

Decision-Making Tool for Determining Student Eligibility for the Illinois Alternate Assessment (DLM) for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

The Decision-Making Tool for Determining Student Eligibility for the Illinois Alternate Assessment is a resource for districts to utilize to assist in making decisions regarding Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) participation. The alternate assessment is intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Having a significant cognitive impairment is not solely determined by an IQ test score, nor based on a specific disability category, but rather a complete understanding of the complex needs of a student. These students have intellectual functioning well below average that exists concurrently with impairments or deficits in adaptive functioning (e.g., communications, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work leisure, health, and safety).

To determine a student's eligibility for DLM, districts should use a variety of data sets including, but not limited to:

- Evaluation Reports
- Benchmark Assessment Data
- Diagnostic Assessments
- Assistive Technology Evaluation Data
- Speech/Language Assessments Data
- IEP Goals/Objectives Progress Data
- Formative Academic and Transition Assessment Data
- Adaptive Skills Assessment Data
- Sensory and/or Motor Assessment Data

Districts must ensure that evidence for the decision to participate in the DLM is **not** based on the following factors:

- Disability category
- Educational environment or instructional setting
- Poor attendance or extended absences
- Percent of time receiving special education services
- Academic or other services a student receives
- Students' instructional reading level being below grade level
- Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
- Administration decision
- Anticipated impact of student scores on the accountability system
- Anticipated disruptive behaviors
- Anticipated emotional duress
- English learner (EL) status
- Native language/social, cultural, or economic status
- Need for accommodations (such as assistive technology or augmentative and alternative communication) to participate in the general assessment

Student: _____

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Part A: Individualized Education Program Eligibility

Directions: Review the student's IEP, assessment data, and related documents to answer the questions below. Mark the column that best answers the question.

1. Does the student have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

No, the student does not have an IEP.



Stop here.

The student is not eligible for the alternate assessment.

Yes, the student has a current IEP.



Proceed to the next question.

2. Which disability category does the student qualify for an IEP in?

Specific Learning Disability **ONLY**

Speech Language Impairment **ONLY**



Stop here.

The student is not eligible for the alternate assessment.

Autism

Deaf/Blindness

Developmental Delay

Emotional Disability

Hearing Impairment

Intellectual Disability

Multiple Disabilities

Other Health Impairment

Traumatic Brain Injury

Visual Impairment



Proceed to the next question.

3. Does the student have intellectual functioning well below average?

No. The student does not have intellectual functioning well below average.



Stop here.

The student is not eligible for the alternate assessment.

Yes. The student has intellectual functioning well below average.



Proceed to
Part B: Adaptive Functioning.

Part B: Adaptive Functioning

Directions: Select the column in each of the three adaptive skills domains (Conceptual, Social, and Practical) that best describes the student's daily functioning and/or instructional support needs. After reviewing all available data, if the team is still undecided between two columns, assume competence and select the column on the left. For example, if the choice is between Column 2 or Column 3, select Column 2.

Conceptual Domain The conceptual domain covers skills that are needed to communicate and accomplish tasks. <i>(Do not consider communication mode but rather how proficient and independent the student is in using their communication system).</i>			
Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student has age-appropriate receptive and expressive communication skills, including conversation skills (verbally or through a communication device).	Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student requires minimal prompting or assistance with age-appropriate receptive and expressive communication skills, including conversation skills (verbally or through a communication device).	Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student has minimal expressive and receptive communication skills, and The student has difficulty communicating wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas (verbally or through a communication device), and The student has difficulty following directions and routines without significant assistance.	Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student has no reliable formal expressive or receptive communication system (verbally or through a communication device), and The student is unable to clearly express wants and needs and understand the messages conveyed by others. The student requires maximum adult assistance to communicate, follow directions, and perform daily routine activities.

Social Domain

The social domain covers instructional support needed to teach behaviors necessary to engage in interpersonal interactions, act with social responsibility, and use leisure time. This includes social competence, self esteem, awareness of gullibility and naïveté (wariness), social problem solving, following rules/obeying laws, and strategies to avoid being victimized.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student requires no instruction due to having adequate to excellent age-appropriate social communication skills.	Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student requires instruction that can be addressed through whole class, general education interventions for age- and grade-appropriate interpersonal skills. This includes social problem-solving, following rules/obeying laws, and strategies to avoid being victimized.	Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student requires systematic, direct, small group instruction in age- and grade-appropriate interpersonal skills. This includes social problem-solving, following rules/obeying laws, and strategies to avoid being victimized.	Assessment and observation data indicate that: The student requires intensive, systematic, and individually designed direct instruction in age- and grade-appropriate interpersonal skills. This includes social problem-solving, following rules/obeying laws, and strategies to avoid being victimized. The student requires individualized one-on-one instruction with extensive modeling and opportunities for practice.

Practical Domain

The practical domain covers instructional support needed to teach behaviors necessary to address personal and health needs; take care of home, classroom, or work settings; and function in a school or community.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Assessment and observation data indicate that:</p> <p>The student requires no instruction to learn and generalize age- and grade-appropriate daily living skills (e.g., meals, dressing, bathing, and toileting needs), and</p> <p>The student requires no instruction on age- and grade-appropriate community living skills.</p>	<p>Assessment and observation data indicate that:</p> <p>The student requires minimal instruction and support to learn and generalize age- and grade-appropriate daily living skills (e.g., meals, dressing, bathing, and toileting needs), and</p> <p>The student requires minimal instruction and support to learn and generalize age- and grade-appropriate community living skills.</p>	<p>Assessment and observation data indicate that:</p> <p>The student requires frequent, individualized instruction, and support across multiple settings to learn and generalize age- and grade-appropriate daily living skills (e.g., meals, dressing, bathing, and toileting needs), and</p> <p>The student requires individualized instruction and support across multiple settings to learn age- and grade- appropriate community living skills.</p>	<p>Assessment and observation data indicate that:</p> <p>The student requires intensive, frequent, and individualized instruction and support in multiple settings to learn and generalize age- and grade-appropriate daily living skills (e.g., meals, dressing, bathing, and toileting needs), and</p> <p>The student requires intensive, frequent, and individualized instruction and support in multiple settings to learn and apply age- and grade-appropriate community living skills and navigation skills.</p>

4. Does the student have **ALL** adaptive skills domains?

The student's adaptive functioning skills and instructional needs do not align with Column 3 and/or Column 4 across **ALL** three adaptive skills domains listed above.



Stop here.

The student is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

The student's adaptive functioning skills align exclusively with Column 3 and/or Column 4 across **ALL** three adaptive skills domains listed above.



Proceed to Part C.

Part C: Determining if the Student Requires Extensive Direct Individualized Instruction

Directions: Select the column that best describes the student's present levels of academic and functional performance (PLAAFP), instruction, support needs, accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology needs. After reviewing all available data, if the team is still undecided between two columns, assume competence and select the column to the left. For example, if the choice is between Column 2 or Column 3, select Column 2.

Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

This section describes the student's present levels of academic and functional performance outlined in the IEP.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The PLAAFP indicates the student is making adequate progress with minimal support on grade-level standards, concepts, and skills represented within the Illinois Learning Standards.	The PLAAFP indicates that the student is making adequate progress with moderate support on grade-level standards, concepts, and skills, represented within the Illinois Learning Standards.	The PLAAFP indicates that the student is making adequate progress, with maximum support, on grade-level standards, concepts, and skills, represented within the Illinois Learning Standards. Or The PLAAFP indicates that the student is mastering the target with moderate support on alternate grade-level standards, concepts, and skills aligned to the Essential Elements.	The PLAAFP indicates that the student is making progress with maximum support and scaffolding on alternate grade -level standards, concepts, and skills aligned with the Essential Elements.

Instruction

This section describes the student's instructional needs and supports to meet goals and objectives outlined in the IEP.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction is aligned to grade-level targets that build in complexity toward achievement of learning aligned to Illinois Learning Standards.	Instruction is aligned to modified or below grade-level targets that aim toward achievement of learning aligned to grade level Illinois Learning Standards, and The IEP outlines some individualized supports and/or accommodations during instruction.	Instruction is aligned to modified grade-level targets within the Essential Elements using differentiation and universal design to build base skills, and The IEP outlines significant individualized supports, accommodations, modifications, and material during instruction.	The IEP outlines extensive individualized supports, accommodations, and modifications and materials during instruction and while working on curriculum or assignments. These additional supports address the communication, motor and/or sensory needs of the learner and provide the learner opportunities to engage with the curriculum.

Accommodations/Modifications

This section describes the accommodations and modifications needed for the student to participate meaningfully in daily instructional and assessment activities.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The IEP outlines a list of accommodations that are consistent with the universal accessibility tools and supports embedded in the IAR, ISA, and/or ACT, which are provided during instruction and assessment to support access.	The IEP outlines a list of accommodations that are consistent with the universal accessibility tools and supports embedded in the IAR, ISA, and/or ACT, and The student requires additional accommodations during instruction and assessment to support access that are not allowed on the IAR, ISA, and/or ACT.	The IEP outlines a list of accommodations that are consistent with the universal accessibility tools and supports embedded in the IAR, ISA, and/or ACT, and accommodations that are provided during instruction and assessment to support access, and The student requires additional accommodations, modifications, and scaffolds during instruction and assessment to support access that are not allowed on the IAR, ISA, and/or ACT.	The IEP outlines individualized support, accommodations, and modifications and materials presented as universal accessibility tools and supports embedded in the IAR, ISA, and/or ACT, and accommodations that are provided during instruction and assessment to support access, and The student requires additional, individualized accommodations, modifications, and scaffolds that change the construct of the assessment to meet the cognitive and physical task demands of instruction and assessment.

Assistive Technology

This section describes the use of assistive technologies needed for the student to actively engage and participate meaningfully and productively in daily activities in school, home, community, and work environments.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>The IEP team has determined the student does not require assistive technology, or</p> <p>An assistive technology evaluation was completed and it was determined that assistive technology is not required, as indicated in the IEP.</p>	<p>The IEP team is in the process of completing an assistive technology evaluation to determine specific assistive technology supports for the student, or</p> <p>Accommodations related to assistive technology devices and services are outlined in the IEP.</p>	<p>The IEP indicates that the student requires assistive technology devices and services, and</p> <p>Accommodations related to assistive technology needs are outlined in the IEP to support academic instruction, communication, daily living, seating/positioning, mobility, sensory, and/or motor needs, and</p> <p>The student currently is learning to use or is independently using assistive technology as a scaffold to access learning in his or her environment.</p>	<p>The IEP indicates that the student requires multiple assistive technology devices and technology services across most of the assistive technology domains due to complex physical, sensory, and/or medical needs, and</p> <p>The student currently requires person-dependent support or scaffolds that may be replaced with assistive technology once feature matching can be determined.</p>

5. Does the student require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports?

The student's characteristics identified in Part C include some characteristics from Columns 1 and 2.



Stop here.
The student is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

The student's characteristics identified in Part C include characteristics exclusively from Columns 3 or 4.



Proceed to the next question.

6. Based on the review of evidence for parts A, B, and C, does the student meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment?

No. The student does not meet all criteria and is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

Yes. The student meets all criteria and will participate in the alternate assessment.

Glossary

Accommodation: Changes in how learning occurs or how a test is administered that does not substantially alter what is learned or what the test measures; includes changes in presentation format, response format, test setting, or test timing. Appropriate accommodations are made to provide equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge.

Adaptive skills: Practical, everyday skills needed to function and meet the demands of one's environment, including the skills necessary to effectively and independently take care of oneself and interact with other people (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2017).

Assistive technology: An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of that device (IDEA 2004). Visit ISBE's [Special Education Assistive Technology](#) webpage and the [Illinois Assistive Technology Guidance Manual](#) for more information about assistive technology.

Assistive technology consideration in the IEP: IEP teams are required to "consider" the assistive technology needs of every student receiving special education services. The need for assistive technology should be detailed under the "Supplementary Aids, Accommodations, and Modifications" section of the IEP. After graduation, assistive technology supports/services should be detailed in the "Transition Services" section of the IEP.

Augmentative and alternative communication: Augmentative and alternative communication includes all forms of communication (other than speech) that are used to express thought, needs, wants, and ideas (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2017).

English learner: English learners are students whose primary or home language is not English and who require language support to effectively participate in school instructional programs.

Illinois Learning Standards: The Illinois Learning Standards establish expectations for what all students should know and be able to do in each subject at each grade. The standards emphasize depth over breadth, building upon key concepts as students advance. The standards promote student-driven learning and the application of knowledge to real-world situations to help students develop deep conceptual understanding. The Illinois Learning Standards, which are intentionally rigorous, prepare students for the challenges of college and career.

Illinois Learning Standards Aligned to the Essential Elements: The Illinois Learning Standards Aligned to the Essential Elements are alternate learning standards and include specific statements of knowledge and skills linked to the grade-level expectations identified in the Illinois Learning Standards. The purpose of the Illinois Learning Standards Aligned to the Essential Elements is to build a bridge from the content in the Illinois Learning Standards to academic expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Modes for communication: Modes for communication can include, but are not limited to, sign language, bilingualism, cued speech, verbal therapy, braille, assistive technology devices, and written language.

Modification: A modification changes what a student is taught or expected to learn. Modifications to grade-level learning change the expectation to learn the full breadth and/or depth of content. Modifications during testing are

changes in the standards being measured on the test or in the conditions in which a student takes the test that result in changes in what the assessment is designed to measure by reducing or changing the expectations for the student. Modifications are not permitted during state testing. The alternate assessment is a different assessment, both in content and expectation; it is not a modified assessment.

Significant cognitive disability: Significant cognitive disability is not a disability category under IDEA. Students with a most significant cognitive disability are those students who meet all the criteria in Part B of this tool. Students are eligible to participate in the alternate assessment if they meet all the criteria in Parts A through C of this tool.

Specially Designed Instruction: Specially Designed Instruction is “... adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction (i) to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and (ii) ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children” (34 CFR Sec. 300.39(b)(3)).

Universal Tools

Universal tools are features or preferences that are either built into the assessment system or provided externally by test administrators. Universal tools are available for all students taking Illinois state assessments and are not classified as accommodations.

Unless otherwise stated in the definitions below, the following 14 special education eligibility categories are found in [34 CFR 300.8\(c\)](#). Please note that most categories typically do NOT include intellectual impairment and therefore will rarely align with the participation criteria for the alternate assessment.

Autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (c)(4) of this section.A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 could be identified as having autism if the criteria outlined in bullet one of this section are satisfied.
Deaf-blindness	Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.
Deafness	Deafness means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Developmental Delay	Developmental delay means a significant delay in physical development, intellectual development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development (may include children 3-9 years of age), per 34 CFR 300.8(b) .
Emotional Disability	<p>An emotional disability means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances or a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. <p>Emotional disability includes schizophrenia. It does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined that they have an emotional disability also.</p>
Hearing Impairment	Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

Intellectual Disability	Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term "intellectual disability" was formerly termed "mental retardation."
Multiple Disabilities	Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities does not include deaf-blindness.
Orthopedic Impairment	Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
Other Health Impairment	Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that — (i) Is due to chronic or acute health problems, such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (ii) Adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Specific Learning Disability	Specific learning disability — (i) General. Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (ii) Disorders not included. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
Speech or Language Impairment	Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Traumatic Brain Injury	Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
Visual Impairment	Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.