In the spring of 2006, a team of Illinois educators created the new Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) Frameworks. The purpose of the frameworks is to prioritize the skills and knowledge from the Illinois Learning Standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, in order to develop a new Illinois Alternate Assessment. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) contracted Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM), and their subcontractor partners, Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates, Inc. (BETA), and the Inclusive Large Scale Standards and Assessment (ILSSA) group, to develop the new IAA in grades three through eight and 11 for Reading and Mathematics; in grades four, seven, and 11 for Science; and in grades three, five, six, eight, and 11 for Writing. BETA's responsibilities include providing event-based assessment activities linked to the IAA Frameworks, developing the assessment rubric, and incorporating principles of Universal Design for Learning. ILSSA's responsibilities include facilitating the development of the IAA Frameworks and providing statewide staff development on how to access grade-level curriculum. Pearson Learning Group (PLG) is a division of PEM and their responsibilities include providing a customized online scoring tool along with training to use this feature.

During the framework development meetings, educators were divided into development teams based on both content area and grade level focus. Addressing reading, writing, mathematics, and science, each content area had one development team for elementary school, one for middle school, and one for high school. Each team consisted of at least one general education teacher, one special education teacher, and one content expert. The process used by the development teams to create the Illinois Alternate Assessment Frameworks was as follows:

The development teams reviewed each of the assessment objectives (statements coded with numbers such as 1.7.03) in grades three through eight. For each assessment objective, the teams:
- Identified the critical function, or the main idea of the objective;
- Wrote an instructional activity that could be used to teach the skills needed to meet the assessment objective in the general education classroom;
- Wrote a modified instructional activity that could be used to teach students with the most significant cognitive disabilities the same skills; and
- Identified three assessment activities that could be used to assess students with the most significant cognitive disabilities on the skills described in the modified activity.

After the development teams examined the assessment objectives and wrote both instructional and assessment activities for each grade level, the teams prioritized the assessment objectives and selected the assessment objectives which are most suitable for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The leadership team at ISBE reviewed these priorities for further refinement. These pilot priorities will form the basis for the new IAA performance test items. Following the completion of the fall 2006 writing pilot, a review may be necessary in order to determine if the new IAA priorities are appropriate and provide a comparable assessment to the general statewide assessment.

Using grade-level curriculum as the focus, the development teams described the instructional and assessment supports, accommodations, and assistive technology required to ensure access to quality instruction.   The descriptions produced by the development teams were summarized into a set of statements designed to provide consistency across the content frameworks. These statements are as follows:
- Appropriate instruction must occur prior to the assessment activity.
- All activities must provide appropriate support, accommodations, and/or assistive technology during both the instructional activities and the assessment process. This may include the following:
  - The use of prompting strategies, ranging from minimum prompts to full physical assistance in order to create a learning continuum for correct responses.
  - The use of assistive technology, ranging from low tech to high tech.
  - The reduction of breadth, depth, and/or complexity.
- Specific instructional strategies and the instructional environment for the individual student vary and should be determined by the student's IEP team.

- During assessment activities, the students should use the mode of communication that they used to learn and practice the skills during instructional activities.
- Instruction should be presented to the student in a way that is authentic, accessible, and meaningful (e.g., tactile objects, picture symbols, or use of a text reader), to ensure the student has multiple opportunities to learn and demonstrate knowledge.
- Instruction should take place within the context of grade-level content, using age-appropriate activities and materials, regardless of the placement of the student.
- Instruction must incorporate age-appropriate activities and materials which represent the same grade level content as their peers without disabilities. However, the activities and materials may be adapted to meet the individual needs of the student (e.g., reduce the language requirements or difficulty of the task) as long as the context of the materials used by same age peers remains intact.

All instructional practices should occur using available resources and materials familiar to the learners.

Communication skills are essential to the assessment of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Symbolic communication skills form the foundation for reading, mathematics, and writing. Students with significant cognitive disabilities are very diverse in their communication ability. Some students communicate symbolically, while others communicate in highly individualized ways. There are some important considerations in the development of symbolic communication skills which include the following:

- All students communicate regardless of their level of symbolic language use.
- Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can acquire generalized use of objects (or object selection) to communicate preferences (Hetzroni, Rubin, Konkol, 2002).
- Language learners must use symbols repeatedly, interactively, and generatively during meaningful and ongoing activities in language-rich environments (Goossens, Crain, & Elder, 1992; Cafiero, 1998; Goossens, et al., 1992; Romiski & Sevcik, 1996; Miller & Eller-Miller, 2002; Mirenda, 2003).
- Competent use of language for multiple purposes, audiences, and contexts facilitate the metalinguistic skills required for reading comprehension (Rankin, Harwood, & Mirenda, 1994).

The assessment activities in this document reflect three types of students who represent the continuum of communication skills within this student population.

- The first activity is designed for students who inconsistently respond to communication and inconsistently use words, objects, or gestures to communicate expressively.
- The second activity is for learners who are beginning to use understandable communication through gestures, pictures, objects/textures, points, etc., to clearly express a variety of intentions.
- The third activity is for students who are using verbal or written words, sign language, Braille, or any language-based augmentative system to request, initiate, and respond to questions, describe things or events, and express refusal.

Throughout the frameworks document, the suggested general education instructional and modified instructional activities are written in plural form, as instruction is typically provided to a whole class. However, the instruction for these activities may be provided in the context of whole class instruction, small group instruction, or individually based on student needs. Conversely, the assessment activities are written in the singular form, as the IAA is a standard assessment measuring individual performance.

The process of reviewing the frameworks and aligning the new IAA to the Illinois Learning Standards and regular assessment is an ongoing process. The activities in this document were created by Illinois teachers and are only suggested activities that may be used to teach the assessment objectives listed. The activities, materials, and techniques listed in the frameworks are just one possible way to teach these assessment objectives and should not to be considered the state-mandated strategy for teaching any given assessment objective. Teachers should feel comfortable in using other strategies, materials, or activities that may already be in place or familiar to the teacher. The IAA Frameworks and the IAA itself will continue to be reviewed and adjusted as changes occur with the Illinois Standards and/or the general assessment.

Grade 7 Priorities

State Goal 1

Vocabulary Development (Standard A)
  1.7.03 Determine the meaning of an unknown word using word, sentence, and cross-sentence clues.
  1.7.05 Use synonyms and antonyms to determine the implied meanings of words.

Reading Strategies (Standard B)
  1.7.09 Use information in charts, graphs, diagrams, maps, and tables to help understand a reading passage.
  1.7.14 Identify compare and contrast organizational patterns in fiction and nonfiction.

Reading Comprehension (Standard C)
  1.7.15 Determine the answer to a literal or simple inference question regarding the meaning of a passage.
  1.7.17 Summarize a story passage or nonfiction passage, or identify the best summary.
  1.7.19 Identify the causes of events in a story or nonfiction account.
  1.7.22, Determine whether a set of technical, multiple-step instructions or procedure are clear (e.g., if not clear, edit to clarify).

State Goal 2
Literary Elements and Techniques (Standard A)
  2.7.01 Identify elements of fiction: character, theme, conflict, point of view, plot, setting, and flashback.
  2.7.06 Determine what characters are like by what they say or do, or by how the author or illustrator portrays them.
  2.7.08 Compare or contrast the behavior of two characters.

State Goal 1

Vocabulary Development (Standard A)
Words in Context

1.7.03 Determine the meaning of an unknown word using word, sentence, and cross-sentence clues.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Determine the meaning of an unknown word using clues from the text.	The teacher will provide guided practice. The students will be able to determine meaning of words using clues from the text and independent reading.	The teacher will provide guided practice and present the text. The students will match selected vocabulary to a picture/definition.	Given a sentence with an unknown word and two options, the student will choose the option with the correct word meaning.	Given a sentence with an unknown word and three to four options, the student will choose the option with the correct word meaning.	Given a sentence with an unknown word, the student will use a strategy to identify the correct word meaning.

State Goal 1

Vocabulary Development (Standard A)
Words in Context

1.7.05 Use synonyms and antonyms to determine the implied meanings of words.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Use synonyms and antonyms to define words.	The teacher will provide guided practice. The students will complete graphic organizers using synonyms and antonyms to deepen their understanding of core vocabulary.	The teacher will provide guided practice. The students will role play synonyms and antonyms of selected vocabulary.	Given two pictures of the same concept, the student indicates whether they are same or different.	Given a synonym or antonym and the direction to find the word with the same meaning or opposite meaning, the student will select the corresponding word.	Given several words, the student will classify each word choice as synonym or antonym.

State Goal 1

Reading Strategies (Standard B)

1.7.09 Use information in charts, graphs, diagrams, maps, and tables to help understand a reading passage.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Use graphic information to improve understanding of text.	The teacher will provide a reading passage with chart/graph. The students will highlight information in the text supported by the chart (i.e., rainfall in country x is greater than country y, then relate to rainfall chart).	The teacher will provide a reading passage with chart/graph and model how information in a graph connects to the text. The students will respond to questions about the graph and text	Given a teacher read passage and two choices, the student will select the corresponding picture or graph (i.e., man standing in the rain/rain chart) which supports the text.	Given a teacher read passage and three choices, the student will select the corresponding picture or graph (i.e., man standing in the rain/rain chart) which supports the text.	Given a teacher read passage and four to five choices, the student will indicate which map, chart, or graph supports the text.

State Goal 1

Reading Strategies (Standard B)

1.7.14 Identify compare and contrast organizational patterns in fiction and nonfiction.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Identify organizational patterns of fiction and non fiction.	The teacher will introduce structures of fiction and nonfiction texts. The students will use signal words to help identify types of organization. The students will recognize organizational patterns in published works and personal writing.	The teacher will use a focused group of signal words to demonstrate the structure of fiction and not fiction texts. The students will begin to identify organizational patterns in fiction and nonfiction using signal word bookmarks.	Given two signal words, the student will classify the words as fiction or nonfiction.	Given three to five signal words, the student will classify the words as fiction or nonfiction.	Given previously introduced signal words, the student will match them to the type of organizational pattern (first, second = sequential pattern).

State Goal 1

Reading Comprehension (Standard C)
Drawing Conclusions Based on Evidence

1.7.15 Determine the answer to a literal or simple inference question regarding the meaning of a passage.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Answer simple comprehension questions related to a passage.	The teacher will present a passage. The students will answer questions to demonstrate their understanding of the passage (i.e., multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer).	The teacher will present a passage, using modified text. The students will answer questions to demonstrate understanding of the passage (i.e., multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer).	Given a passage and one literal question related to the passage, the student will select the correct answer from two choices.	Given a passage and two literal questions related to the passage, the student will select the correct answer for each question from two choices.	Given a passage, the student will read it and answer one literal question.

State Goal 1

Reading Comprehension (Standard C)
Summarizing and Main Idea

1.7.17 Summarize a story or nonfiction passage, or identify the best summary.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Summarize or identify the best summary for various types of texts.	The teacher will provide guided practice on how to summarize a text. The students will use a graphic organizer to write a summary sentence for the selected passages of text. (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How)	The teacher will provide guided practice on how to summarize a text. The students will complete a graphic organizer and generate a summary sentence with needed supports.	Given a short passage and two choices, the student will select the best summary.	Given a short passage and three choices, the student will select the best summary.	Given a short passage, the student will write/select statements to summarize the passage.

State Goal 1

Reading Comprehension (Standard C)
Sequencing and Ordering

1.7.19 Identify the causes of events in a story or nonfiction account.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Identify the relationship between cause and effect.	The teacher will facilitate a discussion of a selected reading passage. The students will use a graphic organizer to show the relationships of events through cause and effect in a passage.	The teacher will facilitate a discussion of a selected reading passage. The students will discuss possible causes or effects by the actions or events in the passage.	Given a picture/explanation of a situation or action from the text and two choices, the student will match it with the picture of what will most likely occur.	Given a picture/explanation of a situation or action from the text and three choices, the student will match it with the picture of what will most likely occur.	Given a picture/explanation of a situation or action from the text and four choices, the student will match it with the picture of what will most likely occur.

State Goal 1

Reading Comprehension (Standard C)
Interpreting Instructions

1.7.22 Determine whether a set of technical, multiple-step instructions or procedures are clear (e.g., if not clear, edit to clarify).

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Determine if a set of directions are clear.	The teacher will present a simple demonstration on generating a set of directions specific enough for others to follow. The students will generate a set of directions for making a sandwich. The sets of directions are then exchanged and students attempt to follow the directions as written.	The teacher will present a simple demonstration on generating a set of directions specific enough for others to follow. The students will follow a set of directions to successfully complete an activity (i.e., making a sandwich).	Given a set of three-step directions with one step missing, the student will indicate which of two choices is correct in order to complete the directions	Given a set of five-step directions with two steps missing, the student will indicate the order of the missing steps when presented with the missing steps.	Given a choice of tasks, the student will demonstrate how to give directions to do a simple task by listing directions in sequence to complete the task.

State Goal 2

Elements and Techniques (Standard A)
Story and Literary Structure

2.7.01 Identify elements of fiction: character, theme, conflict, point of view, plot, setting, and flashback.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Identify elements of fiction.	The teacher will demonstrate how to identify the elements of a work of fiction using a graphic organizer and familiar text. The students will read various pieces of fiction and identify plot, characters, setting, and theme on assigned graphic organizer.	Same as Suggested General Education Activity with needed supports.	Given a selected text, the student will answer questions about one of the following: plot, characters, setting, or theme.	Given a selected text, the student will answer questions about two of the following: plot, characters, setting, or theme.	Given a selected text, the student will answer questions about all of the following: plot, characters, setting, or theme.

State Goal 2

Literary Elements and Techniques (Standard A)
Characterization

2.7.06 Determine what characters are like by what they say or do, or by how the author or illustrator portrays them.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Identify character traits using cues from the text.	The teacher will use whole class discussion to work through a well known selection to analyze the main character's traits and the text that supports those traits. The students will read selected text and complete a character analysis using a graphic organizer linking student perceptions of the character with support from the text.	Same as Suggested General Education Activity with needed supports.	Given three characters from a text and a list of descriptions of behaviors, the student will match each character with the appropriate behaviors on the list.	Given a selection from a text and different description of actions or events, the student will decide whether or not the character would behave that way.	Given a selection from a text and different description of actions or events, the student will decide whether or not the character would behave that way and provide a rationale for their decision.

State Goal 2

Literary Elements and Techniques (Standard A) State Standard 2: Reading Characterization

2.7.08 Compare or contrast the behavior of two characters.

Critical Function	Suggested General Education Activity	Suggested Modified Instructional Activity	Possible Assessment Activity 1	Possible Assessment Activity 2	Possible Assessment Activity 3
Compare characters within and across stories.	The teacher will demonstrate use of a Venn diagram to compare two characters. The students will read selected texts and work in groups to complete a Venn diagram comparing specific characters.	Same as Suggested General Education Activity with needed supports.	Given a text, the student will indicate if character traits for targeted characters are alike or different.	Given a text, the student will sort character traits onto a Venn diagram.	Given a text, the student will sort character traits using a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast traits.