

Overview of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System

Slide 1: Overview of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System

Welcome to this presentation on an overview of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System.

Slide 2: Presenters

Today's presenters include Deirdre Ducharme and Katie Seifert from the Performance Office.

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 then walk you through the review of eligibility criteria on the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System in addition to exploring the design and purpose of alternate assessments.

Then we will review the rare occurrences where a student may not be able to access a specific portion of the CAAELP or the entire CTAA for Math and ELA and CTAS (if applicable) due to the significant and complex nature of their learning profile.

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 as well as provide a range of resources for teachers and school/district leadership.

Slide 4: Inclusive Education

No script.

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.

Slide 6: Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

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

There are no exemptions from state testing and parents cannot opt out. Full participation in these tests by all students in Connecticut is very important so that the results represent not only the state, districts, and schools but student groups within each of those levels. High-quality results can be used for planning and decision-making. For these reasons, both federal and state laws require all public-school districts to administer these tests each year to all students in certain grades and subjects. These laws have been in effect for many years, and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and all public-school districts must comply.

Slide 8: General Principles of Inclusive Education

We all know the importance of inclusion for our students. 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-rounded 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

Using high-quality, evidence-based [Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) (MTSS) that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive foster students' acquisition, generalization, and use of knowledge and skills. This also leads to the application and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs in positive social emotional skills, including friendships with peers, and sense of belonging.

It is important that teams recognize families as collaborative partners, experts, and engaged with them as decision-makers in their students' lives, as well as value and treat students with disabilities and their families with respect.

The purpose of this document shared on this slide 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: IEP State Assessment Section

When teams are meeting part of the decision making that occurs is around district and state testing. In relation to this, the IEP must determine which assessment the student will be participating in as well as list any designated supports or accommodations the student needs for each content area (ELA, Math, Science) and if applicable English Language Proficiency Assessments. These supports must already be used regularly during classroom instruction and testing to provide the student with access.

Slide 11: 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 12: 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 13: Review of Alternate Assessment System: The Design, Purpose, and Eligibility Criteria

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 14: 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 pyramid shown on this slide, a variety of accessibility supports are available to all students on statewide assessments.

The bottom tier shows the state's standard assessments. A variety of universal tools and designated supports are available to all students based on individual student need and educator team determination. The middle tier shows that students with IEPs and Section 504 Plans 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 15: Optimal Testing Conditions for All

Alternate Assessments incorporate 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 IEP.

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

The CTAA and CAAELP are online, while the CTAS is a paper, performance task-based assessment. Each assessment may be accessed in a variety of formats based on the diverse needs of the student.

The content of the CTAA for both English language arts and mathematics is designed to be read aloud to all participating students. The TEA reads the item, response options, and passages as often as is reasonable to obtain a student's response to an item. All text must be read to students exactly as written. The TEA may not paraphrase or vary speed to emphasize words in ways that hint at correct or incorrect responses.

Generally, students may access the test items by:

- Listening to the trained teacher read the test;
- Reading the test question independently if the trained teacher determines this is appropriate;
- Having the test question signed by a qualified trained educator; or
- Listening to a recorded voice read the test question (applicable to the online CTAA and CAAELP only).

Review the CTAA System User Guide and the Test Administration Manuals (available for the CTAA, CTAS, and CAAELP) (available on the Connecticut Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal) to determine how to activate/use accessibility features if needed.

Slide 16: The Design of Alternate Assessments: How Students Respond

Accommodations are changes in the materials or procedures of the assessment that do not alter the construct being measured. A student may use the accommodations that are in their IEP that are consistent with the policies associated with the CTAA, CTAS, and CAAELP. TEAs should refer to the Supplementary Aids and Services section in the plan for more information on the student's accessibility supports throughout instruction to determine accommodations that may be needed by the student.

There are a variety of ways a TEA can administer the alternate assessments so that they are accessible using the mode of communication used by the student.

For example, assistive technology can be used in conjunction with the test delivery interface when administering the CTAA and CAAELP. Permissive mode must be activated in the student's TIDE account and the functionality should be tested using a practice test before the student participates in summative testing.

A paper version of the CTAA may be downloaded and printed from TIDE and made available to the student if it is a more appropriate format than the online test platform. As a reminder, the TEA will transcribe the student responses from the paper test into the test delivery interface in order to submit and process the student's test.

The TEA typically reads and scribes all portions of the test as needed by the student as defined by the associated testing materials applicable to each test. For example, teachers will follow the script in the Directions for Test Administration for CTAA and CAAELP and follow the script as documented in the required CTAS test materials.

The TEA may also administer the assessment using sign language if that is an appropriate accommodation in the student's IEP.

Slide 17: 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.

It is not an alternate curriculum.

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).

Slide 18: 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 CELF standards.

Slide 19: Eligibility for the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System (CTAA, CTAS, CAAELP)

No Script.

Slide 20: Eligibility in CT-SEDS

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

The team 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?” This question applies to CTAA, CTAS, and CAAELP.

Please note, teams can print out a hard copy [Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form](#) or the [Annotated Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form](#) from the portal to use as a planning tool to facilitate discussions and aid in determining eligibility.

Slide 21: 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 with current data. If based on substantiated evidence, the student qualifies for the assessment, the team will select the Verification box and save. In upcoming slides will be discussing the criteria and evidence that teams will need to consider and provide on this form.

Slide 22: Alternate Data Sync from CT-SEDS to TIDE

Once the PPT completes and verifies this form as part of the PPT process, and the IEP and Connecticut Alternate Assessment Form is both finalized and implemented, CT-SEDS will sync to TIDE. This is an example of what the student's test setting dashboard looks like in TIDE once the Alternate Assessment Indicator is set to "Yes". Please note and remind your teams that the sync from CT-SEDS to TIDE can take up to 48 hours after the plan has been finalized and implementation date in CT-SEDS. Therefore, Teams will want to ensure they know and plan for this and are aware of the CSDE testing windows.

Slide 23: Characteristics of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

We are now going to go into the factors that relate to eligibility for the Alternate Assessment System.

Slide 24: 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.

Slide 25: What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities?

One 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 specific intellectual and functional adaptive behavior 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.

Slide 26: What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities? -Continued

Here are the criteria for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that we will be discussing in more detail.

- Students are identified with one or more of the existing categories of disability under the IDEA.
- Students have a significant intellectual impairment.
- Functional adaptive skills are well below age level expectations.
- Students require intensive instruction and significant supports.

For students with the most complex characteristics who do not have an established mode of communication, Teams can refer to the [Early Stopping Rule](#) guidelines.

Slide 27: An In-Depth Look at Eligibility Criteria

Here are two resources administrators, PPT chairs, and Special Education Teams should have and review in relation to the eligibility for the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System.

- [Annotated Connecticut Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form](#)
- [2025-2026 Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form](#)

Slide 28: 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.

Please note, although there is no federal restriction on primary disability category and participation, there are several disabilities that may not have evidence supporting a significant cognitive disability that is pervasive in nature. IDEA requires that intellectual factors/impairments be ruled out to qualify for special education services under the categories of a specific learning disability (SLD), specific learning disability dyslexia (SLD/Dyslexia), or emotional disability.

Therefore, students with these disability criteria types typically would not participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System unless there is evidence to substantiate the presence of a significant cognitive disability.

Students with SLD, SLD/Dyslexia, and Emotional Disabilities typically participate on standard statewide assessments with designated supports, accommodations, and assistive technology (if applicable).

The CSDE monitors disability categories along with all criteria requested for eligibility determination for the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System, so it's important that PPTs carefully review participation criteria and evidence throughout the plan before making a determination for testing.

Slide 29: Eligibility Criteria #2 Student has an Intellectual Impairment.

First, the team must establish 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.

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. This may be other assessment measures such as VBMAPPs.

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

Slide 30: Eligibility Criteria #3 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.

Slide 31: Eligibility Criteria #4 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. 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 32: What is the Early Stopping Rule (ESR) and Student Response Check (SRC)?

No Script.

Slide 33: What is the Early Stopping Rule?

Generally, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be able to participate in the CTAA for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in Grades 3–8 and 11, and science if the student is enrolled in Grades 5, 8, or 11, and the Connecticut Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment (CAAELP) if the student is designated as an English learner/multilingual learner (EL/ML). These alternate assessments are designed specifically for these students.

However, the CSDE developed a process called the Early Stopping Rule (ESR) for a very small subset of students that have not yet established a mode of communication. The guidance in this training applies to the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System only for the purpose of determining if a student has the necessary observable communication skills to participate fully on alternate assessments.

Slide 34: General Characteristics of Eligible Students

We are now going to review general characteristics of students that typically meet the qualifications for an ESR.

Typically, the students who are eligible for the ESR are those students who require the most complex support for their needs even when compared to their peers with significant cognitive disabilities also participating in the alternate assessments.

Often, these students do not use oral speech, nor do they have an established communication system even through the use of assistive technology (low or high tech). Goals may include learning cause and effect to utilize augmentative or alternative communication supports. These students do not currently use objects or textures, regularized gestures, pictures, signs, etc., to communicate with consistency. They may

demonstrate uncertain response to sensory stimuli and their IEPs often focus on medical and functional academic needs. Additionally, the IEP should also document goals that support the development of the student's communication.

Slide 35: The ESR Guidelines

The purpose of the ESR is for teachers to identify students that may qualify before the onset of the testing window as students approved will not take the alternate assessments since they meet the ESR criteria. TEAs should:

- Review the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Early Stopping Rule and Student Response Check guidelines as early in the school year as possible.
- Note timelines for screening eligible students.
- Ensure that all paperwork is completed, signed, and submitted to District Administrators by published deadlines. Incomplete or incorrect forms will be denied approval.

Slide 36: What is the ESR process?

Specifically designed for the Connecticut Alternate Assessments, trained TEAs will follow the guidance outlined on the Early Stopping Rule document, they will administer a three-item Student Response Check (SRC) (included in Appendix A) to the student who do not have an observable mode of communication to respond to instruction. This must be completed in an individual setting.

The SRC is a content-neutral screener that applies to all alternate assessments including the CTAA, CTAS, and the CAAELP.

The administration of the SRC confirms the observation of the student's mode of communication. The purpose is to determine if the student can indicate a response using their preferred method of communication. It is NOT necessary that the student respond correctly to any of the items.

The SRC should be administered individually to the student a total of three times, on three different days, and at various times of the day, between **December 1, 2025, and January 5, 2026 (CAAELP)** and **December 1, 2025, and February 2, 2026 (CTAA and/or CTAS)**.

Slide 37: SRC and ESR Submission Deadlines

TEAs, Special Education Directors and DAs need to be aware of the SRC and ESR submission deadlines.

Submission and deadlines for each year can be found on the Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Early Stopping Rule and Student Response Check website.

As stated in the previous slide, incomplete and late submissions will be denied.

Here are the deadlines:

- For TEAs: Administer three trials of the SRC between December 1, 2025-January 5, 2026, for CAAELP and/or administer three trials of the SRC between December 1, 2025- February 2, 2026, for the CTAA/CTAS. For eligible students, submit the SRC Notes and Signed ESR Request and Attestation Form to the DA no later than January 5, 2026 (for CAAELP) and by February 2, 2026 (for CTAA and CTAS).
- For DAs: Submit the SRC and ESR Request and Attestation Form through TIDE by January 12, 2026, for CAAELP, and March 2, 2026, for CTAA/CTAS.

Slide 38: CAAELP Domain Exemptions

No Script.

Slide 39: CAAELP Domain Exemptions- Eligibility

A small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may be unable to participate in the Listening or Speaking Domains of the Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP) because of the complexities of their disability. Domain Exemptions are available on the Listening and/or Speaking subtests for the following students:

- Students who are identified as D/deaf or hard of hearing may not be able to participate in the Listening subtest due to this disability.
- Students who are non-verbal/non-speaking or unintelligible and, even when provided with assistive technology (AT) or augmentative and alternate communication supports (AAC), may not be able to participate in the Speaking subtest.

These Domain exemptions are **not** documented in the IEP. Starting in December each year before the CAAELP administration, special education teams should review the student's current learning profile to see if they meet eligibility for a domain exemption based on the guidance provided in the CAAELP Domain Exemption Guidance Document.

Slide 40: Additional Alternate Eligibility Considerations

No Script.

Slide 41: 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, PPTs will need to plan to administer the standard assessment with allowable accessibility features.

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 42: Addressing Assumptions and Changing the Paradigms

No Script.

Slide 43: 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 44: 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 45: Tips and Best Practices for Administrators and PPT Teams

No Script.

Slide 46: 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. This includes ensuring data is current and from sources that accurately measure what is being asked for as evidence.
- Using the Annotated Connecticut Alternate Assessment System Eligibility Form as reference to help in review and for supporting teams.
- Training of PPT Chairs on the specific eligibility criteria for the Alternate Assessment and the potential implications.
- Continually training to adjust for staff turnover rates on eligibility, participation (ESR and Domain Exemptions), and other resources available if students with cognitive disabilities do not meet the eligibility requirements.
- Engaging families through communication regarding the process where appropriate, sharing the forms and CSDE parent resources, and considering parent training.

Slide 47: Best Practices for Administrators, Continued

- Provide opportunities to engage families in discussions regarding appropriate identification and eligibility for the alternate assessment. Families may not be aware of the eligibility requirements, implications or allowable accessibility features that may provide access to the standard summative assessments. Teams should take time to review this with families, so they are an informed team member.
- Hold office hours, team meetings, or mini trainings for PPT staff including building administration and general education counterparts, on alternate eligibility criteria. This doesn't have to be only for new staff. Remember recalibration and engaging in meaningful discussions on eligibility and outcomes for students should happen regularly to keep looking at how we need to adjust based on student development.
- Communicate and share resources for teachers and administration on preparing students to participate on standard assessments if they do not meet alternate eligibility criteria.

It is especially important to be proactive and look at these recommendations as a special education administrator.

Slide 48: Best Practices for Special Education Teachers and PPTs

Here are some tips and best practices to share with Special Education Staff and PPTs.

- Communicate with parents/guardians on summative assessments and eligibility. Provide parents with CSDE resources for parents on the Alternate Assessment System. If students are not eligible for the Alternate Assessment System share accessibility supports and how their child will have access to participate.
- Carefully consider the possible global impact of placing a student on an alternate assessment. How this might impact not only current but future planning for the student.
- Thoroughly review and verify correct and current student alternate eligibility data in IEP. It is important teams are using current data and evaluation results to support this eligibility. If teams need additional information to make this determination this should be a PPT discussion.
- Review evidence and eligibility criteria at annual PPT; do not automatically accept decision from previous year. Teams should review all data including past summative assessment results to determine if a student continues to be eligible. Team should not be in the practice of assigning eligibility on past years performance.

- 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. Teams need to ensure that scores are accurately represented on the form. Teams should only be using numerical composite scores and not score descriptions or subtests.
- Attend trainings, office hours, and have team meetings on eligibility criteria for alternate assessments.

Slide 49: Best Practices for Creating Inclusive Education

We know that your goal as an administrator is always to improve student outcomes and inclusion. We wanted to also share with you these recommendations to support you and your students.

- Continue to create and communicate a vision for inclusive educational practices. When leadership messages this regularly and believes in this, others will follow.
- Help to build professional knowledge and capacity and collaborative partnerships across educator specialties (e.g., central office and building administration, general and special education teachers, English Learner/Multilingual Learner educators, school counselors, related service specialists) – we all have an accountability to create inclusive communities! Remember all students are Tier 1 students first.
- Work with building leaders and educational teams to create a master schedule that supports implementation of inclusive educational practices.
- Engage in data-driven improvement strategies to increase student outcomes.
- Prioritize collaborative communication, visibility, transparency with families.
- Engage in and promote asset-based mindsets and student first language through modeling and training.

Slide 50: Resources

In the last few slides, we have for you diverse grouping of resources to support you and your teams.

Slide 51: Resources from National Organizations

No Script.

Slide 52: Resources for Determining Eligibility

No Script.

Slide 53: Resources for Teams to Support Eligibility and Accessibility for State Assessments

No Script.

Slide 54: Alternate Assessment Score Reports and Interpretative Guides

No Script.

Slide 55: ESSA Resources

No Script.

Slide 56: Contacts

Here are your CSDE Performance office Student Assessment Contacts. Please reach out to us with any questions. We are here to support you and your teams.

Slide 57: Thank You for Your Participation!

No Script.