



I AM Alternate Assessment Participation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Indiana Department of Education’s (IDOE’s) Office of Student Assessment has developed this FAQ resource to assist corporations and schools in determining student eligibility for Indiana’s alternate assessment, I AM. Pursuant to 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200.6 (a)(2)(iii)(A)(1), the state educational agency (SEA) must establish and ensure implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for Case Conference Committees (CCCs) to apply in determining when a child’s significant cognitive disability justifies assessment based on alternate achievement standards.

Number	Question	Answer
1	Who decides that a student should participate in the Indiana Alternate Assessment?	The CCC determines how a student will participate in statewide assessments. No individual member of the CCC makes this decision. Parents, teachers, and administrators make the decision based on evidence and information in the Criteria for Determining Participation in the Alternate Assessment in Lieu of the General Education Assessment (Participation Guidelines) .
2	How do we know a student meets the criteria for “most significant intellectual disabilities”?	<p>The term “most significant intellectual disabilities” refers to students participating in special education services within one or more of the existing categories of disability (e.g., intellectual disability, autism, multiple disabilities) with deficits in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is defined as behavior that is essential for someone to live independently and function safely in daily life. The learning characteristics of a student with the “most significant intellectual disabilities” may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A severe intellectual disability that impacts learning, memory, judgment, and processing which impacts learning acquisition;• Performing substantially below grade-level expectations on academic content standards for the age-appropriate grade, even with the use of accommodations;• Requiring extensive, specially-designed and individualized instruction or substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum; or• Requiring more time for processing, opportunities to generalize language, time to learn and process language, and alternate ways to communicate including augmentative and alternative communication to supplement or replace speech or writing. <p>These learning characteristics should be evidenced within the student's individualized education program (IEP) demonstrating the</p>



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		<p>provision of extensive, direct, individualized instruction. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The amount of teaching and re-teaching the student needs to learn new material; ● The level and frequency of prompting; ● The direct support needed from caregivers; ● How often and the intensity of direct, individualized instruction; ● Accommodations and adaptations needed to support sensory and motor skills; ● Assistive technology use; or ● Communication system/augmentative and alternative communication.
<p>3</p>	<p>How do I know if the alternate assessment is appropriate for an English learner (EL) with an IEP whose language proficiency makes it challenging to assess content knowledge and skills?</p>	<p>ELs should be considered for the alternate assessment if:</p> <p>(a) Intellectual functioning indicates a significant intellectual disability using assessments in the home language as appropriate, and</p> <p>(b) The student meets the other participation guidelines for the alternate assessment.</p> <p>Assessments of adaptive behavior and communication should take into account linguistic and sociocultural factors for valid interpretation of these assessments, alongside the information on goals and instruction in the student's IEP used to determine what may or may not be a significant intellectual disability. If an EL with a disability does not meet the criteria for the alternate assessment, the student should take the general assessment with accommodations as appropriate. The school/corporation EL specialist should be present in the CCC meeting for any EL when participation in the alternate assessment is being discussed.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Why is it important that a student participating in the alternate assessment is receiving instruction using Indiana Academic Standards via the Content Connectors, and that performance is measured against alternate achievement standards?</p>	<p>Limited or modified exposure to the grade-level standards may have a significant impact on academic outcomes (including the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma) and post-secondary opportunities.</p>



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5	What if it is not possible to assess a student because the student appears to have no mode of communication (NMC)?	<p>The vast majority of students who participate in the alternate assessment are able to complete the test through various communication mechanisms. A small number of students have no observable way to communicate. For the I AM assessment, Test Administrators are able to close a student's test if the student is not able to communicate in any observable way after attempting to take the two practice test items and the first three operational items of each test for which the student is eligible.</p> <p>All students have the right to communicate and be understood. To ensure that students identified as NMC develop functional communication skills, IDOE has developed a systematic review process for students identified as NMC to assist schools in accessing support from the Indiana Resource Network.</p>
6	If a student has participated in the alternate assessment in the past, but the current CCC determines that the student does not meet Indiana's participation guidelines, can the student be assigned to the general assessment?	<p>Yes. The CCC must ensure that the student receives appropriate instruction on the Indiana Academic Standards and participates in the required general assessments for the student's current grade level, with or without accommodations.</p>
7	Is it possible that the decision to participate in I AM could change as a student gets older?	<p>Yes. Although students with the most significant intellectual disabilities are often identified early, they may be able to participate in the general assessment during the elementary grades. When the level of support needed for the student to access Indiana Academic Standards and the general assessment increases, the committee may determine that participation in the alternate assessment is appropriate. It is important for the CCC to, at least annually, review the student's present level of academic and functional performance to determine the appropriate assessment participation.</p>

Please contact IDOE's [Office of Student Assessment](#) or [Office of Special Education](#) with any questions regarding this guidance.

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