

Assessments Friday Focus 2026-2027 - Alternate Assessment Eligibility



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Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to today's Friday Focus webinar. The topic today is determining eligibility for Alternate Assessments. My name is Bethany Spangenberg. I'm the Deputy Associate Superintendent of Assessments.

Welcome and thank you for joining us. As a reminder, the presentation and recording will be posted to the Statewide Assessments webinars website. All note takers will not be admitted into the Friday Focus webinars; and as you have questions throughout the presentation, please enter your questions into the chat. There's also a little section that's a little bit interactive; so, we'll be using the chat for that as well. So, we will make sure that we're pulling out your questions and also allowing you to engage a little bit with some of the conversation that we have later.

All right, so today we are going to look at understanding the Alternate Assessment eligibility criteria, practice applying the criteria, and learning some strategies to involve the IEP team in the decision-making process.

ADE representatives are not able to determine eligibility for Alternate Assessment participation. Federal law gives that responsibility to IEP teams. However, if you have questions about individual students, you're welcome to contact us directly and we can guide you through the process of making that decision. And then, as I mentioned, we were going to have a little bit of interactive session later with practice and examples. Those are based on fictional characters, not real students. They're not intended to represent any specific student, so if you see any kind of similarities or likenesses, that's just a coincidence.

All right, so it's helpful to start with the purpose of summative assessment. So really, our summative assessments are used for accountability. That is under our ESSA, why we have to have statewide summative assessments. And it gives us a measure of systems at the LEA or a school level, maybe a higher level, a big picture of the programs to help identify who needs some support. It's not typically designed specifically for individual student level data. We do try to get you as much information as possible, but that really wasn't the intended purpose of setting up a

summative assessment. And there are other purposes that summative assessments are used for, such as teacher evaluations. That's up to local determination how they're going to use those in other ways, but it was not the design of the assessment. So, our summative assessments are really a part of a balanced assessment system used in conjunction with other measures of data.

So, let's look at our alternate assessments. First, I'm going to share with you MSAA. So, that is our alternate assessment that measures academic content, and it is aligned to and derived from the state's content standards. There are alternate academic achievement standards that are aligned directly to our state content standards. So those state standards are what we use to instruct students who participate in an Alternate Assessment.

MSAA is designed to assist students with the most significant cognitive disability. So, the purpose of today is to look at what that is for students. How do we know if a student has the most significant cognitive disability and requires participation in an alternate assessment? MSAA is administered in the areas of ELA and math in grades 3 through 8 and 11 and in science in grades 5, 8 and 11.

Our other alternate assessment is Alt ELPA or the Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment. This is the alternate assessment for AZELLA. So, if students are eligible for an alternate assessment, they take the Alt ELPA and not the AZELLA. The Alt ELPA is based on alternate English language proficiency standards. Those standards are very similar, almost identical to the regular English language proficiency standards, but the achievement and the descriptions of what it looks like for this population of students looks a little bit different. And so, this assessment determines English language proficiency based on language expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. So, when the Alt ELPA was designed, it was designed with a comparison group of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are not English learners to make sure that we're appropriately measuring language proficiency for this population of students and not to the general population of English learners or native speakers.

Alternate Assessment participation also applies to any district or local level assessments that you have. So, you should be determining eligibility at all grades if you require any district assessments and that is going to be pretty much all of you. There are early literacy screening that's required if you have benchmark interim

assessments, end of course assessments, anything that you require of all of your students, you must have an alternate assessment available as well. Now, that doesn't mean that your district or your school needs to purchase an alternate assessment, but you need to have a plan to collect that same information with the same purpose as your other required assessments. That's a conversation for a different presentation. If you have any questions about what an alternate assessment looks like for your district assessments, please just feel free to contact me and we can set up a time to talk about that. And it's going to be very specific to the assessments that you have purchased locally or that you require locally.

All right, eligibility information. There is one set of eligibility criteria. So, under the federal requirement, the criteria is developed at the state level and it cannot be changed by the LEA. So, I'm going to share with you what our state eligibility criteria is for Alternate Assessment participation. And then that is what is used for all IEP teams throughout the state of Arizona.

All right, so there's three questions or three criteria. Does the student have a significant cognitive disability? Is the student learning linked to grade level state content standards? And does the student require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in that grade appropriate curriculum?

So, we're going to look at these individually. So first, evidence of a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. So, this is probably the hardest one to determine as far as you know, the differences between students, their assessment results, their evaluation results and making that determination. So, we definitely get the most questions about this first criterion. So, you're going to use results from your cognitive test, adaptive test, and achievement test, so academic. Those 3 components are required for all students. And then you pull in additional information, whatever you have available or whatever you determined needed additional information through your evaluation process. So, you can also look at classroom and district assessments, English language assessments, we're going to talk a little bit about the role of language in eligibility criteria, but you're looking at lots of different pieces of information trying to determine if a student has a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

When we're looking at this, we're anticipating that scores for the most part are going to be flatlined. So, we know that students have areas of strength, areas of need, there's going to be some scores that are much higher than the other scores. We're looking at that holistic picture of the student and the student's characteristics to make a determination. And typically, you're not going to see some scores that are very high kind of in the normal range and some scores that are very, very low. That doesn't necessarily mean that that the disability some significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. So, there is a 1% requirement at the state level, so 1% threshold, no more than 1% of our students across the state may participate in an Alternate Assessment. That requirement is at the state level, it's not at the LEA level. However, we do need to provide oversight to any LEA that does exceed 1% participation in alternate assessments. That's another presentation I'm happy to go over with you if you need some additional support on the 1%, please reach out to me and we can coordinate that. But I wanted to throw that out there because if you're looking at 1% of students on a standard bell curve, those students' scores are going to be closer to around 65. So, there's not a cutoff. Arizona doesn't put that in there because we really want you to look holistically at the student. But that's kind of what we're thinking about right now is 65-ish. If you're seeing scores, those flatline scores, if you're seeing a lot of those from all the components of your assessments that are more than 70, you might want to just kind of be really careful about how you're making that determination.

Okay, the next criterion is instruction and state content standards. So, we're looking at the Arizona Content Standards or Core Content Connector, so those alternate academic achievement standards. Again, this is another presentation. If you're interested, if you want to know more about the instructional side of it, please let me know when we can help support you on that; what those standards are, what they look like, but that learning does need to be on grade level state Arizona, Arizona content standards or core content connectors. The standards are taken at the grade level, and those IEP goals and objectives need to align to grade level state standards. And we know that students are not always functioning at grade level and sometimes those IEP goals tend to look a little bit different, but I can absolutely help support that if you need any assistance. And then you're using that teacher research. Teachers are using research based instructional strategies into intervention, so we

really want to make sure that students are getting that high-quality instruction so that they are prepared to take the assessment.

All right, and then the last criterion is that intensive instruction and substantial supports. That can be through community or school-based instruction. A lot of students have lots of different learning opportunities, and really, you're just kind of looking at how the student is learning, what types of supports are available, and what they need. This one is usually not the most challenging to document or to provide evidence to support eligibility in this in this area. So documented instructional needs and supports for the students to make a measurable academic gain. So, students who participate in alternate assessments typically do not make a year's worth of academic gain in a year. They could need additional supports their learning projection, it looks a lot different. So really making sure that you have that evidence to support the instructional needs and supports for students on a daily level. And a lot of times that is already included, or you can think about including that in your present levels of academic and functional performance. That really tells you where the student is at and what types of supports they've needed to get to where they are and how the expectation for those academic gains.

Before we move on to the next section, I don't see any questions in the chat yet, but I just want to pause a moment to see if there's any questions so far just on the criteria.

OK, I'm not seeing anything yet, so we'll move on. So, there's also considerations that we should not be using when we make determinations for students. I say we, but really it's the IEP teams. And this means don't use these in isolation. That doesn't mean that you can't use them at all. So, we're going to look at a few of these in more detail, but disability category, a student is not determined eligible based on their special education disability, attendance, services, if they're receiving different types of services, there's not a specific amount. So, if you're looking at, you know, ELA, math supports, there's not a requirement for if they have OT, if they have PT, those types of additional services as well. It's just kind of the holistic picture, what evidence do you have to support the criteria directly?

The setting or placement, this is 1 where it might be a little bit less of a conversation for determination. It should not be based on where the student is receiving

instruction, so a lot of these students do receive their instruction in a self-contained classroom. That is not a requirement, and it also doesn't guarantee that a student is eligible because of where they're placed. This we don't say, hey, a student is eligible because they are in a self-contained classroom. But that could be evidence to support some of the criteria that you look at is they need that intensive direct individualized instruction that they are getting in that placement. So, it's not so much about the placement itself, but it's about how that placement or what characteristics of that environment support the student and provide evidence for the eligibility.

Conversely, we do have some schools that have been full inclusion. Students who participate in alternate assessments are in the general education setting with different types of supports. And again, that doesn't mean that they cannot take the alternate assessment, it just means that you have to document what that support looks like.

We don't put a student on an alternate assessment because we think they're not going to do well on the general assessment. It's really an individual determination based on the student needs and the criteria and the evidence that supports that.

Another one, disruptive behavior. We do know that students, they are very challenged in the classroom and they might have some behavioral responses to taking an assessment. And none of the criteria really is about that disruptive, aggressive, or emotional responses. It's really about that cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. So, we don't put a student on an alternate assessment because they have some behavior support needs. Impact on accountability, and that's a lot usually where that 1% comes in. What does that look like? Who's taking the assessment? It's not a high-level school district LEA kind of determination. It's really that individual student. And that kind of goes along with an administrator decision. It's not something that a principal, a special ed director can come in and say, oh, this student is eligible and this student is not. Again, that responsibility lies on the IEP team, so they should be making those decisions.

There is one question and this is a good time. The next slide is a little bit different. So, LEAs need to use an alternate assessment during the school year to request a state alternate assessment. So let me just kind of go back and clarify that a little bit. I

think that would be this one, the district assessments. Please clarify in the chat if this is not what you're asking. They don't necessarily need to already have taken an alternate assessment, there are some deadlines and some requirements on when that determination is made. But if they take an alternate assessment, they take all alternate assessments. So, they would take MSAA if they're in those enrolled grades. They would take Alt ELPA if they're an English learner or have a home language survey other than English or ASL, where they would normally be taking the AZELLA, they would take Alt ELPA. And then any required district assessments that you do offer. If a student is eligible, you would offer something different. And what that something different is could be an off the shelf product that you purchase. It could be a creation of something else that you determine locally. But I can definitely work with you to identify what that could be in your district if you want some additional information. Please let me know if that doesn't clarify your question.

All right. So, we'll look a little bit. So, I pulled special education categories from the MSAA data over the last few years. I've been tracking this for quite a while. So, 2024, 2025, and 2026 administration. So, this is out of all of the students who took MSAA, these are the eligibility categories that were reported in the system for this. So, as you can kind of anticipate, most students who take MSAA have an intellectual disability or autism as their eligibility category, their primary category. And that kind of makes sense where you're looking at a significant cognitive disability that impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Those are probably going to be the most common categories that kind of align with that. And then we have some other ones. Multiple is the next highest, and then lots of other disability categories. And we'll look at this a little bit. Your numbers, you can look at your numbers individually and compare them at the state level to see if there's something that looks a little bit off. So, for example, other health impairment, we have about 3% of students who participate in MSAA that had that category. If you're looking at your data and you're seeing that that number is much higher than that, you might want to look at those students and say, hey, what's going on? Are we making the right decisions? And it could absolutely be that you have a program in your schools that fully supports these students. Parents are enrolling their kids in this program because it's really helpful for them. That's fine, as long as you can explain that. If you look at it and you say, oh, I'm not sure what this criteria is. I'm not really sure how this IEP team made this determination. Then you know to go back and have some conversations and

maybe do some training with those teams. So, you can use this information to kind of compare and see if there's something that you want to look in a little bit deeper.

So, we'll look at a few of these categories individually. Some of them might surprise you and some of them might not. So, as I mentioned, intellectual disability categories, that does tell you that there is a cognitive disability. The level of that may differ. So, you really need to make sure you're meeting that, you have evidence to support that determination. But at least that one is like, okay, you kind of can see why that would be an eligibility category that is commonly used. Autism, there is a spectrum of where students are at and what they need. So just making sure that you have those cognitive, academic, and adaptive ratings, that evidence to support that first criterion for students with autism. It was several years ago, now I need to look at the numbers again, but approximately 25% of students with autism in the state were eligible for alternate assessment. So, it definitely wasn't most students who had that autism category but definitely makes sense that some of those students would be determined to be eligible for Alternate Assessment.

SLD, that the specific learning disability kind of says that there's not a significant cognitive disability, so we would not anticipate that those students are eligible for Alternate Assessment. You need to make sure that you're looking at that data and that evidence, but really, if you see students with that eligibility category, that's definitely one that you want to look into and figure out what's going on and if that is an appropriate assessment for students.

SLI, so language impairment, that doesn't say that the student has a little cognitive, academic, or adaptive scores. We do see that SLI is a secondary category for a lot of students who participate in Alternate Assessment, but if that's the primary, you really want to question what that is because if their primary is a language issue and you're saying that they have low cognitive, academic, and adaptive scores or they have high needs for those, then maybe something's not matching.

All right, more categories. So Multiple, it really just depends on what that multiple is. Again, as long as you have evidence, that makes sense. Same thing with TBI. We talked about emotional behavior. That's not part of that eligibility criteria. So, if that's

the primary one and there is that significant cognitive disability, you really want to make sure that you have that evidence to support it.

OHI, again, depends on what that looks like for the student. There's high variability between how that impacts the student. And as I mentioned, none of them guarantee eligibility. None of them say that a student cannot participate, but there's definitely some categories where you would want to question, go back to that IEP team and figure out what's going on to make sure they're making good decisions for students.

All right, I'm going to pause because the next part is that interactive practice part that we're going to do. I do see there was a question that was answered. The presentation is available on our website. Just give you another moment to put in any other questions before we start to practice because I want to make sure you're clear on eligibility criteria so you can engage in the practice part.

Not seeing anything yet, so we'll get you ready for practice. So, this is not a quiz. This is really just practice in understanding eligibility and being able to apply it. This is something that your IEP teams then would be sitting down together as a team and discussing what evidence they have to support eligibility criteria. So, this is kind of your way of learning how to guide those teams through those conversations.

And again, they're not real students. I just kind of pulled some information. If they sound like somebody that you know, it kind of makes sense that we're looking at these population of students and the conversations that you would have but did not pull it from any particular students in the state.

Alright, so as we go through these, these are the magic questions. What evidence supports eligibility? What evidence that I give you does not support eligibility? And what additional information is needed for the team to be able to decide if a student is eligible for Alternate Assessments?

All right, so these are the questions. I'll kind of remind you, but we're going to go with example number one. And then go ahead and put your ideas in the chat. So those questions, what supports eligibility, what does not, and what additional information do you need?

All right, I think I'm back. Sorry about that. It looks like I got kicked out for a moment.

So hopefully we're ready. We'll go back here. You're looking at what supports eligibility, what does not support eligibility, and what additional information that the team would need to be able to make that decision. So yeah, you guys probably saw this one already. The student is in grade 10, has a primary special education disability category of MOID, and a secondary category of SLI. Cognitive, academic, and adaptive scores are in the 60s. The student participates in community-based learning. In addition to the modified grade level curriculum, and the student has taken Alternate Assessment since grade three.

So, I'm seeing. Yep, evidence to support scores are in the 60s, modified curriculum based on grade level. No additional information, but there you could definitely use some other information, but nothing really is missing. When, yeah, knowing when that testing was. So that happens a little bit. Is it right before a reevaluation? Is it something that was just determined? Great.

Missing the supports the student needs to make measurable gains. The, okay, yeah, in this example, the scores were not meant to be from grade three. They would have had a recent evaluation or recent enough within the last three years that that team would have made that determination. So yeah, it looks like you guys have some really good thinking to get us kicked off here. The grade 10, the student in grade 10. There is a lot of evidence to support those scores look right for having the conversation for the first criterion, community-based learning. You want to make sure that those goals are aligned to grade level standards. And it looks like, you know, their addition to modified grade level curriculum. You could pull in a lot more details when you make that determination. We'll look at the form kind of at the end here but there's a lot of evidence to say, okay, yeah, that makes sense. If you're looking at the student has taken alternate assessment since third grade, well, that could be that the team made a really good decision since third grade. It could also, I mean, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're guaranteed to be eligible for alternate assessment in grade 10. Things can change, the student can be doing really, really well. There may be a reevaluation around the corner, in which case you might want to wait to make this decision until you have updated information. But a lot of

times, you know, that is consistent. Students aren't usually in and out of Alternate Assessment eligibility frequently. It does happen and it can happen. This is an annual determination. But, you know, you can kind of see some patterns with students who really have those significant needs and they're going to need them that year after year.

Great, next example. Special education category is developmental delay for a student in grade 2. Reading goals around main idea and math are a place value and the student displays aggressive behavior when presented with a difficult academic task.

What do you think about this one?

What supports eligibility? What does not support eligibility? What additional information do you need?

All right, need evaluation scores. What do those cognitive, academic, adaptive look like? Especially with a student with a developmental delay when they're that young, it's hard to know what exactly that impact is on the student. Goals are grade level, good. Pulled that out. A lot of information we still need.

OK, Yep, so the student is not eligible until grade 3 for MSAA, unless there's a reason why the student would need alternate for Alt ELPA, or if you have a local assessment, which in grade two could be that literacy screener that you're using, you could be using the general literacy screener for the student if you haven't determined eligibility yet.

Yes, so and then that's a really great point. So, a student in grade two with developmental disability or developmental delay disability category, there's probably a real evaluation right around the corner there, making sure when that student as they age, that category will change. So, you're probably going to be looking for updated information on the student anyway. So before making that Alternate Assessment eligibility determination, it might be helpful to have that current evaluation.

Did I see anything about the aggressive behavior? Not exactly asked this question,

but there's other ways to support a student. We don't put in make them determine eligible for Alternate Assessment. If it's a behavior issue, that behavior could be a manifestation of a lot of different things. But there's different ways to support the student during test administration if they are not eligible for an Alternate Assessment.

Great, let's look at the next practice.

This student is in grade 7, primary special education category of autism, cognitive and academic scores in the high 70s, struggles with peer communication, and IEP goals are around adding with regrouping and decoding multi-syllable words.

As you're thinking about that one, it looks like there was a comment probably from the last one about one-on-ones or small group administration. That's probably a good idea for a student who needs that additional support.

Academic scores, cognitive scores in the high 70s, that's not typically what we would see for a student who is eligible for Alternate Assessment unless there's a reason to use those scores for determination. So, for example, sometimes what you see is that students are unable to participate in some of those cognitive or academic evaluation assessments. If you don't have the communication modes to be able to respond, maybe you're only taking that nonverbal part and then you have to evaluate what does that look like? Yeah, they might do great on something like spatial reasoning, where they're listening to instructions and responding a little bit. But you know the language component, they're not, you can't even get a score for them. So, it's different types of things that would; interpretation of the scores that you're using. So, it's important to know what that is and a lot of description around that, but again, the high 70s is still something that you would really kind of question.

All right, yep. So, it doesn't necessarily indicate that there is a significant cognitive disability.

And then making sure, great, identifying accommodations to use so the student can participate in AASA. Great.

Just have a couple more here just for practice. Example #4, the evaluation team completed an initial evaluation for a student in grade 5. The student qualifies for special education with specific learning disability and a secondary disability of hearing impairment. The student will be receiving special education services in the resource room and parents are supportive of the student taking alternate assessments.

I think you see and sometimes there's additional information in here and how does that play into the conversation that you have as an IEP team.

This one looks like maybe they don't qualify.

Scores for SLD are usually not low enough for the first criterion.

Yep, may not have those adaptive scores.

Right.

The scores are definitely helpful, especially for that first one. That's sometimes the hardest one. I know people have asked for cut scores just to make it black and white. What tends to happen, and it has happened in another state, I've gotten some feedback when they rolled out cutoff scores for participation in Alternate Assessment, is that it's really, really hard. If we've set the number at, for example, 68, we say, okay, 68 and below that student has a significant cognitive disability and can participate in alternate assessments. What's the difference between a student with a 68 and a 69? Which scores are you using? How are you incorporating that? Every single score has to be, you know, not above 68. There's just so much that you can't, you don't have any flexibility with it.

So although it is black and white, it's really not necessarily the best way to make a decision for students, but definitely for this example, the specific learning disability, we would not expect to see those types of scores that would show that they were eligible for Alternate Assessment. What do you think about receiving services in the resource room?

Not sure if I am looking just for chats or parents. Parents are supportive.

Don't matter? Okay. So yeah, what does that resource room look like? It's not so much about the where, but it's about how the student is receiving services. If, for example, this is a very, very small school and they don't have a self-contained program, but they're meeting the needs of the student in a resource room with some additional supports, you could document that. There could be evidence to support that. It really just depends on what that learning is, how what kind of supports they need for that criterion. The parents are supportive. Maybe they're demanding. I see that that might that might be happening too. So, parents are part of the IEP team, and you should be having these conversations with them. A lot of time with what happens is they don't come to these things. They don't do these trainings; they're just not always informed about what the criteria looks like, and sometimes it has happened where they reach out to us and they say, "Hey, we were at one school and my child took an alternate assessment and we go to another school and they say they're not eligible," and they really just don't understand what eligibility criteria is. And also, I'm not sure what happened between the schools that there was a difference. It could be that the student had some changes when they went to a new school and could make that decision. Or it could be that somebody was not making an appropriate decision for the student based on the evidence that was there. We don't know enough about the student, but the parents aren't part of the team. They should be involved in those conversations.

You kind of have to help them with that part of it. And yes, sometimes they might demand it. They might say no, I want the student to be successful. I want them to be proficient. Let's put them on an Alternate Assessment. If the IEP team does not agree, it's just like any other decision of that IEP team. So, you are going to go through state, federal, local policies on what you do when an IP team does not agree on a decision.

Great.

Last example, a student took AASA last year in grade three, didn't do great. The student has IEP goals and objectives for reading and OT only, is an English learner,

and the district that the student is enrolled at is over 1% participation in alternate assessments.

Okay, not evidence, not enough data to support alternate.

Yep, that evaluation, those numbers are really helpful, aren't they? Yeah, OK. Is a student taking Alt ELPA or AZELLA? So, they would have taken AZELLA last year if they didn't have eligibility. So, they either take all alternate or no alternate.

Bottom 2 don't really matter.

So, a couple things could happen. So, what we do with students is we assume competence. We assume that the student can participate. And so it could be that last year the IEP team had a conversation and they said, okay, you know what? We're not sure that this evidence was really good evidence to support Alternate Assessment eligibility. So, let's have them take AASA and just kind of see what other data we can collect and make another decision next year, because you're going to make this decision every year.

But it could be that the student wasn't eligible and that's okay, but you still, you know, you're still bringing it up as a conversation. They didn't, weren't eligible last year that doesn't mean they're not this year but definitely need to look at what that evidence was.

Goals and objectives for reading and OT.

See anybody address that part of it yet, specifically?

Okay, yep, you're very likely going to see goals and lots of areas, at least reading and math, writing like you don't have a significant cognitive disability in one academic area. That's going to be across everything, intellectual disability, that it's going to impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. So really looking at you know, areas of life where the student is impacted by that disability. So, you're probably going to see IEP goals and objectives for lots of different things, but

definitely for all academic areas. It's not a requirement, but that's probably what would make the most sense.

Let's see.

Okay, so if it's an OT issue, there probably are accommodations available for AASA, yep.

Um, yep, the English learner isn't necessarily relevant other than you can use any information that you have about the English language proficiency for things like determining interpretation of your evaluation. Was it administered in the student's language or how proficient is the student in English to be able to participate in the evaluation assessments?

The district is over 1%. That has really nothing to do with this student at all. You're making that decision on the student level, at the student level.

All right, thank you so much for your participation. There's a lot of thoughts in the chat, so I appreciate your interactions. I did want to go back really quickly before we get to the next section. There was a question that I wanted to make sure I addressed. DTCs are questioning who should be entering accommodations or requests alternate assessment. So alternate assessment, if they've already been determined for alternate assessment, that always goes through the Alternate Assessment District Test Coordinator. So, they have that information. They're kind of the gatekeepers of who has special education that and Alternate Assessment participation eligibility. So that always goes through them. The Alternate Assessment District Test Coordinator needs to be communicating with the AZELLA Test Coordinator and your Achievement Test Coordinators to make sure that those students are not taking any other assessments. So, it does happen where a student should be taking Alt ELPA. Maybe they did take Alt ELPA and they were on the list, so they were tested with AZELLA as well. really, really don't want that to happen. So, make sure there's really good communication, but it is the responsibility of the Alternate Assessment District Test Coordinator.

And then if you're submitting accommodations for a student who takes AZELLA or

any of the achievement assessments, AASA, AzSCI, ACT, those types of things, that is not the Alternate Assessment Test Coordinator. Different programs might have different requirements. It can be somebody other than the Test Coordinator, but it does need to be somebody who has that information that can support it. So just make sure you're all communicating to decide who's submitting accommodations requests, but as far as Alternate Assessment participation, that's going to be the Alternate Assessment Test Coordinator.

We'll move on a little bit to the form. So, there's a form very specific for Alternate Assessment eligibility participation, and this is part of your IEP. So, this documentation should be attached. I think from my understanding, a lot of these are built into your online IEP systems where you like click a box and then it'll give you the form to use. And that's great. But what can happen is you might have this conversation, determine that the student is not eligible for Alternate Assessment participation, and now you're trying to document that you had that conversation. So, the form is available separately if you need to do it that way. I'm not sure how your IEP systems work, but we do have a form that you can put everything into and attach it to your IEP. If the student is not eligible and your own systems don't allow you to do it that way.

But that documentation is part of the IEP, so it's used for IEP teams and that includes the families. So, when they're calling us, the form is not filled out in a way that they understand what that eligibility was for that student. It's also useful for the Alternate Assessment District Test Coordinator. Again, secondary, that's not your primary audience or anything like that. But if you are over 1%, there's a monitoring process that we have to go through federally required oversight, and it helps them a lot if that information is filled out and it's clear because they have to submit some of that information to us. And so, they have to really, they can copy and paste some of it if it's documented correctly. Otherwise, they're digging through and trying to figure out how that decision was made so that they can communicate it to us. And of course, as part of the IEP is a legal document. So, if there's any issues, legal issues that arise, you want to make sure that everything is really well documented. I think I feel like in the world of special education, we know that we want to do really, really good documentation because it does protect us, it protects the student. So, make sure that it's filled out very well.

So, we're going to kind of look at a couple key components of the form. A lot of it's self-explanatory. You can kind of fill things out and we do update it based on feedback that we receive. So, there are some updates that we have been applying, but the criteria isn't changing. It's more usability of the form. This is probably the hardest part of the form is filling out the evidence. So, all those things that we talked about and that, you know, we practice with, that goes into these boxes to make it really, really clear what was that evidence and how is it used to support eligibility.

So, criterion one, two, three, there's a separate section for each one and you list the source and then describe it. So, you have to do both. If you do your programmatic monitoring, if you're, going through that process of evaluating student IEPs, evaluations and IEPs, then this has to be filled out. You have to make sure that it's supporting that evidence, that why piece of it. So sometimes what's happening is there might be a source or it'll say see evaluation like that is not telling a parent or the District Test Coordinator, or, you know, if it ends up with a lawyer, that's not going to work. So, you really need to be specific about that.

So let me look at, sorry, what goes in those boxes. So, the source and the description. So really you can kind of use a template. I don't always like to give an example because sometimes people copy this. Remember, this is a fake student. None of this is real so make sure you're not applying it to a student, an actual student, but this is kind of a format that you can use. So, you're saying this source, whatever source you have listed, shows what, what does it tell you and what does it mean, that why piece of it. So, indicating some sort of application to the criteria.

So, for an example, the adaptive score, so the student has areas of need and social skills attentional control, overall executive functioning, and functional communication. So, there's different ways that that might be impacting the student. So, this is what it's telling us. The student struggles to engage with peers and adults, focus on instruction, and retain information. So, kind of what does that mean for the student? And you're probably familiar with this with those impact statements that you're doing on your on your documentation already. Like you got to really pull that in and say, what does this mean about this student? And then you can say something like the results were consistent with both the parent and teacher rating scale. So just

saying there's consistency across it. It's really impacting them academically, is impacting them adaptive, those adaptive skills, both in the classroom and at home.

And then, you know, in this example, it is consistent with a cognitive evaluation. So, then you can say, oh, also we have this other source of evidence. We're going to explain what that is. So, the Woodcock-Johnson shows that the student's overall intellectual score is 62. So that's something that we would kind of see as consistent. Strength in patterns and picture recognition, areas of need, and verbal attention and memory. So that indicates the student struggles to pay attention to directions and retain information. The teacher also sees this in the classroom. She needs to repeat directions, redirect the student, use strategies like songs or poems to help the student remember information. So, you're really saying, look at what the student is doing and what they need.

So, we have scores in there, so those are incorporated. I did not put the adaptive score specifically in there, but that's what you would do is this is the score. This is what it means. And then this is how it's impacting the student. So, this is what the teacher needs to do to make sure that intense direct individualized instruction, they need to redirect the student. They need to use these other strategies that specially designed instruction to make sure that the student is learning. So those types of things that you can put in there. Again, not necessarily perfect because this is a fake student so I'm, you know, trying to come up with something. But what do you know about the student that you can incorporate that and connect those pieces between the results of the evaluation and the eligibility criteria?

Okay, the other part of a couple other parts, just there's a signature page. We just get questions about this, so I like to include it. Signatures, wet signatures are not required. IEP signatures are not required. There is some agreement that you need to do for an SLD category. Other than that, you're not, it's not something that they're looking for as far as compliance. It is good documentation. So, if you have that available, you can have signatures. You could put in here, this was a virtual, you know, we called over the computer or over the phone, and then there's a box for agreement. So, if a participant doesn't agree, you can click the box just for your documentation. Everybody on the team agreed.

If somebody did not agree, then there's also a notes section. So, you can put whatever notes you need to in here. So it could be that you're clarifying what test the student will take because depending on their grade, if their EL status, those types of things, what you could even put in your local assessments that this would also apply to. Anything else that you want to document. So sometimes people it's your own policies, however you do it. Sometimes it's documented in the prior written notice. But we did get some feedback that sometimes that's not the best place to put a specific Alternate Assessment eligibility participation note in. So, there is a note page, note section. This section is completely optional. Nobody's requiring you to put anything specific in there, but it is for your use in case you need to explain anything further.

All right. I do see another question before we move on to the next section. The dates for MSAA, the window has not been determined. We do not have a contract yet. So, we've gone through the RFP process. We have identified a vendor, but it has not been approved and awarded yet. So, we are still waiting for those final steps and that is one of the first things on our list to do is once we have that vendor, that contract confirmed, we will confirm the test window dates and get those out to you. I can tell you that we have requested and we anticipate being able to have the same similar windows that we've always had, so probably around the same time. We just need to have a contract and a vendor confirm that for us.

All right, a little bit more. As we've been talking about here, the IEP team is responsible for determining eligibility for Alternate Assessment. So, there's a few things that you can kind of look at just to try to make sure that engagement, that all members of the IEP team are participating in this and understanding what that criteria is.

So just starting off training. So special education teachers, I think they see that training like this is the most often. It's available. I'm happy to help present separately to a group of teachers if you need it, or you're welcome to take these slides, this webinar, share it with your special education teachers but some of these other people aren't always included in those professional development opportunities. So, if there's an opportunity that you have that you can bring in your general education

teachers, your school psychologists, related service providers, parents and families, if they're interested, you could just kind of host something like this or even just send the link to this webinar out to parents and say, hey, you know, when we're having conversations, this is what it looks like. This is what we're trying to talk about to make sure everybody is comfortable and able to participate in that conversation.

All right, so another tip that we can give is making sure you have conversations. So, it's not just about the special education teacher saying, yep, the student's eligible, let's move on. Really following that model of looking at that evidence, looking at what you have that supports eligibility. If there's something that doesn't support eligibility, can you get that information? So, or is something that's missing, can you get that information? So, I gave you just pieces, you're going to have a lot more, the IEP team is going to have a lot more information than what I gave you. So, they can be looking at that and saying, hey, wait, what about this score? How does this impact the student? What does that direct individualized instruction look like? So, you can have those conversations. And documenting it just kind of the example that I showed a way to make sure that it's very clear. So that conversation is really drives that documentation. So, it's not just It's not just about, OK, this is some information, but that should be a conversation. Like, okay, I'm noticing this.

All right, I think maybe I'm back in again. I don't know what's happening today. I'm not exactly sure when everybody lost me, but I'm just going to kind of pick up.

Making sure that everybody's involved in those conversations. If somebody's quiet, ask them what they think. And they might not have all of the training. If you haven't done the training with them, they might not know what to say, but you can just bring them in and say, hey, this is what the score on this evaluation. Is that what you're seeing? How do you deal with this or that? To make sure everybody's participating in that conversation.

Next tip is just focusing on the evidence, making sure that you're looking at that individual student. Use all of the evidence that you have available to you. So, you don't get to pick and choose and say, oh, these scores support eligibility, so I'm going to use them. Those do not, so I'm just going to pretend like they're not there.

Or making sure you're using that holistic picture. We want all of the evidence to show what that student needs.

And then if there is evidence not available, how are you going to get that? Is it needed? And then how are you going to get that information? And then, like I mentioned, assuming competence, we're going to have high expectations for students, and we're going to give them the opportunity for them to show that they can do something before we tell them that they're not able to do something. So, if that evidence, again, if it's kind of iffy, like that one student in grade three, there's other things in that scenario, but they put the student on the general assessment and saying, okay, let's try that out. And maybe next year we'll have that conversation and it'll go a little differently.

And then this is an annual determination. So, making sure that you're having that conversation every year. And I understand that some of that evidence isn't going to change. If you just did an evaluation last year, and now you're having the conversation this year, that evidence, that part of the evidence didn't change. But you can definitely talk about the things that did change. So, what is happening in the classroom? What does instruction look like? How has the student made gains over the last year and really having that conversation again. And then really at a higher level, an LEA level, or if you have students transferring in and out, you should really start to see some consistency among the different teams that are making this determination if you're having that conversation every year.

All right, that was a lot of information that I gave you and really took almost the full hour so far today. I will stay on for five minutes until two o'clock. So, if there's any follow-up questions, please go ahead and put those into the chat. If you have questions at a later time or need some additional support, you can contact us at AlternateAssessment@azed.gov and we'll be happy to do any kind of different types of presentations, work with you or your teachers. I said, I mentioned there's a couple other opportunities, so there's eligibility criteria, but we can talk about instruction, we can talk about 1%, just lots of different ways that we are able to support you.

Thank you all for joining. If you want to hop off, you absolutely can. If you have any questions, please put those in the chat.

If you have questions, yeah, reach out to me. I have access to this Inbox. So, if you reach out to me and just say, hey, I heard this, I would like some help or I want to talk about something, I will absolutely respond to it, I will see that. And I think Alternate Assessment might be a little bit easier than trying to spell my name. So go ahead and send it to that one and I will get it and I will respond to you.

All right. If your district doesn't offer a local alternate assessment, it's not a testing year, a student is not an English language learner, do you have to fill out the eligibility determination form?

You don't need the form at all if you're not making that decision or having that conversation about this decision. So, for example, if you have a student who is an SLD and you're like, no, they're not appropriate. Like we don't need to have this conversation because there's no evidence to support that. There's no interest in having that conversation. You don't need to have it. There isn't really a prescribed when you have to have it and when you don't. If you don't have any tests, the student is not taking any tests for which they need alternate assessment eligibility, you don't have to make that determination. Just know that if you do not have alternate assessment eligibility determination, the student is not taking an alternate assessment. So yeah, if it doesn't apply, you don't have to do it. But if it did apply, then you want to make sure that it's already in place before the student takes an assessment. Also, it could help if you make that, have that conversation, make that decision, because a student could transfer somewhere else. And then now you have a different team that needs to go over the evidence. They don't know the student very well. They have to go over the evidence that somebody else collected and have those conversations. So, it would be a little more challenging for them to do it, but there's no requirement that you have to do it yourself.

All right, go ahead, Kristi. Yep.

Yep, I touched on that a little bit, a little bit, very little bit. So, some students, you attempt to administer an achievement assessment, your cognitive or academic assessment to a student with a cognitive disability, but have to discontinue testing or they're not able to attain standard scores because response modes, different things

that are happening with the student. So, that's part of your evidence. So, when you go in there and say, hey, this is the result, your result may be, we weren't able to even get a score for this student because this is what we observed. This is how the student responded, this is the circumstances under which we attempted to. So yeah, absolutely, just document what you were able to collect and why, and that's going to be good evidence for you to say, hey, the student has a significant cognitive disability if part of the evidence we gathered was that they couldn't even complete one of those evaluation assessments.

All right. Thank you all so much for joining. If you have any last-minute questions, you can put them in the chat, but otherwise, feel free to reach out to us at AlternateAssessment@azed.gov and we can answer any follow up questions you have there as well.

All right, I think that's all of our questions for today. Thank you so much for joining us.