

Ohio's Learning Standards–Extended and Instruction for Students Who Participate in the Ohio Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD)

Frequently Asked Questions for Families

1. Why should students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in academic instruction and assessment?

Under IDEA, all students have the right to have the same opportunity to access academic content and demonstrate their mastery in addition to learning functional life skills such as communication, social skills and practical daily living skills. In addition to learning functional life skills, such as communication, social skills and practical daily living skills, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities must have access to the general curriculum; be involved in the general curriculum; and make progress in the general curriculum. General curriculum means the same grade-level academic content standards curriculum that is afforded other students. Students with the most significant cognitive disability receive this content through instruction based on Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended.

2. What are Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended?

Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended (OLS-E), commonly referred to as the "extended standards," were designed to make Ohio's Learning Standards more accessible to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The extended standards ensure students who take Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with the most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD) are provided with multiple ways to learn and demonstrate knowledge aligned to grade-level standards. At the same time, the extended standards are designed to maintain the rigor and high expectations of Ohio's Learning Standards.

3. How are Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended different from Ohio's Learning Standards?

The OLS-E target the same academic content as Ohio's Learning Standards but reduce breadth and complexity of the grade-level standards into alternate achievement markers for state testing purposes. Thus, ensuring equal participation in grade-level assessment with allowable modifications to grade-level outcomes.

Ohio Learning Standards-Extended have three levels of difficulty from "most complex" to "least complex" aligned to each standard from Ohio's Learning Standards. This allows teachers to adjust difficulty based on individual student strengths. Ohio educators deconstructed Ohio's Learning Standards to monitor growth and progress over time that

includes alternate achievement markers of progress.

4. What does instruction look like for students being educated with the extended standards?

Instruction for students who qualify to take the AASCD should include meaningful opportunities for learning grade-level concepts and skills, with the added individualized supports, including explicit, direct, systematic and sequential instruction, accommodations, scaffolds, peer interaction, special services, assistive technologies and, when needed, modifications to the achievement markers as outlined in the Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended.

Based on the complexity of the most significant cognitive impairment, students who qualify to take the AASCD will almost always require extensive, repeated, individualized instruction, methods, materials substantially adapted materials for accessing information in alternative ways and supports to acquire, maintain, demonstrate and transfer skills across multiple settings. These individualized and adapted methods, materials, supports and services should be described in detail within the student's individualized education program, specifically in sections 7 and 12.

More information about Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended, including how they are used in pairing with the grade-level standards to plan for instruction and assessment, can be found at the [Teaching Diverse Learners Center](#) at the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence.

5. I am concerned that my child will not receive functional life skills because of the push for academic content standards. Are functional life skills in the extended standards?

Functional life skills are critical for all students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities. As instruction is designed, educators should blend academic content and functional life skills into meaningful lessons for their students. It also should be noted that many of the standards are important to transitioning into adulthood and could be considered functional or life skills. Communicating, reading, writing, numeracy, using tools and technology, finding your location on a map, knowing how the world works, day/night, sequence of events and so on are life skills all students need. Other student-specific functional life skills should be aligned to future outcomes through individualized transition assessment and planning and also should be embedded into daily individualized instruction.

6. How can my child who is nonverbal participate in standards-based instruction and assessment?

All individuals communicate, regardless of their verbal ability. Most people interact using many modes of communication throughout each day. Some students communicate through facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, signed language, augmented language systems, picture exchange and/or using a variety of other behaviors. Your child may have many modes of communication and the educational team will need to consider accommodating to include these varied modes. Content learning that is guided by the grade level standards provides the educational team with instructional opportunities to develop and practice alternate forms of communication, including no tech, low tech, augmentative and assistive technology.

7. Can Ohio's Learning Standards–Extended be used with students who do not take the AASCD?

The Ohio's Learning Standards–Extended and associated [learning progressions](#) can support educators to differentiate instruction for all students. However, they must be used with caution. Ohio's Learning Standards are written and assessed at a much higher level of expectation than the extended standards. While these extensions and learning progressions can provide entry points into Ohio's Learning Standards for students who need differentiation to grow and build base skills and close gaps in knowledge in the classroom but do not take the alternate assessment, it is important to remember these students are working toward and will be assessed using Ohio's Learning Standards. When using the extended standards with students who do not have the most significant cognitive disabilities, the learning expectation should be the same as their nondisabled peers.