

## Ohio's Journey to Appropriate Alternate Assessment Participation

Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD) is the federally required statewide assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in Ohio's general assessment even with allowable accommodations. The alternate assessment is aligned to [Ohio's Learning Standards–Extended \(OLS-E\)](#) and designed to allow students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in an appropriately rigorous assessment. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) limits the total number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are assessed **statewide** with an alternate assessment to 1% of the total number of students in the state who are assessed.

Ohio is committed to meeting the needs of the whole child, which is an opportunity to ensure positive and meaningful educational experiences for students with disabilities that will lead to academic and postsecondary success. Ohio's goal is to ensure the right students are taking the right tests. The Department collaborates with regional state support teams, districts and community schools to ensure that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are using guidance documents appropriately, consistently applying the criteria for alternate assessment participation and using the available accommodations to provide students with disabilities access to Ohio's State Tests.

Ohio has made significant progress in improving the use of state guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment through [Ohio's Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool](#). The 2021-2022 school year was the second full year of implementation for the decision-making tool. The participation numbers on the alternate assessment decreased from spring 2018 to spring 2022 as reflected in table 1. Table 1 shows the percentage of students who took an alternate assessment by content area in grades 3-8 and high school in school years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022 for the first time. This represents a major improvement for Ohio's education system to meet the needs of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

**Table 1: Participation in Alternate Assessment by Subject Across Years (EdFacts)**

Subject	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	2021-2022	Change
Reading	1.93%	1.95%	1.93%	1.37%	0.97%	-0.39%
Mathematics	1.97%	1.99%	1.95%	1.40%	0.99%	-0.40%
Science	1.89%	2.02%	1.96%	1.45%	1.03%	-0.41%

**Significant Steps in the Journey:** Steps toward improving the appropriate use of the alternate assessment statewide. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. A [one-page flyer](#) for families in January 2022 to serve as a companion to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#), which describe the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities. The flyer and the [Assessment Toolkit for Parents](#) alongside the newly created [Evaluation Roadmap](#) are on the Department's new family engagement [website](#).
2. Addition of alternate assessment participation rates to the annual [Special Education Profiles](#) and [Special Education Ratings](#). Both the profiles and the ratings include easy to understand explanations of the published data for stakeholders. Districts and community schools identified as significantly exceeding the 1% threshold with a 3.5% or higher participation rate are assigned to Tier 3 of the Special Education Program Monitoring process and are required, with the assistance of regional state support team consultants, to complete a root cause data analysis and an improvement plan. These activities are monitored at the state level through the Special Education Program Monitoring process.

3. Regional state support team consultants facilitated the National Center on Educational Outcomes' [Disproportionality Calculator](#) with 52 Tier 3 districts.
4. Engage statewide stakeholder groups, such as the [Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials Center](#) (AT&AEM) network, Improving Outcomes for Learners with Complex Needs and others to provide regional state support teams with training and tools to support appropriate use of the alternate assessment and Ohio's Learning Standards – Extended.
5. Updated the [Accessibility Manual](#) to address technical edits for Ohio's statewide assessments that are online with paper testing as an accommodation.
6. Embedded the [Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Tool](#) into the state's IEP documents, therefore requiring use of the tool when statewide testing is considered. The regional state support team consultants will continue to provide district training on the Decision-Making Tool. Monitor the effectiveness of the state support teams Decision-Making Tool trainings by reviewing district feedback, frequently asked questions and new practices to decision-making procedures.
7. The Department cross-office Alternate Assessment Workgroup and selected stakeholders participate in ongoing national learning and networking opportunities. These opportunities include:
  - [The National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) (NCEO) Communities of Practice
  - [The TIES Center](#)
  - Membership in [The Council of Chief State School Officers \(CCSSO\) State Collaborative on Assessment, Standards and Education of Students with Disabilities \(ASES\)](#)
  - The annual [OCALICON](#) international conference

### Future Plans

The Alternate Assessment Participation Workgroup continues to meet regularly and includes representatives from the Offices for Exceptional Children; Learning and Instructional Strategies; Assessment; Innovation and Improvement; Accountability; Data Quality and Governance; and Community Schools. This cross-agency team developed the following action steps for school year 2022-2023:

1. Conduct a targeted analysis of state-level alternate assessment data by disaggregating student alternate assessment participation data by 1) socioeconomic status; 2) race and ethnicity; 3) disability category; and 4) English Learner status. Analysis of this data will direct improved guidance to regional teams that are supporting local Tier 3 districts and community schools.
2. Develop and disseminate resources and training to districts and families about alternate assessment eligibility. Regional and local professional development will continue to dispel misunderstandings observed in district and community school justification forms.
3. Working collaboratively with members of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); Assessment, Standards and Education of Students with Disabilities (ASES); State Collaborative on Assessment, Standards and Students (SCASS); and National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).
4. Concurrently review and revise Ohio's Learning Standards and Ohio's Learning Standards – Extended to ensure grade-level access to the general education curriculum for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. During the 2022-2023 school year, the Department will revise English language arts content standards.