

**Application for Competitive Grants Under Title VI, Subpart I, Section 6112:
Enhanced Assessment Instruments**

Enhanced Assessment Program

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**“Increasing Accessibility and Validity of Assessments of Students
with Disabilities”**

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ABSTRACT

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is seeking funding to develop alternative assessments that significantly advance practice in the area of increasing accessibility and validity of assessments of students with severe disabilities, including strategies for test design, scoring, and reporting. Ohio estimates that approximately 700 students per grade level (0.5 percent of the total student population) will need an alternative to the mainstream tests if they are to participate in the state-wide testing program and receive a valid and reliable assessment of their mastery of academic content standards.

Funds provided will support the development, implementation, and dissemination of alternate assessments in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. Development activities will begin with the creation of content specifications for severely disabled students that are based on state standards and then proceed to item and test specifications and the creation of alternate assessments that measure student academic achievement using multiple measures from multiple sources. Implementation activities will include a two-stage field test, an operational administration, the creation of teacher and parent resources to encourage the use of the alternate assessments to promote student learning of state academic content standards, and training and technical assistance activities. Dissemination will utilize web-enabled, print, and video mediums to share development products and insights, as well as Ohio-based and national organizations.

Grant funds will enable Ohio to secure the services of organizations with national and state experience to help tackle the challenges of advancing practice in the area of increasing accessibility and validity of assessments of students with severe disabilities.

PROPOSAL

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is seeking funding to develop alternative assessments that significantly advance practice in the area of increasing accessibility and validity of assessments of students with severe disabilities, including strategies for test design, scoring, and reporting. This proposal addresses the absolute priorities identified by the Secretary of Education to: (1) collaborate with other research institutions and organizations to improve the quality, validity, and reliability of state academic assessments beyond the requirements for the assessments described in Section 111(b)(3) of Title I, Part A; (2) measure student achievement using multiple measures of student academic achievement from multiple sources; and (3) evaluate student academic achievement through the development of comprehensive, performance-based assessment instruments.

The Ohio Department of Education will utilize the federal funds to develop and implement alternate assessments to be administered to the most severely disabled students, and to demonstrate their validity for use in conjunction with the state-wide assessment of student achievement of Ohio's academic content standards. Funds will be used to build on existing alternate assessment technology to create an assessment that benchmarks the performance of severely disabled students to Ohio's academic content standards, utilizes multiple components to derive multiple measures of achievement, provides valid and reliable assessment of student mastery of academic content standards, and is tied to efforts to align instructional programs for students with severe disabilities to efforts to promote student participation in the academic curriculum.

Background

The Ohio Department of Education Office of Assessment administers the statewide testing program for the State of Ohio. The Department of Education provides this program for the 612 Ohio school districts that enroll approximately 1,800,000 students in their kindergarten through twelfth-grade programs.

Currently, the ODE administers the statewide proficiency test program for all fourth-grade, sixth-grade, and ninth-grade students. Recent state and federal legislation has significantly changed the statewide program: the current proficiency test program is being phased out; diagnostic and achievement tests are being developed and phased into the program.

Section 3301.079 of the Ohio Revised Code requires the State Board of Education to adopt diagnostic and achievement tests aligned with academic standards and model curriculum for each of grades kindergarten through eight, as well as grade ten. The tests are to be administered in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science to measure student comprehension of academic content and mastery of related skills.

The achievement tests are being developed to measure the level of reading and mathematics skill expected at the end of each grade; the level of science and social studies achievement expected at the end of fifth, seventh, and tenth grades; and the level of writing achievement expected at the end of fourth, eighth, and tenth grades.

The diagnostic assessments are designed to measure student comprehension of academic content and mastery of related skills for the relevant subject area and grade level. The diagnostic tests were established to allow districts to determine weakness and strength areas for students leading to the achievement tests that begin in grade three in reading, mathematics, science, writing, and social studies.

Students to be assessed will be enrolled in public and community (charter) schools. The population of students will include, but not be limited to,

- students without disabilities;
- students with disabilities;
- students with visual impairment; and
- students identified as English proficient.

There are approximately 140,000 students at each grade level in Ohio. Ohio estimates that approximately 700 students per grade level with severe disabilities (0.5 percent of the total student population) will need an alternative assessment if they are to participate in the statewide assessment program. Due to the extremity of their disabilities, these students will be unable to validly demonstrate their attainment of state academic content standards through the mainstream assessments, even with accommodations in the test administration protocols.

In Ohio, an alternate assessment for students with disabilities was implemented during the 2000-2001 school year according to the requirements of the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA. The current alternate assessment is an evaluation of student progress toward their IEP goals and objectives.

Ohio seeks funding to support the development of alternate assessments that are based on state content standards and are intended for students with the most severe disabilities. The alternate assessments to be developed with these funds will meet the requirements of both state and federal law. Alternate assessments will determine student attainment of Ohio's content standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. In addition, the assessments will be designed in such a way that the results of the alternate assessments can be aggregated with the results of the regular assessments.

The ODE will maximize the involvement of Ohio educators and parents in the development of the alternate assessments. Parents of students with disabilities, active Ohio classroom teachers, other school personnel, and administrators will be involved in the development of the assessment system, which includes the scoring process. Whenever practicable, ODE will consult with teachers recognized as outstanding in the education of students with disabilities.

Purpose and Use of Alternate Assessment Results

The overarching goal of Ohio's assessment system, including the alternate assessments, is to increase student learning of worthwhile content. To this end, Ohio's alternate assessment will be designed to:

1. Monitor the progress of ALL students and identify educational needs;
2. Determine performance levels for students taking an alternate assessment;
3. Provide information regarding school and district accountability;
4. Provide information regarding the need for improvements in curriculum and instruction for students taking alternate assessments.

More specifically, the alternate assessments will:

- be based on and systematically aligned with Ohio's academic standards;
- provide a range of assessment formats that most closely represent the cognitive expectations that exist in exemplary programs that serve the most severely disabled students;
- be technically sound, professionally defensible, administratively feasible, and meet industry standards for reliability and validity;

- include in the development process parents of severely disabled students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, active Ohio classroom teachers, other school personnel, and administrators with expertise in the education of severely disabled students;
- address administration and scoring issues related to the needs of severely disabled students;
- provide students, families, and teachers with valid and reliable information about how individual students with severe disabilities perform with respect to these standards;
- provide a timeline that allows results for the achievement tests to be returned to students, families, schools, districts, and the ODE within sixty days of test administration;
- address the need for professional development so that teachers/administrators will have information on how the assessments are aligned with academic standards, how to administer the assessments, how to interpret scores, and how the results of assessments can inform instructional decisions;
- be accompanied by teacher instructional materials and strategies;
- include the development of student and parent resources and training programs.

Project Design

The extension of Ohio's assessment system to students with disabilities (SD) creates a need for translation and articulation of the Ohio state academic standards for students whose abstract academic skills and ability to generalize academic skills to diverse contexts are limited, but whose potential for independent adult living can be developed through life skills and functional curricula. These students are capable of functioning socially and economically in society with careful development of specific skills, and many of these skills are represented by elements of the Ohio academic standards.

The major components of the work to develop alternate assessments for students with disabilities are the interpretation of the state academic content standards for this population and the development of assessment tools to measure students' progress toward those standards. Further, the work will involve (1) communicating to Ohio citizens these innovative assessments, and (2) reporting student results in a way that corresponds to the reporting mechanisms for all other students.

The body of technical knowledge for creating alternate assessments for students with disabilities is rapidly emerging (Halle, 1993; Kleinert & Kearns, 2001; Ysseldyke & Olson, 1997). The Ohio Department of Education will engage the involvement of the National Center for Educational Opportunity (NCEO), American Institutes for Research (AIR), Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), Measurement Incorporated (MI), and Questar in helping to advance this knowledge as we work to develop assessments that are innovative, developmentally appropriate, technically sound, legally and professionally defensible, and administratively feasible. Our team of contractors has first-hand knowledge of new findings from the emerging research and practice because of their national network of assessment and special education contacts.

Ohio will employ an Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee and engage other Ohio educators and citizens in developing these assessments. In preparation for this work, ODE staff and our partners have tried to envision an appropriate approach to assessment. Our plan, which is described below, consists of the collection of multiple forms of evidence that shows how well students are advancing toward the alternate standards and helps teachers refine instructional approaches and improve their decision making.

General Approach

The work of developing and delivering alternate assessments consists of several steps. We propose first working with our partners and Ohio educators of the severely disabled to develop specifications for severely disabled students based on the current Ohio content standards and criteria for determining who should take the alternate assessments. Second, we will develop an alternate assessment that will consist of multiple components. As a part of the development process, we will propose a mechanism for phasing out the existing alternate assessments. We will field-test the new assessments and set performance standards using a process that will allow us to aggregate the results to those of the main population. Next, we will develop a reporting system that will provide interpretable results. Finally, we will train teachers who work with severely disabled students not only how to administer the assessment, but also how to use the results to improve their instructional techniques.

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP), as the core legal document for students with disabilities, contains all decisions and information about students' educational programs, including information about assessment participation. Therefore, all assessment development efforts must consider IEP development and reflect IEP requirements. As Ohio develops the alternate assessment, we are revising our IEP requirements, training, and forms to promote maximum participation of students with disabilities in the mainstream curriculum.

Developing Content Specifications: Appropriate assessment instruments and procedures can be conceptualized, designed, specified, and developed once appropriate content standards have been developed. In this case, we will need content specifications, based on the Ohio content standards, that form the basis for each diagnostic and achievement test. As part of the test design

and development process, we will work with the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee to identify alternate content specifications that are appropriate for students with disabilities.

Exhibit 1 is an example of content specifications for students with disabilities, based on the Ohio reading content standards. The example illustrates the content standards that could emerge from work in meetings with special educators and the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee. We propose to draw upon the expertise and experience of our partners and of the Advisory Committee members to develop similar charts to represent the assessments in reading, writing, science, social studies, and mathematics in kindergarten to grade 12.

We propose that charts representing all the tests be assembled with explanatory information and sent to approximately 100 special education teachers and professors of special education for their review. We further propose that the standards be reviewed in focus groups of parents and teachers of students with disabilities. Feedback from these reviews will be incorporated into a second version of the specifications that can be presented to the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee for refinement and approval. These external reviews will strengthen the standards and enhance their validity.

Once the content standards for students with disabilities have been finalized, project staff and the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee will determine, in close consultation with psychometricians on the project staff, test and item specifications for the alternate assessments.

EXHIBIT 1
Content Specifications for
Students with Disabilities

Domain	Kg-Age 5	Gr.1-Age 6	Gr. 2-Age 7	Gr. 3-Age 8	Gr. 4- Age 9	Gr. 5-Age 10
Self-care and Activities of Daily Living	Uses glass tumblers, cutlery, napkin, etc., appropriately during meals	Able to identify classroom bathroom and use appropriately	Recognizes own and other classrooms by symbol or numbers on the door	Able to choose desired food items from picture menu	Able to find foods at supermarket given a picture shopping list	Recognizes own and other names in print
Communication	Uses spoken words, signs, and symbols to make needs known appropriately Responds to own name	Responds to questions using verbalization	Recognizes teachers and caregivers	Identifies colors by name Identifies pictures of familiar objects by name Knows names of teachers and caregivers	Speaks or responds with communication device understandably in full sentences	Sequences pictures to tell a story Understands and responds to two-part directions Selects appropriate print matter to look at Prints name
Independent Function	Responds to simple directions	Recognizes safety signs by shape or symbol	Leaves and returns to classroom without getting lost	Chooses appropriate utensils to eat with	Chooses appropriate sets of clothing	Identifies warning signs Develops a picture schedule

Students who appropriately participate in the alternate assessments will not be able to perform the same tasks as students who participate in the regular assessment on the same schedule. For example, standards for letter recognition, rhyming, word recognition, and print conventions will not be part of the alternate assessment administered to five-year-olds. Instead, we will be looking for early precursors of these skills--such as face and item recognition--in these assessments. Further, we do not have detailed evidence as yet what levels of performance it will be feasible to expect from a cross-section of these students. These content and performance

standards will evolve from the standard-setting process. Nevertheless, the project partnership will design a framework that allows flexibility in filling out the "outline," but creates system integrity. This framework will allow us to set an Ohio standard for student performance so that educators can determine whether students are progressing in their educational programs.

Further, while expectations for 5-year-olds who participate in the alternate diagnostic and achievement assessments will be expectations that normally functioning 1- and 2-year-olds might meet, it is expected that the existing schedule of skill acquisition represented by the Ohio academic standards will still apply to students with disabilities, but will be looked at over a much longer timeline. For example, we will be expecting these students to recognize symbols, letters, shapes, colors; use words and sentences; and use a variety of academic skills in specialized situations that clearly reference the Ohio academic standards through the indicators and benchmarks developed as part of the item development process.

DRC's experience in developing Arkansas's alternate assessment system and Questar's experience in developing Virginia's alternate assessment system demonstrate that this partnership possesses the knowledge and skills to create this framework.

Specifying Criteria for Administering the Alternate Assessment: As part of its overall effort to support teachers in their assessment decisions for their students, ODE and its partners will develop guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in alternate assessments. These guidelines will be completed by June 30 prior to the first implementation year of each alternate assessment that will be used to validate participation decisions.

When determining the criteria for administering the alternate assessment, the decisions that must be made include:

- Who will participate? Who, if anyone, will be exempted?

- What methods of responding will be allowed (teacher observation, audio cassette, data sheets)?
- What types of administrative forms should be required (parental consent, entry cover sheets, tables of contents)?
- What kinds of tasks/student entries will be appropriate? How many entries are sufficient to demonstrate performance of a content indicator or benchmark? (For bidding purposes, we are assuming four student entries per content area.)
- What, if any, standard entries (such as a student schedule) should be required?
- How should the portfolios be organized?

The guidelines will outline specific criteria that must be met for students to receive an alternate assessment. Factors such as students' current and past history, educational placement and curricula, disability category, cognitive functioning, amount of time receiving special education services, and the extent to which these students require direct instruction and/or supports to generalize learned skills to other situations and environments will all be considered in making decisions about administration of the alternate assessment. The curriculum provided to students will be a critical factor in determining whether a student should participate in the standard diagnostic and achievement assessments, with or without allowable accommodations, or in the corresponding alternate assessment. We expect the guidelines to indicate that students whose curriculum focuses on life skills, and functional academic skills--that is, the content standards--would most appropriately be assigned to the alternate assessment. In addition, we propose that decisions made regarding participation in alternate assessments be reviewed and revalidated annually and that Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams make recommendations for inclusion in alternate assessment at the IEP meeting prior to the start of each school year. It is

important that the development of these participation guidelines include those educators who will administer the alternate assessments. Involvement of people who have day-to-day contact with these students and know their needs, levels of performance, and educational plans, as well as those Ohio educators who are recognized in the field of special education, will be included in the development and refinement of the participation guidelines. The guidelines will also address the transition from existing alternate assessments to the new alternate assessments.

The guidelines and explanatory information about applying the guidelines in IEP participation decisions will be posted on the Ohio Department of Education website, and widely distributed through school dissemination networks, the OSEP-sponsored Ohio Parent Information Center, professional organizations, union publications, etc. The guidelines also will be featured in professional development activities provided to prepare educators for implementation of the new alternate assessments.

Developing Alternate Assessments: The alternate diagnostic and achievement assessments will be designed to demonstrate whether and how well students are progressing toward meeting the alternate standards. The alternate diagnostic assessments will be developed to predict performance on the alternate versions of the achievement tests, so that performance on those tests will reveal the need for intervention and provide useful information about the need for revision of IEPs and curriculum in preparation for the alternate achievement assessments.

Several important questions will guide development of alternate assessments. The Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee will provide guidance on these questions and undoubtedly raise more important issues as we pursue the development process.

- Which administration formats or combination of formats can provide sufficient information for teachers and parents to make the kinds of instruction decisions that will lead to student progress?
- How much information must be collected to provide a comprehensive picture of students' progress?
- Will teachers be able to see enough in the classroom to determine how well the student is progressing?
- What means can facilitate their observations and data collection?
- How do we develop instruments that are valid and reliable yet not burdensome or obtrusive?

We assume that both diagnostic and achievement alternate assessments will consist of a variety of assessment approaches, providing opportunities for teachers and other service providers to develop a broad view of student performance and progress in relation to the content standards. We are planning to develop an assessment portfolio that provides a vehicle for collecting multiple forms of evidence about each student. To gather material for students' portfolios, teachers will be given the following materials as appropriate for the grade and subject being assessed:

- Observational checklists
- A series of prompts for on-demand student performance
- Guidelines for collecting samples of student work to be evaluated holistically
- Directions and criteria for evaluating student work

Each component of the proposed portfolio is explained below.

Observations – Teachers will be given an instrument to use in observing their students. Observations will be conducted three times a year by the classroom teacher or by another service provider who is familiar with the student being assessed. Observations will seek information about students' attainment of academic, interpersonal, and other skills included in the content standards. We propose that the "assessment window" for each structured observation be one week. Information provided to teachers will help them understand how to integrate the observation procedures into their daily classroom so that they can collect data in as unobtrusive, naturalistic way as possible.

Prompts – The prompts developed for each alternate assessment will be structured but responsive to students' developmental levels. Teachers will be given guidance about when prompts should be administered; some may be spoken prompts, some written, and some pictorial. Students' response modes may be to write, to speak, or to demonstrate a behavior or skill. We anticipate that the prompts will be sequenced developmentally so that teachers can track student progress along a trajectory of performance leading to attainment of the alternate standards. Prompts will be administered within the assessment windows established in conjunction with the Advisory Committee.

Student work samples – Guidelines will be provided to help teachers collect samples of student work that illustrates attainment of functional and academic skills included in the content standards. To maintain standardization, we recommend that a minimum of five work samples (or proxies where appropriate) be collected during each assessment window. Teachers will receive information on how to structure the collection of work samples so that they accurately reflect what students know and can do. We anticipate that the work samples will be quite varied in nature and look forward to discussing this component of the assessment with our partners and

with the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee so that together we can determine an appropriate list of materials to include for assessment purpose.

Evaluation directions and criteria – We will give teachers handbooks as part of the training on how to evaluate a portfolio. This handbook will guide them on scoring the portfolios. The score will give us the data we need to aggregate scores from the alternate assessments with those from the regular assessments.

The purposes and final design for these assessments will emerge at meetings with the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee, from communications solicited from educators around the state, from reference to the research base, from the best thinking of the alternate assessment team in consultation with other experts on the project staff, and from reviews of other state alternate assessments that have demonstrated validity and reliability.

Phasing Out Current Alternate Assessments: As the newly developed alternate achievement and diagnostic assessments become available for administration to Ohio students with disabilities, ODE will be able to phase out existing alternate assessments. Information in the administration guidelines will help teachers make this transition in as seamless a way as possible. Teachers must understand the new content standards for the alternates, new administration procedures, and new expectations for their students.

Information, clear delineation of timelines, and discussion of how the "new" differs from the "old" go far in smoothing transitions. As the existing alternate assessment is phased out, information and resources such as the following must be available to teachers, administrators, and parents. The approach will include at a minimum these components:

- Dates for the adoption of content standards

- Timeline necessary to meet the requirements of the Ohio Title I timeline agreement and the requirements of IDEA compliance
- Information about the new content standards and their implications for teaching and for assessment
- Differences between the existing assessment system and the new system and implications of the differences for teachers' time, IEP development, and expectations for students
- Resources to learn more, including web sites that offer information
- Professional development sessions to provide information and to assist in training teachers
- Procedures for parents, teachers, administrators, and specialists to talk about the new assessments
- Availability of print, video, and web-based information for all groups, including parents and caregivers

Staff working on the alternate assessments will work closely with individuals developing the professional development, training sessions, and other resources concerning the "regular" diagnostic and achievement tests. They will take advantage of the networks established to disseminate information about the other tests and will coordinate the flow of information to all groups. We will seek guidance about outreach activities from the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee and will communicate with leaders of the 14 Ohio chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Designing Field Tests: We will need to field-test not only the items but also the procedures for this special population. ODE and its partners will need to observe the actual administrations to determine the effectiveness of the various measures.

The field-testing process of the alternate assessments will meet the same standard as the field testing process for the regular assessments, even though the sample of students will be significantly smaller and more dispersed. We propose field testing three times as many items as necessary to create solid alternate assessments for the diagnostic and achievement tests. Using a 3:1 harvest ratio will allow us to choose the items that best withstand the various testing situations and produce the most reliable and valid results. This should also leave additional items that may be used to replace items that do not appear to be functioning well under operational conditions.

We will field-test the checklists and formal prompts in a manner similar to the field test for mainstream diagnostic assessments. We will sample 20 schools that have at least five SD students enrolled. We will select one teacher per school who regularly works with SD students. That teacher will administer and score the checklist and formal prompt sections of the assessment. We will have one staff member from AIR, NCEO, Questar, or DRC observing each teacher. Staff members will focus on the teachers' processes for administering the assessments and the interpretations they make of student performance in order to determine

- the appropriateness of the items;
- the adequacy of the instructions; and
- teachers' abilities to both administer and score the assessments.

Finally, the items will undergo formal item analyses.

Because we will use a portfolio approach, the most effective field test will be a dry run of the process. We will send out the guidelines for collecting student work and the evaluation criteria, ask the teachers to collect and evaluate the student work, and have the teachers send us their scores and the students' portfolios. We will rescore each of the portfolios and compare our score with the teacher's score. We will then follow up with the teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructions. Debriefing meetings with teachers will allow us to delve into problems teachers may have experienced or misconceptions they have about the assessments. Again, we will sample 20 schools, and try this approach with five students per teacher.

Conducting Standard Setting: The Ohio Department of Education is required by Title I regulations to aggregate scores from alternate assessments with their corresponding mainstream assessments. Despite the considerable differences in the content standards assessed on the alternate and standard assessments, it is possible to make reasonable links between performance standards on these two sets of assessments. The degree to which the standards from the alternate assessments and corresponding proficiency, achievement, and diagnostic assessments are comparable influences whether it is reasonable to aggregate scores from the two assessments. NCEO has suggested that alternate assessments should be designed to assess achievement toward pre-determined standards (Thompson, Erickson, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Callender, 1999).

ODE proposes a judgmental moderation process to set performance standards from the alternate assessments that are linked and reasonably comparable to the standards on the corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments. ODE will consider at least four different ways to conceptualize performance standards for the alternate assessments.

The first approach is to set standards for advanced, proficient, and basic performance on the alternate assessments that are asserted to be comparable to the standards with the same labels on

the corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments, while recognizing that the likelihood of comparability is probably low. This is the practice in Kentucky, where all students who achieve the proficient level (for example) are counted and reported together as having met that standard, whether they did so on the regular or alternate state assessments (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 2001). A disadvantage of this approach is that scores based on the alternate assessment performance standards are not comparable in meaning to scores and performance standards from the corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments.

The second approach will be to set performance standards for the alternate assessments that are acknowledged to be different from the performance standards on the corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments. While this approach forthrightly acknowledges differences in the alternate and corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments, it does not provide an empirical or logical basis for aggregating scores from the alternate and other assessments.

The third approach is to set performance standards for the alternate assessments that are comparable to the lowest levels of performance on the corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments. This conceptual approach is based on the premise that enough of the Ohio content standards will appear in the alternate assessments so that the highest levels of performance on the alternate assessment could conceivably overlap with the lowest levels of performance on the corresponding proficiency, achievement, and diagnostic assessments.

The fourth approach is to tie performance standards to individual student progress over the course of an academic year in learning the academic content standards. This approach assumes that the variation in the ability of the most severely disabled youngsters to learn the academic content standards renders an absolute attainment standard inappropriate for most students in this

classification. This approach suggests that the progress of each student from her/his individual starting point is the most appropriate method of assessing performance against Ohio's academic content standards for the most severely disabled youngsters.

Collaboration with partner staff and with the experts on the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee may generate other conceptualizations for performance standards on the alternate assessments that will allow us to provide a rationale for aggregating alternate assessment scores with scores from the corresponding achievement and diagnostic assessments. Much of the interesting work to be shared with the Advisory Committee, with partners, and with the project's Technical Advisory Committee will consist of determining the most appropriate conceptualization of performance standards and evaluating the judgmental moderation approach to setting reasonably comparable performance standards on the alternate assessments.

Many states are now wrestling with comparability issues and working to determine how best to proceed. ODE and its partners are uniquely positioned to monitor the new information coming out of this struggle closely, and we believe that – working within the comprehensive system being developed in Ohio – ODE and the partners will be able to bring the issue to a new level of clarity.

Scoring: Consistent with the mainstream state-wide assessment program, diagnostic assessments will be scored by students' own teachers and achievement tests will be scored by scorers who do not work directly with the students. For both regular education students and students with disabilities (including severely disabled students who will participate in the alternate assessment), results from the diagnostic assessments do not have to be reported to the ODE and are not factored into school and district accountability calculations. Results from achievement tests (including grades three through eight and grade ten reading and mathematics

tests) are aggregated to the subgroup, school, district, and state level and are factored into school and district accountability calculations.

Rangefinding: ODE will convene rangefinding committees consisting of special education teachers and parents of severely disabled students to review samples of student portfolios along with the scoring rubric. Necessary revisions to the initial rubric may be made upon the review of the portfolios. These scored samples will be used to create scoring guides and other training materials for use in reader training.

Rangefinding will occur before handscoring. ODE strongly prefers to use "live" portfolios for rangefinding, so the Rangefinder Committee meetings will be scheduled as soon as possible after portfolios are returned. Once the project is established, ODE may determine that it is not necessary to do rangefinding each year.

Ohio will employ Ohio educators who work with students with severe disabilities to conduct the scoring. ODE is committed to selecting scorers for this project who are, first and foremost, concerned with the task – scoring entries from a population who cannot participate in a statewide assessment. It will be important to include scorers who have experience in working with students whose work is being evaluated. Also, it is necessary to employ scorers who demonstrate the ability to adhere to specific criteria, to make observations, and to accept correction. Candidates will be interviewed and their qualifications will be assessed. We expect to hire a diverse group of scorers for this important task.

Training Scorers: Scorer training will commence with a presentation of the scoring guide, which includes the scoring rubric and selected anchor entries that have been previously scored by the Rangefinder Committee. The scorers will then score training sets that also are comprised of entries that have been scored by the Rangefinder Committee. Discussion of each training set will

further the scorers' understanding of the rubrics and processes by which the portfolios will be scored. If any scorer seems to have difficulty, he or she will be offered additional help before taking qualifying sets.

Qualifying Scorers: After the training sets have been thoroughly discussed, the scorers must demonstrate their ability to apply the scoring criteria in accordance with the rubric. They are required to score qualifying sets comprised of entries scored by the Rangefinder Committee, and their scores will be compared to those of the committee. In order to qualify, the scorers must attain a certain level of agreement (to be determined by the ODE) with the committee. Those who do not qualify will not be allowed to score the "live" portfolios and will be dismissed from the project.

Training and Qualifying Reports: After scorers record their scores for the training or qualifying set, the score sheets will be scanned. A report will be generated which shows reader performance on that set. The report will include the portfolio security numbers; the true scores for those entries as determined by the Rangefinder Committee; the scorer's scores; and the percentage of exact, adjacent, and nonadjacent agreement the scorer achieved on that set. From these reports, the training staff can determine who is having difficulties and where those difficulties lie. These reports will also be used to certify the scorers who qualify.

Designing a Reporting System: There are many challenges to reporting results on alternate assessments. By June 30, 2003, ODE, in conjunction with its partners, will confirm methods of reporting results on alternate assessments and provide policy recommendations for aggregating and disaggregating the results. These reporting methods will evolve logically from the standard-setting process, and the partnership will work closely with the Standard Setting and Alternate Assessment Advisory Committees to ensure that the aggregation/disaggregation procedures and

the reporting method minimize the conflicts inherent in comparisons of assessments based on alternate systems of standards.

By June 30 prior to the first implementation year of each alternate assessment, ODE will design and provide score reporting forms for alternate assessments that inform improvements in curriculum and instruction for students taking alternate assessments.

In order to use score reports effectively to inform their practice, teachers need reports that are developed and formatted in ways that facilitate their decision-making process. Reports that are useful for directors of testing often are not useful for classroom teachers. Individual student reports must help teachers and other service providers decide whether the educational plan is working and where performance weaknesses lie. A useful report can contribute clarity and direction for the IEP team in deciding what changes to make in individual student IEPs.

AIR, Questar, and DRC have responded to these needs in their previous assessment work. Using that expertise and experience, we will work closely with the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee and Ohio classroom educators to determine how best to format the reports to provide the information that is necessary as clearly and effectively as possible. We will pilot the reports with groups of classroom educators. Interpretation of these reports will be included in the general professional development on the assessments, and changes will be made in response to feedback from the pilot and from comments received during professional development efforts.

Training and Assisting Teachers: Teacher resources will include all necessary information on the alternate assessments. The materials will seek to communicate clearly and without jargon. Distributed through the Ohio Regional Professional Development Centers and the Regional Education Service Centers, these materials will provide "advance organizers" for teachers, administrators, parents, and others who must prepare for the new alternate assessments.

We envision these materials to be user-friendly, eye-catching, clear, and comprehensive. Materials will be produced in print and electronic forms. We will also provide question-and-answer sheets and other informational pieces that can assist ODE in publicizing the new assessments.

Project staff will also identify appropriate professional and membership organizations around the state and provide them with copies to distribute with other publications and made announcements in these publications. In addition, the materials will be posted on the ODE web site.

In addition to training teachers prior to the administration, we plan to provide technical assistance to schools and districts. The educators who work with the students for whom these alternate assessments will be developed will have key roles in administering and scoring the tests and will be expected to understand and use the results of test data in making instructional and curricular decisions. For them to take part in the system and use results appropriately and effectively, they will need to be able to administer and score the tests with confidence. Technical assistance and training that focuses on how to interpret and use the assessment results will enhance their understanding of the assessments and increase their capacity as special educators.

The following points will be stressed:

- The importance of the new standards;
- The relevance of the standards to teaching practice;
- Strategies for administering the new assessments;
- Interpretation of data derived from the new assessments;
- The use of data in decision making;
- Application of the new standards to the writing of student IEPs;

- The depth of information to be gained from close analysis of student work samples

We propose to train trainers to provide special educators with the technical skills and understanding needed to introduce the new alternative assessments successfully. This training will be incorporated in the state-wide Test Coordinator Workshops, other test-related training and technical assistance activities, and special education workshops.

Participants in training sessions will learn how the new standards and alternate assessments can provide data that will supplement their understanding of how their students learn and how best to foster continued learning. Participants will be encouraged to "make the standards their own" so that strategies for helping their students attain them become part of their professional repertoire. Sessions will also be designed to assist teachers as they communicate and work with parents and community leaders to help them understand the focus of the assessment. Materials such as "frequently asked questions" sheets can help make communications more positive.

We propose to develop print, video, and web-based materials as well that will provide information and technical assistance to teachers as they learn to use and appreciate the new assessments. We propose developing a short web-based course and a video that will supplement material offered in the training sessions. Both will have accompanying material either in print form (for the video) or printable from the web course. A toll-free number will also be provided, and we also will ask the Advisory Committee to advise us on the feasibility of developing a "chat" room or other format that can provide technical assistance and encourage the development of professional networks of teachers who work with students with disabilities. Links can be made available to web sites such as those hosted by the Council for Exceptional Children, by NCEO, and by AIR's EMSTAC program, which is described below.

All training and informational materials about alternate assessments will be developed in close consultation with the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee and other Ohio educators. They will also conduct the train-the-trainer courses, prepare the course for the web, prepare the informational brochures, and train educators to provide technical assistance over the toll-free telephone line. Connections with Ohio's Special Education Resource Centers (SERCs), Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs), and Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) will allow us to take advantage of their institutional knowledge of Ohio education policies and their personal and professional associations with school and district personnel. In addition, these connections will allow us to identify and make connections with school and district personnel who can serve as trainers-of-trainers.

We further recognize that participation on standard-setting and advisory committees will also serve as training and professional development. Teachers and other educators who serve on these committees become the core of the state's alternate assessment infrastructure. They can be called on to discuss their activities as part of electronic communications or to write pieces detailing their experiences.

ODE will explore additional methods to communicate with the training audience and with others in the state. Additional methods will build on existing modes of communication and seek to strengthen associations of teachers across the state and enhance understanding and competency.

Evaluation

To ensure that Ohio's alternate assessments accomplish the purposes for which they are designed, we will implement a set of validation activities that documents the processes used to develop and refine the instruments and that tracks the performance of individual students over time.

The validation activities will be employed in both formative and summative ways – providing feedback that will be used to refine the instruments and providing summary information about the fidelity of the instruments to the purposes for which they are being developed. The validation activities will result in reports of the reliability and validity of the instruments. These reports will be produced at the conclusion of the 2002-03, 2003-04, and 2004-05 school years. Each validation report will:

- 1) Describe the Ohio assessment instruments;
- 2) document the development of the instruments;
- 3) present a comparison of the results from the previously-warranted and Ohio instruments;
- 4) evaluate the reliability, validity, and utility of the Ohio instruments.

In evaluating the reliability, validity, and utility of the Ohio instruments, we will document:

- 1) the evidence for predictive validity of the Ohio assessments, including:
 - a) whether the skills measured are causally related to growth of important general outcomes (e.g., language comprehension and expressive language);
 - b) the degree to which the alternate assessments predict performance on non-assessment tasks.
- 2) the evidence for the sensitivity of the Ohio assessments to student gains in academic skills;
- 3) the evidence for the reliability of the Ohio assessments, including:
 - a) whether measures of status and gain are unlikely due to lack of reliability of the instruments; and
 - b) whether measures of status and gain are unlikely due to differences in the administration and scoring of the assessments; and
- 4) the evidence for the decision making utility of the Ohio assessments, including:
 - a) the evidence that the assessments can be useful or beneficial for informing educational actions,
 - b) the degree to which the instruments permit identification of students who are not progressing academically; and

- c) the level of confidence that users can have that decisions made on the basis of the assessments are appropriate and beneficial for students.

Analyses outlined below will examine the variation in degree of validity and reliability across the alternate assessments. This information will be used to refine the assessments and to identify the optimal way of combining data to achieve the intended purposes and uses.

Content-Based Validity Evidence: To establish the fidelity of Ohio's alternate assessments, we will describe the instruments and document how their development was designed to performance against Ohio's academic content standards. This description will document the relationship between the assessment instruments' content and the academic content standards. In particular, we will examine the adequacy of the representation and the relevance of the items to the interpretation of the test score.

Analysis of the internal structure of the Ohio assessments will indicate the degree to which the relationships among test items and test components conform to the construct on which the test score interpretation is based. Confirmatory factor analysis across the assessment components will signal the degree to which items contributing to inferences are related. Estimates of Chronbach's Alpha will provide further evidence of the fidelity of the collection of items to the component scores.

Evidence of Test-Criterion Relationships: Evidence of how accurately Ohio's assessment scores predict performance in the next grade will be derived from multi-year analyses of individual student test scores. By following students across grades we will determine how accurately alternate assessment scores at any given grade predict performance on future assessments. By conducting analyses of the impact of cut-score specification for each Ohio alternate assessment component we can locate the score thresholds that improve specificity and positive predictive power, depress false-positives, and maximize the number of correct classifications.

Reliability Evidence: The reliability of the Ohio assessment instruments will be established through analyses of internal consistency, test-retest, and inter-rater agreement data. Using

classical test theory (Chronbach's Alpha) and generalizability theory, we will examine the internal consistency of the instruments, reliability of the tasks and teacher ratings. Test-retest reliabilities will be measured by having the same child evaluated by different teachers over a one-week interval. While the use of different teachers will produce a lower-bound estimate of test-retest reliability and likely underestimate the true test-retest reliability characteristics of the instruments, it will permit the evaluation of the concurrence between teachers about an individual child. Indexes of scorer consistency will be derived to determine the level of inter-rater reliability.

Management Plan and Quality of Project Personnel

Ohio's management team includes Associate State Superintendent Bob Bowers, Assistant State Superintendent Mitchell Chester, Ohio Director of Assessment Jan Crandell, and Ohio Director of Special Education, Michael Armstrong. Combined, these individuals have state-level curriculum, assessment, and special education leadership experience in Connecticut and Kentucky, as well as in Ohio. In addition, these individuals have district-level leadership experience in Connecticut, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, as well as Ohio.

Jan Crandell, who heads the ODE Office of Assessment, has more than 30 years' experience in developing and implementing large-scale assessment programs. She will devote 10 percent of her time to overseeing the development of the alternate assessments. The Office of Assessment employs 15 full-time staff. Two Office of Assessment staff members will have primary responsibility for overseeing contractor staff who will work on the project.

Michael Armstrong, who heads the ODE Office of Exceptional Children, will devote 10 percent of his time to overseeing the development of the alternate assessments and tying the assessment effort to aligning instructional programs for children with severe disabilities to state academic content standards. One Office of Exceptional Children staff person will have primary

responsibility for overseeing the development of content standards, assessment specifications, and field tests.

Ohio employs a panel of nationally-known experts to advise the state on matters of assessment and accountability. During their quarterly meetings, this Technical Advisory Committee will review the work of this project, and will focus particularly on issues of technical quality and standard setting. Ohio's technical advisory panel includes Gregory Cizek, Sanza Clark, George Engelhard, Robert Gabrys, Robert Linn, William Mehrens, Andy Porter, Joseph Ryan, and Roger Trent.

Capacity of Project Partners and Project Dissemination

ODE's partners have considerable experience developing alternative assessments and using a broad variety of communication strategies. AIR's two Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)-funded technical assistance and dissemination centers, its multiagency Technical Assistance Partnership, its broad interconnections with many government agencies, and its publicity work for a variety of offices of the National Institutes of Health have provided us opportunities to refine procedures for communicating with multiple audiences. They are experts at print and electronic communication, have developed and distributed on-line training and coursework, and are skilled using radio and television broadcasting and video for dissemination of information. AIR's Elementary and Middle School Technical Assistance Center (EMSTAC) has as its mission identifying and meeting the technical assistance needs of elementary and middle schools to improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities through web-based, print, and person-to-person assistance and training. Its exemplary website (www.emstac.org) illustrates AIR's capabilities to communicate effectively about special populations.

NCEO, as an OSEP-funded Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center, has considerable experience conducting research into policy and operational issues regarding the testing of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments. NCEO also provides technical assistance and training on the development and implementation of alternate assessments within states. NCEO participates in a number of assessment projects and research studies that collect data on the participation and performance of students with disabilities and assesses accommodations and alternate assessment approaches that facilitate the participation of students in statewide assessment programs. The projects include the design and development of the Arkansas Alternate Assessment System, researching out-of-level testing of students with disabilities (OSEP Grant #H324D990058), evaluating the intended and unintended consequences of large-scale assessments and accountability systems on students with disabilities for OSEP, and examining the role of special education and children with disabilities in education policy reform for the University of Maryland's Educational Policy Reform Research Institute.

AIR and NCEO are familiar with OSEP's desire to disseminate as broadly as possible information supporting OSEP goals for students with disabilities – participation in state assessments being one of its highest priorities – and have well-established connections to OSEP networks of technical assistance and dissemination resources.

Questar currently manages the statewide alternate assessments for Virginia and Arkansas, and both states consider their special education students and educators well served by their portfolio assessment programs. All students, regardless of their educational placement (special education classroom, homebound, hospital, etc.) or disability can participate. Questar's performance assessment staff have years of experience creating effective materials for scorer training and qualifying for projects including, among others, the Louisiana Educational

Assessment Program, the Arkansas Direct Writing and the Benchmark and End-of-Course Examinations, the Virginia Literacy Passport Test, and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, to name just a few.

Deliverables and Timelines

The following deliverables will be produced for the alternate assessments in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Each will be produced for early elementary, upper elementary, middle, and high school grades. Each of these will be disseminated through electronic and print mediums.

By June 30, 2003

- a. Develop content specifications in reading and mathematics for students with severe disabilities – including validation of standards by ODE partners and in-state educators.
- b. Develop test and item specifications for reading and mathematics.
- c. Develop administration criteria for alternate assessments.
- d. Develop alternate assessment portfolios for reading and mathematics, including observational checklists, prompts for on-demand performance, and guidelines for collecting samples of student work.
- e. Develop criteria for evaluating student portfolios.
- f. Conduct initial field test of reading and mathematics alternate assessments in reading and mathematics – 20 schools, 20 teachers, and approximately 100 students.

- g. Refine assessments based on feedback from initial field test and conduct second field test of reading and mathematics alternate assessments in reading and mathematics – 20 schools, 20 teachers, and approximately 100 students.
- h. Design score reports for parents, schools, districts, and the state of Ohio.

By September 30, 2003

- a. Conduct standard setting for reading and mathematics alternate assessments.
- b. Produce documentation of the technical characteristics of the reading and mathematics alternate assessments based on the field test data.
- c. Produce materials to assist educators and parents with understanding how state academic standards are applied to students with severe disabilities and the relationship between the alternate assessments and state academic standards.
- d. Develop and implement teacher training and assistance protocols.

By June 30, 2004

- a. Develop content specifications in science, social studies, and writing for students with severe disabilities – including validation of standards by ODE partners and in-state educators.
- b. Develop test and item specifications for science, social studies, and writing.
- c. Develop alternate assessment portfolios in science, social studies, and writing, including observational checklists, prompts for on-demand performance, and guidelines for collecting samples of student work.
- d. Develop criteria for evaluating student portfolios.

- e. Conduct initial field test of science, social studies, and writing alternate assessments in reading and mathematics – 20 schools, 20 teachers, and approximately 100 students.
- f. Refine assessments based on feedback from initial field test and conduct second field test of science, social studies, and writing alternate assessments in reading and mathematics – 20 schools, 20 teachers, and approximately 100 students.
- g. State-wide administration of reading and mathematics alternative assessments.
- h. Scoring and reporting of student performance on reading and mathematics alternative assessments.

By September 30, 2004

- a. Conduct standard setting for science, social studies, and writing alternate assessments.
- b. Produce documentation of the technical characteristics of the science, social studies, and writing alternate assessments based on the field test data.
- c. Produce documentation of the technical characteristics of the reading and mathematics alternate assessments based on the state-wide administration – including documentation of the method used to calibrate performance levels on the alternate assessments with performance levels on the mainstream Ohio assessments.
- d. Develop and implement teacher training and assistance protocols.

GEPA (GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT), SECTION 427

Steps ODE will take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted programs for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs are the following:

- Ensure that the school districts or other local entities have submitted to the State sufficient steps to meet the section 427 requirement.
- Work with advocacy organizations and agencies to reach out and serve parents.
- Communicate with parents through statewide advocacy organizations.
- Assist schools in this effort by disaggregating data by gender and ethnicity, LEP, migrant status, students with disabilities, those who are economically disadvantaged.
- Identify and reduce barriers to equitable participation through the identification (during public review) of programs that provided funds for local-level programs. The process for determining the use of those funds will be outlined, restrictions or limitations on their use will be identified, and application procedures will be provided.
- Ensure that equitable access to and participation in state-level activities, such as conference and meetings, will be provided to students, teachers, and other federal program beneficiaries with special needs (e.g., signing for the hearing impaired).
- Will address constraints of individual programs in funding state-level activities, and assure that the uses of the funds will comply with the general provisions of the respective programs.

Budget Narrative

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will utilize federal grant funds to support contractual arrangements with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and Measurement Incorporated (MI), and their subcontractors, the National Center on Education Outcomes, Questar, and Data Recognition Corporation. In addition, Ohio will utilize federal grant funds to convene Ohio educators and parents and train them to help develop, administer, and score the alternate assessments.

AIR, MI, and their subcontractors have submitted proposals to ODE to perform the work described in this proposal. ODE revenue sources are not adequate to support the development and implementation as outlined herein. Ohio is making a substantial fiscal contribution to the project, as identified in the budget matrix, but will not be able to support all of the work outlined herein without identifying additional source(s) of revenue.

Budget

	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUDGET INFORMATION NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS					OMB Control Number: 1890-0004
						Expiration Date: 02/28/2003
Name of Institution/Organization Ohio Department of Education			Applicants requesting funding for only one year should complete the column under "Project Year 1." Applicants requesting funding for multi-year grants should complete all applicable columns. Please read all instructions before completing form.			
SECTION A - BUDGET SUMMARY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FUNDS						
Budget Categories	Project Year 1 (a)	Project Year 2 (b)	Project Year 3 (c)	Project Year 4 (d)	Project Year 5 (e)	Total (f)
1. Personnel	0					0
2. Fringe Benefits	0					0
3. Travel	0					0
4. Equipment	0					0
5. Supplies	0					0
6. Contractual	1,131,884					1,131,884
7. Construction	0					0
8. Other	0					0
9. Total Direct Costs (lines 1-8)	1,131,884	0	0	0	0	1,131,884
10. Indirect Costs	95,078					95,078
11. Training Stipends	166,477					166,477
12. Total Costs (lines 9-11)	1,393,439	0	0	0	0	1,393,439

ED Form No. 524

Name of Institution/Organization Ohio Department of Education	Applicants requesting funding for only one year should complete the column under "Project Year 1." Applicants requesting funding for multi-year grants should complete all applicable columns. Please read all instructions before completing form.
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**SECTION B - BUDGET SUMMARY
NON-FEDERAL FUNDS**

Budget Categories	Project Year 1 (a)	Project Year 2 (b)	Project Year 3 (c)	Project Year 4 (d)	Project Year 5 (e)	Total (f)
1. Personnel	117,000					117,000
2. Fringe Benefits	32,760					32,760
3. Travel	10,000					10,000
4. Equipment	0					0
5. Supplies	0					0
6. Contractual	772,690					772,690
7. Construction						0
8. Other						0
9. Total Direct Costs (lines 1-8)	932,450	0	0	0	0	932,450
10. Indirect Costs	0					0
11. Training Stipends	0					0
12. Total Costs (lines 9-11)	932,450	0	0	0	0	932,450

SECTION C - OTHER BUDGET INFORMATION (see instructions)