

**States' Flexibility Plans for Phasing
Out the Alternate Assessment Based
on Modified Academic Achievement
Standards (AA-MAS) by 2014-15**



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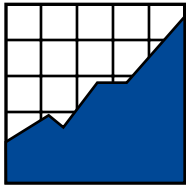
States' Flexibility Plans for Phasing Out the Alternate Assessment Based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards (AA-MAS) by 2014-15

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March 2013

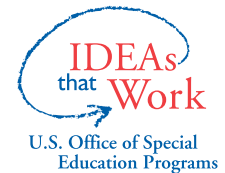
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Executive Summary

Some states have an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) allows up to two percent of students to be deemed proficient with this assessment option. Students who participate in an AA-MAS must have an individualized education program (IEP) and be unlikely to achieve grade level proficiency within the year covered by the IEP.

In 2011 the U.S. Department of Education provided the opportunity for states to request flexibility from some of the ESEA accountability requirements. To receive a flexibility waiver, states with an AA-MAS were required to include a plan to phase out the use of the AA-MAS for ESEA accountability by the 2014-15 school year. This report compiles, analyzes, and summarizes the states' plans for phasing out the AA-MAS in their approved waiver applications.

Twelve states with an operational AA-MAS have approved flexibility waivers as of December 2012. Nine of these states indicated that they plan to provide professional development that will help educators develop skills they need to more successfully instruct and assess low performing students with disabilities. Two-thirds of the states indicated that they plan to provide technical assistance that will help transition this group of students to the new common core state standards (CCSS) and assessment systems. Some of the other features of states' plans included: consideration of students' access needs, ensuring that students have access to grade-level content, and reviewing and updating the IEPs of students who participate in an AA-MAS.

States provided varying levels of detail about how they plan to phase out the AA-MAS. Some states provided fairly extensive information about the transition, while other states provided brief, broad statements. As states move toward phasing out the AA-MAS for accountability purposes, many will need to develop more detailed plans. As students are transitioned back to the general assessment, states have an opportunity to think thoughtfully about how to best instruct and assess low performing students with disabilities and other struggling learners.

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Overview

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that all students, including students with disabilities, participate in state assessments. Most students with disabilities participate in the general assessment, with or without accommodations. A few students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS). In 2007, federal regulations allowed states to offer an additional option: an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS). For ESEA accountability, states could count up to two percent of students proficient using the AA-MAS. States were not required to offer this assessment. Students who participated in an AA-MAS were required to have an individualized education program (IEP) and be unlikely to achieve grade level proficiency within the year covered by the IEP (Price, Hodgson, Lazarus, & Thurlow, 2011).

In 2011 the federal government provided the opportunity for states to request flexibility from some of the ESEA accountability requirements. As of December 2012, 34 states plus the District of Columbia had approved waiver applications and 10 additional states had submitted waiver requests (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). If these states with approved flexibility waivers have an AA-MAS, they are required to phase its use out for accountability purposes by the 2014-15 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b).

States with waivers that currently have an AA-MAS included plans for phasing out their use of the AA-MAS by the 2014-2015 school year in their approved flexibility waiver applications. The transition away from the AA-MAS will affect many students with disabilities in those states. It also will likely have an impact on schools and districts in those states. Careful planning for the transition is an important role for these states to undertake. With the expectation that states have approached the transition from the AA-MAS in different ways, it is possible that the ideas from one state might be used by others.

The U.S. Department of Education provided funding through Race-to-the-Top awards to groups of states to work together to develop and implement innovative assessment systems. General assessments of English language arts and mathematics are being developed by two consortia—the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Most of the states that received waivers are members of one of these consortia and will need to work closely with other consortium members to ensure that the new assessments are accessible to students currently participating in the AA-MAS.

Since information about how states plan to phase out their use of the AA-MAS is spread out across the many waiver applications, there was a need to compile it in one document. To address this need the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) compiled, analyzed,

and summarized the plans for phasing out the AA-MAS that were in states' approved waiver requests. This report presents the results of that analysis. The specific research questions we sought to answer were:

1. Of the states with approved flexibility waivers in December 2012, which ones had an operative AA-MAS?
2. What specific plans for phasing out the AA-MAS were included in states' approved flexibility applications?

Process Used to Find Information about States' AA-MAS Transition Policies

The ESEA state flexibility waiver applications for states with an operative AA-MAS that had received approval from the U.S. Department of Education as of December 31, 2012, were downloaded from <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/requests> and analyzed (see Appendix A for a list of documents reviewed). For this report, we compiled and summarized each state's transition plan information from these waiver documents. Information provided within a state waiver application that was about the AA-MAS and serving students with disabilities within the new standards and assessment system was analyzed. Transition plan criteria were identified based on the review of each of the state documents. In the Results section, each specific transition plan criterion was listed by name if the criterion was mentioned by two or more states. Transition plan criteria that were not common to at least two states were included in the *other* category.

Results

As of December, 2012, 12 states that had an operational AA-MAS—Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia—had applied for a flexibility waiver and received approval from the U.S. Department of Education (2012a). Table B1 in Appendix B presents the name of each state's AA-MAS, and the grades and content areas assessed. One state with an AA-MAS (North Dakota) had not yet received approval so it was not included in this analysis; two states with an AA-MAS (California and Texas) did not apply for ESEA flexibility.

Transition Plan Criteria

Information on transition plans was found in 10 of the 12 active AA-MAS states with approved flexibility waiver applications. One state (Indiana) did not provide any information related to the AA-MAS phase-out process. Indiana's application was approved early in the waiver process (February 9, 2012), and did not mention its AA-MAS in the waiver document. Another state's

(North Carolina) application mentioned the phase-out of its AA-MAS by 2014-2015 in its approved waiver application, but did not provide information about a transition plan related to the AA-MAS. North Carolina was part of the second round of applications and was approved on May 29, 2012.

States provided varying levels of detail about how they plan to phase out the AA-MAS—some states provided fairly extensive details and information about the transition, while other states provided brief, broad statements. Transition plan criteria varied across the states that included AA-MAS phase-out plans in their approved waiver application (see Figure 1). Some transition plan criteria were mentioned by the majority of states and other criteria were mentioned by only one state in their flexibility waiver documents.

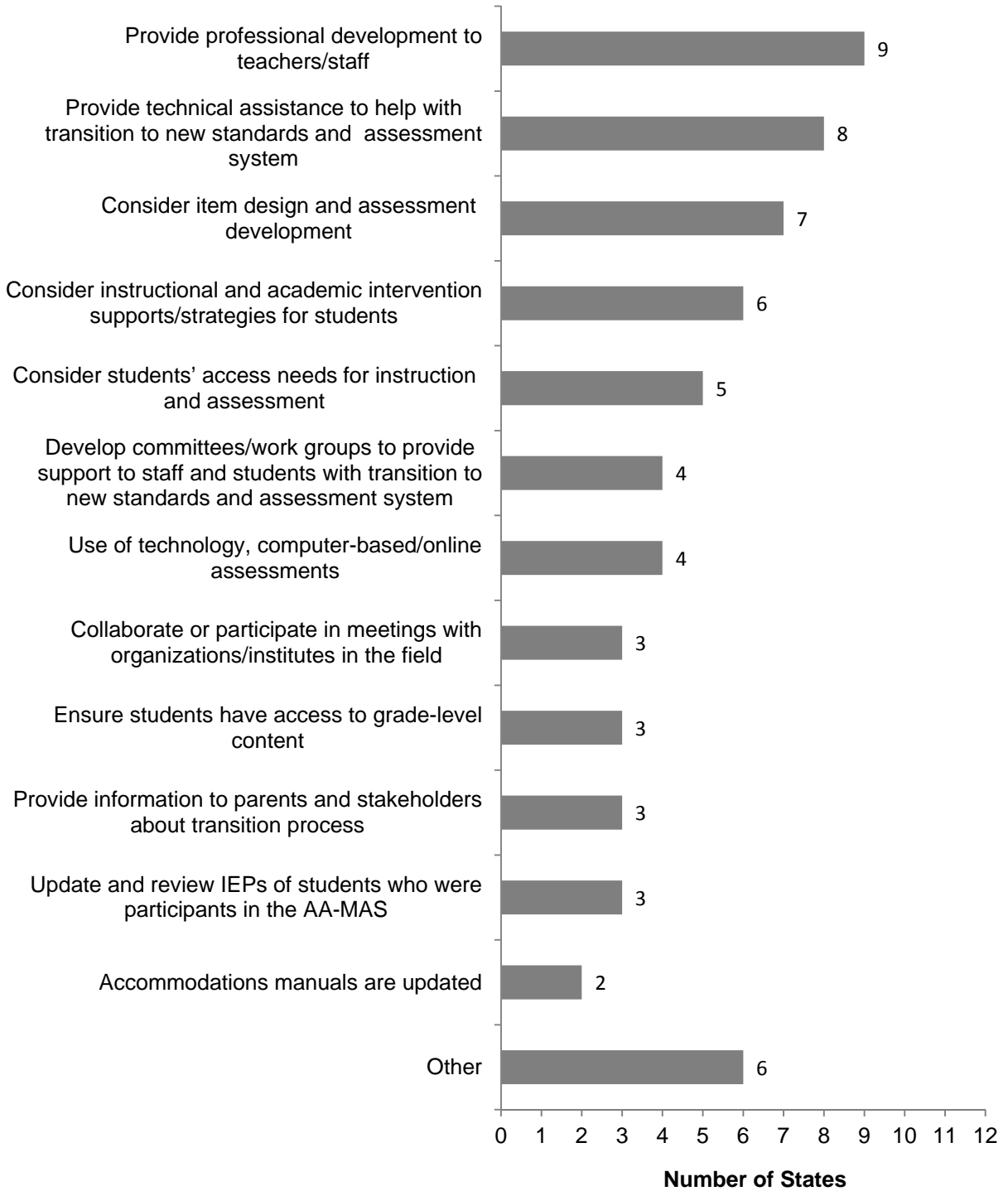
A summary of the specific criteria mentioned by each state is presented in Table C1 in Appendix C. Detailed specifications are presented in Table C2 in Appendix C. Each of the criteria that two or more states included in their approved waiver applications is discussed in this section.

Provide professional development to teachers/staff. Nine states (Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia) indicated in their waiver applications that they planned to provide professional development for teachers. Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, and Oklahoma included specific details about the professional development that would be provided. For example, Oklahoma plans to offer training on a multi-tiered system of academic and behavior supports, collaborative teaching, and accommodations and modifications. Connecticut stated in its waiver application that:

CSDE is developing a mandatory online course for the 2012-13 school year for teachers who work with SWD. This course will include information about how to prepare students who presently take our modified assessment for the SBAC assessment. (p. 45)

Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system. Eight states (Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Tennessee, and Virginia) stated that technical assistance and support would be provided by the state department of education to help districts transition to the new standards and assessment system. Many states did not provide specific details about the type of technical assistance that would be provided for this transition, but the following types of technical assistance were mentioned by at least one state: increasing capacity to provide professional development training, providing information to parents and other stakeholders, and ensuring that students and teachers have adequate resources to understand the new assessment system and what the items will look like. For example, Maryland's application said that:

Figure 1. AA-MAS State Transition Plan Criteria



Each local school system appoints a Mod-MSA Facilitator to serve as a liaison between the MSDE and the local school system. The name of this facilitator will now change to Assessment Facilitator for Students with Disabilities. The Facilitators will continue monthly meetings with the MSDE and will continue to receive technical assistance and support in the transition of the 2% students from the Mod-MSA to the regular MSA. (p. 549)

Consider item design and assessment development (e.g., Principles of Universal Design or embedded supports). Seven states (Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee, and Virginia) included information about item design and new state assessment development. Six of the states (Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, and Tennessee) mentioned how they were working with their consortium (either PARCC or SBAC) to develop the new assessment system. Six states (Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee, and Virginia) also discussed how the new assessment system would be accessible for students with disabilities or low achieving students. For example, Maryland’s application stated “accessible assessments will allow all individuals taking the assessments to participate and engage in a meaningful and appropriate manner, with the goal of ensuring that results are valid for every student” (p. 552). Additionally, Maryland noted, “embedded support accessibility options and procedures need to be addressed during design and item development to minimize the need for accommodations during testing” (p. 553).

Four states (Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, and Tennessee) mentioned that they would be using principles of Universal Design or Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as they developed the new assessment system. Two states (Tennessee and Virginia) stated that the new assessment would be administered online and would include embedded accommodations such as large text, read-aloud, or highlighting. Virginia specifically stated that students taking the AA-MAS needed to be considered and that, “Virginia will work with its technical advisors and its testing contractor in seeking solutions to providing the supports inherent in the VMAST items within the SOL tests” (p. 32).

Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students. Six states (Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia) provided information in their flexibility waiver applications about how the use of instructional and academic intervention supports and strategies for students would be needed as students transition from the AA-MAS. Georgia and Michigan discussed the development and implementation of schoolwide tiered intervention systems designed to provide behavior and academic support to all students. Georgia also stated, “The diverse needs of learners will guide the development of curriculum and instructional activities designed to address diverse needs” (p. 28). The use of research-based or evidence-based interventions was important to states. Oklahoma stated that it would “provide

educators with the tools and supports to assist all students who need interventions for academics and/or behaviors in accessing the curriculum” (p. 28).

Michigan indicated that Priority Schools will get additional supports for students with disabilities but did not indicate that Focus and Reward schools would get similar supports:

Michigan will provide specific support to students with disabilities in Priority schools. Each school will be required to incorporate specific programming decisions for supporting these students through components of the reform/redesign plan related to differentiated instruction. As a part of the initial data review and analysis for the creation of the reform/redesign plan, schools will use Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) to review and further develop a school-wide tiered intervention system. In addition, the Michigan Department of Education will work to integrate project resources such as the Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners program for dropout prevention, and the Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MiTOP) program for developing systems to support postsecondary outcomes into the online professional learning tools for Priority school educators. Other pedagogical practices focusing on Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and Co-Teaching will be incorporated into the online learning supports for Priority school educators. (p. 39-40)

Consider students’ access needs for instruction and assessment. Five states (Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Tennessee) indicated in their applications that instruction and assessments would be made more accessible to students. This typically focused on the use of accommodations during instruction and assessment, although a few states mentioned other access considerations. For example, Maryland indicated that IEP teams must meet to discuss the “instructional programming and accommodation needs” (p. 548) of each student who participated in the state AA-MAS.

The committee will begin by reviewing the CCSS from the perspective of students with a wide range of learning disabilities, and will make a recommendation to the state in time for the 2012-13 school year on whether to continue administering the MAAS through 2013-14 or adopt a transitional assessment to gradually bring the 2 percent of MAAS-tested students toward a PARCC-like model. (p. 24)

Develop committees/work groups to provide support to staff and students with transition to new standards and assessment system. Four states (Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee) stated that they established committees or work groups to assist staff and students with the transition to the new standards and assessment system. The states created different groups to meet the needs of the transition process. For example, Connecticut developed a com-

munity of special education practitioners to review SBAC work among other work groups. Tennessee developed a committee to provide intervention and support plans for students who may struggle with the new standards:

In order to help these students with the rigor of CCSS, we will convene a special committee of TDOE staff and external organizations and stakeholders to create a comprehensive student support plan, which explicitly enumerates the accommodations offered to support the needs of SWD students with the new standards to be fully implemented by the 2013-14 school year. (p. 24)

Use of technology, computer-based/online assessments. The applications of four states (Connecticut, Maryland, Tennessee, and Virginia) mentioned that they were creating computer-based assessment systems for state assessments. The applications suggested that computer-based assessments might be more accessible for students who participated in the AA-MAS than the previous general assessment. For example, Connecticut wrote:

Approximately 2% of Connecticut’s students take the computer-based modified assessment system (MAS) and are particularly well positioned for the 2014-15 assessment due to their experience with a computer-based assessment system. (p. 44)

Collaborate or participate in meetings with organizations in the field. Three states (Connecticut, Kansas, and Louisiana) stated in their waiver applications that they were collaborating with, or participating in, meetings with various other organizations to help support the transition to the new assessment system and standards. Louisiana shared that it participated in organizational strategy meetings with NCEO, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the National Governors’ Association (NGA) to “stay informed and connected to key stakeholders” (pp. 61-62).

Connecticut indicated that:

to successfully include a student with disabilities in the general education curriculum, general and special educators along with student support services professionals must collaborate in new ways to meet the demands of developing high-quality IEPs based on the CCSS. To that end, the CSDE in collaboration with SERC [State Education Resource Center, see ctserc.org], has provided a series of job-embedded workshops on assessments methods, IEP alignment, specially designed instruction, and assistive technology. (p. 50)

Ensure students have access to grade-level content. Three states (Maryland, Oklahoma, and Tennessee) specifically discussed the need to ensure that students who participated in the AA-MAS have access to grade-level content. For example, Connecticut’s application stated:

Teachers must continue to teach grade-level content standards, provide accommodations and supplementary aid and services during instruction to assist students to access grade level content and participate in rigorous instructional activities. (p. 44)

Provide information to parents and stakeholders about transition process. Three states (Louisiana, Maryland, and Minnesota) stated in their waiver documents that information would be provided to parents and other stakeholders about the transition to the new system. For example, Maryland developed and was continuing to revise a question and answer document that will be provided to local school systems and parents with information designed to help them understand the elimination of the state’s AA-MAS and the transition to the new assessment system. In another example, the Louisiana Department of Education stated that it “is committed to deep engagement with district leaders, teachers, parents, special education advocates, policymakers, and students in order to ensure adequate supports for student and educators” (p. 38).

Update and review IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS. Three states (Maryland, Michigan, and Oklahoma) stated that IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS must be reviewed and updated. Both Michigan and Oklahoma indicated that data-based decision making or data analysis should be used to help determine appropriate assessments for students with IEPs. For example, along with using a decision-making worksheet to determine how students will appropriately participate in the assessment system, the Michigan Statewide Assessment Selection Guidelines “support data-based decision making when determining appropriate assessments for students with disabilities” (p. 39).

Accommodations manuals are updated. Two states (Connecticut and Maryland) indicated that the state accommodations manuals would be updated to reflect the new assessment system. Connecticut stated it was “updating the testing accommodation manual to provide information to districts on how the new assessment system will impact access for students who currently take the MAS” (p. 45). Maryland updated its manual to “reflect the removal of the current Mod-MSA language” (p. 549).

Other. Six of the states (Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Virginia) had other criteria in their ESEA flexibility applications. The criteria mentioned as “other” were different for each state (see Table C2 in Appendix C for details and specifications). A few of the other criteria provided by states are described here.

Maryland stated that “the IEP teams must avoid an increase in students identified as eligible to participate in the Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA) as a result of the elimination of the Mod-MSA in grades 3 through 8” (p. 548). The Minnesota application indicated that stakeholders would assist the state in developing a plan for the phase out of the AA-MAS:

Following direction from the US Department of Education, MDE will work with stakeholders to create a plan for future use of the MCA-Modified assessment; In order to comply with the guidance from the US Department of Education, MDE will work to limit the use of the assessment to the appropriate student population while moving toward a phase out in 2014-15. (p. 63)

Discussion

The opportunity for states to apply for flexibility to change their approach to the accountability requirements of ESEA has generated much interest among states, with 35 states (including the District of Columbia) having applied and received approval as of December, 2012. Potential issues associated with the new flexibility have been identified, including the treatment of student subgroups (e.g., ethnicity/race, special education status, English language learner [ELL] status, economic status), as many states shift to the use of super subgroups to calculate student progress for accountability purposes (Center on Education Policy, 2012). There has been a lack of attention to the requirement that those states with an AA-MAS must discontinue its use for ESEA accountability by 2014-15 and this analysis was conducted to help fill this gap.

States need to develop sound plans that will help ensure the successful transition of students out of the AA-MAS into the regular assessment. States’ flexibility waiver applications provide information about how each state plans to phase out the use of the AA-MAS for accountability purposes.

In their waiver applications, only three states explicitly recognized the importance of ensuring that students who transition out of the AA-MAS will need to have access to grade level content. This is a concern since Federal regulations require that students who participated in the AA-MAS have access to grade level content. Previous studies found that some of these students may not have had the opportunity to learn content that would be on the test (Altman, Cormier, Lazarus, & Thurlow, 2012; Lazarus, Hodgson, Price, & Thurlow, 2011), and it is vital that as these students transition to the general assessment that they have access to grade level content.

Most states included professional development and technical assistance in their flexibility waiver applications. Educators will need to learn new skills that will enable them to improve their instructional practices and improve the learning of students who previously participated

in the AA-MAS. Teachers may need training on developing IEPs with measurable goals, differentiating instruction, accommodations, and scaffolding. States are using a variety of methods to provide the training. For example, Georgia is “designing teaching resources, formative tools, and professional learning opportunities for this transition” (p. 27), while Connecticut is developing an online course.

States also recognized the need to work closely with the other members of the general assessment consortium that they belong to (i.e., PARCC, SBAC) in order to help ensure that the new assessments that are being developed will be accessible to the students who are currently participating in the AA-MAS. Many states indicated that the new assessments will use the principles of universal design. Some states also indicated that the new assessments will be technology-based and will include embedded features that may make them more accessible. Many states also developed plans to help ensure that students can meaningfully access the general test. For example, two states indicated that they planned to revise their accommodations manual, and several others indicated that they would provide professional development on accommodations.

Based on the results of this analysis, it appears that a few states may have been unclear about which assessment some students who currently take the AA-MAS would be shifting to. Almost all students who participated in the AA-MAS, will transition to the general assessment, with or without accommodations. Very few students who take the AA-MAS have significant cognitive disabilities, so it would be very rare that a student would transition to an AA-AAS. States will need to use care when they revise their participation guidelines to ensure that students currently in the AA-MAS are shifted to the appropriate test (Lazarus & Rieke, in press).

IEPs play a key role in transitioning students from the AA-MAS to the general assessment. IEPs with measurable goals that include high expectations based on knowledge of content standards will help ensure that students have access to grade-level content (Lazarus & Rieke, in press). Some states have tools and templates that can be used. For example, Oklahoma recently introduced an online option for submitting IEPs. And, Maryland is developing resource materials that will help IEP teams as they revise and update IEPs.

States will need to consider when they want to discontinue use of the AA-MAS, and then develop appropriate timelines. For example, Tennessee’s waiver application indicates that the state department of education will “make a recommendation to the state in time for the 2012-13 school year on whether to continue administering the MAAS through 2013-14 or adopt a transitional assessment to gradually bring the 2 percent of MAAS-tested students toward a PARCC-like model” (p. 24). Similarly, Minnesota indicated that the “MDE will work to limit the use of the assessment to the appropriate student population while moving toward a phase out in 2014-15 (p. 63).

States also need to consider whether they want to totally phase out the use of the AA-MAS, or whether they want to continue to use the high school AA-MAS for graduation requirements. For example, Maryland wrote in its application:

The elimination of the Mod-MSA will not affect a student's graduation requirement. A student with a disability will continue to take the regular assessment, with the provision of accommodations, as recommended by his or her IEP Team. In addition, the High School Assessments (HSA) and Modified High School Assessments (Mod-HSA) will continue to be administered.

One state indicated that specific support for students with disabilities will be provided for Priority Schools. Other schools may also need support as they transition students out of the AA-MAS since teachers at a wide range of schools may find the transition challenging.

As students are transitioned back to the general assessment, states have a wonderful opportunity to really think thoughtfully about how to best instruct and assess low performing students with disabilities and other struggling learners. They then should develop and implement transition plans that will help ensure that real change occurs that will improve student learning and outcomes.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Description of States' AA-MAS

Table B1. AA-MAS Name, Content Area, and Grade Described by State as of November 2012

State	Assessment Name	Content Areas/Grades
Connecticut	Connecticut Mastery Test Modified Assessment System (CMT MAS) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test Modified Assessment System (CAPT MAS)	Math and Reading (3-8, 10 ¹)
Georgia	Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests – Modified (CRCT-M)	Math and Reading (3-8); English Language Arts (3-8)
Indiana	Indiana Modified Achievement Standards Test (IMAST)	Math and English Language Arts (3-8); Science (4, 6); Social Studies (5, 7)
Kansas ²	Kansas Assessment of Modified Measures (KAMM)	Math and Reading (3-8, HS); Writing (5, 8, HS); Science (4, 7) History-Government (9, 11)
Louisiana	Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) Alternate Assessment, Level 2 (LAA 2)	Math and English Language Arts (4-10); Science (4, 8, 11); Social Studies (4, 8, 11)
Maryland	Maryland Modified High School Assessment (Mod-HSA); Maryland Modified School Assessment (Mod-MSA)	Math and Reading (3-8); Algebra, Biology, English, and Government (HS)
Michigan	Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Access	Math and Reading (3-8); Writing (4, 7)
Minnesota	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) Modified	Math and Reading (5-8, 11)
North Carolina	NCEXTEND2 Alternate Assessment for End-of-Grade (EOG)	Math and Reading (3-8); Science (5, 8)
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)	Math and Reading (3-8); Science (5, 8); End-of-Instruction Tests, High School (Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History)
Tennessee	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Modified Academic Achievement Standards (MAAS)	Math and Reading/Language Arts (3-8); Science (3-8); Social Studies (3-8)
Virginia	Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test (VMASST)	Math and Reading (3-8); Algebra 1 (End-of-Course)

Source: Adapted and updated table that was in Lazarus, et al., 2011.

¹ CAPT MAS is available as a live test for identified grade 10 students and as a retest for individual students in grade 11 and 12.

² Kansas also offers KAMM Opportunity to Learn (OTL) assessments for grades 9-12 in math, reading, science, writing, and history-government. The OTL assessments are designed to give students the opportunity to learn the content standards prior to participation in the KAMM. According to the Kansas Assessment Examiner's Manual this assessment option "provides High Schools with flexibility in determining when to assess students."

Appendix C

AA-MAS Characteristics by State

Table C1. State Transition Plan Criteria for AA-MAS

	Connecticut ¹	Georgia	Indiana ²	Kansas	Louisiana	Maryland	Michigan	Minnesota ³	Oklahoma	Tennessee	Virginia	No. of States
Provide professional development to teachers/staff	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	9
Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	8
Consider item design and assessment development	X	X		X	X	X				X	X	7
Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students		X				X	X		X	X	X	6
Consider students' access needs for instruction and assessment		X			X	X			X	X		5
Develop committees/work groups to provide support to staff and students with transition to new standards and assessment system	X			X	X					X		4
Use of technology, computer-based/online assessments	X					X				X	X	4
Collaborate or participate in meetings with organizations in the field	X			X	X							3
Ensure students have access to grade-level content						X			X			3
Provide information to parents and stakeholders about transition process					X	X		X				3
Update and review IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS						X	X		X			3
Accommodations manuals are updated	X					X						2
Other criteria (see Table C2 for specifications)		X				X		X	X		X	6

Note: See Table C2 for specifications and descriptions.

¹ Connecticut did not specifically describe the phase out of the AA-MAS and transition to the new assessment system. However, the language in the Connecticut waiver application implies that the assessment option is going away and general information related to the transition is provided.

² Indiana did not mention the phase out of the state's AA-MAS in its waiver application.

³ North Carolina mentioned the phase out of the state's AA-MAS within its Waiver document, but did not include details about the transition plan in the approved application.

Table C2. Specifications and Descriptions of State Transition Plan Criteria, 2012

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Connecticut ¹	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: CSDE is developing a mandatory online course for the 2012-13 school year for teachers who work with SWD. This course will include information about how to prepare students who presently take our modified assessment for the SBAC assessment. Additionally, the CSDE will provide teachers with opportunities to meet with special education directors and other stakeholders through upcoming conferences and regularly scheduled meetings to share information and answer questions about anticipated changes (p. 45).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: While Connecticut believes many of its current practices have prepared students for this next generation assessment system, the CSDE has planned additional activities to successfully transition districts, educators, and students to the SBAC computer-based assessment in the 2014-2015 school year. A community of special education practitioners has been formed to review and respond to the SBAC work. In addition, CSDE content and assessment specialists are ongoing participants in the SBAC Access and Accommodations work group; To support districts, the CSDE has identified a Special Education College to Career Ready Team that includes staff from the Bureau of Student Assessment and the Bureau of Special Education along with secondary special education district transition staff. This team has identified a series of next steps specific to special education within the CSDE and districts, including the expansion of professional development guidance documents and additional resources for districts, IHEs, and parents of students with disabilities.</p> <p>Consider item design and assessment development: The CSDE has joined the SBAC and intends to adopt SBAC assessments in the 2014–15 school year. Until then, the CSDE has begun implementing an assessment transition plan that is piloting new assessment items designed to measure the CCSS. During 2012, the content area experts along with the CSDE psychometricians will review the current assessments based on the CSDE’s content frameworks that were in place prior to adoption of the CCSS and identify items that do not align with the CCSS. The goal of this work will be to remove questions measuring skills that are not required under the CCSS. The CSDE believes this approach will encourage educators to focus more intensely on the CCSS. Depending on the costs, Connecticut plans to participate in the optional formative assessments, an option available to SBAC members. The CSDE’s Bureau of Assessment content area experts work directly with contractors charged with developing assessment blueprints, item specifications, and sample items, allowing for firsthand knowledge of the new assessments. The in-depth work by the CSDE content area experts on the content specifications for mathematics provides the necessary expertise to develop and deliver professional learning experiences for educators on item and task development, scoring, and alignment. The CSDE is uniquely positioned to critically analyze existing assessments and determine possible changes. The CSDE intends to use the pilot data collected in 2011–12 to create items based on the CCSS that could be administered as a supplemental component of the CSDE state assessments beginning in 2012–13 and continuing in 2013–14 (p. 63).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Connecticut ¹ (continued)	<p>Develop committees/work groups to provide support to staff and students with transition to new standards and assessment system: While Connecticut believes many of its current practices have prepared students for this next generation assessment system, the CSDE has planned additional activities to successfully transition districts, educators, and students to the SBAC computer-based assessment in the 2014-2015 school year. A community of special education practitioners has been formed to review and respond to the SBAC work. In addition, CSDE content and assessment specialists are ongoing participants in the SBAC Access and Accommodations work group (p. 44-45); To support districts, the CSDE has identified a Special Education College to Career Ready Team that includes staff from the Bureau of Student Assessment and the Bureau of Special Education along with secondary special education district transition staff. This team has identified a series of next steps specific to special education within the CSDE and districts, including the expansion of professional development guidance documents and additional resources for districts, IHEs, and parents of students with disabilities (p. 45).</p> <p>Use of technology, computer-based/online assessments: Approximately 2% of Connecticut's students take the computer-based modified assessment system (MAS) and are particularly well positioned for the 2014-2015 assessment due to their experience with a computer-based assessment system (p. 44).</p> <p>Collaborate or participate in meetings with organizations in the field: To successfully include a student with disabilities in the general education curriculum, general and special educators along with student support services professionals must collaborate in new ways to meet the demands of developing high-quality IEPs based on the CCSS. To that end, the CSDE, in collaboration with SERC, has provided a series of job-embedded workshops on assessment methods, IEP alignment, specially designed instruction, and assistive technology use. Participants in these professional development activities were to determine whether the design of a student's IEP yielded educational benefit; determine the types of assessments that provide present levels of performance data; monitor the progress of IEP goals and objectives; analyze the gap between the expected performance of all students and a particular student's current level of achievement; and write standards-based, specific, and measurable objectives (p. 50).</p> <p>Accommodations manuals are updated: The CSDE is also updating the testing accommodation manual to provide information to districts on how the new assessment system will impact access for students who currently take the MAS (p. 45).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Georgia	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: The GaDOE Special Education staff is proactively designing teaching resources, formative tools, and professional learning opportunities for this transition. Additionally, PARCC is building item prototypes and resources that will be available to teachers and students to use prior to full implementation of the assessment system. The SEA intends to provide all teachers with professional development focused on the core content standards; teachers will continue to participate in professional development designed to provide the expertise required to utilize data from multiple measures to continually access progress, establish baselines of performance, and evaluate the progress of students (p. 27-28).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: Given that alternate assessments based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS) will not be an option once the Common Core Assessments are implemented in 2014-2015, Georgia will work with districts, schools, and teachers to ensure a smooth transition for students who formerly participated in the state's AA-MAS, the CRCT-M (p. 28).</p> <p>Consider item design and assessment development: As a Governing State within the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, (PARCC) consortium, Georgia has a significant voice and role in major decisions regarding the development of the assessment system. The design of the system intentionally considers the needs of students at all levels of the achievement continuum, including those that have struggled to demonstrate what they have learned on traditional large-scale assessments. PARCC's assessments are being designed to ensure there is sufficient opportunity for students who are very low achieving (or very high achieving) to demonstrate concepts they comprehend and how they can apply these concepts. The open-ended, performance-based, and innovative nature of the test items and tasks that will be included on the assessments should allow students this opportunity to demonstrate proficiency; To help prepare both teachers and students for this new type of assessment (historically Georgia's assessment system has been selected-response), Georgia is using its Race to the Top funds to build both a formative item bank and benchmarks that will be comprised of mainly open-ended, performance-based items and tasks (p. 28).</p> <p>Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students: The state recognizes the importance of Response to Intervention (RTI) as a critical component of identifying students who may benefit from supplemental, remedial, or enriched instruction. Georgia's RTI process includes several key components including: (1) a 4-Tier delivery model designed to provide support matched to student need through the implementation of standards-based classrooms; (2) evidence-based instruction as the core of classroom pedagogy; (3) evidence-based interventions utilized with increasing levels of intensity based on progress monitoring; and (4) the use of a variety of ongoing assessment data to determine which students are not successful academically and/or behaviorally. Data Teams in each school serve as the driving force for instructional decision making in the building; The diverse needs of learners will guide the development of curriculum and instructional activities designed to address diverse needs; The data collection process is an essential component of RTI which is designed to</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Georgia (continued)	<p>provide additional supports and accommodations to students. The State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) makes available data to teachers at the individual student level but also provides teachers with tools to develop profiles of classroom needs and will link to instructional activities designed to address identified areas of content (p. 28).</p> <p>Consider students' access needs for instruction and assessment: To complement the instructional materials that are being developed to assist teachers in the delivery of instruction for the new Common Core Georgia Performance Standards; the state intends to employ the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the design of curricula so that methods, materials, and assessments meet the needs of all students. Traditional curricula may present barriers that will limit students' access to information and learning. In a traditional curriculum, a student without a well developed ability to see, decode, attend to, or comprehend printed text may be unable to successfully maintain the pace of the instruction. The UDL framework guides the development of adaptable curricula by means of three principles. The common recommendation of these three principles is to select goals, methods, assessment, and materials in a way that will minimize barriers and maximize flexibility. In this manner, the UDL framework structures the development of curricula that fully support every student's access, participation, and progress in all facets of learning. One of the key principles to guide professional development for instructional practices of diverse learners includes providing multiple means of engagement. This approach will assist teachers in delivering differentiated standard-based instruction that engages and provides access to all learners. Professional development activities designed to support teachers' utilization of data derived from multiple measures will be emphasized as a component of sound instructional practice focused on improving student performance. To differentiate instruction is to recognize and react responsibly to students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, and preferences in learning and interests. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is and assisting in the learning process. The integration of technology provides an important component of UDL and will play a vital role in assuring these activities meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, including students with disabilities, ELLs, and low-achieving students (p. 27).</p> <p>Other: Mathematics and ELA specialists are developing Common Core teacher guides for each grade/subject level teacher. In addition, instructional units, materials, and tasks are being developed to support the new common core standards. As materials are being developed, they are posted on the GaDOE website for viewing; Significant training and support will be provided to districts in the use of these items, with special consideration given to strategies for low-performing students (i.e., diagnosing and addressing student weaknesses); As Georgia prepares for the 2014-2015 implementation of PARCC assessments, training will be provided to systems on appropriate placement decisions given the phase-out of the AA-MAS. Indeed, many of these conversations have already taken place as systems have been informed that there will be no AA-MAS in 2014-2015 (p. 28-29).</p>
Indiana	No Information Provided

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Kansas	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: In order to transition from the KAMM to the SBAC assessment the focus will need to be on how to increase the skills of teachers so instruction reaches the rigor necessary to make the transition. The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), Technical Assistance Systems Network (TASN), convened two groups of experts from across the state, including KSDE content experts from the Career Standards and Assessment Team to create professional development on the CCSS in reading and math. The math group developed math foundations training that will give educators the foundational skills they will need to implement the math CCSS. The Literacy group has worked to coordinate reading instructions. Teachers will focus instruction on reading, writing, speaking, listening and research. Professional development continues on standards based IEP goals in order for goals to be based on CCSS; Six summer academies in 2011 were conducted to prepare teachers for the transition to the CCSS. Teachers were instructed there are one set of standards and all students, including students who take the KAMM. During the summer 2012, six summer academies focus on the implementation of the CCSS instruction in the classroom which includes students who take the KAMM. These summer academies will continue to help all teachers make the transition to the CCSS (p. 61).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: In order to transition from the KAMM to the SBAC assessment the focus will need to be on how to increase the skills of teachers so instruction reaches the rigor necessary to make the transition. The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), Technical Assistance Systems Network (TASN), convened two groups of experts from across the state, including KSDE content experts from the Career Standards and Assessment Team to create professional development on the CCSS in reading and math. The math group developed math foundations training that will give educators the foundational skills they will need to implement the math CCSS. The Literacy group has worked to coordinate reading instructions</p> <p>Consider item design and assessment development: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment will be an adapted online assessment that contains a variety of accessibility options to benefit all students including students with disabilities and will be available in the school year 2014-2015. SBAC is using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and accessibility features such as audio read-aloud, text magnification and highlighting (p. 62).</p> <p>Develop committees/work groups to provide support to staff and students with transition to new standards and assessment system: The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), Technical Assistance Systems Network (TASN), convened two groups of experts from across the state, including KSDE content experts from the Career Standards and Assessment Team to create professional development on the CCSS in reading and math.</p> <p>Collaborate or participate in meetings with organizations in the field: The Kansas Enhanced Assessment Grant (EAG) with Ohio and North Carolina focuses on the Survey of Enacted Curriculum (SEC). The purpose of the EAG is to have teachers review instruction in relationship to the CCSS for students with disabilities. Through the Kansas EAG State Consortium Grant, CCSSO provided</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Kansas (continued)	<p>assistance to KSDE for analyzing the alignment between current Kansas state assessments and modified assessments. The SEC methodology and framework are used to analyze these state documents for degree of content alignment and, also, analyze current state assessments, standards, and classroom instruction to the Common Core (p. 61-62).</p>
Louisiana	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: In addition to the development of an alternate assessment, NCSC is developing curriculum, instruction, and professional development support for teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The project also involves identifying effective communication strategies for students, the development of material at varying levels of complexity to meet students' unique learning needs, and accommodation policies appropriate for this population. Louisiana has established a Community of Practice comprised of teachers and district and school administrators who work with this population of students. The group reviews materials and provides feedback as they are developed. The goal of the NCSC project is to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options (p. 37); During this process, the LDOE is committed to deep engagement with district leaders, teachers, parents, special education advocates, and students in order to ensure adequate supports for students and educators (p. 38).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: PARCC is supporting this transition with a focus on wide accessibility. Specifically, PARCC has engaged in the following strategies: Established both a State Operational Working Group and a Technical Working Group to focus on accessibility, accommodations, and fairness issues. Created a Senior Advisor position to facilitate the work of the OWG, TWG, and consultants (this job search is currently underway).</p> <p>Consider item design and assessment development: PARCC is supporting this transition with a focus on wide accessibility. Specifically, PARCC has engaged in the following strategies: Made a commitment to Universal Design to guide the assessment development; Made a commitment to include embedded supports in the assessments.</p> <p>Consider students' access needs for instruction and assessment: PARCC is supporting this transition with a focus on wide accessibility. Specifically, PARCC has engaged in the following strategies: Established both a State Operational Working Group and a Technical Working Group to focus on accessibility, accommodations, and fairness issues. Created a Senior Advisor position to facilitate the work of the OWG, TWG, and consultants (p. 38).</p> <p>Develop committees/work groups to provide support to staff and students with transition to new standards and assessment system: PARCC is supporting this transition with a focus on wide accessibility. Specifically, PARCC has engaged in the following strategies: Established both a State Operational Working Group and a Technical Working Group to focus on accessibility, accommodations, and fairness issues. Created a Senior Advisor position to facilitate the work of the OWG, TWG, and consultants (this job search is currently underway).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Louisiana	<p>Collaborate or participate in meetings with organizations in the field: PARCC is supporting this transition with a focus on wide accessibility. Specifically, PARCC has engaged in the following strategies: Participated in CCSSO, NGA, NCEO, and other organizational strategy meetings to stay informed and connected to key stakeholders and to remain vigilant on AAF issues (p. 38).</p> <p>Provide information to parents and stakeholders about transition process: During this process, the LDOE is committed to deep engagement with district leaders, teachers, parents, special education advocates, policymakers, and students in order to ensure adequate supports for students and educators (p. 38).</p>
Maryland	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: Each local school system may provide professional development opportunities to improve best practices for the use of accommodations. Educators should check with their local school system special education office to identify professional development opportunities that are available (p. 554).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: Each local school system appoints a Mod-MSA Facilitator to serve as a liaison between the MSDE and the local school system. The name of this facilitator will now change to Assessment Facilitator for Students with Disabilities. The Facilitators will continue monthly meetings with the MSDE and will continue to receive technical assistance and support in the transition of the 2% students from the Mod-MSA to the regular MSA. In addition, the Facilitators will continue to receive professional development on a variety of topics related to student participation in Maryland assessments. A meeting with the Facilitators will be scheduled in May 2012, for the purpose of discussing the transition and to provide technical assistance as requested to each local school system (p. 549).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Maryland (continued)	<p>Consider item design and assessment development: PARCC is committed to providing all students with equitable access to high-quality, 21st century assessments, and attending to the unique assessment needs of students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). From the initial design stages, PARCC will consider how its assessments will be accessible to all participating students, including students with disabilities and ELLs. Accessible assessments will allow all individuals taking the assessments to participate and engage in a meaningful and appropriate manner, with the goal of ensuring that results are valid for every student. The PARCC assessment system will increase access to all participating students by adhering to Universal Design for Learning principles and embedding supports from the initial stages of item development (p. 552); Through a combination of Universal Design principles and computer embedded supports, PARCC intends to design an assessment system that is inclusive by considering accessibility from the beginning of initial design through item development, field testing, and implementation, rather than trying to retrofit the assessments for SWD and ELLs. Paper-and-pencil assessments that have been designed without the benefit of Universal Design have focused primarily on promoting accessibility after-the-fact resulting in the need to provide many more accommodations and a consequent need for increased test administration resources at the school level. Additionally, as the number of accommodations may be needed for some students to demonstrate what they know and can do, embedded support accessibility options and procedures need to be addressed during design and item development to minimize the need for accommodations during testing. Embedded accessibility supports at the item level, that do not shift the construct being measured, become a feature of the assessment for potential use by all children (p. 53).</p> <p>Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students: Review previously recommended modified instruction, research-based and/or evidence-based interventions, instructional supports, and accommodations (p. 548).</p> <p>Consider students' access needs for instruction and assessment: Upon approval of the Governor's budget, local education agencies, public agencies, and nonpublic schools must ensure the IEP team, for each student with a disability who currently participates in the Mod-MSA, meets to: Discuss the student's instructional programming and accommodation needs (p. 548); In order for the student to be prepared for the MSA, and the upcoming PARCC assessment, teachers must teach grade-level content standards, aligned with the format of the assessment, with accommodations and supplementary aid and services. To ensure students are instructed and are familiar with the format of the assessment, will assist them to successfully access grade level content standards, and participate in instructional activities and assessment (p. 554-555).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Maryland (continued)	<p>Use of technology, computer-based/online assessments: Students will need to be prepared for the transition from accessing an online assessment to completing a paper and pencil assessment. Mod-MSA has only selected responses; MSA has selected responses, Brief Constructed Responses (BCRs), and Extended Constructed Responses (ECRs). There will be additional technical assistance to local school systems related to preparing students to take an assessment containing BCRs and ECRs (p.547-548).</p> <p>Ensure students have access to grade-level content: The elimination of the Mod-MSA will not have an instructional or educational impact on students' educational progress. Each student with a disability will continue to receive the same quality instruction and supports during instruction and assessment as outlined in his/her IEP; Teachers must continue to teach grade-level content standards, provide accommodations and supplementary aid and services during instruction to assist students to access grade level content and participate in rigorous instructional activities (p. 554).</p> <p>Provide information to parents and stakeholders about transition process: Currently developing a question and answer (Q & A) document (Attachment #2) addressing the elimination of the Mod-MSA. The document will be disseminated to local school systems, nonpublic schools, and parents by April 30, 2012 (p. 549).</p> <p>Update and review IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS: Upon approval of the Governor's budget, local education agencies, public agencies, and nonpublic schools must ensure the IEP team, for each student with a disability who currently participates in the Mod-MSA, meets to: Revise the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), as appropriate, to reflect the student's participation in statewide assessments and recommended accommodations (p. 548); Maryland's Online IEP form and format, effective July 1, 2012, will reflect, as appropriate, the removal of the current Mod-MSA language. The MSDE will provide resource materials for dissemination to appropriate staff by the end of April 2012 (p. 549).</p> <p>Accommodations manuals are updated: Maryland's Accommodations Manual (MAM) updates, effective June 2012, will reflect the removal of the current Mod-MSA language. The MSDE will release the new MAM and provide training to local school systems on June 8, 2012, and June 11, 2012. The nonpublic schools will be trained on June 18 and June 19, 2012 (p. 549).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Maryland (continued)	<p>Other: Upon approval of the Governor’s budget, local education agencies, public agencies, and nonpublic schools must ensure the IEP team, for each student with a disability who currently participates in the Mod-MSA, meets to: Discuss and identify the student’s participation in district and statewide assessments; The IEP teams must avoid an increase in students identified as eligible to participate in the Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA) as a result of the elimination of the Mod-MSA in grades 3 through 8. IEP teams must know the difference between the Mod-MSA and Alt-MSA; and the six eligibility criteria for students to participate in the Alt-MSA, which can be found in the Maryland Accommodations Manual and on the MSDE website; Students will need to be prepared for the transition from accessing an online assessment to completing a paper and pencil assessment. Mod-MSA has only selected responses; MSA has selected responses, Brief Constructed Responses (BCRs), and Extended Constructed Responses (ECRs). There will be additional technical assistance to local school systems related to preparing students to take an assessment containing BCRs and ECRs; The elimination of the Mod-MSA will not affect a student’s graduation requirement. A student with a disability will continue to take the regular assessment, with the provision of accommodations, as recommended by his or her IEP Team. In addition, the High School Assessments (HSA) and Modified High School Assessments (Mod-HSA) will continue to be administered. Once the PARCC assessments are implemented, students will continue to work toward pursuing a Maryland High School Diploma (pp. 548-549).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Michigan	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: Professional development and technical assistance will be provided to teachers in order to help them prepare their students for this transition, and this training will also be included in teacher preparation institutions; Currently students with disabilities in Michigan have multiple choices of assessments to demonstrate what they know and can do. It is expected that the majority of students with disabilities will be assessed on the general assessment and that only a small percentage of SWDs be assessed on an alternate assessment. Therefore, teachers of SWDs will be required to understand the CCSSs and CCEEs in order to ensure that all students are progressing on their individual goals and meet the state proficiency standards. In the past, special educators were not invited to the robust curriculum professional development opportunities. With the new teacher effectiveness requirements and clear expectations, special educators need to be active participants in curricular PD activities. MDE will be supporting teachers to not only understand the standards but be able to teach to the standards through PD activities provided through the ISDs, professional development modules offered through Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), and the Michigan Online Professional Learning System (MOPLS) (p. 39).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: Professional development and technical assistance will be provided to teachers in order to help them prepare their students for this transition, and this training will also be included in teacher preparation institutions (p. 39).</p> <p>Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students: Michigan will provide specific support to students with disabilities in Priority schools. Each school will be required to incorporate specific programming decisions for supporting these students through components of the reform/redesign plan related to differentiated instruction. As a part of the initial data review and analysis for the creation of the reform/redesign plan, schools will use Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) to review and further develop a school-wide tiered intervention system. In addition, the Michigan Department of Education will work to integrate project resources such as the Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners program for dropout prevention, and the Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MiTOP) program for developing systems to support postsecondary outcomes into the online professional learning tools for Priority school educators. Other pedagogical practices focusing on Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and Co-Teaching will be incorporated into the online learning supports for Priority school educators (p. 39-40).</p> <p>Update and review IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS: For all assessments, individual education program teams must determine and document which assessments are appropriate for students with disabilities. IEP teams are encouraged to use the “Decision Making Worksheet for Statewide Assessments” to ensure students with disabilities are participating in the most appropriate statewide assessment. The Michigan Statewide Assessment Selection Guidelines and accompanying online professional learning module direct IEP Teams to consider the MEAP/MME first with accommodations as needed. The guidelines support data-based decision making when determining appropriate assessments for students with disabilities (p. 39).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Michigan (continued)	<p>Update and review IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS: For all assessments, individual education program teams must determine and document which assessments are appropriate for students with disabilities. IEP teams are encouraged to use the “Decision Making Worksheet for Statewide Assessments” to ensure students with disabilities are participating in the most appropriate statewide assessment. The Michigan Statewide Assessment Selection Guidelines and accompanying online professional learning module direct IEP Teams to consider the MEAP/MME first with accommodations as needed. The guidelines support data-based decision making when determining appropriate assessments for students with disabilities (p. 39).</p>
Minnesota	<p>Provide information to parents and stakeholders about transition process: Following directions from the US Department of Education, MDE will work with stakeholders to create a plan for future use of the MCA-Modified assessment (p. 63).</p> <p>Other: MDE will work to limit the use of the assessment to the appropriate student population while moving toward a phase out in 2014-15 (p. 63).</p>
North Carolina	<p>Other: The NCDPI is developing modified assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts for implementation in 2012-13 and 2013-14; however, the OCS students participate in classes with general students and receive instruction on the same content standards. There will be no modified assessments administered beginning with the 2014-15 school year (p. 30)</p>
Oklahoma	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: OK SPDG will promote systems change in the content and delivery of professional development for educators and parents directed at ensuring better academic and social outcomes for all Oklahoma’s students with disabilities. This multi-tiered system of academic and behavior support (a blended model of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports [PBIS] and Response to Intervention [RtI]) provides a framework for using child-specific data to identify and address specific academic and behavior needs of students with disabilities, particularly those students who have been participating in the OMAAP or general assessments with accommodations. In addition, it provides a valid method of identifying gaps in services for students with disabilities. This framework provides an opportunity for this population of students to be provided education in their least restrictive environment and access to the same curriculum as students without disabilities. This initiative will have the long-term outcome of closing the achievement gap (p. 28); The SEA provides resources, training, and professional development from national experts to ensure educators have the tools needed to assist with this population. Annual professional development is offered to all educators in areas such as collaborative teaching, accommodations and modifications, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Response to Intervention (RtI). In addition, training will be provided to districts regarding a multi-tiered system of academic and behavior supports (blending PBIS and RtI) (p. 27).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Oklahoma	<p>Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students: Although the OK SPDG’s main goal is to ensure better academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities, the grant will provide educators with tools and supports to assist all students who need interventions for academics and/or behaviors in accessing the curriculum. The grant will also assist in implementing statewide initiatives for early literacy and implementation of CCSS (p. 28).</p> <p>Consider students’ access needs for instruction and assessment (e.g., use of accommodations): Additionally, an accommodation manual specific to Oklahoma assists district personnel in selecting appropriate accommodations to be utilized for student assessments; Educators are also provided a criteria checklist for the identification of the appropriate assessment and curriculum access resource guides to assist all educators with suggestions and activities to implement appropriate instruction for students with disabilities. In preparation for the PARCC assessments, which do not include an assessment based on modified achievement standards, Oklahoma is updating curriculum access resource guides to provide suggestions and activities aligned to the CCSS (p. 27).</p> <p>Ensure students have access to grade-level content: The SEA has undergone restructuring of personnel and programs that will integrate special education initiatives into the current transition plan for CCSS. All programs outlined for the transition of CCSS will have a representative from the office of Special Education services to ensure that students with disabilities have access to accelerated programs and opportunities to decrease the achievement gaps. The collaboration between offices within the SEA will provide opportunities to deliver essential training to LEAs and schools that will decrease the achievement gap in all subgroups. Students with disabilities are expected to be taught in the least restrictive environment and to have access to the same curriculum as students without disabilities; Supports, personnel, accommodations, and modifications are used in general and special education classes, along with differentiated instruction, to provide access to the curriculum for all students (p. 27).</p> <p>Update and review IEPs of students who were participants in the AA-MAS: The SEA provides training and support to educators and parents in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) based on grade level standards to improve student outcomes. The SEA has recently launched an online option for LEAs to submit IEPs for statewide, district, and site data analysis. This will assist in further data analysis of student IEP goals, the environments in which students receive instruction, accommodations and modifications, types of assessment, and assessment results. This will assist educators in understanding patterns of students who take the general assessments, OMAAP assessments, and alternate assessments and in providing transitional interventions that will lead students toward higher achievement on PARCC assessments and alternate assessments in the future (p. 27).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Oklahoma (continued)	<p>Other: Accelerating learning of students with disabilities and closing the achievement gap is an Oklahoma priority. The SEA developed the 2011 Oklahoma State Personnel Development Grant (OK SPDG) for the purpose of accelerating student learning experiences so that all students with disabilities, including those who have been participating in the Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP) or the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP), are able to meet the expectations of the Common Core State Standards. Because the State will be administering the PARCC assessments, which will not include an assessment with modified achievement standards, it is imperative that Oklahoma educators are preparing students with disabilities who participate in the OMAAP for transitioning to the PARCC general assessment with accommodations (p. 26-27); The SEA monitors implementation of the federal requirements included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As a result of the monitoring, each district is provided a district data profile that identifies how they are performing with regard to each of the indicators outlined in Oklahoma’s State Performance Plan. The information from the district data profiles provide valuable information to assist in making decisions on assessment, instruction, graduation, and drop-out rates. Access to this type of data will provide the SEA and LEA the opportunity to develop programs and provide targeted professional development to assist educators in decreasing the achievement gap (p. 27).</p>
Tennessee	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: The committee will then conduct a review of current research and compile a kit of best practices for teachers to use for teaching the CCSS to SWD. The set of strategies will be incorporated into PD for all teachers, not only those teaching in EL or special education classrooms. The state will also provide PD for special education teachers on writing standards-based IEPs correlated to CCSS (p. 24).</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: TDOE will work with LEAs to conduct an in-depth study of capacity, with particular focus on broadband access and number of computer terminals, in order to determine which LEAs will need assistance in meeting these guidelines. Our Chief Information Officers (CIOs) will then craft a plan summarizing LEA capacity and including annual metrics to measure the scaling-up efforts, which TDOE can then use to monitor the pace of transition (p. 28).</p> <p>Consider item design and assessment development (e.g., Principles of Universal Design or embedded supports): Because PARCC tests will be administered online, SWD populations will be able to take advantage of the principles of universal design, as accommodations, such as large text and read-aloud, can be built into the test items themselves (p. 24).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Tennessee (continued)	<p>Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students: Due to the rigorous nature of the standards, it is inevitable that some students, including those without learning disabilities or language deficiencies, will still struggle with new, higher expectations. The state will thus convene a committee to devise an intervention and support plan which will focus on providing remedial and “bridge” coursework in twelfth grade for students who are not on track to graduate at the CCR level. In December 2011, we began working with four other states through the Gates-Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) College Transition Course Project on the development of bridge coursework modules to be available for use for the 2013-14 school year. The committee will also study the correlation between CCR and certain early signs (like attendance and course completion) to determine the “flags” that indicate when a student is unlikely to meet the CCR goal. We will then be able to use our robust data systems to provide student-level information to teachers, counselors, and administrators, who can provide early interventions. Training in this kind of intervention will be a crucial part of the summer PD sessions outlined in Appendix 2 (p.24-25).</p> <p>Consider students’ access needs for instruction and assessment (e.g., use of accommodations): In order to help these students with the rigor of CCSS, we will convene a special committee of TDOE staff and external organizations and stakeholders to create a comprehensive student support plan, which explicitly enumerates the accommodations offered to support the needs of SWD students with the new standards to be fully implemented by the 2013-14 school year. The committee will begin by reviewing the CCSS from the perspective of students with a wide range of learning disabilities, and will make a recommendation to the state in time for the 2012-13 school year on whether to continue administering the MAAS through 2013-14 or adopt a transitional assessment to gradually bring the 2 percent of MAAS-tested students toward a PARCC-like model (p. 24).</p> <p>Ensure students have access to grade-level content: As previously emphasized, we intend to hold all students to the same high expectations for achieving the standards and learning targets to ensure college and career readiness; our plan also allows for appropriate supports and accommodations for English learner (EL) students and students with disabilities (p. 23); Students with disabilities fall into two assessment categories: the 2 percent of all students who are unable to take the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) standardized test because of disability take a modified test called the MAAS (Modified Academic Achievement Standards); the 1 percent of the student population classified as having significant cognitive disabilities submit an IEP portfolio. We recognize the need to help these students achieve at a CCR level and improve the rigor of these assessments. To that end, Tennessee has joined, along with 18 other states, the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC; see http://www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/projects/NCSC/NCSC.html), a consortium which intends to develop a new system of supports—including assessment, curriculum, instruction, and PD to help them graduate high school ready for postsecondary options. NCSC will create a framework aligned with CCSS that uses scaffolded learning progressions to bring these students towards an understanding of the core CCSS concepts. The bases of these scaffolded learning progressions, known as Common Core Connectors will be made available to states for the 2012-13 school year, and will be</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Tennessee (continued)	<p>followed by lesson plans on key CCSS concepts. As a partner state, Tennessee has convened a 30-member community of practitioners—including LEA special education supervisors, special education teachers, TDOE staff, and other stakeholders (e.g. advocacy groups)—which participates in the NCSC work group focusing on PD; however, the state will have access to the work done by other states in assessment, curriculum, and instruction. After NCSC completes its work by the 2014-15 school year, the community of practitioners will advise TDOE on whether to adopt the new assessment system and related materials (p. 24).</p> <p>Develop committees/work groups to provide support to staff and students with transition to new standards and assessment system: Due to the rigorous nature of the standards, it is inevitable that some students, including those without learning disabilities or language deficiencies, will still struggle with new, higher expectations. The state will thus convene a committee to devise an intervention and support plan which will focus on providing remedial and “bridge” coursework in twelfth grade for students who are not on track to graduate at the CCR level (p. 24-25).</p> <p>Use of technology, computer-based/online assessments: Administering on-line PARCC assessments to all students within three years represents an enormous challenge for LEAs. TDOE must take the lead in spreading awareness of the technological demands of PARCC and engaging stakeholders with information, support, and a sense of urgency. In cooperation with PARCC, TDOE will distribute purchasing guidelines with minimum technological specifications to LEAs to enable them to ramp up their technological capacity in preparation for administering computer-based PARCC assessments in 2014-15. TDOE will work with LEAs to conduct an in-depth study of capacity, with particular focus on broadband access and number of computer terminals, in order to determine which LEAs will need assistance in meeting these guidelines. Our Chief Information Officers (CIOs) will then craft a plan summarizing LEA capacity and including annual metrics to measure the scaling-up efforts, which TDOE can then use to monitor the pace of transition. In those cases where lack of funding is an issue, we will assist LEAs in creating partnerships with local businesses and non-profits to improve their technological capacity (p. 28).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Virginia	<p>Provide professional development to teachers/staff: Virginia has provided and will continue to provide substantial instructional materials and professional development to help teachers teach and administrators provide instructional leadership for all students in the content and skills contained in the Standards of Learning; General instruction, special education, and English as a second language (ESL) staff at the Department of Education work closely to ensure that materials developed and professional development provided serve students with disabilities and LEP students.</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help with transition to new standards and assessment system: Upon approval of Virginia’s ESEA flexibility application, staff at the Virginia Department of Education will inform school divisions that the VMAST I assessments will no longer be available beyond the 2013-2014 administration and will provide technical assistance in preparing eligible VMAST students to take the SOL assessments in 2014-2015 (p. 32).</p> <p>Consider item design and assessment development (e.g., Principles of Universal Design or embedded supports): In addition, Virginia will work with its technical advisors and its testing contractor in seeking solutions to providing the supports inherent in the VMAST items within the SOL tests (p. 32).</p> <p>Consider instructional and academic intervention supports/strategies for students: Additionally, Virginia has a strong Response to Intervention (Rtl) initiative, a comprehensive student-centered assessment and intervention framework used to identify and address individual student difficulties before referral to special education. In using the Rtl approach, students receive research-based intervention and assessment. Rather than waiting for a student to fail, interventions and assessments are designed to meet the needs of each student with individualized instruction (p. 31).</p> <p>Use of technology, computer-based/online assessments: Virginia is a national leader in implementing online tests and is often consulted by other states and consortia that are transitioning to online testing. By 2013 all Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in Virginia will be administered online with the exception of those taken by a small number of students who have a documented need for a paper/pencil test. The movement to all online testing has provided Virginia with the opportunity to develop next-generation assessments that include technology-enhanced items in addition to the multiple-choice items that have traditionally comprised the SOL tests. The technology-enhanced items provide for different ways to measure critical thinking and problem-solving skills and support the increased rigor inherent in Virginia’s new content standards. New mathematics tests for grades 3-8, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II that include technology-enhanced items will be administered for the first time in 2011-2012. Examples of the technology-enhanced items for mathematics may be found at: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/practice_items/index.shtml. New reading, writing, and science assessments that also include technology-enhanced items are being implemented in 2012-2013 (p. 38).</p>

State	Specifications and Descriptions
Virginia (continued)	<p>Other: Support for Teachers of LEP Students and Students with Disabilities: . . . Virginia has a strong Response to Intervention (Rtl) initiative, a comprehensive student-centered assessment and intervention framework used to identify and address individual student difficulties before referral to special education. In using the Rtl approach, students receive research-based intervention and assessment. Rather than waiting for a student to fail, interventions and assessments are designed to meet the needs of each student with individualized instruction; Virginia’s RTI guidance has a major focus on universal screening, which is used to identify students who are struggling and who may need specific interventions. Through screening and other data, increasingly intensive instructional interventions are provided to students through the school’s systematic approach to implementing multi-tiered interventions. The Virginia Department of Education is directing and supporting RTI at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and offers demonstration sites to scale-up the RTI framework (p. 31-32).</p>

¹ Connecticut did not clearly mention the phase out of the AA-MAS and transition to the new assessment system. However, their language implies that the assessment option is going away and they provide general information related to the transition and the adoption of the CCSS and new assessment system.

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