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## NCEO Tool 6

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Who Should  
Participate in Your  
State's Alternate  
Assessment?  
A Slide  
Presentation Tool  
for Administrators

1% Toolkit

# Who Should Participate in Your State's Alternate Assessment?

## A Slide Presentation Tool for Administrators

Maureen Hawes, Martha Thurlow, Cesar D'Agord, Charity Funfe Tatah Mentan,  
Kathy Strunk, and Sheryl Lazarus

In collaboration with  
NCEO's 2019 1.0% Peer Learning Group (PLG)

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Project Officer: David Egnor



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<https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Tool6DistrAdmPPT.pdf>

## Acknowledgments

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In addition to the authors of this document, it took a team to ensure that PLG 3 was successful. Members of this team included, in addition to the authors (in alphabetical order): Anthea Brady, Sheila Brookes, Sharon Hall, Susan Hayes, Judy Lee, Kate Nagle, Travis Peterson, Tanner Petry, and Tony Ruggiero.

Staff from 45 states and the District of Columbia participated in the PLG 3 webinar calls. The participating states are listed here. This product would not exist had it not been for their active participation in PLG 3.

Alabama  
Alaska  
Arizona  
Arkansas  
California  
Colorado  
Connecticut  
Delaware  
District of Columbia  
Florida  
Georgia  
Hawaii  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Kentucky  
Louisiana  
Maine  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
Minnesota  
Mississippi  
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North Dakota  
New Jersey  
New Mexico

New York  
Ohio  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania  
South Carolina  
South Dakota  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Utah  
Vermont  
Virginia  
Washington  
West Virginia  
Wisconsin  
Wyoming

# Who Should Participate in Your State's Alternate Assessment?

## A Slide Presentation Tool for Administrators

The 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), includes a 1.0% cap on state-level participation rates in the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). No limit was placed on district or school rates, but districts must provide justifications if they expect their rate to be above the 1.0% threshold. In addition, states are to provide oversight to districts.

These requirements mean that states and districts need to examine their data on AA-AAAS participation as a basis for having discussions about the data and whether state guidelines are being followed and appropriate decisions are being made for individual students. This resource may be adapted by states to reflect their unique circumstances.<sup>1</sup> It intends to provide administrators with clear and concise information about the alternate assessment, federal law, and the importance of making appropriate decisions for the participation of students with disabilities in the AA-AAAS. The slide presentation may be used to support administrator knowledge, train educators, and communicate with parents. It is intended to be a versatile resource, one that may be used for in-person trainings, webinars, handouts, or as a website publication.

### Federal Law

Alternate assessments were first developed in response to the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which required that all states and districts develop, by the year 2000, alternate assessments for those students with disabilities unable to participate in regular assessments even with accommodations. IDEA did not define who the students were who could participate in an alternate assessment, nor did it use the term “significant cognitive disability.” In 2003, regulations added to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) allowed states to count as proficient those students with significant cognitive disabilities who participated in the alternate assessment and met rigorous alternate achievement standards set by the state.

In 2015, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA reaffirmed that an AA-AAAS is the appropriate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. ESSA placed a 1.0% cap on the state participation rate for each subject, based on the total number of all students in the state assessed in the subject (34 CFR 200.6(c)(2)). ESSA specified that states cannot place a cap on the participation rates of local education agencies (LEAs) in any subject (34 CFR 200.6(c)(3)(i)). This means that LEAs can exceed 1.0% participation in an AA-AAAS in a given subject, but the state as a whole cannot exceed 1.0% AA-AAAS participation in any subject.

ESSA required LEAs expected to exceed 1.0% AA-AAAS participation to submit information justifying the need to exceed 1.0%. In addition, the state must provide oversight and monitoring of LEAs that submit justifications (34 CFR 200.6(c)(3)(ii-iii)).

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<sup>1</sup> States may wish to adapt the slides. They may be found at <https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/Presentations/OnePercentAdministratorPowerpoint.pptx>.

## Introduction

This resource is one of three developed by states and technical assistance centers working together in NCEO's 2019 1.0% Peer Learning Group (PLG 3). The two other documents that were developed can support this tool for administrators on who should participate in your state's alternate assessment.<sup>2</sup> They include:

- *Start With the End in Mind: An Infographic for Educators and Parents/Guardians* uses clear language to help explain how assessment participation decisions can affect a child with a disability's future. This tool may be used to begin the important conversation about the participation of students in the state's AA-AAAS.
- *IEP Team Resource: Making Decisions about Participation in the Alternate Assessment* provides IEP team members (including teachers, school psychologists, speech language therapists, occupational therapists, paraprofessionals, parents, administrators, and others who may participate in the IEP team meeting) with supports to help with the decision about whether a student with a disability should participate in a general assessment or an AA-AAAS.

## Purpose of Tool

The purpose of this tool is to support the need for administrators to have access to brief but substantive information about who should participate in the state's alternate assessment. The resource highlights the purpose of the alternate assessment, the implications of a student taking the alternate assessment, strategies for talking with parents, and identification of students who should participate in the alternate assessment. The [Slide Presentation Tool](#) is intentionally short with a focus on the information that is perhaps most important for administrators to know. Click the icon in the upper left corner of each page to see comments that the presenter might want to make when using the slides. The slides may be customized for each state (see <https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/Presentations/OnePercentAdministratorPowerpoint.pptx> to access the actual PowerPoint slides). In addition to serving as an information resource for administrators, it may be used for in-person or webinar trainings for educators, and as a handout for educators and parents.

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<sup>2</sup> All tools may be found at <https://nceo.info/Resources/tools>

# Alternate Assessment Participation

**[*State's name*]  
Guidance on Who  
Should Participate in  
[*state's name for  
alternate assessment*]**





# Presentation Objectives

- Purpose of [*state name for alternate assessment*]
- Implications for a student who takes the [*state name for alternate assessment*]
- Talking with parents about the [*state name for alternate assessment*]
- Supporting decisions about which students should participate in the [*state name for alternate assessment*]





# Alternate Assessment Purpose

- The [*state name for alternate assessment*] is one part of our state's assessment system for school-age children
- The [*state name for alternate assessment*] is designed specifically for those students with "the most significant cognitive disabilities." It is based on **alternate achievement standards**, which means the performance expected is different.



# Federal Law Requirements

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides funds for our state's elementary and secondary education system. We must adhere to ESSA requirements, including those about state and district assessments
- ESSA placed a **1.0% state-level cap** on participation in the [*state's name for alternate assessment*], by subject area, across all grades.

# Implications for Districts

- ESSA requires districts with more than 1.0% participation in the [*state name for alternate assessment*] in a subject area to provide to the state:
  - Assurance that IEP teams are adhering to the state's participation guidelines
  - Justification for the participation rate over 1.0%
  - Assurance that parents are informed about implications for their child of participation in the [*state name for alternate assessment*]



# Implications for Students

- **Short-term:** Student's instruction is in less depth, breadth, and complexity than the instruction of other students
- **Long-term:** Student may not meet the requirements for the state's graduation diploma
- **Longer-term:** Student may not be eligible for some post-secondary training institutions, military service, or jobs

# Which Students Should Participate?

- **Only those students with the "most significant cognitive disabilities"**
  - Most of these students (**but not all**) have intellectual disabilities, autism, and multiple disabilities
  - Many of these students (**but not all**) were identified for special education services prior to entering kindergarten
- The decision about which students should participate in [state's name for alternate assessment] is often very difficult.

# National and State Data

## National data on disability categories

Categories of Disabilities of Students Participating in the Alternate Assessment

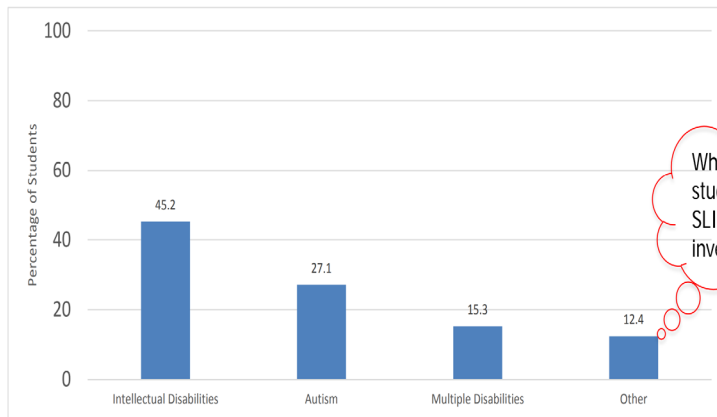


Figure includes data from 15 states (see Thurlow et al., 2016)

Slide from Thurlow & Lazarus (2017):

<http://nceo.umn.edu/docs/Presentations/1percentCap042717.pdf>

Our state's data:  
*[Enter state data on categories, if available]*



# State Guidelines Across the U.S.

- **Student's disability significantly affects intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior**
- **Student requires extensive, direct, and individualized instruction and supports that are not temporary or transient in nature**
- **Student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing materials**
- **Student's instruction is based on alternate academic achievement standards**



# State Guidelines

- [Insert primary points in your state's participation guidelines]
- [Provide link(s) to guidelines and supporting materials on your state's guidelines]





# Participation Decision-Making Process

- Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams make the decision about which assessment a student takes
  - Parents and guardians are key to the decision
  - School professionals should not make decision without parent or guardian input
- IEP teams need training and resources to help with making the participation decision
  - [Provide link to state's resources here]



# Communicating with Parents and Guardians

- Listen to them and respect their views!
- Treat them as equal partners in the education of their child
- Show up where they are (e.g., community events), partner with community organizations, and engage community liaisons
- Use interpreters to bridge potential cultural and linguistic barriers



# Helpful Resources

- **State Department Contact:**
- **State Resources:**
- **Other Resources:**
  - 1% Toolkit from the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO):**  
<https://nceo.info/Resources/tools>

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*NCEO is an affiliated center of the Institute on Community Integration*