

# The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System: Monitoring and Assessment Supports Updates

## Performance Matters, November 7, 2025

### Transcript

#### Slide 1. The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System: Monitoring and Assessment Supports Updates

Welcome to this presentation on Monitoring and Assessment Supports Updates.

#### Slide 2. Presenters

Today's presenters include Deirdre Ducharme from the Performance Office and Ashley DiGangi from the Bureau of Special Education.

#### Slide 3. Overview of Today's Presentation

In this presentation, we are going to review federal and state legislation that supports inclusive education, providing a free and appropriate education to students with disabilities, and those that support annual testing for students registered in the Connecticut Public School System.

We will also review the state and local monitoring of student participation on alternate assessments. We will show you the different data systems available to support this work.

We will then walk you through the review of eligibility criteria on alternate assessments in addition to exploring the design and purpose of alternate assessments.

Finally, we will explore best practices for teachers and school administrators supporting students with the most significant cognitive needs. We will offer suggestions for supporting students who don't qualify for alternates.

#### Slide 4. Inclusive Education

#### Slide 5. Promoting Inclusive Education

Welcome to today's session on Monitoring and Assessment Supports Updates.

We will explore this presentation through the lens of promoting inclusive education. As educators, our ultimate goal is to foster a safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environment where every student has the opportunity to learn, grow, and reach their full potential.

The work you and your school teams do each day is essential to advancing inclusive education. Assessments play a key role in this effort by measuring learning outcomes aligned with grade-level standards. The Performance Office is here to support you by ensuring you have the tools and resources needed to provide all students with access to high-quality learning experiences.

**EdSight** and the **Centralized Reporting System** offer valuable data, including results from statewide assessments and optional interim assessments. These tools can help inform instruction and support the individualized needs of every student in your classroom.

#### Slide 6. Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education

We will take a moment to review the federal legislation that guides our work at both the state and local levels.

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities of Education Act (IDEA) requires states to make available an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) for eligible students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Moreover, IDEA requires that if a Planning and Placement Team determines that a student must take an alternate assessment, the team must include a statement in the student's IEP of why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment; and why the alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the student (34 CFR § 300.320(a)(6)(ii)).

#### Slide 7. Participation- Connecticut General Statutes 10-14n Act (IDEA)

#### Slide 8. General Principles of Inclusive Education

Here are just a few ways to ensure that we are promoting inclusive education in our classrooms and learning communities:

Each and every student is valued and fully supported.

- All students are actively engaged and participate.
- All students are supported to succeed in making academic progress (including those students who need the greatest extensive supports)
- All students are supported to build friendships and experience belonging not only in the classroom but in other aspects of their school program and community.

In addition to these assurances, IDEA and ESEA have the same goal of improving academic achievement through high expectations and high-quality programs aligned to state standards and resources for being a part of a well round education.

[TIES Belonging Resources | Creating communities of belonging for students with significant cognitive disabilities | Institute on Community Integration Publications](#)

#### Slide 9. General Principles of Inclusive Educational Practices

Use high-quality, evidence-based [Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) (MTSS) that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive

foster students'—acquisition and use of knowledge and skills; use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs; positive social emotional skills, including friendships with peers; and sense of belonging.

Recognize families as collaborative partners, experts, and engaged decision-makers in their students' lives and value and treat students with disabilities and their families with respect.

The purpose of this document is to describe how school leadership standards align with the core tenets of MTSS, providing context for the value and relevance of the framework.

#### [Slide 10. The Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)

Comprehensive inclusive education should be grounded in each of these key principles.

1. Will the student experience belonging as a member in their school and general education classroom(s)?
2. Will the student be actively participating at school across the school day?
3. Will the student be learning the grade-level general education curriculum?

The answer to each of these questions needs to be yes.

Comprehensive inclusive education should be grounded in each of these key principles:

The IEP is not the student's sole educational program, nor is it a curriculum. For each student eligible under IDEA, their educational program consists of:

- The general education curriculum
- The school's routines & activities
- The Individualized Education Program

A strong and well-designed IEP allows any educator or specialist to have a detailed understanding of the student's identified disability, barriers, and measurable goals to support instruction and learning and facilitate those important social and communicative interactions that promote the whole child.

#### [Slide 11. IEP State Assessment Section](#)

The IEP must list any designated supports or accommodations the student needs for each content area (ELA, Math, Science). These supports must already be used during classroom instruction and testing.

#### [Slide 12. Start with the End in Mind](#)

When planning for any programming for a student, we should always keep the end goal in mind for that unique individual along with the short term one-year goals that we plan within the IEP. Yet, we also want to look ahead at the needs of the students during critical transitional years, such as pre-school to elementary, elementary to middle school, middle school to secondary education, and finally post-secondary and beyond. We need to ensure we work with the entire

team, including the parents/guardian and student, by keeping the educational benefit in mind while maintaining high expectations and advocacy for our students. For some this may mean providing resources and services along the educational continuum to prepare for high school graduation, job planning or placement, or further education and training. For others, this may mean planning for transitional services and programming beyond age 22. **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.**

#### [Slide 13. Five Things to Consider When Making Decisions About Student Participation on State Alternate Assessments](#)

There are considerations to make when determining if a student should participate on an alternate assessment.

First, we need to consider the student's disability and documented need. Only children with the most significant cognitive disabilities can take an alternate assessment.

Second, the Planning and Placement Team must determine yearly at the annual which assessment is most appropriate for that student (standard or alternate) based on the student's learning profile- as evidenced throughout the IEP.

Third, if the PPT is considering an alternate assessment, they must complete the Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form, which is embedded within the IEP, to determine if there are current cognitive and functional adaptive assessment scores and other evidence to support participation.

Fourth, each member of the PPT, including the parent/guardian, must agree that the student meets eligibility criteria for taking the alternate assessment, and understand the short and long-term implications.

Fifth, all educators and support specialists should collaborate to ensure that all students are taught academic content aligned to their grade, being mindful that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may need content presented in reduced depth, breadth, and complexity. These students may need access to assistive materials, software, technology and communication or language plans to ensure access. Again, we need to think and plan with the end in mind.

#### [Slide 14. Monitoring the Participation on Alternate Assessments](#)

To orient you with the alternate assessment system, we will take a quick look at prevalence data from the 2024-25 school year.

#### [Slide 15. ESSA Requirements](#)

**The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** ensures that educators, families, students, and communities receive essential information through annual statewide assessments. These assessments measure student progress toward high academic standards.

Under the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**, states receive federal education funding to support local education agencies, with the expectation that they meet specific requirements—including the participation of all public-school students in state summative assessments.

One such requirement under ESSA is the **1.0% cap** at the state level on the percentage of students who may participate in the **Connecticut Alternate Assessment System** in any tested subject area. This percentage is calculated by dividing the number of students taking the Connecticut Alternate Assessments in a subject (math, ELA, or science) by the total number of students tested in that subject statewide.

While it is important for Connecticut to monitor and comply with guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, the **Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)** remains committed to supporting districts. This includes providing guidance on critical areas such as making appropriate eligibility determinations for alternate assessments.

Please view this presentation as an opportunity for the CSDE to offer clarification and support to help guide your important work.

#### Slide 16. Connecticut's Approach to Supporting Districts

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) continually reviews the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) screening process for determining eligibility for the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System. The Eligibility Form, embedded within CT-SEDS, has remained a consistent tool that requires teams to review cognitive and adaptive behavior assessment data within the triennial evaluation period to ensure students meet the established criteria. Eligibility must be reviewed annually in CT-SEDS, and teams must plan for participation in state assessments for all grades covered by the duration of the student's IEP.

Additionally, educators who administer alternate assessments are required to complete annual training. This year, training will be available in early November and will be offered in a self-paced format. Each session focuses on a specific component of the system, including eligibility determination, test design for the Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA) in Math and ELA, the Connecticut Alternate Science (CTAS) Assessment, and strategies for supporting students with complex communication and behavioral needs.

A variety of recorded training sessions are available on the CSDE portal, covering topics related to alternate assessments, accessibility features, and accommodations.

You'll also find a wide range of resources on the Alternate Assessment System webpages to support teams in understanding eligibility requirements, assessment procedures, and frequently asked questions. Links to many of these resources are included at the end of this presentation.

### Slide 17. Public EdSight

Use EdSight to track participation and trend performance data for all your students.

Non-confidential assessment results are publicly reported through EdSight. This is an interactive web site that integrates important school and district information collected by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) that serves as a single source for all data-driven analysis and reporting. The CTAA results, along with the results for the Connecticut Alternate Science Assessment (CTAS), can be accessed via these paths:

On the EdSight home page, select the Assessment tab from the top header, then choose Alternate Assessment from the drop-down menu.

- The Alternate Assessment main page includes an interactive report for viewing ELA and Math data. Users can filter by grade, year, district/school, subject, and student demographics.
- Users can also view year specific CTAS data by school and district via an Excel file. Due to the small number of students taking these assessments, small groups are suppressed. Individual data is available on the Centralized Reporting System, which we will view in a few moments.

### Slide 18. EdSight Secure

<https://secure-edsight.ct.gov/>

Available to authorized district-level users.

When viewing the CTAA on EdSight, the reports that can be utilized to review ELA and math results are interactive.

Data available for individual LEA Districts and their associated schools; not available at the ASEP level.

### Slide 19. EdSight Secure: Searching by Group or Individual

EdSight Secure: Searching by Group or Individual

On this page of EdSight Secure, high-level district users can search for schools within their district. Authorized users can also search by SASID, as shown on this slide. When searching by SASID, the student's current school of enrollment will appear at the bottom of the dashboard, as shown on this slide.

### Slide 20. EdSight Secure: Student Search

When looking at this individual dashboard, you will see that the Early Indicator, shown on the upper right of the dashboard, has three categories: green (or on target), orange (needs support), and red (high need). This student requires a high level of need. Select from any of the tabs on the top header to view specific data associated with Enrollment History, Attendance History, Discipline History, Assessment History, LAS Links History, Course History and Resources.

To view the student's historical assessment data, choose Assessment History from the top header. Data results span from when the student first took the state assessment as a third grader in 2020-21 to the most recent data results from the 2024-25 school year: This information is useful to teachers and educators as one indicator for tracking growth and determining student performance across years.

#### [Slide 21. EdSight Secure: Student Longitudinal Performance](#)

This is an example of the longitudinal performance data available for this student on the CTAA.

Refer to the CTAA Performance-Level Scale Score Ranges by Content Area and Grade to map the range the student's scale score falls within.

#### [CTAA-Guide-for-Score-Report-Interpretation.pdf](#)

The CTAA tests student performance in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics based on alternate achievement standards. The student's performance on the CTAA is reported by a scale score for each content area, as well as by performance level. Scale scores are reported for each student on the Individual Student Report (ISR).

The CTAA scores may be used in conjunction with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) progress reports and with report cards to evaluate the student's performance on academic content and skills. The scores can inform planning for instruction that is aligned with the Connecticut Core Standards. The Connecticut Core Standards can be used to assist the teacher in interpreting the student's scores in relation to the standards and in planning standards-based instruction. Student CTAA scores should not be used in isolation when making program or placement decisions about students.

CTAS Performance-Level Scale Scores are available on the portal: [Guide for CTAS Score Report Interpretation](#)

#### Slide 22. A Historical Trajectory of Student Participation on Alternate Assessments

To orient you with the alternate assessment system, we will take a quick look at prevalence data from the 2024-25 school year. This report was generated in EdSight and shows a small increase in student participation on the 2024-25 alternate assessments.

The 2024-25 data shows an increase in student participation on alternates closer to the 2018-19 rates...

Participation rates from 2016-17 are much higher, but at that point in time, teachers used the Learner Characteristics Inventory to determine eligibility for participation on alternate assessments.

#### [Slide 23: 2024-25 Student Participation by Disability Category](#)

Here is the percent of students by disability category taking the Connecticut Alternate Assessments. Highlighted in yellow are those categories that are questionable for eligibility

since they do not fall within the expected criteria to meet criteria for the most significant cognitive disability. Districts should conduct their own analysis of participation data by disability category to identify any questionable determinations or need to review an individual IEP for more information.

Students identified as ADD/ADHD, Emotional Disability, Learning Disability, and Speech/Language Impairments should participate on standard assessments with the provision of accommodations and assistive technology, if appropriate.

#### [\*\*Slide 24: 2024-25 Participation by Demographic Categories\*\*](#)

Here are the 2024-25 statewide participation calculations on alternate assessments by student demographics. What stands out? How might this demographic data look for your district?

#### [\*\*Slide 25: 2024-25 Performance by Subject, Grade, and Performance Category\*\*](#)

This report can be generated from EdSight. Again, districts are encouraged to generate these reports for their local schools to monitor student cohort performance on assessments. The last column in the table shows the average scale score. Refer to the CTAA Interpretative Guide to determine the range and description that aligns to the scale score.

Based on the data, less than 95% students eligible for alternate assessments take the assessments. Participation rates are as low as 85% in Grade 11. What does this data look like locally in your district?

Also look at the percent of students performing in each grade across performance categories. Notice the percent of students reaching Level 4. When reviewing data locally, it might be worth determining if the student should be reconsidered to participate on the standard assessments. Performance levels should help teams align instructional goals and present levels of performance in the IEP to further identify a student's specific goals and objectives.

#### [\*\*Slide 26: Centralized Reporting System\*\*](#)

Located on the Connecticut Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal, the Centralized Reporting System is available to district and school administrators that have a TIDE user account with associated permissions. This system allows administrators to view individual and aggregate school/district results for Smarter Balanced and NGSS summative and interim assessments, and alternate assessment data including the summative CAAELP, CTAA, and CTAS.

#### [\*\*Slide 27: Centralized Reporting System: Assessment Dashboard\*\*](#)

Here we see the CRS dashboard for students that took the alternate assessments during the 2024-25 school year. The image shows that the user can drill-down and look at high-level performance data by tested area. As a first glance, the data tells me which grades students in my district took the alternate assessments: Grades 3-6, 8, and 11. It also tells me the count and percent of students for applicable performance categories for math and ELA. CTAS is not shown here, but it would be available on the user's dashboard for those students that took the alternate science in Grades 5, 8, and 11.

[Slide 28. Centralized Reporting System](#): Group and Individual Performance

The CRS allows users to search aggregate data at the district or individual school or roster-level (if applicable), or drill down to the individual level.

Shown on this slide, the alternate science data is available by district, school, and roster. It provides the student count, average score, points possible, performance distribution, and specific performance for each science performance task. The image also shows a student's Individual Report for science. All ISRs can be downloaded and printed from CRS. Data can also be downloaded into an Excel file for further data analysis. Are your classroom teachers and TEAs using this data to help identify strengths and weaknesses in the area of science? Are teams using this data to determine alignment with curriculum and instructional expectations? If not, the possibilities are quite powerful. For example, educators can look at district, school, roster level data for each item across the 6 Performance Tasks. Which items or tasks did students struggle? Which items or areas of science were students most successful? How can this information be used to inform instruction?

[Slide 29. Centralized Reporting System](#): CTAA Math and ELA ISR

Here is an image of a student's Individual Report for the CTAA. It shows the student's scale score and performance category for math and ELA as compared to the student's school.

[Slide 30. Review of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System: The Design, Purpose, and Eligibility Criteria](#)

To orient you with the alternate assessment system, we will take a quick look at prevalence data from the 2024-25 school year.

[Slide 31: Pyramid of Connecticut's Statewide Assessment](#)

We are now going to briefly discuss the purpose for alternate assessments.

Most students enrolled in the Connecticut Public Schools will participate on standard assessments. As indicated by the bottom tier of this pyramid, a variety of accessibility supports are available to all students on statewide assessments.

For those students with IEPs/Section 504 Plans, a variety of embedded and non-embedded accommodations are available on statewide assessments, as indicated by the middle tier. At the top tier, the smallest percent of students, one percent or less, will participate on alternate assessments.

Image of the Pyramid of Connecticut's Statewide Assessment System. The bottom tier shows the state's standard assessments. The middle tier shows that students can access the standard assessments with accommodations. The top tier shows the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System with a goal that 1% or less of the state's total tested population will participate on alternate assessments.

### Slide 32: Design of the Alternate Assessment

The Connecticut Alternate Assessment System is designed to measure the knowledge and skills of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities as required by the IDEA and ESSA. They support student independence to the greatest extent possible by making academic and language content accessible and the expected achievement levels appropriate. These assessments adjust for the depth, or cognitive complexity of skills and abilities, within the grade level standards. The assessments measure fewer standards, and the content adjusts for difficulty and is scaffolded to support the diverse range of accessibility needs within this student population.

Additional Information:

Depth- refers to how much of a single skill is measured by an item; for example, a deeper level item may address both description and dialogue narrative techniques whereas an item of less depth may only address description.

Breadth- refers to the scope or range of the content standards covered by the items in the AA-AAAS. In some cases, the AA-AAAS may cover the same content standards as the general assessment (perhaps, the essence of those standards).

Complexity-refers specifically to the format of the passages, items, tasks with built in scaffolding (documented in the secure Directions for Test Administration- applicable to the CTAA Math and ELA; and the CTAS Performance Task script read by the teacher).

### Slide 33. The Alternate Assessment Incorporates...

The combination of accessibility features, optimal testing conditions, and accommodations are incorporated within the alternate assessment design and are intended to maximize students' test access and performance.

Additional Information:

Connecticut Alternate Assessments are designed to include:

- optimal testing conditions that must be provided to all students who take the test;
- accessibility features that must be provided to students as needed; and
- accommodations that students must receive as specified in their IEPs.

### Slide 34. The Alternate Assessment is Comprised of Three Assessments

Nearly all students with disabilities should be expected to make academic progress measured against grade-level achievement standards.

All Connecticut public school students are expected to be provided instruction aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards. The subtests within the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System are derived from the CCS, NGSS, or CELP standards.

#### Additional Information:

The CTAA assesses grade-level content linked to and derived from the CCS, which are the academic standards for English language arts and mathematics expected for all Connecticut students. The IEP goals and objectives should be based on the general education curriculum defined in the CCS for all Connecticut students. The CTAA has been developed to ensure that all eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities are able to participate in an assessment that is a measure of what they know and can do in relation to the grade-level CCS.

Similarly, eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 5, 8, and 11 are assessed in science using the CTAS, which is aligned to the grade-level NGSS allowing students to access the content and demonstrate what they know and can do related to grade-level science standards.

Finally, eligible students who are identified as EL/ML in the public school system are expected to demonstrate their English language proficiency skills annually. The CELP standards describe the language necessary for students to complete grade-appropriate tasks, while continually developing English proficiency. Content aligned to and derived from the CELP standards define the tested domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The IEP goals and objectives include supports for English language development for these eligible students. The CAAELP assessment provides eligible students identified as EL/ML with significant cognitive disabilities the ability to participate in an assessment that measures what they know and can do in relation to the CELP standards.

#### [Slide 35. Eligibility in CT-SEDS](#)

To determine eligibility, PPTs will complete the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form located within CT-SEDS.

Teams will select the District and State testing tile to locate this form. Once on this tile, in the state testing portion, they will see this question “Is the student being considered for participation in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System?”

Teams can print out a hard copy Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form from the portal to use as a planning tool to facilitate discussions and aid in determining eligibility.

#### [Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form](#)

#### [Slide 36. Eligibility in CT-SEDS, Continued](#)

If the student is being considered for participation in the alternate assessment, the team will select “yes” and save the record. Then, the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form will populate on the page (as shown on this slide).

The PPT must review and complete the eligibility form as part of the annual PPT process. If based on substantiated evidence, the student qualifies for the assessment, the team will select the Verification box and save. When the IEP is finalized and implemented, the alternate

assessment data will sync to TIDE by populating the Alternate Assessment Indicator on the student's TIDE dashboard.

### [Slide 37. Characteristics of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#)

### [Slide 38. The Alternate Assessment Criteria](#)

As stated by federal law and regulations, only those students who have the "most significant cognitive disabilities" should participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System. But what does "the most significant cognitive disabilities" really mean? We need to explore this in more depth because there is **no special education category** of "most significant cognitive disability."

Teams need to ensure that eligibility is not based on a student's IDEA disability category, EL/ML status, previous low achievement, or the need for accessibility features to access general summative assessments.

Because not all students who have an intellectual disability meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability, teams need to be aware of accessibility features that may provide them access to general state summative assessments. If teams have questions regarding this, please reach out to the CSDE.

#### Additional Information:

One of the things that we know is that most of the students who do appropriately participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System have the IDEA categorical labels of intellectual disabilities, autism, and multiple disabilities **BUT** it is critical to remember that **not all** of the students with these labels should be assigned to the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System.

### [Slide 39. What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities?](#)

Another thing that we know is that many of the students who do appropriately participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System come to kindergarten already having been identified for special education services to support their intellectual and functional adaptive behavior dynamic needs. Of course, **not all** of these students should take the Connecticut Alternate Assessments. Once again, we need to consider the continuum of services and the student's unique learning profile.

Students may often use augmentative communication devices or assistive technology for access to their environment, daily living, and instruction. Communication and assistive technology should be considered from Pre-K and beyond, even if communication is at the "cause and effect" or low-tech levels.

These characteristics should be documented and evident in the student's programming and throughout the IEP.

#### Additional Information:

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are a relatively small population who: (1) are identified with one or more of the existing categories of disability under the IDEA (for example: intellectually disabled, autism, multiple disabilities, and traumatic brain injury, which are the most common); and (2) have cognitive impairments that may prevent them from attaining grade-level achievement standards, even with systematic instruction and accommodations. Additionally, student records indicate a pervasive disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and functional adaptive behavior defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.

[Slide 40. What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities, continued?](#)

Additionally, the following characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities will need to be reviewed and documented as part of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form.

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

As you can tell from what we know, the decision about which students should participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System is often a very difficult decision.

[Slide 41. An In-Depth Look at Eligibility Criteria](#)

[Slide 42. Eligibility Criteria #1 Identification Under IDEA](#)

Although, there is no federal restriction on the primary disability category for participation in an alternate assessment, students with certain disability categories (for example intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, autism, or traumatic brain injury) are more likely to meet eligibility criteria.

[Slide 43. Eligibility Criteria #1 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.

In the absence of cognitive assessments, the PPT must determine there is evidence throughout other areas of the plan that substantiates a significant cognitive disability.

Also shown on this slide is a list of Cognitive Assessments commonly used. Refer to the Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form for details.

[Slide 44. Eligibility Criteria #2 Student has functional adaptive behavior skills well below age-level expectations.](#)

Next, the PPT must determine that the student has functional adaptive behavior skills well below age-level expectations. What does this mean?

- Functional adaptive behavior is defined as those conceptual, social, and practical skills necessary to meet the common demands of everyday life across multiple settings.
- Functional adaptive scores should be more than 1.5 standard deviations below the mean score.
- Assessment results should be within 3 years of the triennial IEP.

The most common functional adaptive behavior assessments include:

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

As referenced in the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Section 9: Assessments, these assessments should be the most current edition available.

If "Other" is selected, DO NOT use assessments or associated composite scores that do not measure broad functional adaptive behavior skills for the purpose of this alternate assessment eligibility criteria (e.g., Assessment of Basic Language and Learning, Autism Behavior Rating Scale, Autistic Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Behavior Assessment System for Children, file review, or observations would not be appropriate for this purpose).

When "Other" is selected, the team should specify the full name of the functional adaptive behavior skill assessment, recognizing these will be identified for additional CSDE monitoring. Additionally, teams must ensure that the evaluations address the degree for which a student's second language acquisition or sensory disability affects the validity and reliability of test findings for a student who is EL/ML, Deaf/Blind, Hearing or Visually Impaired.

[Slide 45. Eligibility Criteria #3 Student requires intensive instruction and significant supports.](#)

Finally, the team must determine that the 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.

The PPT can provide evidence that the student has IEP goals and objectives linked to (and derived from) the Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which are the academic standards for English language arts, mathematics, and science in Connecticut. For students identified as EL/ML the PPT can provide evidence that the student has IEP goals that support English language development linked to (and derived from) the Connecticut English Language Proficiency (CELP) Standards. To access these standards, students are typically provided repeated access to content in a systematic manner, across multiple settings and subject areas, allowing these students greater opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do. Supports are individualized and evidenced throughout the student's IEP, particularly in the student's present levels of performance, goals and objectives, accommodations, and related service needs. Students who do not require extensive, repeated, and individualized instruction, and do not use substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curricula, are expected to take Connecticut's standard assessments with designated supports, accommodations, and assistive technology (if applicable) as indicated in the student's IEP.

#### [Slide 46. Additional Alternate Eligibility Considerations](#)

#### [Slide 47. When There is Insufficient Evidence to Meet Eligibility Criteria](#)

For students with cognitive disabilities that have average or slightly below average functional adaptive skills, or those that do not meet the cognitive eligibility criteria, plan to administer the standard assessment.

What are the access points used for the student to access their instruction within the learning environment?

Trial Practice Tests with appropriate supports and accommodations to:

- Explicitly familiarize the student with the test format, platform, and available embedded tools, designated supports and accommodations.
- Show the student how to use them.
- Work with the student to determine which supports are helpful versus those that are not.
- Trial assistive technology or communication devices with the test to check functionality and student access needs.

#### [Slide 48. When to Reconsider Eligibility for the Alternate Assessment](#)

- When to Reconsider Eligibility for the Alternate Assessment
- As teams, when revisiting the student's eligibility status reconsider the following:
  - Has the student participated in standard assessments in the past?
  - Is the disability category SLD, SLD/Dyslexia, or ED?

- If the reason provided is or is similar to statements such as...
  - “they are in a life skills class” or
  - “they are in the self-contained class” or
  - “they are in the alternate assessment class” or
  - Or anything having to do with “behaviors” as the primary issue.
- Then teams will need to return to the **annotated eligibility form to ensure appropriateness**.
- If you are a PPT Chair, a member of the PPT, or an Administrator, and you are hearing these comments, these should act as a red flag for you. Consider reviewing the decisions to assess certain students with alternate assessments.

#### Slide 49. When to Reconsider Eligibility for the Alternate Assessment, Continued

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 demonstrates functional adaptive behaviors necessary for the student to live independently and function safely in daily life for their age group.
- The student **never** took the alternate assessment and then, in middle or high school, they do.

#### Slide 50. Best Practices for Administrators

We have compiled a list of some best practices for districts to consider that can support the process of accurate identification for the Alternate Assessment. Many of these recommendations are drawn from a survey of several districts in which they were asked to share their best practices for special education teachers and PPTs.

When a district is given notice of exceeding the 1% threshold, administrators or IEP file reviewers should consider:

- Conducting file reviews of individuals identified for the Alternate Assessment
- Reviewing for accurate completion of the eligibility form as designed
- Using the Annotated Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form as reference
- Training of PPT Chairs
- Continually training to adjust for staff turnover rates
- Engaging families through communication regarding the process where appropriate, sharing the forms, and considering parent training

### Slide 51. 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.

### Slide 52. Best Practices for Creating Inclusive Education

- Create and communicate a vision for inclusive educational practices.
- Build professional knowledge and capacity and collaborative partnerships across educator specialties (e.g., general and special education, English Learner/Multilingual Learner educators, school counselors, related service specialists) – we all have an accountability to create inclusive communities!
- Create a master schedule that supports implementation of inclusive educational practices.
- Engage in data-driven improvement strategies.
- Prioritize collaborative communication, visibility, transparency with families.

### Slide 53. Tips for Identifying Participation on Alternate Assessments

1. Understand Participation Criteria.
2. Gather evidence on each criteria based on evaluations and using documentation in the IEP across
  - Multiple sources,
  - Multiple years, and
  - Multiple settings.
3. Document evidence using the embedded CT Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form.

### Slide 54. Data Monitoring

1. Carefully review your local participation data (See EdSight) at each grade, subject per school.
2. Review local practices for identifying assessments appropriate for students with disabilities.
3. If your district exceeds 1% participation, identify and address the possible root causes for high participation in the alternate assessments.
4. Require assurances with PPT members to ensure their adherence to the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System eligibility guidance.
5. Provide assurances to communicate with parents/guardians about implications for their child's participation on alternate assessments.
6. 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.

### Slide 55. SERC Training

The CT State Education Resource Center, in collaboration with the CT State Department of Education, is pleased to offer free in-district training and technical assistance in Universal Design for Learning, Assistive Technology, and Accessible Educational Materials. Within these categories, we also offer training on ethical integration and use of AI and AI tools for educators and students, Google Suite Tools and iOS devices and apps.

For more information, please contact:

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### Slide 56. Resources

[Slide 57. Resources from National Organizations](#)

[Slide 58. Resources for Determining Eligibility](#)

[Slide 59. Resources for Teams to Support Eligibility and Accessibility for State Assessments](#)

[Slide 60. Alternate Assessment Score Reports and Interpretative Guides](#)

[Slide 61. Resources that Support Access to Participation and Performance Data](#)

[Slide 62. ESSA Resources](#)

[Slide 63. CSDE Contacts](#)

[Slide 64. Thank you for Your Participation](#)