

Considerations for Participation in the Alternate Assessment

Criterion 3: The student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measureable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

The alternate assessment is an option for students 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. Criterion 2 determines if the student is participating in instruction linked to the Tennessee state standards. For students who meet the eligibility of Criteria 1 and 2, the team must then determine if the student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports. Below are some considerations to guide teams in making this determination.

Broad Questions to Consider to Help Determine Criteria 3	Additional Considerations for Teams
<p>1. Did the IEP determine the least restrict environment (LRE) based on current, comprehensive data?</p>	<p>A. Is there significant data included within the present levels of educational performance (PLEPs) to determine where and how the student will participate in instruction?</p> <p>B. Is there adequate evidence for the need to provide academic instruction in a separate setting (e.g., evidence of accommodations and modifications attempted within the general education setting in the past paired with evidence of little to no progress made)?</p> <p>C. Is there evidence that the LRE for each subject/class was determined separately based on evidence?</p> <p>D. Is there evidence that the selected accommodations and/or modifications will support meaningful participation?</p>
<p>2. Is there evidence that the IEP team made an individualized decision based on student strengths as well as needs?</p>	<p>A. Are the student strengths in the IEP related to learning and academics?</p> <p>B. Have the student’s strengths been considered in the selection/use of interventions, accommodations, modifications, or supports (e.g., a student with strong social skills using peer tutoring as an accommodation; a student with strong auditory memory skills using audio supports, etc.)?</p>
<p>3. Are there accommodations, modifications,</p>	<p>A. Are the selected accommodations and/or</p>

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<p>services, or other supports that could be used to support the student for a portion or all of the instructional day in order to increase active participation?</p>	<p>modifications subject-specific?</p> <p>B. Are the accommodations and/or modifications setting-specific?</p> <p>C. Is there evidence that the accommodations, modifications, services, and/or supports have changed as the student learns additional skills, language, and content each year?</p>
<p>4. Is there evidence the student is achieving measurable gains?</p>	<p>A. Is there formal evidence of learning and achievement (e.g., prior state assessment results, universal screeners, individualized progress monitoring, etc.)?</p> <p>B. Is there informal evidence of learning and achievement (e.g., classroom work samples, performance tasks, etc.)?</p>
<p>5. Is there evidence that the student requires extensive and substantial specific accommodations, modifications, services, or supports?</p>	<p>A. Does the IEP contain sufficient evidence and data that a student requires <i>substantial</i> accommodations, modifications, services, and supports?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>PLEPs</i> – <i>Measurable annual goals and short-term objectives</i> – <i>Communication needs or fluent use of an augmentative, assistive communication system (Primary language fluency and skill level (English learner) and the impact of learning a second language on the student's performance.)</i>
<p>6. Is there a process for ensuring that the accommodations, modifications, services, or supports are appropriate for the student?</p>	<p>A. Has the impact of an accommodation, modification, service, or support been verified?</p> <p>B. Is there evidence that the student actively uses the accommodation, modification, service, or support when engaged in learning?</p>

Frequently Asked Questions for Criteria 3

1. *Special educators often do not attend the offered standards trainings. Would the standards training prepare them for instructing students eligible for the alternate assessment?*

Understanding the standards is an important first step. However, teachers must also have an in-depth knowledge of differentiation strategies, how to scaffold instruction, and the specific, extensive, individualized supports that the student requires in order to make progress. Teams may need to consider how to train all teachers on the student’s needs as a part of the IEP planning process.

2. ***If a student requires substantial supports, should the instruction occur within the special education setting?***

Many of the accommodations, modifications, services, and/or supports that a student requires can be provided within any setting. An IEP team should carefully consider the needs of the student and how a support can be implemented within the student's LRE. On rare occasions, the needed support may require a specific setting; however, this is rarely the case.

3. ***Are there specific accommodations and/or modifications that must be included in the IEP once it is determined the student is participating in the alternate assessment?***

The supports selected must be individualized for the student and should be selected through a decision-making process by the IEP team. This process should include input from the student whenever possible.