

ELIGIBILITY AND DECISION-MAKING

Does the IEP team determine alternate education framework eligibility only during the years the student is in a grade in which assessments are administered?



NO. The decision for participation in the alternate education framework can be done at any grade but we recommend not making the decision until at least 2nd grade.

If a student does not pass the general State assessment, do they automatically qualify to participate in the alternate assessment?



NO. Many students who do not perform well on or pass the general assessment will not qualify for participation in the alternate assessments.

- In order to participate in the alternate assessments, a student must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in [Guidance for IEP Teams: Participation Decisions for the Alternate Assessments and Instruction Using AAAS](#).

When the IEP team is completing Appendix A, Eligibility Checklist, if the parent does not agree that the data supports one of the criteria but the rest of the IEP team feels that it does, should the team proceed with completing the Appendix A and the eligibility determination?



YES. The parent can document their disagreement by checking off the box on Appendix A. The IEP team will proceed with completing Appendix A and the eligibility determination.

☞ Parents do not have to give consent. ☞

★Reminder that the Appendix A is a required document of the IEP process and must be completed!★

IEP GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Are all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, expected to meet goals based on grade-level standards within the period covered by the IEP?



YES. The expectation is that the IEP team develops appropriate annual IEP goals that are aligned with grade level standards. The yearly goals need not necessarily result in the student reaching grade level, but rather reduce the gap between the student's present level and the grade level standard.

- For students with significant cognitive disabilities, the alternate academic achievement standards help the IEP team select priority standards on which to focus.

Is the process for goal development the same for all students?



YES. For all students with disabilities, the IEP team considers the impact of the disability on the student's functional performance and how that impacts their access to the curriculum and the school environment.

- Because students with significant cognitive disabilities, have *greatly impacted academic and adaptive functioning*, their IEPs will include one or more functional goals in areas such as communication, social interaction, self-management, and independence.

If the IEP team determines that instruction and/or assessments aligned with alternate academic achievement standards are appropriate for a student, does the student have to change school placement or enter a self-contained classroom?



NO. Decisions about instruction and assessment are separate from decisions about placement.

- Students with disabilities must be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.
- They can only be removed for instruction in separate settings if the student is unable to make progress on the goals identified in the IEP in the general education classroom with supplemental aids and services.

ASSESSMENT

Can a student participate in the alternate assessment for certain content areas and the general assessment for other content areas?



NO. A student who is determined eligible for participation in the alternate assessments and instruction is a student whose disability affects all aspects of their life across all academic areas, independent functioning, community living, leisure, and vocational activities.

If a student has previously been tested on an alternate assessment, but the current IEP team determines that the student no longer meets the criteria for the alternate assessments described in the guidance document, can the student participate in the general assessment?



YES. The IEP must ensure that the student is prepared for the challenges of work and college by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to help them succeed in today's knowledge-based global economy.

PARENTAL CONSENT

If the parent does not provide consent for their child to participate in the alternate framework, what does the IEP team need to do?




First the team needs to make an effort to understand the parents' concerns such as:

- Their child will be removed from the general education classroom.
- Their child will not earn a diploma.

Then the team can try to address these concerns through the IEP process, documenting the discussions and decisions in prior written notice.

Bottomline, if consensus cannot be reached through the IEP team process, best practice is to consult with special education leadership and reconvene after receiving guidance on how to proceed.

What will happen if the parent does not attend the meeting or is unsure of whether they want to provide consent for their child to participate in the alternate education framework?

1	Ensure that the parent is provided with prior written notice within 5 business days of the meeting.
2	If the parent wants more time to make a decision, they should be reminded that if there is no written consent OR no written refusal within 15 days, the team will move forward with their decision. 

Prior to moving forward with these decisions without a parent present, the team is encouraged to pursue *every means possible* to ensure parent involvement.

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/TechnicalAssistanceBulletin/19-07-Improving-Outcomes-for-Students-with-Significant-Cognitive-Disabilities-Eligibility-Instruction-and-Assessment)