

The logo features the word "Ohio" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a thick, lime-green circle. The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a classroom with students raising their hands and a chalkboard with math problems.

Ohio

One Percent Waiver Extension Request for Reading, Mathematics and Science

ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(D) and 34 CFR 200.6(c) and (d)

Submission to U.S. Department of Education

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

OCT. 9, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, addresses alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Each state must submit a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education if it predicts exceeding one percent participation in the alternate assessment in a subject. Ohio submitted and was granted a waiver for school year 2017-2018. Ohio submitted and was granted a waiver extension request for school year 2018-2019.

Ohio's alternate assessment participation rates were 1.95 percent in English language arts, 1.99 percent in mathematics and 2.02 percent in science for school year 2017-2018. Participation rates in school year 2018-2019, were 1.93 percent in English language arts, 1.95 percent in mathematics and 1.96 percent in science (See Table 1). Because of these past rates, Ohio anticipated exceeding the one percent threshold for the 2019-2020 administration of the alternate assessment in English language arts, mathematics and science and requested an extension to the school year 2018-2019 waiver. Ohio's request for an extension was approved in February 2020.

Prior to approval, an addendum was submitted on January 21, 2020, to provide additional data to Ohio's November 19, 2019, request for a waiver extension. Included in this addendum were two tables showing Ohio's participation data as originally submitted in November 2019 and an updated data table using EdFacts data to align with the information source used by the U.S. Department of Education.

Until the U.S. Department of Education asked Ohio to submit an addendum to their 2019-2020 waiver extension request, Ohio's assessment participation rate was calculated using data from the Department's Education Management Information System (EMIS). This data set differs from the EdFacts data used by the U.S. Department of Education which includes only the assessments required for federal accountability purposes. The EMIS data included high school assessments required for graduation in Ohio but not reported for federal accountability purposes. Therefore, there appeared to be a discrepancy in the number of students tested in English language arts, mathematics and science with the EdFacts data showing fewer total students tested. Starting with the addendum to Ohio's 2019-2020 waiver extension request, and including this waiver extension request for school year 2020-2021, the Department will use the EdFacts data when submitting a waiver extension request.

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 2018-2019. Using the EdFacts data set, Ohio's participation rates improved for all three assessments. The participation rate in Ohio's mathematics alternate assessments indicates improvement from 1.99% in 2017-2018 to 1.95% in 2018-2019, an improvement of 0.04% fewer students participating. Most significantly, participation in science alternate assessments improved from 2.02% in 2017-2018 to 1.96% in 2018-2019, an improvement of 0.06% fewer students participating.

TABLE 1: Participation in Alternate Assessment by Content Area Across Years (EdFacts)

Content Area	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Change
English Language Arts	1.93%	1.95%	1.93%	- 0.02
Mathematics	1.97%	1.99%	1.95%	- 0.04
Science	1.89%	2.02%	1.96%	- 0.06

Due to COVID-19, Ohio was unable to complete statewide alternate assessment testing in spring 2020. Therefore, Ohio is using school year 2018-2019 alternate assessment participation data and anticipates exceeding the one percent threshold for the 2020-2021 administration of the alternate assessment in English language arts, mathematics and science. Ohio is requesting an extension to the 2019-2020 approved waiver for the 2020-2021 school year.

As stipulated in the Every Student Succeeds Act, Ohio's improvement plan includes annually requiring justifications from districts and community schools exceeding the one percent threshold, supporting and monitoring districts and community schools to appropriately use the state's eligibility guidelines for the alternate assessment and using a statewide tiered system of support to provide appropriate oversight and support to districts that exceed the one percent threshold.

Ohio's participation rate continues to be above the one percent threshold. The Ohio Department of Education is collaborating with local and national partners to develop and implement innovative approaches to ensure only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are participating in Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities. An Alternate Assessment Participation Workgroup (Workgroup), created at the Department in early 2017, continues with regularly scheduled meetings 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 participates in the National Center for Educational Outcomes Community of Practice and Professional Learning Groups and includes Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) Assessment, Standards and Education of Special Students (ASES) members, representatives from the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) and members from Ohio's [state support teams](#). The Workgroup has consulted with numerous stakeholder groups such as the Ohio State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children, the Ohio Association of Pupil Service Administrators and the special education statewide testing advisory committee to gather input and feedback throughout the school year.

Ohio continues to build on the Department's system of regional state support teams to provide technical assistance and monitoring to local districts and community schools. The Department is collaborating with state support team directors and key staff members to implement a tiered system of support to assist districts and community schools in reviewing and improving their alternate assessment policies and practices. The goal is to ensure that only eligible students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in the state's alternate assessments. Ohio's tiered intervention monitoring plan is described in more detail beginning on page 13 of this document.

As stipulated in the Every Student Succeeds Act, districts and community schools exceeding one percent participation are again required to complete and submit an electronic justification in January 2020 describing their individualized education program policies and processes for determining assessment participation for students with disabilities. The updated justification form requires districts and community schools to outline how they are using the Department's eligibility guidelines and companion resources when making decisions about alternate assessment participation. Districts and community schools are also asked to describe any special programs or circumstances that might impact their participation rate and, as a result, would justify exceeding the one percent participation threshold. The Workgroup updated the justification form for 2019-2020 to include more detailed participation data, including state comparison data, and assurances that staff are appropriately using Department guidelines and resources.

Alignment to Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education

[Each Child, Our Future](#) is Ohio's strategic plan for education. The purpose of the plan is to lift aspirations, create hope and excitement, guide development of state-level education policies and promote high-quality educational practices across the state. Introduced in 2018, the plan focuses on three core principles: Equity, Partnerships and Quality Schools – with the goal of creating a system in which each student is challenged, prepared and empowered for his or her future. The Department's work on alternate assessment participation aligns with the purpose and goals of Ohio's strategic plan. The Department is working to reduce participation in alternate assessments not solely to meet federal requirements, but to ensure each student has access to rigorous curriculum and assessments that prepares them for future success. *Ohio's goal is to ensure the right students are taking the right tests.*

Ohio's strategic plan recognizes that equity of education achievement is a persisting challenge. Page 10 of the plan states that appropriate supports must be made available so personal and social circumstances do not prohibit a child from reaching his or her greatest aspiration. Access to academically challenging standards is fundamental to achieving equity in education and overreliance on Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities limits students' access to rigorous curriculum and assessment that meets the personalized learning needs of each child. The Department is working with regional state support teams, Educational Service Centers, districts, community schools and other partners to improve the process of identifying students for participation in the alternate assessment to ensure that all students have equitable access to high quality education and related services leading to post-secondary success. The strategic plan promotes a focus on meeting the needs of the whole child. As we improve our ability to meet students' individual learning, behavioral and social emotional needs, fewer students will be at risk of being inappropriately identified as having a disability and therefore being inappropriately assigned to take an alternate assessment. Ohio's Significant Steps Toward Ensuring the Right Students are Taking the Right Assessments

Ohio's focus on equity as a core principle has made access to appropriately rigorous curriculum and assessment for all students a priority. While the Department is working to reduce the percentage of students participating in the alternate assessment, the priority is to ensure that all students are taking the most appropriate assessments given their unique needs. The Department is working with regional support teams, districts and community schools to ensure that Individualized Education Program teams are using the 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 taken significant steps toward improving the use of the alternate assessment statewide. These steps include the following:

1. The Department added alternate assessment participation rates to both the Special Education Profiles and Special Education Ratings, which are published annually. Both the profiles and the ratings are available to stakeholders and include easy to understand explanations of the published data. Districts and community schools identified as significantly exceeding the one percent threshold are assigned to Tier 3 of a tiered intervention and support system. Districts and community schools identified for Tier 3 are required, with the assistance of regional state support team consultants, to complete a root cause data analysis and an improvement plan. This is monitored at the state level through Ohio's compliance dashboard.

2. The Department's Office for Exceptional Children collaborated with the Department's Office for Innovation and Improvement to add alternate assessment participation guidance to the Compliance Support Tool used with districts and community schools in school improvement status. The tool is designed to promote communication among state, regional and local staff to ensure alignment of improvement plans and support meaningful progress on improvement goals. The Compliance Support Tool provides the Department another outlet for supporting districts and community schools in improving their use of the alternate assessment.
3. The Department worked in partnership with stakeholder groups like the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, the state Assistive Technology network 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.
4. The Department updated guidance documents available for use by Individualized Education Program teams when considering alternate assessment for students. Updates were made with multiple levels of stakeholder input. An additional tool, the Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool, was developed and state support teams will share the tool with Tier 3 districts and community schools.
5. The Department updated for school year 2020-2021 the State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit for use by state support team consultants as they assist districts and community schools to improve their use of the alternate assessment. This toolkit includes presentation materials, communication examples, resources from OCALI on the use of extended standards and administration materials from the test developer. The key update is that the Department aligned the resources in the toolkit with each section of the root cause analysis tool that Tier 3 districts are required to complete with their State Support Team. By having the resources aligned to each element in the root cause analysis tool, State Support Team members can readily focus their support to the needs of the district. The Department will continue to update and refine this toolkit.
6. Alternate Assessment Workgroup members from across the agency, along with selected stakeholders, participate in ongoing national learning and networking opportunities. These opportunities include the National Center on Educational Outcomes' Communities of Practice and Professional Learning Groups, the TIES Center's Professional Learning Groups, membership in the Council for Chief State School Officers State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards Assessment, Standards and Education of Special Education Students State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, and the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence [OCALICON](#) international conference. With support from the United States Department of Education Office for Elementary and Secondary Education, the National Center for Educational Outcomes began providing technical assistance to Ohio on their one percent work in February 2020. Ohio meets with the National Center for Educational Outcomes monthly and the technical assistance is ongoing.

REQUIRED COMPONENTS OF ONE PERCENT WAIVER EXTENSION REQUEST

Component 1

Be submitted at least 90 days prior to the start of the state's testing window for the relevant subject;

Ohio's assessment window for the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities opens Feb. 2, 2021. Ninety days prior to the start of Ohio's testing window (Nov. 4, 2020), the Department will submit a waiver extension request to the United States Department of Education.

Component 2

Provide state-level data, from the current or previous school year, to show: The number and percentage of students in each subgroup of students who took an alternate assessment;

Component two of Ohio's one percent waiver extension request includes the number and percentage of students assessed in each subgroup of students who took the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: 2018-2019 Participation in Alternate Assessment by Content Area (Grades 3-8 and High School)

Subject	Subgroup	Number of students who took the standard assessment	Number of students who took the alternate assessment	All students tested	Percentage alternately assessed
English Language Arts	All Students	894,189	17,603	911,792	1.93%
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	1,104	22	1,126	1.95%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	22,970	332	23,302	1.42%
	Black, Non-Hispanic	146,705	4,353	151,058	2.88%
	Hispanic	55,997	995	56,992	1.75%
	Multiracial	47,339	810	48,149	1.68%
	White, Non-Hispanic	620,074	11,091	631,165	1.76%
	Students with Disabilities	127,448	17,581	145,029	12.12%
	Economically Disadvantaged	449,645	11,813	461,458	2.56%
	English Learners	25,368	750	26,118	2.87%
Mathematics	All Students	885,259	17,619	902,878	1.95%
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	1,085	21	1,106	1.90%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	22,546	333	22,879	1.46%
	Black, Non-Hispanic	144,700	4,364	149,064	2.93%
	Hispanic	55,329	996	56,325	1.77%
	Multiracial	46,773	817	47,590	1.72%
	White, Non-Hispanic	614,826	11,088	625,914	1.77%
	Students with Disabilities	126,197	17,598	143,795	12.24%
	Economically Disadvantaged	443,860	11,813	455,673	2.59%
	English Learners	25,014	752	25,766	2.92%
Science	All Students	386,326	7,621	388,947	1.96%

Subject	Subgroup	Number of students who took the standard assessment	Number of students who took the alternate assessment	All students tested	Percentage alternately assessed
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	489	6	495	1.21%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	9,846	147	9,993	1.47%
	Black, Non-Hispanic	59,281	1,842	61,123	3.01%
	Hispanic	22,864	401	23,265	1.72%
	Multiracial	18,925	349	19,274	1.81%
	White, Non-Hispanic	269,921	4,876	274,797	1.77%
	Students with Disabilities	52,343	7,613	59,956	12.70%
	Economically Disadvantaged	181,461	4,938	186,399	2.65%
	English Learners	9,697	296	9,993	2.96%

- a. *The state measured the achievement of at least 95 percent of all students and 95 percent of students in the children with disabilities subgroup enrolled in grades for which the assessment is required.*

Ohio follows federal requirements for participation in statewide assessments as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act. Students in grades 3 through 8 are required to take both English language arts and mathematics assessments annually. Students in grades 5 and 8 must take a science assessment. High school students are required to take end-of-course exams to meet state graduation requirements. Ohio met federal requirements for statewide test participation in 2018-2019 through the administration of Ohio's State Tests. Data in Table 3 indicate that the Department measured achievement for more than 95 percent of all students enrolled in grades and courses for which an assessment is required. The Department measured achievement for more than 95 percent of students in the children with disabilities subgroup enrolled in grades and courses for which an assessment is required. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: 2018-2019 Participation Rate of All Students and Students with Disabilities (Grades 3-8 and High School)

Subject	Students tested	Students required to test	Percent achievement measured for all students	Students with disabilities tested	Students with disabilities required to test	Percent achievement measured for students with disabilities
English Language Arts	911,792	916,706	99.46%	145,029	146,496	99.00%
Mathematics	902,878	908,972	99.33%	143,795	145,599	98.76%
Science	388,947	393,203	98.92%	59,956	61,164	98.02%

b. The U.S. Department of Education encourages a State to use current year (2020-21) IEP or test registration data to make a credible estimate of the number and percentage of students (including by subgroup, if possible) who will take the alternate assessment in SY 2020-21 or who would have taken the alternate assessment in SY 2019-20 if testing had been conducted.

In the June 9, 2020, memorandum to states about additional information regarding the requirements to request a waiver or waiver extension request for the 2020-2021 school year, the U.S. Department of Education encouraged states to make a credible estimate of the number and percentage of students, by subgroup if possible, who would have taken an alternate assessment in school year 2019-2020, if testing had not been interrupted by COVID-19. Because statewide alternate assessment testing in school year 2019-2020 was not completed and because the general education testing was not scheduled to begin until late March, not all districts had uploaded student information into the testing system. With incomplete student testing enrollment, Ohio is not able to estimate alternate assessment participation based on school year 2019-2020 test enrollment data. Therefore, Ohio is making a credible estimate based on information in the state's Education Management Information System for school year 2019-2020. Ohio is estimating alternate assessment participation by using the number of students who had the test type of alternate assessment identified in their testing record (numerator) and the total number of students enrolled in tested grades during the October 2019 student count week (denominator). Our credible estimate is more than 0.1% point lower than school year 2018-2019.

Table 4: Credible estimate of students who would have taken the alternate assessment in school year 2019-2020.

Total number of students with alternate assessment indicated in testing record	Total number of students in tested grades enrolled in Ohio schools during October count week	Percent alternate assessment participation
23,012	1,274,059	1.81%

Component 3A

Include assurances from the state that it has verified that each district or community school that the state anticipates will assess more than one percent of its assessed students in any subject using an alternate assessment followed the state's guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment.

In school year 2018-2019, data showed that a considerable number of districts and community schools, 559, exceeded the one percent threshold and were required to submit a justification form with assurances. The form asked districts and community schools to detail how they implemented the Department guidelines for participation in the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities. In school year 2019-2020, the deadline for submitting the justification form with assurances was March 16, 2020, the same day that the Governor of Ohio ordered school buildings closed statewide due to COVID-19. To ensure that districts had ample time to submit their justification form, the Department extended the submission window until June 1, 2020. Even though alternate assessment testing was not completed due to COVID-19, 687 districts submitted justification forms. This is 128 more submissions in districts and schools than in the previous school year. The department believes that all districts that had exceeded the one percent threshold in 2018-2019 did submit a justification form in 2019-2020. That all districts that were previously over the 1.0 percent threshold submitted their justification, plus the fact that districts had the option to submit a justification

form even if they did not go over the 1.0 percent threshold, accounts for the significant increase in the total number of submissions.

Evidence of Progress

The Department received justification forms with assurances from 100 percent of required districts and community schools (those that exceeded one percent alternate assessment participation in school year 2018-2019) as well as a significant number of districts that did not anticipate exceeding one percent but submitted the form anyway. The Alternate Assessment Workgroup utilized both quantitative and qualitative data from district and community school justifications to plan for technical assistance. Trends identified include the following:

- An overabundance of students with specific learning disabilities and other health impairments - disability categories that do not include intellectual disabilities;
- An overabundance of students in other disability categories not typically associated with the most significant cognitive disabilities and alternate assessment needs;
- Explanations that confused low academic performance with intellectual disability;
- Repeated references to high poverty combined with both urban and rural settings;
- Misconstrued notion that drug addiction, unemployment and low socioeconomic status are automatically causally linked to high rates of the most significant cognitive disabilities; and
- Assignment to alternate assessment based on placement and least-restrictive environment decisions.

Review of justification forms revealed multiple opportunities for improvement across districts. The Alternate Assessment Workgroup created a toolkit for regional state support teams to utilize when they provide professional development to districts and community schools. This set of resources was created to help the state support teams assist districts in completing the self-review summary report. The self-review summary report is a root cause analysis document that all Tier 3 districts identified in the special education profiles are required to complete with assistance from their regional state support team. The toolkit includes resources for each section of the summary report. Those sections cover policies, practices and procedures districts use for determining alternate assessment participation, training for district staff regarding alternate assessment participation eligibility, parent and family involvement, student alternate assessment data exploration and, alternate assessment disproportionality. One resource that all districts will be required to use with the state support teams is the new decision-making tool.

An overview of the new decision-making tool, decision-making tool Frequently Asked Questions and other alternate assessment updates were provided to all districts and community schools in the form of a webinar, with slides and a transcript posted online following the webinar. The webinar also addressed the calculation of projected participation rates, an update on the state waiver process and the timeline for submitting assurances. The Department shared a preview of family resources regarding alternate assessment participation criteria for, and implications of, participation in Ohio's alternate assessment and use of Ohio's Learning Standards-Extended for instruction.

The Department notified the districts that were required to submit a justification in school year 2018-2019 but did not submit a justification. The Department considered the failure to submit a justification in the rubric used to determine the monitoring tier to which a district was assigned as described in profile indicator component 4B of the special education profiles. Additionally, when the special education profiles are released in December 2020, all Tier 2 districts will be notified that they are required to complete the self-review summary report independently (without state support team assistance) and submit it to the Department.

Component 3B

Include assurances from the state that it has verified that each district or community school that the state anticipates will assess more than one percent of its assessed students in any subject using an alternate assessment will address any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup taking an alternate assessment.

The Department continues to address disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup participating in the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. (See Table 2.) Ohio's 2018-2019 EdFacts data shows a continuing disproportionately high number of participants in the economically disadvantaged subgroup. This is a persisting area of concern that was also evident in the qualitative data analysis of the district-level justification forms. Data also show a disproportionate number of black students participating in the alternate assessment, which echoes state-level significant disproportionality data regarding the identification of students with disabilities. The Department plans to assist districts and community schools with the analysis of alternate assessment disproportionality data. In alignment with *Each Child, Our Future's* focus on equity, the Office for Exceptional Children plans to make disproportionality a high-priority focus for 2020-2021. The Alternate Assessment Workgroup plans a targeted analysis of student participation by 1) socioeconomic status, 2) race and ethnicity, and 3) disability category. This analysis will include data at the state level and within identified Tier 3 districts and community schools.

Evidence of Progress

In 2018-2019, the Department included alternate assessment participation in Special Education Profiles and Special Education Ratings for the first time. Due to COVID-19, the department postponed the release of Special Education Profiles for school year 2019-2020 to December 2020. By incorporating alternate assessment participation in the profiles and ratings, the Office for Exceptional Children identified Tier 3 districts and community schools for the supports and monitoring process. This provided the opportunity and the platform to work with districts and community schools in analyzing their participation data. The electronic Special Education Profile system was designed to alert Tier 3 districts of mandatory action steps. Action steps included completing a self-review summary report and an improvement plan within the Department's electronic compliance dashboard. The self-review for alternate assessment required analysis of participation rates by disability category. State support teams assisted districts and community schools in completing the self-review and developing aligned improvement plans.

For the 2020-2021 school year, the Department's Alternate Assessment Workgroup concluded that the self-review summary report could be improved to engage districts and community schools in more rigorous data analysis, especially concerning disproportionality data. In addition to analyzing participation by disability category, the revised self-review will require analysis of participation data by race and ethnicity. Resources provided by the national [Community of Practice](#), led by the National Center on Educational Outcomes, provided guidance to improve the template. The Alternate Assessment Workgroup is collaborating with the Department's Significant Disproportionality Workgroup to explore methods for local districts and community schools to calculate and analyze their disproportionality data. The Workgroup will include the newly developed guidance in the State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit and will train state support team consultants to assist districts and community schools in analysis of disproportionality data. In school year 2020-2021, districts that are identified as Tier 3 districts and required to do a self-review summary report, will be asked to use an analytic approach to explore disproportionality as presented in the [NCEO Brief #19 – Guidance for Examining Disproportionality of Student Group Participation in Alternate Assessments](#).

Component 4A

Include a plan and timeline for improving the implementation of its guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment.

The Department has made significant progress in improving the use of state guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment. A significant improvement was completed in 2018 when the Office for Exceptional Children embedded the State's participation guidelines into its online, dynamic Individualized Education Program form. The dynamic form links directly to the participation criteria document. This document includes four required signatures: parent or guardian, intervention specialist, district representative, and general education teacher. The form is expected to be updated and signed annually during individualized education program review. However, stakeholder feedback indicated that the form is not being used consistently or effectively partially because it lacks specificity and clarity. Based on this feedback, the Department clarified and updated existing resources to better expand upon the criteria. Specifically, the Department created a new Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool.

Evidence of Progress

The Department offered multiple resources to inform Individualized Education Program teams in their decision-making process: 1) participation criteria form, 2) decision making flowchart, and 3) companion document. The Alternate Assessment Workgroup gathered feedback on the resources from stakeholders on advisory committees and through discussions with state support team consultants. In July 2019, the Workgroup began the process of updating the existing guidance, with a focus on turning the companion document into a decision-making tool that expands on the participation criteria. The updated tool, the Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool, is organized in sections correlated to Ohio's participation criteria to provide additional guidance and specificity to the participation criteria. The Department's Supports and Monitoring Team in the Office for Exceptional Children will use the new tool with Individualized Education Program teams in targeted districts and community schools, including those identified as Tier 3. Furthermore, beginning this year, the new decision-making tool is required for use by all IEP teams when determining alternate assessment participation.

The Department worked with its testing contractor, Cambium Assessment, Inc., to address the concern that many students with disabilities that do not include an intellectual component are assigned to the alternate assessment. Beginning with school year 2019-2020, the Department added a step to Ohio's assessment enrollment procedures that requires districts to submit the disability category for each student when alternate assessment is selected as their test type. The Department will not consider test records complete for participating students until a disability type is identified. The goal is to provide another opportunity for educators to reflect on and affirm the team's decision to use the alternate assessment. Due to COVID-19 and interrupted testing, the Department was unable to analyze if this new requirement appeared to have any impact on alternate assessment participation. The Department will compare the testing data from school year 2018-2019 with 2020-2021 to see if any correlation can be made between including this additional step and a reduction in participation.

Timeline for Improving Implementation of Guidelines

Summer 2019: The Workgroup drafted language for an updated version of the current "companion document." The Workgroup engaged external experts to refine the language and format the content into a step-by-step framework for discussing student eligibility. The companion document was renamed and became the Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool.

September 2019 through May 2020: The Workgroup gathered input and feedback from external stakeholder groups, including:

- The State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC)
- The Ohio Association of Pupil Services Administrators (OAPSA)
- The Students with Disabilities Testing Advisory
- The Ohio Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials network
- The Low Incidence and Autism Spectrum Disorder network
- The State Support Team Directors
- The State Support Team Alternate Assessment trainers
- The Alternate Assessment Content and Fairness review committee
- The Ohio Test Advisory Committee
- The Ohio Test Steering Committee
- The Ohio State University Family Engagement Center
- The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD)
- 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)
- The National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO)

September 2019 through June 2020: The Workgroup used stakeholder feedback to revise and finalize the new tool.

November 2020: Ohio's Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-making Tool expected release

Component 4B

Include additional steps to support and provide oversight to each district or community school projected to exceed the one percent threshold.

Tiered Intervention and Monitoring Plan

The Department continues to work with districts and community schools directly and through assistance of the state's 16 regional [state support teams](#) to ensure appropriate participation in the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities. The cornerstone of the Department's multifaceted approach is a system of tiered intervention and monitoring, designed to improve application of state guidelines for participation in the Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities. Implementation of the tiered system of support includes collaboration with the state's 16 regional state support teams. For Tier 1 districts and community schools, the Department provides professional learning opportunities, tools and resources. For Tier 2 and 3 districts and community schools, the Department collaborates with state support teams to provide additional intervention, support and monitoring through the self-review summary report and improvement plan process and other training opportunities.

Using submitted justifications, Ohio School Report Card data and Special Education Profiles, the Department annually identifies the districts and community schools with the greatest need of intervention and support. Of the 559 school districts and community schools above one percent participation in school year 2018-2019, the Department identified 83 for Tier 3 intervention during 2019-2020. However, due to COVID-19, the release of state Special Education Profiles was delayed. These 83 school districts and community schools will be notified of their Tier 3 status in the school year 2020-2021 profiles. Each of the 16 regions in the state will have

approximately 5 traditional districts and community schools identified. The Department used a multi-point rubric to identify districts for tiers. The Department considered the following data in the rubric:

- 2018-2019 alternate assessment participation rates;
- Multi-year increase in participation rate;
- A spike of more than 1% participation in a single year;
- Failure to submit a justification when having exceeded 1%;
- Failure to report alternate assessment data in the Education Management Information System (EMIS);
- Participation of disability types atypical to alternate assessment participation within the district; and
- Information provided in the previous year's justification form and recommendations from the alternate assessment support staff in the state support teams.

Evidence of Progress: Tier 3

Tier 3 support is provided to districts and community schools that are identified as needing significant support. This tier includes continued Tier 1 and Tier 2 support.

Intervention and monitoring processes related to alternate assessment improved greatly in 2018-2019 due to the use of the Special Education Profiles and Compliance Dashboard. These two tools allowed the Department and state support teams to work together to assist and monitor improvement efforts in Tier 3 districts and community schools. As described above, the Special Education Profiles informed districts and community schools of their Tier 3 status and the required action steps. The Compliance Dashboard is an interactive system that allows districts to read and respond to comments from the Department, submit self-reviews and improvement plans and upload documentation of completed action steps. Specialists in the Department's Office for Exceptional Children review and monitor the documentation. State support teams assisted district teams with analyzing data using the Self-Review Summary Report, developing and submitting improvement plans, and implementing planned action steps.

The Alternate Assessment Workgroup created a SharePoint site to share alternate assessment professional learning resources with state support team staff. The State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit currently includes presentations, group learning activities, sample forms, parent communication examples, and so on from the Office for Exceptional Children and the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. This content focuses on the five areas of the self-review summary report that all Tier 3 districts must complete with their regional state support team before doing an improvement plan. The workgroup will continue to expand and update the toolkit as new resources become available. For example, the workgroup is updated the parent and family frequently asked questions document.

The Department provided technical assistance and resources to Tier 3 districts and community schools as outlined in the 2018-2019 waiver extension request. Evidence of implementation for each action step is listed in Table 4 below. Some of the sample documents referenced are available via web-based links or are available in the Appendix (marked with an asterisk *). (See Table 5.)

Table 5: Evidence of Tier 3 Progress 2019-2020

Tier 3 Progress	
Planned Action Steps	Evidence of Implementation 2019-2020
1. Districts and community schools will, with the assistance of the Department and state support team consultants, construct goals to be included in improvement plans for appropriately identifying students for participation in the alternate assessment. Improvement plans should include measurable outcomes, timelines, frameworks for technical assistance, updated procedures and training opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office for Exceptional Children Comprehensive Monitoring Process* • District Self-Review Summary Report* • District Improvement Plan template*
2. The Department will review records (e.g., Evaluation Team Reports, Individualized Education Programs) and evaluate current determination processes, policies and procedures used to qualify students for participation in the alternate assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office for Exceptional Children Comprehensive Monitoring Process*
3. The Department and state support team consultants will assist districts and community schools with analysis of subgroup participation data to identify and address any disproportionalities in assignment of subgroups to the alternate assessment. Districts and community schools with significant disproportionalities will address the root causes as part of their improvement plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Self-Review Summary Report* • District Improvement Plan Template* • State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit*
4. The Department and state support team consultants will engage in discussions with teachers, administrators and Individualized Education Program team members as part of monitoring processes and root cause analysis as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office for Exceptional Children Comprehensive Monitoring Process* • Parent meetings led by Office for Exceptional Children staff* • Parent public meeting notice and notification letter*
5. Parents and families will be notified of monitoring procedures and records reviews and provided opportunities to ask questions and participate in discussions as members of the Individualized Education Program teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent meetings led by Office for Exceptional Children staff* • Parent public meeting notice and notification letter*
6. The Department’s Office of Innovation and Improvement will include alternate assessment participation in its school improvement processes for high-priority schools and districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance Support Tool*

Evidence of Progress: Tier 2

Tier 2 support is for districts and community schools that need moderate support. This tier includes continued Tier 1 support.

The Department provided technical assistance and resources as outlined in the 2018-2019 waiver. Evidence of implementation for each action step is listed in Table 5 below. Some of the sample documents referenced are available via web-based links or are available in the Appendix (marked with an asterisk *). (See Table 6.)

Table 6: Evidence of Tier 2 Progress 2019-2020

Tier 2 Progress	
Planned Action Steps	Evidence of Implementation 2019-2020
1. Department staff, in collaboration with state support team consultants, will lead regional and local professional learning opportunities focusing on analyzing data and reviewing special education records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit* • Regional meetings with special education administrators* • Ohio Statewide Testing and Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee meetings* • Presentations at Ohio Association of Pupil Service Administrators meetings and other professional organizations* • Presentation at Ohio Educational Technology Conference.
2. Department staff, in collaboration with state support team consultants, will provide training opportunities for special education leaders, as well as district and school administrators to ensure Individualized Education Program teams have the necessary resources and are using them properly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit* • Regional meetings with special education administrators* • Presentations at Ohio Association of Pupil Service Administrators meetings and other professional organizations*
3. The Department will develop training resources to address disproportionality in the assignment of subgroups of students to the alternate assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit* • Office for Exceptional Children Comprehensive Monitoring Process* • Universal Support Training Materials • Alternate Assessment Decision-making Tool (November expected release)

Evidence of Progress: Tier 1

Tier 1 support is for districts and community schools that are above the one percent participation threshold, as well as any districts or community schools seeking assistance with alternate assessment participation.

The Department provided technical assistance and resources as outlined in the 2018-2019 waiver. Evidence of implementation for each action step is listed in Table 6 below. Some of the sample documents referenced are available via web-based links or listed in the Appendix (marked with an asterisk *). (See Table 7.)

Table 7: Evidence of Tier 1 Progress 2019-2020

Tier 1 Progress	
Planned Action Steps	Evidence of Implementation 2019-2020
1. The Department will lead professional development webinars on appropriate alternate assessment participation and completion of required justification forms for exceeding one percent participation. Webinars will be recorded and posted public use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train-the-trainer event for test administration training, November 2019* • Participation Guidelines for Ohio's Alternate Assessment • Decision Framework for Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines • 2018-2019 AASCD Refresher Training PowerPoint • Spring 2021 Online Training Module 1 • Spring 2019 Alternate Assessment Directions for Administration Manual
2. The Department will present at multiple statewide conferences and other events for teachers and administrators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train-the-trainer event for test administration training, November 2019* • 2018-2019 Alternate Assessment Refresher Training PowerPoint • OCALICON Presentation November 2019
3. State support teams will continue to provide training on decision-making processes for Alternate Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate assessment participation rates added to Special Education Profiles and Ratings* • Ohio Statewide Testing and Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee Meetings* • Spring 2021 Online Training Module 1 • Alternate Assessment Decision-making Tool • Participation Guidelines for Ohio's Alternate Assessment • Decision Framework (Flowchart) for Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines • Alternate Assessment Frequently Asked Questions for Families

Tier 1 Progress	
Planned Action Steps	Evidence of Implementation 2019-2020
4. The Department will provide resources, including data analysis tools, to address disproportionality in assignment of student subgroups to the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate assessment participation rates added to Special Education Profiles and Ratings* • Monthly state support team Directors' Meetings* • Skype/webinars as needed
5. Parent and family engagement staff will work with districts and community schools to ensure families understand how IEP decisions about alternate assessment participation are appropriately made and the implications of participation in the alternate assessment for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AASCD FAQ • Participation Guidelines for Ohio Alternate Assessment • Decision Framework (Flowchart) for Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines • Ohio Learning Standards-Extended • AASCD Administration Manuals and Guidance Documents. • Alternate Assessment Practice Test Site
6. Technical support from the Department is available to all stakeholders through phone support and a dedicated email address (Aaparticipation@education.ohio.gov).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email support provided by Department staff via Aaparticipation@education.ohio.gov • Phone support provided by Department staff at 614-466-13217 or 1-877-644-6338 • ODE AASCD Web Page • Ohio Alternate Assessment Portal

ACTION STEPS FOR 2020-2021

1. Provide a webinar, with presentation slides and associated transcript posted online following the webinar, to all districts and community schools. The webinar will introduce the new decision-making tool and Frequently Asked Questions document. The Department also will discuss the updated justification form (with assurances only), address the calculation of projected participation rates and the timeline for submitting assurances. The Department also will update stakeholders on the state waiver process and preview of new tools and guidance.
2. Conduct a targeted analysis of student participation in alternate assessment by 1) socioeconomic status; 2) race and ethnicity; and 3) disability category. This analysis will include data at the state level. An analysis of disproportionality data will help the Department clarify statewide trends and support local districts and community schools in improving their use of alternate assessments. This analysis will be included in a new alternate assessment participation data story the Department is preparing. Information from this data story will be used for training, technical assistance, professional development and other presentations.
3. Improve the rigor of the self-review summary report for Tier 3 districts and community schools. The Department will update the self-review to engage districts and community schools in more rigorous data analysis, especially concerning disproportionality data. In addition to analyzing participation by disability category, student performance on the alternate and other data trends, the revised self-review will require analysis of participation data by race and ethnicity. The Department will include a tool for examining disproportionality in alternate assessment participation in the State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit and provide training for state support team consultants to assist districts and community schools in analysis of disproportionality data.
4. The Department will continue to provide resources and training to districts about the new decision-making tool. The new tool will help address the inappropriate placement of students without the most significant cognitive disabilities on the alternate assessment. It will also assist educators with consistent application of the state's participation criteria.
5. Expand the State Support Team Alternate Assessment Participation Professional Development Toolkit with new and updated content on how to apply the participation criteria, fully engage parents and improve their understanding of the alternate assessment participation decision making process, and other elements covered in the self-review summary report. Regional and local professional development will provide opportunities to dispel some of the misunderstandings observed in district and community school justification forms.
6. Continue and modify, as needed, use of a multi-tiered system of statewide support to improve the use of alternate assessment. The Department will continue to apply the action steps by tier as outlined in Tables 5, 6 and 7 above.
7. Continue participation in national networks and learning opportunities for state staff. Working collaboratively with other members of the Assessment, Standards, and Education of Students in Special Education (ASES) collaborative, through the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Department is participating in the development of communications templates for parents, administrators and educators. The collaborative also provides access to timely research and best practices from other states.
8. Continue to receive technical assistance from the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) as well as participate in the 1% Community of Practice and Peer Learning Groups hosted by NCEO and the TIES Center.