

Alternate Education Framework






What is the Alternate Education Framework?



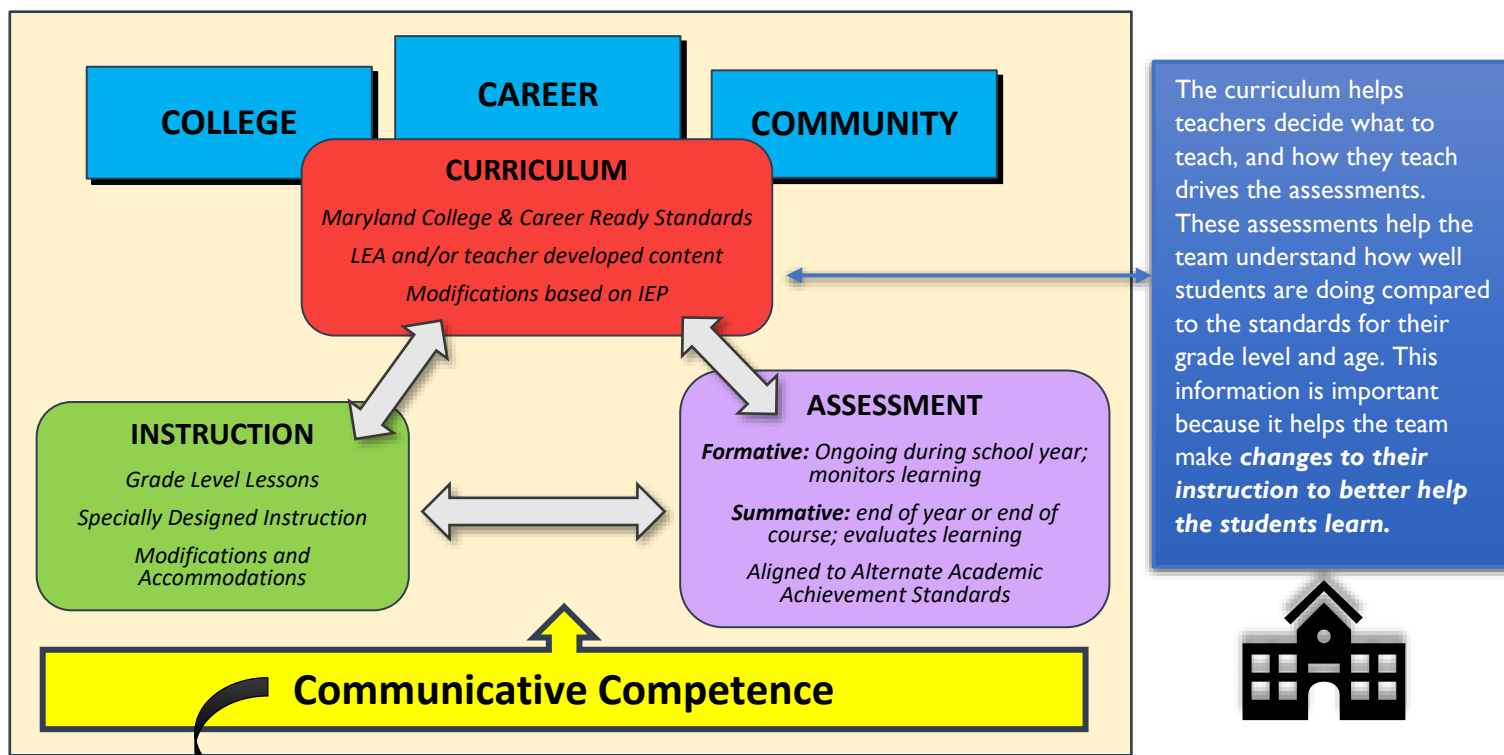
The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES), developed the Alternate Education Framework with the goal of providing high academic achievement expectations for **ALL** students, including those with **the most significant** cognitive disabilities. The framework aims to ensure that these students receive appropriate instruction and assessments that support their learning and overall development. By following this approach, students are prepared for their post-school life, including college, employment, and active participation in the community, thus setting them up for a fulfilling and successful future.

Overview

<p>What is it?</p> 	<p>The Alternate Education Framework is a special plan designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It includes a supplemental curriculum, instruction, and assessments tailored to their needs. The framework is not intended to take the place of the general education curriculum. The framework provides helpful guidance for creating and implementing a program that address their specific academic and functional requirements. Its purpose is to help these students access and understand the essential elements of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS).</p>
<p>What it is not...</p> 	<p>This does not mean that these students will learn from a completely different curriculum than other students. It also does not mean that they will be placed in a specific type of school or program. Doing so would go against the main goal of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which is to ensure that students with disabilities have access to and make progress in the general curriculum.</p>
<p>Who is eligible for this?</p>	<p>The alternate education framework is appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that impact them across all domains of academic and adaptive functioning [1]. However, eligibility is NOT determined by only the student's disability.</p>
<p>Who makes the determination of eligibility?</p>	<p>The IEP team includes the student's family, special and general education teachers, school administrators, school psychologist, and related service providers like Speech Therapy (ST) or Occupational Therapy (OT) if needed.</p> <p>★ Parents can invite anyone they want to the meeting. ★</p> <p>Sometimes, the team might determine that the student will not be able to completely master the same content standards as their peers. In such cases, the student will be taught and assessed using <i>alternate academic achievement standards</i> (AAAS).</p> <p>When the IEP team chooses to use AAAS for a student, they need to be careful. They should understand that there is a difference between students who can earn a high school diploma and those who are eligible for the Alternate Education Framework.</p> <p>★ Parents must be informed of, and have the option to make the decision and the determination of eligibility must be made on an annual basis. It is the law in MD! ★</p>
<p>Do they get a high school diploma?</p>	<p>It could be possible to attempt to earn a Maryland High School diploma, but the longer a student participates in the Alternate Education Framework, the chances of earning one decreases. Instead, these students will receive a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion.</p> 

Maryland's Take on Alternate Educational Framework

The picture below shows how curriculum, instruction, and assessment are connected and work together to support the learning of students with significant cognitive disabilities who use AAAS and alternate assessments.



What does Communicative Competence actually involve?

At the heart of the Framework is something called **Communicative Competence**. It involves learning behaviors that help students communicate what they know and how to express their needs. Communication comes in different ways, not just through spoken words. Some students with more complex communication needs use alternative methods to communicate effectively.



When students improve their communication skills, it helps them take part in teaching and learning activities. If a student doesn't have a consistent, understandable, and reliable way to communicate, it's **really important** for the school staff to work with the student and their family.



Together, they can create a communication system that the student can use every day, no matter where they are. This way, the student can effectively express themselves and be understood in different situations.

When students with significant cognitive disabilities improve their academic and functional skills, it opens more opportunities for success in college, career, and community. By learning and developing important skills, they can have a brighter future and be more independent and engaged in their communities.



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)