

Tier 1 Universal Technical Assistance: Alternate Assessment 1% Participation Cap

Office of Special Education

2025-2026

nj.gov/education

Tier 1 Universal Technical Assistance: Alternate Assessment 1% Participation Cap

- Any LEA that anticipates exceeding the 1% cap for the DLM Year End (YE) assessment in the 2025-2026 academic year will be required to participate in the completion of this online self-paced training and provide assurance when completing the 1% justification form.
- Tier 1 Universal Technical Assistance for the 1% Participation Cap is to be completed in conjunction with the completion of the Justification Form by one (1) person in the Local Educational Agency (LEA). It should be completed by an individual who is involved in overseeing the Alternate Assessment and in a position to make decisions around the Alternate Assessment district-wide (e.g., Supervisor of Special Education, District Test Coordinator, etc.) **by January 30th, 2026.**

Email: aaparticipation@doe.nj.gov

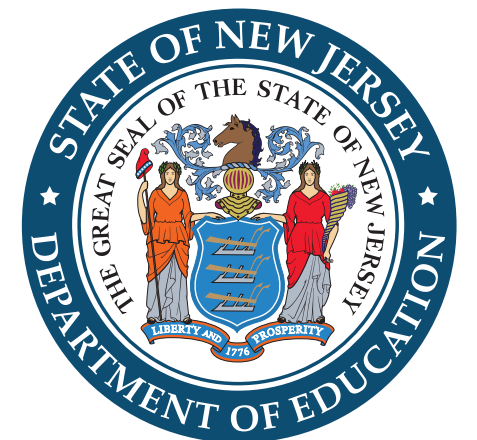


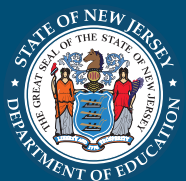
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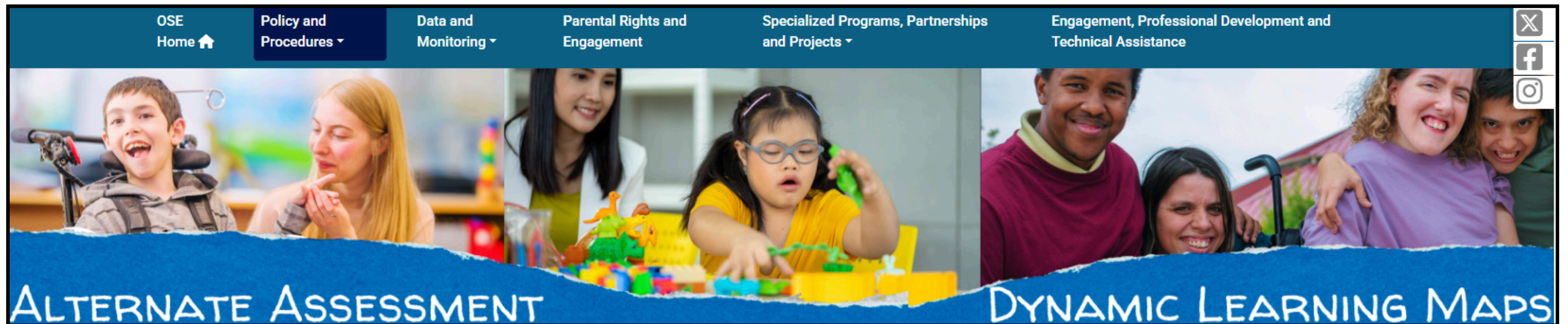
Alternate Assessment Key Resources

The following slides highlight the New Jersey Alternate Assessment website and provide resources for LEAs and families to better support their understanding of the alternate assessment.

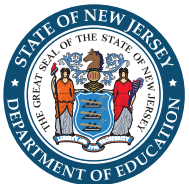


Alternate Assessment Key Resources

Please visit the website below to access important resources.
For future access, make sure to save or bookmark the link.



[Alternate Assessment Website](#) 



nj.gov/education

Alternate Assessment Key Resources

Use the companion guide, "Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Roadmap" while completing the participation criteria form.

New Jersey DLM Participation Criteria for the 2025-2026 School Year

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments are based on the Essential Elements and measure a student's performance on alternate achievement standards. Essential Elements are grade-level-specific expectations related to college and career readiness standards for students in the general population. The DLM assessments measure performance on the Essential Elements.

Students who participate in the DLM assessments are not precluded from participating in the menu of options available to meet the state assessment requirement for graduation.

Factors to Determine Participation in DLM

The following factors shall not be used to determine participation in the DLM:

- Multilingual Learner (ML) status
- Anticipated disruptive behavior during testing
- Prior attendance or extended absences
- Anticipated poor performance on the general statewide assessment
- Impact of the student's score on the accountability system
- Need for accommodations to participate in the general statewide assessment
- Administrative decision

The following factors may not be the sole criteria used to determine participation in the DLM:

- Student's disability category
- Percent of day in special education
- Academic and related services the student receives
- Instructional setting

Directions



1. Determine initial eligibility by completing Part A.
2. If found eligible, complete Part B and Part C. You may use one form for multiple content areas.
3. Make sure to complete the chart (Part D) for determinations and assurances.
4. Retain the participation criteria document in the student's record.

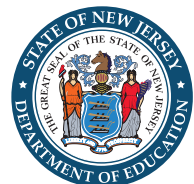
**Part A
Determining Initial Eligibility**

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

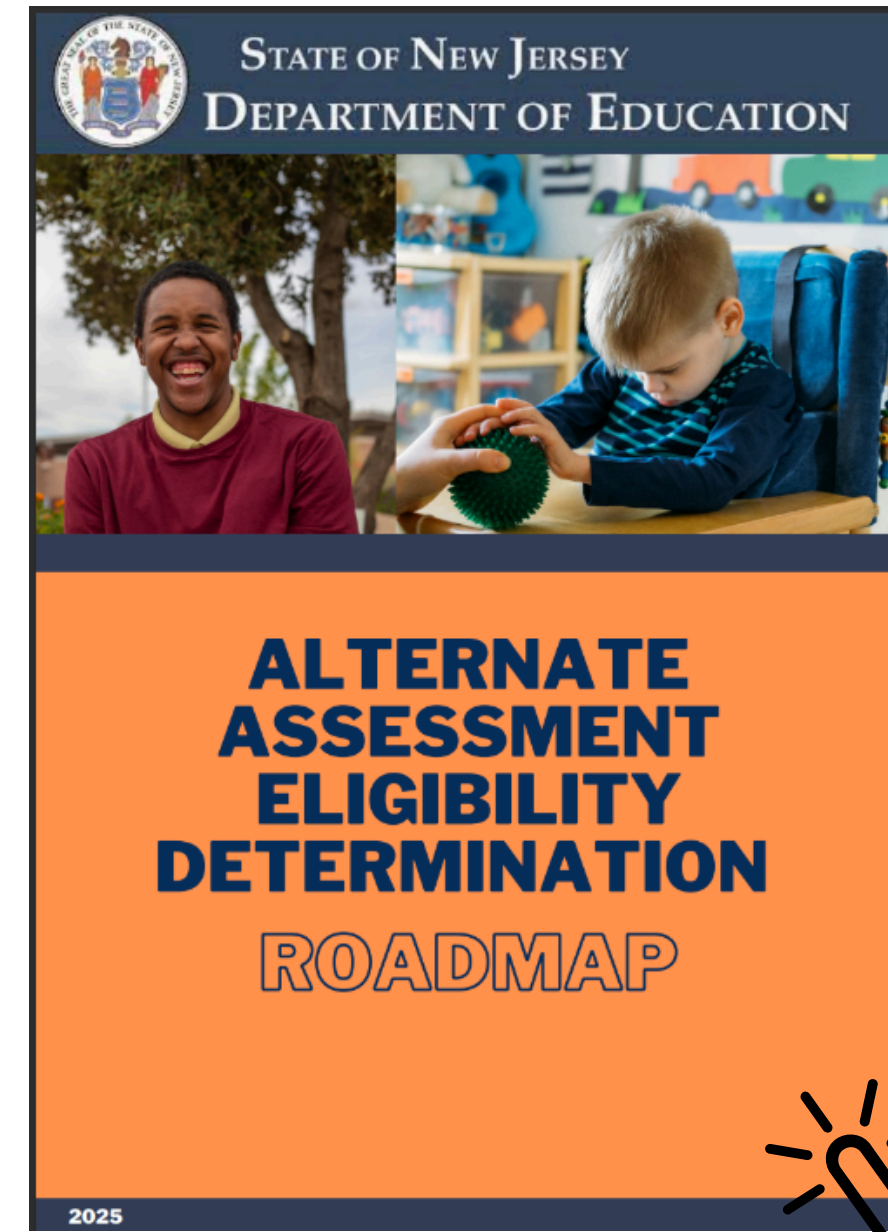
Content Area(s): Math ☐ English Language Arts ☐ Science ☐

1. Does the student have a current individualized education program (IEP)?

<input type="checkbox"/> No, the student does not have an IEP.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the student has a current IEP.
	
Stop here. The student is not eligible for the DLM.	Proceed to the next statement.



nj.gov/education



Alternate Assessment Key Resources

Explore the resources below.

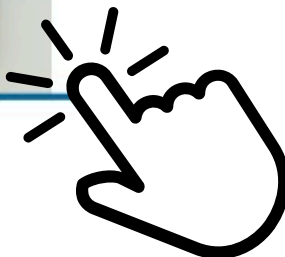


Alternate Assessment Self-Reflection Guide For Local Educational Agencies

2023



New Jersey Department of Education



nj.gov/education



New Jersey's Alternate Assessment Overview for Families



This overview provides information to families on the alternate assessment statewide assessments in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science for students with significant intellectual disabilities. Resources are provided to support families and teachers in their combined work.

Alternate Assessment

Alternate assessments measure the knowledge and skills of students with significant intellectual disabilities, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and later amended in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This assessment system is based on the same state standards established for all New Jersey public school students. Alternate assessments support student independence to the greatest extent possible by making academic content accessible and the expected achievement levels appropriate. It allows a very small population of students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on appropriate assessment.

New Jersey's Alternate Assessment

The New Jersey Alternate Assessment (NJAAA) is the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) and it is an assessment of English Language Arts, mathematics, and science skills aligned to the New Jersey Standards for eligible students with significant intellectual disabilities in grades 3-8, and 11. It is a secure test presented to individual students via computer by teachers trained by the New Jersey Department of Education and the Alternate Assessment partner, DLM.

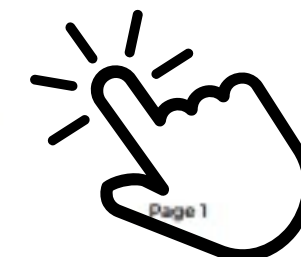
What Families Should Know About the Alternate Assessment

Deciding whether a child should take the alternate assessment can be challenging. Some families worry their children may feel stressed taking the general statewide assessment, even with appropriate accommodations and accessibility features. At the same time, families also worry others will not expect as much from children who take the alternate assessment. This document offers information to help families better understand the alternate assessment and how to make this decision with the IEP team.

How the IEP Team Decides a Student Qualifies for the Alternate Assessment

A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team uses a wide range of sources to determine alternate assessment eligibility. These may include:

- Work samples;
- Results from formative assessments;
- Universal screeners and diagnostic assessments;
- Data from evidence-based interventions;
- Support needs assessments;
- Assistive technology assessment;
- The learner profile;
- Daily services and support provided by an aide or paraprofessional; or
- Daily instructional support provided by intervention specialists.



Page 1

Federal & State Regulations

The following slides review the state and federal regulations surrounding the alternate assessment for students with disabilities.

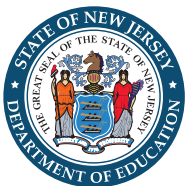


State Regulations

Students with Disabilities in State and Districtwide Assessments N.J.A.C.6A:14-4.10(a)

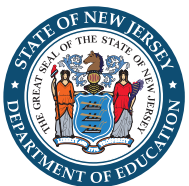
Students with disabilities shall participate in the Statewide assessment system according to the following:

1. Except as provided in (a) 2 below, students with disabilities shall participate in Statewide assessments pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-4.1. Accommodations and modifications approved by the Department of Education shall be provided, when determined necessary by the IEP team, to students with disabilities who participate in the general Statewide assessments.
2. Students with disabilities shall participate in the alternate assessment for students with disabilities in each content area where the nature of the student's disability is so severe that the student is not receiving instruction in any of the knowledge and skills measured by the Statewide assessment and the student cannot complete any of the types of questions on the assessment in the content area(s) even with accommodations and modifications.



New Jersey's Alternate Assessment Dynamic Learning Maps

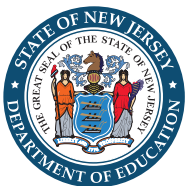
The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allows for the use of alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. In New Jersey, this alternate assessment is the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM).



Federal Regulations

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Elementary and Secondary School Education Act, and Every Student Succeeds Act

- The requirement for states to develop alternate assessments first appeared in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA, 1997).
- The Elementary and Secondary School Education Act (ESEA) included alternate assessment results in accountability measures, as long as they aligned with grade-level standards.
- In 2015, the reauthorization of ESEA, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), reaffirmed the importance of alternate assessments for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities.
- ESSA marked a significant shift in educational policy, moving the focus from limiting proficiency rates to placing a cap on participation in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities, as determined by each state's eligibility criteria.



Federal & State Regulations

States must have a definition of “students with the most significant intellectual disabilities”, addressing both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

The term “significant intellectual disability” is not a disability category. The designation of “significant intellectual disability” is reserved for a small group of students with disabilities to determine their eligibility for participation in the state alternate assessment program.

New Jersey Department of Education



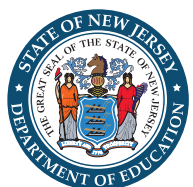
Who Are New Jersey's Students

With the Most Significant Intellectual Disabilities

Division of Educational Services

Office of Special Education

WATCH VIDEO



nj.gov/education

Federal & State Regulations

States must have guidelines for IEP teams in determining on a case-by-case basis whether a student is most appropriately assessed with the alternate assessment.

IEP Documentation

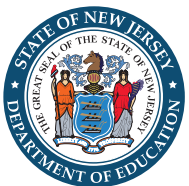
For students who take alternate assessments, the IEP must explain why the student cannot participate in the general assessment and provide a justification for the appropriateness of the alternate assessment. The DLM Participation Criteria Form must be completed **annually** and maintained in the student's file.

Staff Training and Implementation

States must ensure educators and staff receive training to administer general and alternate assessments. They must also understand how to implement appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.

Accountability and Oversight

Review participation data, including alternate assessment rates, classification categories, and class programming. Identify trends or patterns that may affect the 1% threshold.



1% Participation Cap

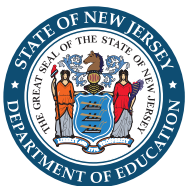
The following slides review the 1% participation cap for the alternate assessment and provide guidance for LEAs on how to calculate whether their LEA exceeds the cap.



1% Participation Cap

- National data show that students who participate in alternate assessments typically have the most severe intellectual and multiple disabilities. These students represent fewer than 1% of all students, and less than 10% of students with disabilities.
- The 1% cap limits the number of students whose alternate assessment scores can count as proficient for accountability, helping prevent the misuse of assessments with lower achievement expectations.
- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are not prohibited from assessing more than 1% of their tested students with the alternate assessment; however, they are required to submit information justifying the need to exceed the 1% limit.

The goal **is not** to ensure **all LEAs** are below the 1% participation cap, but **to ensure all LEAs** have identified the right students to take the alternate assessment.



1% Participation Cap

Watch the video below to learn more about the 1% cap for the NJ Alternate Assessment.

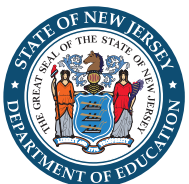


1% Cap

New Jersey Alternate Assessment (NJAA)

Office of Special Education

WATCH VIDEO



nj.gov/education

Calculating the 1% Participation Rate

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{DLM} \\ \text{All tested grade levels} \\ \text{3-8 and 11} \\ \\ \text{Both in-district} \\ \text{students AND out-of-} \\ \text{district placements} \end{array} \div \begin{array}{l} \text{NJSLA and DLM} \\ \text{Total test enrollment} \\ \\ \text{All tested grade levels} \\ \\ \text{Both in-district AND} \\ \text{out-of-district} \\ \text{placements} \end{array} = \frac{\quad}{\quad} \times 100$$


DONT
FORGET


- Calculations are per SUBJECT (ELA and Math) and not across grade levels.
- Calculations are based on federally accountable assessments (NJSLA, DLM). DO NOT include NJGPA.
- 2 decimal places are used to determine if over the 1.00% threshold.



ESSA Guidance on Justification Forms

- The U.S. Department of Education allows for individual LEAs with more than 1.00% of tested students taking the DLM to do so with justification.
- LEAs are required to submit information justifying a need to exceed the 1.00% limit.
- If it is anticipated that the LEA will exceed the 1.00% participation cap for the Spring Year End (YE) assessment, a justification form must be submitted.





STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Justification 2025-2026

Applications should be submitted by January 30th, 2026, to AAParticipation@doe.nj.gov

▲ **Directions**

Complete and submit this application *only* if you anticipate that participation in the DLM in your district for the 2025-2026 school year will exceed 1.00%.

District Name:
County Code:
District Code:
Name and Title of Person Completing the Form:
Email Address:

Part One: Data Review

Please provide the percentage of students administered the Dynamic Learning Maps Assessment for the two school years listed in the table.

Test Administration Year	Language Arts Literacy	Math
2023-2024	%	%
2024-2025	%	%

Part Two: Justification Calculation

Please provide the number of anticipated students in each eligibility category who will be administered the Dynamic Learning Maps Assessment in Language Arts Literacy and Math in the 2025-2026 School Year.

**Effective beginning with the Spring 2026 DLM administration, students eligible under the following categories: Auditory Impairment, Emotional Regulation Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Specific Learning Disability and Eligible for Speech-Language Services (only) are not eligible to take the alternate assessment. **

Eligibility Category	Language Arts Literacy (Number of Students)	Math (Number of Students)
Autism		
Deaf/Blindness		
Intellectual Disability		
Multiple Disabilities		
Traumatic Brain Injury		
Communication Impairment		
Other Health Impairment		
Social Maladjustment		
Visual Impairment		

New Jersey Department of Education

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Review of LEA Data

Review participation data; including the rate of students taking the alternate assessment, classification categories, and class programming.

Identify trends or patterns that are potentially impacting the 1% threshold.

Review procedures to ensure the LEA is applying eligibility criteria to make consistent, valid, and appropriate determinations.



New Jersey's Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria

***The following slides offer an overview of New Jersey's Participation Criteria
Form, along with helpful resources and guidance.***



New Jersey's Alternate Assessment Eligibility

Use the companion guide, "Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Roadmap" while completing the participation criteria form.

Determining eligibility is a detailed process lead by IEP team members.

The participation criteria form is to be completed annually.

New Jersey DLM Participation Criteria for the 2025-2026 School Year

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments are based on the Essential Elements and measure a student's performance on alternate achievement standards. Essential Elements are grade-level-specific expectations related to college and career readiness standards for students in the general population. The DLM assessments measure performance on the Essential Elements.

Students who participate in the DLM assessments are not precluded from participating in the menu of options available to meet the state assessment requirement for graduation.

Factors to Determine Participation in DLM

The following factors shall not be used to determine participation in the DLM:

- Multilingual Learner (ML) status
- Anticipated disruptive behavior during testing
- Prior attendance or extended absences
- Anticipated poor performance on the general statewide assessment
- Impact of the student's score on the accountability system
- Need for accommodations to participate in the general statewide assessment
- Administrative decision

The following factors may not be the sole criteria used to determine participation in the DLM:

- Student's disability category
- Percent of day in special education
- Academic and related services the student receives
- Instructional setting

Directions

1. Determine initial eligibility by completing Part A.
2. If found eligible, complete Part B and Part C. You may use one form for multiple content areas.
3. Make sure to complete the short Part D for determinations and decisions.
4. Review the participation criteria document in the student's record.

**Part A
Determining Initial Eligibility**

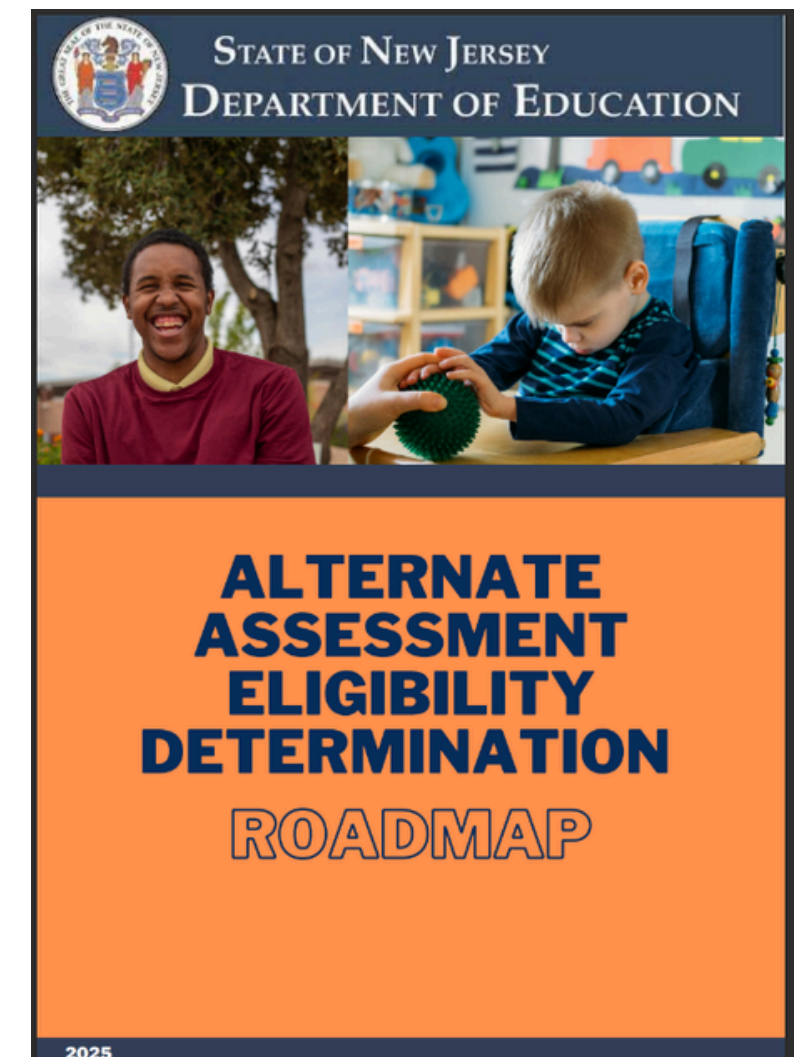
Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Content Area(s): Math ☐ English Language Arts ☐ Science ☐

1. Does the student have a current individualized education program (IEP)?

<input type="checkbox"/> No, the student does not have an IEP.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the student has a current IEP.
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Stop here. The student is not eligible for the DLM. Proceed to the next statement.



DLM Participation Criteria

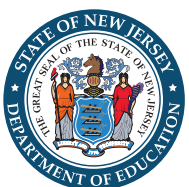
Factors to Determine Participation in DLM

*The following factors shall **not** be used to determine participation in the DLM:*

- Multilingual Learner (ML) Status
- Anticipated disruptive behavior during testing
- Poor attendance or extended absences
- Anticipated poor performance on the general statewide assessment
- Impact of the student's score on the accountability system
- Need for accommodations to participate in the general statewide assessment
- Administrative decision

*The following factors may not be the **sole** criteria used to determine participation in the DLM:*

- Student's disability category
- Percent of day in special education
- Academic and related services the student receives
- Instructional setting





DLM Participation Criteria

Part A: Initial Eligibility

#1 Does the student have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

The eligibility process starts with confirming if the student has a **CURRENT** Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Part A Determining Initial Eligibility	
Student Name:	<input type="text"/>
Grade:	<input type="text"/>
Content Area(s):	Math <input type="checkbox"/> English Language Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input type="checkbox"/>
1. Does the student have a current individualized education program (IEP)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, the student does not have an IEP.  Stop here. The student is not eligible for the DLM.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the student has a current IEP.  Proceed to the next statement.






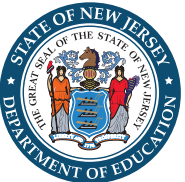
DLM Participation Criteria

Part A: Initial Eligibility

#2 Review the student’s determined eligibility and classification.

Beginning with the Spring 2026 administration, the eligibility criteria for students with disabilities participating in the DLM alternate assessment have been **revised** to ensure that only students with the **most significant intellectual disabilities** are included.

<p>Student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:</p> <p>Auditory Impairment Emotional Regulation Impairment Orthopedic Impairment Specific Learning Disability Eligible for Speech-Language Services (only)</p> <p></p> <p>Stop here. The student is not eligible for participation in the DLM.</p>	<p>Student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:</p> <p>Communication Impairment Other Health Impairment Social Maladjustment Visual Impairment</p> <p></p> <p>A student identified with these disability categories very rarely will be a student with a most significant intellectual disability, and therefore, rarely, if ever, qualify for the DLM.</p> <p>Proceed to Part B with Caution.</p>	<p>Student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:</p> <p>Autism Deaf/Blindness Intellectual Disability Multiple Disabilities Traumatic Brain Injury</p> <p></p> <p>A student with any one of these disabilities may have significant intellectual disability. However, fewer than half of the students in these categories may have a significant intellectual disability that would qualify them for the DLM.</p> <p>Proceed to Part B.</p>
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DLM Participation Criteria

Part B: Disability Impact

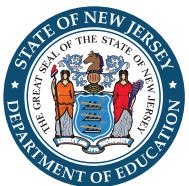
The student has a disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

IEP team assesses if the student's disability significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior across the areas of English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science.

**Learning
Social Interaction
Problem Solving
Communication
Reasoning
Self-Care**

**Requires extensive
support now and into
adulthood**

**Describes profound
impairments in
cognitive abilities and
everyday skills**



DLM Participation Criteria

Part C: Essential Elements

#1 The student is taught using the Alternate Achievement Standards (Essential Elements).

- IEP goals and objectives should demonstrate that the student's instruction is aligned with alternate achievement standards known as Essential Elements.
- Alignment ensures that the student's progress is mapped toward achieving grade-level performance targets.
- Essential Elements can be found on the Dynamic Learning Maps website.



DLM Participation Criteria

Part C: Individualized Instruction

#2 The student requires extensive, repeated individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature.

- Needs are extensive and require consistent, long-term intervention rather than temporary or sporadic assistance; the criterion is met.
- Requires frequent, intensive help to make progress and achieve their goals.
- Need for support should be an integral and continuous part of their educational plan, embedded in their daily learning routine rather than provided occasionally or in response to specific issues.

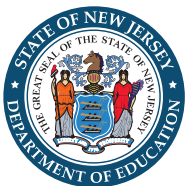


DLM Participation Criteria

Part C: Materials and Methods

#3 The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information.

- Requires significant modifications to educational materials and teaching methods due to challenges with intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.
- Adaptations are essential for the student to engage with the curriculum, achieve their IEP goals, and participate meaningfully in their education.

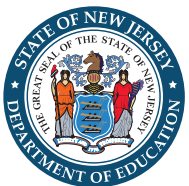


DLM Participation Criteria






Part C: Post-School Outcomes

#4 The student's significant intellectual disability will impact post-school outcomes (e.g., supported housing and/or employment).

- Support Needs
 - Supported housing (e.g., group homes with staff assistance)
 - Supported employment (e.g., job coaching, workplace accommodations)
- Developmental Nature
 - These challenges are typically present from birth. However, in some cases, a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or similar event may cause significant changes in intellectual functioning later in life.

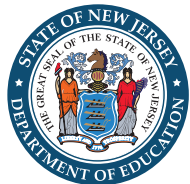


Review Eligibility Statements

Eligibility Statements	IEP Team Decision
The student has a disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior AND;	 YES
The student is taught using the Alternate Achievement Standards (Essential Elements) AND;	 YES
The student requires extensive, repeated individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature AND;	 YES
The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information, AND;	 YES
The student's significant intellectual disability will impact post-school outcomes (e.g., supported housing and/or supported employment).	 YES

IMPORTANT

The answer to ALL the questions must be YES for a student to be eligible to take the DLM.



Additional Resources

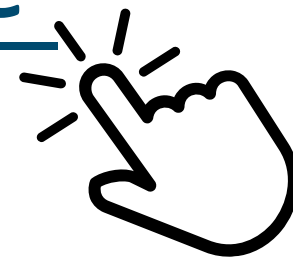


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Alternate Assessment Support



Alternate Assessment Website



AAparticipation@doe.nj.gov

- Participation Criteria
- Eligibility Questions
- 1% Cap Questions
- Justification Forms



nj.gov/education

Final Reminders and Quiz

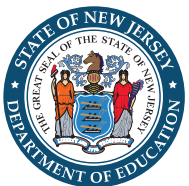


Final Reminders

- ! To demonstrate your **completion and understanding** of the content covered in this training, please complete the Tier 1 Universal Technical Assistance: Alternate Assessment 1% Participation Cap Quiz on the next slide.
- ! This quiz is **mandatory** and serves as official documentation of your participation in Tier 1 Universal Technical Assistance.

IMPORTANT

- After submitting the quiz, **save the confirmation email** for your records.
- You do **not** need to email your quiz results. A copy will be automatically sent to the Alternate Assessment Team.
- Please ensure your **Justification Form** is submitted to AAparticipation@doe.nj.gov by **January 30, 2026**.



Tier 1 Universal Technical Assistance: Alternate Assessment 1% Participation Cap Quiz

