

Considerations for Participation in the Alternate Assessment

Criterion 2: The student is learning content linked to (derived from) Tennessee Academic Standards.

The alternate assessment is an option for student with the *most significant* cognitive disabilities. In making decisions regarding assessment eligibility, teams must determine if a student meets all three criteria. Criterion 1 determines if the student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability. For students who meet the eligibility of criterion 1, the team must then determine if the student is engaging in learning linked to the Tennessee Academic Standards. Below are some considerations to guide teams in making this determination.

Broad Questions to Consider to Help Determine Criteria 2	Additional Considerations for Teams
<p>1. How does the student’s disability impact their active participation in instruction that is aligned to state standards?</p>	<p>A. Is the student participating in standards-based instruction in the areas of English language arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies daily?</p> <p>B. Does the student demonstrate understanding of the instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>using the content vocabulary?</i> – <i>connecting concepts?</i> – <i>applying a concept to a demonstration or real-world scenario?</i> – <i>demonstrating physical communication of understanding (i.e., laughing, pointing, excitement)?</i> <p>C. Is the student asking questions for more information or to build understanding?</p>
<p>2. How is the instruction designed to support the student’s active participation?</p>	<p>A. What accommodations are built into the lesson or designed for the student’s individual access and participation?</p> <p>B. What system or strategy is used to modify the instruction?</p> <p>C. What strategies are used to engage and elicit response and learning from the student?</p>
<p>3. How are the grade-level state standards broken down into smaller skills, steps, or units in order to support student learning?</p>	<p>A. Are the modifications directly aligned to the grade-level standards?</p> <p>B. Does the team begin planning with the expectation of achieving grade-level standards and then incorporating accommodations and modifications as needed?</p>
<p>4. Did the IEP determine where, when, and how the</p>	<p>A. Is there clear language regarding participation in</p>

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<p>student will actively participate in instruction aligned to state standards?</p>	<p>ELA, math, science and social studies? (All students, regardless of least restrictive environment (LRE), should be provided meaningful instruction aligned to grade-level standards.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clear indication of where the student will be taught standards-based instruction – Clear indication of who, if anyone, is needed to support <p>B. Are the accommodations/modifications individualized for student engagement, access, and learning?</p>
<p>5. Do the measurable annual goals and short-term objectives support increased opportunities for learning within the grade-level standards? Can the skills be generalized across content and within rigorous instruction?</p>	<p>A. Are the skills in the IEP goals and short-term objectives generalizable across subjects and settings?</p> <p>B. Is there at least one goal sufficiently designed to increase the student's literacy skills?</p> <p>C. Is there at least one goal sufficiently designed to increase the student's communication skills?</p>
<p>6. Is there evidence that the student is making progress within instruction aligned to state standards as well as in regard to IEP annual goals and short-term objectives?</p>	<p>A. Is there evidence of student progress toward mastery of standards-based instruction?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Curriculum-based measures – Content-based projects/assessments <p>B. Is there evidence of student progress towards mastery of IEP goals and objectives?</p>

Frequently Asked Questions for Criteria 2

1. ***If a student is eligible for the alternate assessment, do we need to add goals in the IEP related to standards, including science and social studies?***
 No, the IEP goals and short-term objectives should be focused on skills that the student needs to learn in order to increase the access, participation, and independence during content instruction. Goals are not standards-based, but are foundational to meeting the expectations of a standard.

2. ***If the IEP team determines that the student's LRE is within a special education classroom, does the student still need to participate in standards-based instruction?***
 Yes, all students should participate in grade-level, standards-based instruction daily. The standards define **what** the student is taught. LRE determines **where** the instruction occurs. For students whose LRE is the special education classroom for any part of the day, the team must ensure that the student is still receiving instruction as well as intervention.

3. ***Can a student also be taught functional/life skills if they are eligible for the alternate assessment?***

Yes, the IEP should plan for all of the student's needs. The first criterion for alternate assessment eligibility, requires that a student have both academic and adaptive behavior (i.e., functional/life skills) deficits. Therefore, the IEP team is charged with ensuring that a student receives instruction in both.