

# How the Alternate Educational Framework Decision is Made



## Who is Eligible?

In the Alternate Education Framework, eligibility for participation is not based on a student's disability but rather on their *cognitive, academic, and adaptive performance* at school. This framework is typically intended for students with **the most significant** cognitive disabilities, as they require extensive support throughout school, home, and the community. The purpose of the Alternate Education Framework is to offer guidance in the creation and execution of an educational program that caters to their academic and functional requirements while enabling them to engage with the curriculum.

Not every student with a disability who is unlikely to graduate high school is eligible for the Alternate Education Framework.

Alternate Education Framework, despite its name, does not mean that the students will be receiving instruction using a "different" or "alternative curriculum."

★Determination of eligibility for the Alternate Education Framework **MUST** be made each year, and parents **MUST** be informed of, and consent to, the decision★

## What is the Decision-Making process?

The IEP team meets together, which consists:



The team must complete the Appendix A process.



The team determines the student's eligibility.

- ❖ Family
- ❖ Special Education and General Teachers
- ❖ Administrators
- ❖ School Psychologists
- ❖ Related Service Providers such as:
  - Speech Therapy (ST) and/or
  - Occupational Therapy (OT)
- ❖ Student



**Alternate Appendix A: Participation Criteria and Checklist** is a document that guides the team through the process to determine if the student meets the eligibility criteria or not.

**The Team MUST** make sure that multiple sources of valid data are thoroughly reviewed and all participation criteria are met! (Shown on the next page)

Because of how significant this decision is, the team must ensure that the decision was not based on:

### Student Characteristics

- Disability Label
- Language
- Cultural Differences
- Extended Absences
- Behavioral Concerns

### Administrative Factors

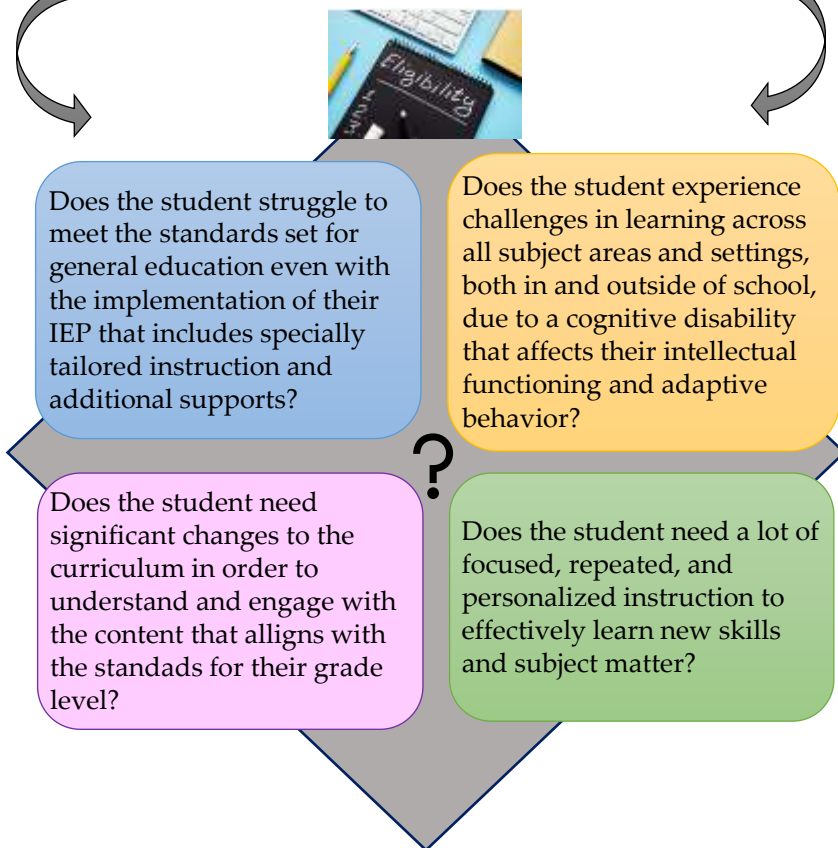
- Amount, nature, or setting of special education services
- Logistical concerns

## What is the Eligibility Criteria?

The team considers all of the following information:

Assessments of the Student's Performance			Classroom Data		Other
Cognitive	Educational	Adaptive	Teacher Reports Assessments	Intervention Data IEP Progress Reports	Family Input Medical Professionals

To be able to answer these 4 main questions:



### Heads up Parents!

It is the LAW in Maryland that the IEP teams **MUST** obtain parental consent for participation in the instruction and/or assessment aligned to the alternate academic achievement standards. See [Parental Consent Under Maryland Law](#) for more information.

#### NOTE:

- ☞ You have a right to either consent or refuse to consent.
- ☞ The IEP team will send you a written notice **within 5 days** after the team meeting.
- ☞ The deadline for your reply is **15 days after** the team meeting.

#### REMINDER:



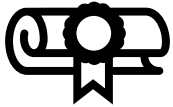
- ☞ If the team disagrees with your decision, there are dispute resolution options available to resolve the matter.
- ☞ Bottomline, if you disagree, you have options available to you to keep advocating for your child's education!

## What happens once the student is eligible to participate in the Alternate Education Framework?

The IEP team will take the following actions to develop the student's IEP.

Review the student's:	Create IEP Goals & Objectives	IEP Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Impact Statement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Previous Rate of Growth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specially Designed Instruction that will help them access the alternate academic achievement standards</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nature and severity of their disability as it relates to the student's ability to advance towards their goals</li> </ul>	<p>Each goal should be accompanied by objectives that aid in achieving the goal while also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> MUST be aligned with standards of the grade in which the student is enrolled (*This is required for each academic area impacted by the disability. *)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Addresses functional skills that are impacted by the student's disability.</li> </ul> <p>The objectives may include specific skills-based fundamental skills that are needed to increase the student's access to the general curriculum.</p>	<p>This is where the IEP team determines what special education and related services, such as Speech Therapy, the student will receive and the least restrictive environment (LRE) in which the student's IEP can be implemented effectively.</p> <p><b>Note that decisions about services and placement are separate and distinct from the decision about participation in alternate education framework!</b></p>

## What is the “ALTERNATE” part of the student’s education?

	General Education	Alternate Education Framework
<b>CURRICULUM</b> 	<p>Courses are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).</p>	<p>Alternate Education Framework are aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, they are modified so that the student can learn key concepts (“essential elements”) while moving through the grade level curriculum.</p>
<b>ASSESSMENT</b> 	<p>Most students in Maryland, including those with disabilities, take part in the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) for assessment purposes. Students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations and supports as specified in their IEP for MCAP.</p>	<p>If students qualify for the Alternate Education Framework and their parents agree to it, they take part in the Dynamic Learning Maps Assessments. Just like MCAP, this assessment assesses English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and once in high school. For Science, they are assessed in grades 3, 8, and once in high school.</p>
<b>GRADUATION</b> 	<p>Students who participate in the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and successfully meet the requirements will earn a Maryland High School Diploma.</p>	<p>Students who are working toward the alternate academic achievement standards and taking the Dynamic Learning Maps assessments will be eligible to earn a Maryland High School Certificate Program of Completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This final decision to award the certificate will not be made until the beginning of the student’s last year in high school. COMAR 13A.03.02.09E(3).</li> </ul> <p><i>Note that they are not excluded from attempting to complete the requirements for a Maryland High School Diploma.</i></p>

### Summary

- ★ A minority of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities do need instruction in, and their performance measured against, the alternate academic achievement standards. ★
- ★ Eligibility for participation must be determined **YEARLY** through a collaborative IEP team decision-making process. ★
- ★ Under Maryland Law, the IEP team must obtain **Parental Consent** for their child’s participation in the alternate assessment and/or receive instruction toward the alternate education framework. ★
- ★ Decisions for the child’s participation in the alternate educational framework have a critical impact on meeting the graduation requirements needed to earn a Maryland High School Diploma. ★
- ★ It is important that the team maintains high expectations which allow students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to be prepared for post-secondary options. ★

### Source

- Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services. (2022, Dec). 19-07 – Improving Outcomes for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Eligibility, Instruction and Assessment. Maryland State Department of Education. [Technical Assistance Bulletin # 19-07 Improving Outcomes for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Eligibility, Instruction, and Assessment \(marylandpublicschools.org\)](https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/Technical-Assistance-Bulletin-19-07-Improving-Outcomes-for-Students-with-Significant-Cognitive-Disabilities-Eligibility-Instruction-and-Assessment)