
 - Other evaluation sources conducted should indicate the student has a significant intellectual impairment
 - Other evaluation sources should be current

1. Student has an intellectual impairment.

- A. No evidence exists to support that this student has an intellectual impairment.
- B. In the absence of standardized, cognitive assessments/scores, there is evidence to substantiate the presence of an intellectual impairment.
- C. Results of cognitive testing (e.g., Full-Scale IQ score < 70, developmental age).

What to Look for When Conducting a File Review for Evidence of an Intellectual Impairment

Intellectual Impairment:

- PPTs should gather and interpret information about the child's current performance...relative to challenging content standards and the child's individual circumstances.
- Ensure cognitive scores are:
 - Current (within 3 years)
 - Composite/FSIQ scores that are numerical
 - Meet guidance of 70 or below
 - If cognitive scores are not available due to severity of disability, other measures should be used to substantiate intellectual impairment.



Present Levels,
Annual Goals,
Supplementary
Aids/Services



Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria

#2 Student has Functional Adaptive Behavior Well Below Age-level Expectations

- The team must also determine that the student has **functional adaptive behavior skills** well below age-level expectations.
- Functional adaptive behavior skills are those conceptual, social, and practical skills necessary to meet the common demands of everyday life that is well below age/grade level expectations.
- Results of functional adaptive behavior assessments score is more than 1.5 standard deviations below the mean score.
- Assessment results should be within 3 years within the triennial IEP.

Common Functional Adaptive Assessments Used:

Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS)
Scales of Independent Behavior-Revised (SIB-R)
Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS)

Documenting Functional Adaptive Behavior Scores in CT-SEDS

2. Student has adaptive behavior well below age-level expectations.

(Adaptive behavior is defined as those conceptual, social, and practical skills necessary to meet the common demands of everyday life across multiple settings.)

- A. Student has adaptive behaviors necessary for the student to live independently and function safely in daily life for their age group (34 CFR §§ 200.1(d) and 300.160 (c)).
- B. Results of adaptive behavior assessment(s) (e.g., scored more than 1.5 standard deviations below average)

Assessment Used

Adaptive Behavior Assessment Sy ▾

Date Completed

03/10/2022



Composite/Functional Score


44

What to Look for When Conducting a File Review for Evidence of Functional Adaptive Behavior Skills

Functional Adaptive Behavior:

In CT-SEDS

- Present Levels, Annual Goals, Supplementary Aids and Services should address concerns regarding functional adaptive skills
- Current evaluation should include functional adaptive measures.
- Eligibility form includes:
 - Name of functional adaptive assessment administered
 - Date it was administered
 - Composite score that is numerical and 1.5 standard deviation below.



Present Levels,
Annual Goals,
Supplementary
Aids/Services



Special
Considerations



Special
Education and
Related
Services



Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria #4 Intensive Instruction and Significant Supports

The team must also establish that the student requires **intensive, repeated individualized instruction**, and uses substantially adapted materials, assistive technology, and individualized methods of accessing information to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and transfer skills across multiple settings.



Documenting Intensive Instruction and Significant Supports in CT-SEDS




3. Student requires intensive instruction and significant supports.

- A. Student does not require extensive, repeated, individualized instruction.
- B. Student requires extensive, repeated instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature, and uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and transfer skills.


What to Look for When Conducting a File Review for Intensive Instruction and Significant Supports

Intensive, Repeated Individualized Instruction:


- Review Present Levels of Performance, Annual Goals and Supplementary Aids and Services
 - Goals and Objectives
 - Which types of accommodations are documented?
 - Which types of related services are students receiving?
How many hours/days per week?
 - Are students provided repeated access to content in a systematic manner across multiple settings and subject areas?
- Review Assistive Technology and adaptive needs



Present Levels,
Annual Goals,
Supplementary
Aids/Services



Special
Considerations



Special
Education and
Related
Services



Verification

The PPT will then need to verify that the student meets all the eligibility criteria for participation on the alternate assessments.

Verification

- The PPT verifies that supporting evidence related to the student's assessment options was discussed and this student meets the eligibility criteria for participation in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System.



Additional Alternate Eligibility Considerations



When There is Insufficient Evidence to Meet Eligibility Criteria

- Review and determine the access points used for the students to access their instruction within the learning environment.
- Understand accessibility supports that may be available for that student to access the learning environment, including curriculum and social emotional learning.
- Based on accessibility supports utilized throughout instruction, review designated supports and accommodations associated with each applicable standard assessment.
- Trial practice and training tests with appropriate supports and accommodations to gather information and evaluate student need.
- Document the accessibility supports needed for the summative assessment and the student will take the grade applicable standard assessments in the IEP.



When to Reconsider Eligibility for the Alternate Assessment

Revisit the student’s alternate eligibility status if you find the following:

- The student participated in standard state assessments (e.g., Smarter Balanced) in the past.
- The primary disability category is a learning disability, learning disability/dyslexia, or emotional disability.
- The reason provided as to why the student qualified is that:
 - “they are in a life skills class” or
 - “they are in the self-contained class” or
 - “they are in the alternate assessment class” or
 - anything having to do with “behaviors” as the primary issue.



When to Reconsider Eligibility for the Alternate Assessment

Revisit the student's alternate eligibility status if you find the following:

- The student takes a content-area class in a general education setting with their typical peers without significant supports and modifications.
- The student is slightly below, or even at, grade level in one content area.
- The student **never** took the alternate assessment and then, in middle or high school, they do.



Best Practices to Consider



Best Practices for Administrators

- Review participation rates and identify possible trends by disability categories or other demographics that might be disproportionate to students taking standard assessments.
- Ensure that teams are accurately completing the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form as designed. Use the [annotated form](#) as reference.
- Provide continuous professional development opportunities for staff, so that they can maximize differentiated learning and inclusion teaching practices.
- Hold office hours, team meetings, or mini trainings for PPT staff including building administration, on alternate eligibility criteria.
- Provide opportunities to engage families in discussions regarding appropriate identification and eligibility for the alternate assessment.
- Communicate and share resources for teachers and administration on preparing students to participate on standard assessments if they do not meet alternate eligibility criteria.



Best Practices for Special Education Teachers and PPTs

- Communicate with parents/guardians on summative assessments and eligibility.
- Carefully consider the impact of placing a student on an alternate assessment.
- Thoroughly review and verify student alternate eligibility data in IEP.
- Review evidence and eligibility criteria at annual PPT; do not automatically accept decision from previous year.
- Review justification for student eligibility; ensure evaluations are current and within the triennial.
- Accurate completion of the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form with all current and applicable data in CT-SEDS.
- Attend trainings, office hours, and have team meetings on eligibility criteria for alternate assessments.



Next Steps for Districts Exceeding the One-Percent Threshold



Next Steps

1. Complete follow up survey by **November 25, 2024**. This will be emailed to Superintendents, Directors of Special Education, and District Administrators. Please submit one survey per district.
2. Carefully review your local participation data (See EdSight) at each grade, subject per school.
3. Review local practices for identifying assessments appropriate for students with disabilities.
4. Identify and address the possible root causes for high participation in the alternate assessments.
5. Require assurances with PPT members to ensure their adherence to the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System eligibility guidance.
6. Provide assurances to communicate with parents/guardians about implications for their child's participation on alternate assessments.
7. Identify actionable items “Do now/Do tomorrow” and set goals to accurately identify students for the most appropriate assessments based on current assessment and evidence.



Helpful Resources



Helpful Resources

- [Developing an Assessment Participation Action Plan: A Tool for District Leaders](#)
- [IEP Team Resource: Making Decisions about Participation in the Alternate Assessment](#)
- [Parent Overview of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System](#)
- [TIES helps educators, parents, and administrators create and support inclusive school communities | TIES Center](#)
- [FAQ About the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System](#)
- [Connecticut Alternate Assessment Participation Guidance for Planning and Placement Teams](#)



Helpful Resources

- [AA-AAS: Standards That Are the “Same but Different” \(NCSC Brief #1\) \(archive-it.org\)](#)
- [State Assessment Decision-making Processes for ELLs with Disabilities](#)
- [Improving Instruction for English Learners Through Accessibility Decision Making \(Improving Instruction\): Training Module](#)
- [Accessibility Considerations](#)
- [CSDE Assessment Guidelines](#)
- [Special Documented Accommodations](#)
- [Resources for Planning and Placement Team/Section 504 webpage](#)
- [Assessment Resources Quick Guide for Planning and Placement/Section 504 Teams](#)



Helpful Resources

- Every Student Succeeds Act. 2015. 20 USC § 1001.
<https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>
- US Department of Education. 2017. Every Student Succeeds Act: Assessments under Title 1, Part A & Title 1, Part B: Summary of Final Regulations.
- Every Student Succeeds Act: Assessments under Title 1, Part A & Title 1, Part B: Summary of Final Regulations (2017):
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaassessmentfactsheet1207.pdf>



What is a takeaway or new learning from this training?





Follow-up Survey

- A follow-up survey will be emailed to Directors of Special Education, Superintendents of Schools, and District Administrators
- Deadline: November 25, 2025
- One submission per district



CSDE Contacts



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No one rises to low expectations.

Les Brown

“ quotefancy



A UNIVERSE OF OPPORTUNITIES



CONNECTICUT
Education

2024-2025

Thank you!!!!

For attending and all that you do
to support students!

Connecticut State
Department of Education