



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

AA-AAS | Participation

Why provide alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS)?

Alternate assessments are used to ensure educational accountability for *all* students with disabilities. When students are excluded from the state assessment, the reporting of test results is incomplete and cannot be considered when decisions are made about how to improve programs. Also, the excluded students may be denied educational opportunities available to other students.

Who should participate in alternate assessments?

Alternate assessment participants are those students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in regular assessments even with [accommodations](#). The few students who have significant cognitive disabilities may be assessed on the grade-level content with different achievement standards to define proficiency. This assessment is called the [alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards \(AA-AAS\)](#), or [increasingly simply the alternate assessment](#). English learners (ELs) with significant cognitive disabilities are among the students who should participate in alternate assessments.

ELs with significant cognitive disabilities also may participate in an [alternate assessment of English language proficiency \(ELP\)](#).

What are some sample participation guidelines for AA-AAS?

The basis for decisions about participation in assessments should not be the category of a student's disability, the settings in which the student receives instruction, or the percentage of time a student spends in particular classroom settings. [Many states have guidelines](#) that help in deciding which assessment option is the best for an individual student.