



ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

NICOLE BARNETTE

DIRECTOR OF ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

AGENDA

- Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria
- Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment
- Resources
- Important Dates
- Alternate Assessment Infographic

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES AND ANNUAL ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Arizona's Alternate Assessments:

- ELA and Mathematics Grades 3 - 8 and 11 – Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)
- Science Grades 5, 8, and 11 – Science Alternate Assessment through MSAA
- English Language Proficiency Grades K-12 for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities – Alt ELPA

The IEP team determines eligibility for alternate assessment participation, not a specific alternate assessment. English learner status and grade level will inform which assessment(s) the student will be administered.

The federal regulations that implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require schools to ensure that each child's IEP is reviewed periodically, but not less than annually... [34 C.F.R. § 300.324(b)]

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Grade	ELA/Math	Science	Alt ELPA
K			X
1			X
2			X
3	X		X
4	X		X
5	X	X	X
6	X		X
7	X		X
8	X	X	X
9			X
10			X
11	X	X	X
12			X

Note: The IEP team must complete the parent notification of alternate assessment participation on page 4.

Alternate assessments are not administered at the student's grade level for this school year and the student is not an English learner. Alternate assessment eligibility will apply to any locally required assessments.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION DECISION DOCUMENTATION

Three key questions for the IEP team to consider and document its decisions.

- 1) Does the student have a significant cognitive disability?
- 2) Is the student's academic instruction linked to state content standards?
- 3) Does the student require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade and age-appropriate curriculum?

To meet criteria for alternate assessments, the student must meet all participation criteria descriptors.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION DECISION DOCUMENTATION

Participation Criterion 1

The student has a significant cognitive disability.

Yes No

Participation Criterion 1 Descriptor

Review of student records indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. (Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.)

Sources of Evidence for Criterion 1 (check if used)

- Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test
- Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment
- Results of individual and group administered achievement tests
- Results of informal assessment
- Results of individual reading assessments
- Results of district-wide alternate assessments
- Results of language assessments including English learner (EL) language assessments if applicable.

Describe the sources of evidence that were used for criterion 1 and how that evidence supports eligibility.

Source

Description

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION DECISION DOCUMENTATION

Participation Criterion 2

The student is learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards.

Yes No

Participation Criterion 2 Descriptor

Goals and instruction listed in the IEP for this student are linked to the enrolled grade-level state standards and address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student. Goals are written to allow for suitable instructional time prior to test administration.

Sources of Evidence for Criterion 2 (check if used)

- Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples
- Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives from the IEP
- Data from scientific research-based interventions
- Progress monitoring data

Describe the sources of evidence that were used for criterion 2 and how that evidence supports eligibility.

Source

Description

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION DECISION DOCUMENTATION

Participation Criterion 3

The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and- age-appropriate curriculum.

Yes No

Participation Criterion 3 Descriptor

The student (a) requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature and (b) uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across academic content.

Sources of Evidence for Criterion 3 (check if used)

- Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives, and materials including work samples from both school and community-based instruction
- Teacher collected data and checklists
- Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives, and post school outcomes from the IEP and Transition Plan for students age 16 years and older unless State policy or the IEP team determines a younger age is appropriate.

Describe the sources of evidence that were used for criterion 3 and how that evidence supports eligibility.

Source

Description

ALTERNATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (ALT ELPA)

The Alt ELPA is designed to determine English language proficiency based on language expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Students must be determined eligible for an alternate assessment by the IEP team.

For the Alt ELPA Screener, students must have been determined by the IEP team to be eligible for alternate assessments **and** have one of the following requirements:

- Home Language Survey (HLS) indicating a language other than English
- sign language other than ASL
- missing an English language proficiency test

ALT ELPA SCREENER (CONTINUED)

Deadlines for the Alt ELPA Screener

- Within the first 30 days of the school year, if the student has an alternate assessment eligibility determination
- Within 14 days of enrollment for students who transfer into the district

The student will need to take the AZELLA assessment if the student's educational records fall outside of the identified timeline.

ALTERNATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION DECISION DOCUMENTATION

The following definition serves as the basis for the Alt ELPA participation guidelines. English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities are students

- who are not proficient in the English language and who have been identified as having an English language acquisition need;
- who meet the federal definition of an English learner (ESEA §8101(20))*;
- who meet the state definition for having a most significant cognitive disability; and
- whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams have determined an alternate assessment is appropriate for the student.

Note: A student using American Sign Language as a means of communication is not considered an English learner for the purpose of participation in English Language Proficiency Assessments.

Eligibility Determination for the Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment (Alt ELPA)

- The student has a current Arizona English Language Proficiency Assessment record (AZELLA or Alt ELPA) of less than Proficient
- The student meets the federal definition of an English learner
- The student is eligible for alternate content assessments (MSAA)

THE FOLLOWING SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED IN THE ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS:

1. A disability category or label
2. Poor attendance or extended absences
3. Native language/social/cultural or economic difference
4. Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
5. Academic and other services received
6. Educational environment or instructional setting
7. Percent of time receiving special education services
8. English learner (EL) status except for determining participation in Alt ELPA
9. Low reading level/achievement level
10. Anticipated disruptive behavior
11. Impact of test scores on accountability system
12. Administrator decision
13. Anticipated emotional duress
14. Need for accommodations, e.g., assistive technology/AAC to participate in assessment process

Evidence shows that the decision for participating in alternate assessments was not based on above list.

PARENT NOTIFICATION

Alternate Assessment Participation

Following IEP team review of participation guidelines, the student is eligible for and will participate in the following assessments:

MSAA ELA, Mathematics, and Science

- Yes School year _____ (List the current school year if this IEP meeting is on or before November 30. List the following school year if the IEP meeting is on or after December 1.)
- No (The student will participate in statewide achievement tests)

Alt ELPA

- Yes, the student is eligible for alternate assessments and has been determined an English learner. (The student must also take MSAA if enrolled in a tested grade.)
- No, the student will participate in AZELLA.
- No, the student is not an English learner.

Potential Consequences

Are there any effects or local policies that would preclude completion requirements for a regular high school diploma for the student participating in testing?

- Yes No

If yes, explain:

This IEP team has determined the student is eligible to participate in alternate assessments as indicated above.

			Agreement
Parent(s)/Guardian: _____		Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

RESOURCES

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

- ❑ **Core Content Connectors** - used for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Grade-level, core academic content in ELA and Mathematics found in both the State Standards and the Learning Progression Frameworks (LPF). Core Content Connectors may be found at:

<https://www.msaastates.com/ccc-standards.html>



- ❑ **MSAA Sample Items** - teachers use a subset of the current sample items as a formative assessment tool, allowing teachers to understand what the student may be able to know and do based on these items, and how teachers can respond to this information through instruction. practice and become familiar with item types, accessibility features, accommodations, and the online platform. MSAA sample items may be found at:

<https://www.msaaassessment.org/sample-items>



INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

- ❑ Alt ELPA Standards – developed for English learners identified as having a significant cognitive disability. English Language Proficiency Standards for English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities may be found at

https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2024/11/ELP%20Standards%20for%20ELs%20with%20Significant%20Cognitive%20Disabilities_0.pdf



- ❑ ELPA21 Arizona resources specific to the Alt ELPA, such as a screener information, accessibility and accommodations manual and FAQs:

<https://www.elpa21.org/resources/?state=Arizona>



IMPORTANT DATES

Dates	Details
August 4, 2025 – May 8, 2026	Alt ELPA Screener testing window is open.
October 1 – November 28, 2025	Student Selector Application opens (students must have accurate records in AzEDS)
January 26, 2026 – March 13, 2026	Alt ELPA Summative Testing Window
February 17, 2026	MSAA (Multi State Alternate Assessment) training opens and can be found on the MSAA platform.
March 9– April 24, 2026	MSAA Spring 2025 Testing Window <ul style="list-style-type: none">MSAA ELA & Mathematics - Grades 3-8 and 11MSAA Science - Grades 5, 8, and 11

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT INFOGRAPHIC



2025-2026 Alternate Assessments

- ✓ For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (must meet eligibility criteria)
- ✓ Test Coordinators will identify eligible students using the Student Selector Application for MSAA and Alt ELPA Summative, October 1 – November 28, 2025
- ✓ Administered one-on-one

MSAA (Multi-State Alternate Assessment)

- ✓ Test window: **March 9 – April 24, 2026**
- ✓ ELA, Mathematics (Grades 3-8 and 11) and Science (Grades 5, 8, and 11)
- ✓ Writing prompt
- ✓ Administration Information: www.msaaassessment.org
- ✓ Monitoring for the 1% Threshold (if over 1% participation in Alternate Assessment) begins **November 2025**
- ✓ Training for test administrators and test coordinators starts **February 17, 2026**
- ✓ Refer to [ADE Alternate Assessment website](#) for additional MSAA resources

Alt ELPA

- ✓ Alt ELPA Screener Test Window: **August 4, 2025 – May 8, 2026**
- ✓ Alt ELPA Summative Test Window: **January 26 – March 13, 2026**
- ✓ For EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (must meet eligibility criteria)
- ✓ [Alt ELPA Screener Training](#) opens August 12, 2025
- ✓ [Alt ELPA Summative Training](#) opens December 2025
- ✓ Refer to [ADE Alt ELPA website](#) for additional Alt ELPA resources

Resources

- ✓ [MSAA Reporting Portal](#) for Spring 2025 ELA and Math open
- ✓ Instructional supports are available on the [ADE Alternate Assessment website](#)

QUESTIONS?



