

Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool for California

The individualized education program (IEP) team determines an individual student's eligibility to participate in an alternate assessment. To guide and support IEP teams in determining whether a student is most appropriately assessed with an alternate assessment, the California Department of Education (CDE) having consulted with its Assessment Development and Administration Division and Special Education Division, has developed this optional Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool. For students eligible for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), the IEP team may use this tool to determine if an alternate assessment is appropriate for the student.

Background

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law, replacing and updating the No Child Left Behind Act. The purpose of ESSA “*is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.*”¹ As part of the assessment provisions of ESSA, the law requires that the vast majority of students take a state's general assessment at various grade levels, as this helps to measure educational progress.² To help maintain a critical focus on educational equity and excellence for all students, only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may take an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. ESSA limits the number of students who may take such assessments to 1 percent of all tested students in a given subject.³

While many states have been able to meet the 1.0 percent limit, California has continued to exceed the 1.0 percent cap.⁴ Eventually, if California is not able to lower the rate of students taking the alternate assessment, the US Department of Education could withhold Title I, Part A state administrative funds.⁵

¹Every Student Succeeds Act. 2015. 20 USC § 1001. <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

²US Department of Education. 2017. Every Student Succeeds Act: Assessments under Title 1, Part A & Title 1, Part B: Summary of Final Regulations.

³Every Student Succeeds Act: Assessments under Title 1, Part A & Title 1, Part B: Summary of Final Regulations (2017): <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaassessmentfactsheet1207.pdf>

⁴National Center on Educational Outcomes. 2020. “AA-AAS Participation Rate from 2007–08 to 2016–17.” Data Analytics, no.12. https://tableau.ahc.umn.edu/t/ICI/views/AA-AAStrend0708-1617/Story1?iframeSizedToWindow=true&embed=y&:showAppBanner=false&:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no

⁵Rooney, P., and Ryder, R. 2019. “Information Regarding Consequences for States Not Meeting the Requirement to Assess Not More Than 1.0 Percent of Students on the Alternate Assessment,” memorandum from the US Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/07/state1capconsequences19final.pdf>

Instructions for Use

This tool is divided into four parts, Part A through Part D. IEP teams should work through the document, starting with Part A. At the end of each part, the team should review whether the student meets the criteria for alternate assessment. After reviewing the information, if a student does not meet the eligibility criteria, the student may not be eligible to participate in the CAAs for English language arts/literacy (ELA), mathematics, and science or the Alternate ELPAC.

Throughout the tool, IEP teams must review multiple sources of information, including the student's IEP and other data, such as results from formative assessments, evidence-based interventions, assistive technology assessment, and the student's cumulative folder documenting supports and services. When using this tool to document the IEP team's decision, all members of the IEP team should sign the form and attach the completed form to the student's IEP.

Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool for California

Student Name: _____ Grade Level: _____ Date: _____

SSID: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Part A—Determining Initial Eligibility

Directions: Complete the first two questions to determine whether the student may be eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

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

No, the student does not have an IEP.



Stop here. The student is not eligible for alternate assessment.

Yes, the student has a current IEP.



Proceed to the next statement.

2. Review the student's identified disability, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) eligibility categories.

The student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:

- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment (only)



Stop here. The student is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

The student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:

- Deafness/hearing impairment
- Emotional disturbance
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Visual impairment

A student identified with these disability categories very rarely will be a student with a most significant cognitive disability and will rarely, if ever, qualify for the alternate assessment.



Proceed to **Part B**.

The student meets state eligibility criteria under the following disability category designations:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Traumatic brain injury

A student identified with any of these disability categories may have a cognitive disability. However, fewer than half of the students in these categories may have a most significant cognitive disability that would qualify them for the alternate assessment.



Proceed to **Part B**.

Part B—Determining Whether the Student Has a Most Significant Cognitive Disability

Directions: Select the column in each of three adaptive skills domains (Conceptual, Social, and Practical) that best describes the student's daily functioning. After reviewing all available data, if the team still struggles to decide between two columns, presume competence and select the column to the left. For example, if the team is trying to decide between 2 point or 3 point, select 2 point.

Conceptual Domain

The Conceptual Domain covers skills that are needed to communicate, apply academic skills, and manage and accomplish tasks.

1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student meets grade-level standards in all content areas. • The student has age-appropriate receptive and expressive communication skills, including conversation skills verbally or through a communication device. • The student expresses and makes independent choices, exhibits self-control, and takes responsibility for choices at an age-appropriate level. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has difficulty learning academic content aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), or 2012 English language development (ELD) standards but is making progress with appropriate supports. • After learning new content, the student may need additional practice with direct instruction to generalize the new skills into daily living activities. • The student has some age-appropriate receptive and expressive communication skills (verbally or through a communication device), uses and understands simple, nonverbal communication and can follow simple, age-appropriate directions and routines with prompting. • The student may have been referred for an initial evaluation during elementary school due to academic difficulties. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has difficulty learning grade-level academic content across all subject areas and may require multiple tiers of intervention and designated supports. • The student may need instruction aligned with the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Prioritized Core Content Connectors (CCCs), Essential Understandings (EUs) for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, the CA NGSS Science Connectors (SCs), or the ELD Connectors to build base skills to get back to grade level. • The student may struggle to generalize skills outside the classroom, even with assistance and practice. • The student has difficulty communicating wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas but receptively understands messages. • The student struggles to follow directions and routines without significant assistance. • The student may have been referred for an evaluation in preschool or kindergarten based on developmental differences. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has significant difficulty learning academic content and may require instruction that is designed by clustering grade-level standards into life-applied units of study with intensive accommodations. • The student requires significantly modified curriculum and instruction derived from the CA CCSS Prioritized CCCs, and EUs, CA NGSS SCs, or ELD Connectors and likely is unable to apply or generalize skills outside the classroom setting. • The student may be unable to clearly express wants and needs and may not seem to understand the messages conveyed by others. • The student likely requires maximum adult assistance to communicate. • The student requires layers of supports (accommodations, scaffolding, or unlisted resources for access) and assistive technologies to follow directions and daily routine activities. • The student was most likely identified with developmental delays as an infant or toddler and received early intervention services through the California Department of Developmental Services Early Start program.

Social Domain

The Social Domain covers behaviors needed to engage in interpersonal interactions, act with social responsibility, and use of leisure time. This includes social competence, self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté (wariness), social problem-solving, following rules/obeying laws, and avoiding being victimized.

1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student displays age-appropriate social, communication, and leisure skills. • The student can initiate and maintain friendships, and express and recognize emotions with peers who are the same age. • The student engages in play and recreational activities without additional support. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student may have difficulty with social interactions (e.g., may misinterpret peers' social cues or others may consider the student's actions immature). • The student has communication, language, and conversation skills that are less concrete or more immature than peers who are the same age. • The student may have challenges in regulating emotion and behavior in an age-appropriate manner, and these challenges may be noticed by peers and adults. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has social, behavioral, and communication skills markedly different from peers who are the same age. • The student can be understood but uses a mode of communication that is much less complex than peers who are the same age. • The student may use behaviors to communicate. • The student may not perceive or interpret social cues accurately. • The student often needs significant support to engage in social situations or use communication skills. • The student may be easily persuaded to do things that go against the rules or safe boundaries when coaxed to do so. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student often uses behaviors to communicate. • The student has very limited communication skills in terms of vocabulary and grammar. • The student may be in the process of developing a mode of communication, may be described as nonverbal, or uses very limited non- symbolic communication. • The student requires significant adult assistance to communicate with peers or adults and may require layers of support (e.g., simple speech, visuals, gestures) to communicate. • The student may not yet show understanding of symbolic communication with speech or gesture.

Practical Domain

The Practical Domain covers behaviors needed to address personal and health needs; take care of home, classroom, or work settings; and function in a school or community.

1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is able to follow safety rules and functions in the community and classroom setting similarly to peers who are the same age. • The student independently performs self-care activities such as eating, dressing, and taking care of personal hygiene. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student often functions age-appropriately in personal care daily living activities and using community resources. • The student displays recreational skills typically on the same level as peers, although some additional support may be needed. • The student may need support in navigating the school and community and may need reminders about being mindful of safety hazards. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student may need support to care for personal needs (e.g., eating, dressing, toileting needs), may have needed an extended period of explicit teaching in these areas, and may require prompting or cues. • The student often requires additional support and learning opportunities for recreational skills. • The student requires intensive support to safely navigate the school and community. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student requires significant support and direct instruction across all activities of daily living (e.g., meals, dressing, bathing, toileting needs) or may be dependent on others for all aspects of physical care, health, and safety. • The student requires intensive teaching and ongoing support for recreational and navigation skills, not because of physical ability but because of significant cognitive needs. • The student requires supervision at all times.

Determining Whether the Student Has a Most Significant Cognitive Disability

The characteristics of students who qualify for the alternate assessment will fall almost exclusively in the 4-point range, with no more than one characteristic in the 3-point range.

The student scores 10 or fewer points.



Stop here. The student is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

The student scores 11 points or more.
The student has a most significant cognitive disability.



Proceed to **Part C**.

Part C—Determining if the student requires direct individualized instruction aligned to the CCSS, extended and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

Directions: Select the column that best describes the student’s grade- and age-appropriate curriculum, instruction, supports, accommodations, and assistive technology needs. After reviewing all available data, if the team still is struggling to decide between two columns, **presume competence** and select the column to the left. For example, if the team is trying to decide between 2 point or 3 point, select 2 point.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

This section describes the student’s daily learning needs as outlined in the IEP.

1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student’s present levels of performance on the IEP indicate that skills are closely aligned with grade-level standards, concepts, and skills, with present-level data showing skill gaps represented within the CCSS. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student’s IEP includes annual goals and objectives aligned with the CCSS and may include short-term learning objectives aligned with the Prioritized CCCs and EUs for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, the CA NGSS SCs, or the ELD Connectors in prescriptive area(s) of data-determined need. The student’s instruction and assessment are aligned with grade-level targets that build in complexity from Prioritized CCCs and EUs toward achievement of learning aligned with the CCSS. The student’s IEP requires specially designed instruction that is standards-based and includes explicit instruction in all content areas for grade-level standards. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student’s IEP includes goals and objectives that target modified grade-level standards within the Prioritized CCCs and EUs for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, the CA NGSS SCs, or the ELD Connectors. The student’s instruction and assessments are aligned with modified grade-level targets within the Prioritized CCCs and EUs, CA NGSS SCs, and ELD Connectors. The student’s IEP requires specially designed instruction that is standards-based and includes life-applied, grade-level learning. The student requires accommodations and may require unlisted resources. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student’s IEP includes present level of performance statements that align learner data with grade-level standards through the Prioritized CCCs and EUs, CA NGSS SCs, or the ELD Connectors. The student’s instruction and assessments are based on student data, likely showing skill gaps within the Prioritized CCCs and EUs, CA NGSS SCs, or ELD Connectors. The student’s IEP requires specially designed instruction that is standards-based and includes life-applied, grade-level learning. The student requires extensive accommodations and unlisted resources.

Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations

This section describes the accessibility resources needed for the student to participate meaningfully in daily instruction and assessment activities.

1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's IEP outlines a list of accessibility resources presented in the California Assessment Accessibility Resources Matrix, under Universal Tools, Designated Supports, that are provided during instruction and assessment to support access. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's IEP outlines a list of accessibility resources presented in the California Assessment Accessibility Resources Matrix, under Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations that are provided during instruction and assessment to support access. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's IEP outlines a list of accessibility resources presented in the California Assessment Accessibility Resources Matrix, under Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations that are provided during instruction and assessment to support access. The student requires additional individualized accommodations, unlisted resources, and scaffolds that change the construct. These also are provided during instruction and assessment to support access. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's IEP outlines the use of individualized unlisted resources, accommodations, and materials beyond those that are presented in the California Assessment Accessibility Resources Matrix to meet the cognitive and physical task demands of instruction and assessment. These additional supports address the communication, motor, and/or sensory needs of the student and provide the learner with opportunities to show what they know and can do.

Assistive Technology

This section describes the use of assistive technologies needed for the student to actively engage and participate meaningfully and productively in daily activities in **school, home, community, and work** environments.

Note: The assistive technology box on the Special Factors page of the IEP should be a quick reference before taking a deeper look into the supports, services, and testing accommodations section of the IEP. There are more than 10 domains of assistive technology available for IEP teams to consider.

1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<p>The student must meet one of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s IEP team has determined the student does not need any assistive technology. • The student had an assistive technology evaluation completed and it was determined that no assistive technology is required as indicated in the check box on the IEP. 	<p>The student must meet one of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student requires assistive technology supports and services. The IEP team is in the process of learning about assistive technology and determining specific supports for the student. • The student’s IEP includes assistive technology in the Special Instructional Factors, Measurable Annual Goals, Specially Designed Services, and/or Statewide and District Testing, as presented in the Assistive Technology Consideration in the IEP document and the California Assessment Accessibility Resources Matrix. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s IEP outlines required assistive technology supports and services. • An assistive technology assessment was used or is in the process of being used to feature match individualized, assistive technology to support academic instruction, communication, daily living, seating/positioning, mobility, sensory and/or motor needs, etc., or the student currently is learning to use or is independently using assistive technology as a scaffold to access learning in their environment. 	<p>The student must meet all of the following conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s IEP describes complex physical, sensory, or medical needs across most of the assistive technology domains. It may be challenging to determine access for the use of assistive technologies. • The student currently requires person-dependent supports or scaffolds that may be replaced with assistive technology once feature matching is determined.

Determining Whether the Student Requires Extensive, Direct, Individualized Instruction, and Substantial Supports

The characteristics of students who qualify for the alternate assessment will fall almost exclusively in the 4-point range, with no more than one characteristic in the 3-point range.

The student scores 10 or fewer points.



Stop here. The student is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

The student scores 11 points or more. The student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction with learning targets aligned with the Prioritized CCCs, EUs, CA NGSS SCs, or ELD Connectors and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.



Proceed to **Part D**.

Part D—Additional Concerns

The decision to participate in the alternate assessment is made after reviewing the entire decision-making tool and the collection of evidence used in parts A, B, and C. The decision to participate in the alternate assessment is **not** made based solely on any of the following considerations.

- Disability category, educational environment, or instructional setting
- Instructional reading level is below grade level
- Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
- Administration decision or anticipated impact of student scores on the accountability system
- Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional duress, if taking general assessments
- Poor attendance or extended absences
- English learner designation or other social, cultural, or economic difference
- Need for accommodations (such as assistive technology or augmentative and alternative communication) to participate in the general assessment

Based on the review of evidence in parts A, B, and C, and ensuring that the decision is not based solely on any of the considerations above, does the student meet all criteria for participation in the alternate assessment?

- Yes. The student meets all criteria in parts A, B, and C and will participate in the alternate assessments.
- No. The student does not meet all criteria in parts A, B, and C and is not eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.

School District Representative Name _____ Date _____

Intervention Specialist Name _____ Date _____

General Education Teacher Name _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____ Date _____

Glossary

accommodation

Changes made to **how** a student accesses learning content, communication, environments, materials, or assessments. Testing accommodations are adjustments to the testing conditions, test format, or test administration that provide equitable access during assessments for students with disabilities and students who are English learners. Testing accommodations do not change what is being measured. Accommodations must be permitted on CAASPP tests to all eligible students, if specified in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

adaptive skills

Practical, everyday skills needed to function and meet the demands of one's environment, including the skills necessary to take care of oneself effectively and independently and interact with other people (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2017).

assistive technology

An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of that device (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Visit the Assistive Technology & Accessible Educational Materials Center website at <https://ataem.org/> for more information about assistive technology.

assistive technology considerations in the IEP

Beginning with the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, the IEP team is required to consider the assistive technology needs of every student receiving special education services. The "Assistive Technology Considerations" in the IEP document helps teams navigate this process.

assistive technology domains

There are thousands of assistive technology supports that might assist a student to access, participate, and become more independent in a variety of school activities and tasks, including low- and high-tech options. These supports are organized into more than 10 domains.

augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)

Includes all forms of communication (other than speech) that are used to express thought, needs, wants, and ideas (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2017).

California Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Educational standards describe what students should know and be able to do in each subject in each grade. In California, the State Board of Education decides on the standards for all students, from kindergarten through grade twelve. The CDE helps schools make sure that all students are meeting the standards.

- **California CCSS Core Content Connectors:** The CAAs for ELA and mathematics are part of the CAASPP System. The purpose of the CAAs is to measure what students know and can do. These measures help identify and address gaps in knowledge or skills early so students can receive the support they need. The CAAs are aligned with alternate achievement standards—called the Core Content Connectors (CCCs)—and are linked to the Common Core State Standards for ELA and mathematics.
- **California CCSS Essential Understandings:** The Essential Understandings (EUs)—are derived from the CCCs and are the basic key ideas or concepts students should know for each respective standard. The EUs are what is most essential and most critical for students to learn.

Category Definitions—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA categories are defined as follows by 34 CFR Section 300.8. (Please note in the definitions of disability categories below that most categories typically do not include intellectual impairment; therefore, they rarely will align with the participation criteria for the alternate assessment.)

- **“Autism”** means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with “autism” are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines and unusual responses to sensory experiences. (a) Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (B)(10)(d)(v) of this rule. (b) A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism if the criteria in paragraph (B)(10)(d)(i) of this rule are satisfied.
- **“Intellectual disability”** means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term “intellectual disability” was formerly termed “mental retardation”.
- **“Deaf-blindness”** means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.
- **“Deafness”** means a hearing impairment that is so severe the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

- **“Emotional disturbance”** means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance: (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (f) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (B)(10)(d)(v) of this rule.
- **“Hearing impairment”** means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but is not included under the definition of deafness in this rule.
- **“Multiple disabilities”** means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability, blindness, or intellectual disability orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. “Multiple disabilities” does not include deaf-blindness.
- **“Other health impairment”** means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that: (a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (b) adversely affects a child’s educational performance.
- **“Orthopedic impairment”** means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (for example, poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis) and impairments from other causes (for example, cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
- **“Specific learning disability”** means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
- **“Speech or language impairment”** means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

- **“Traumatic brain injury”** means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
- **“Visual impairment,”** including blindness, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance.
 - The term “visual impairment” includes both partial sight and blindness.
 - The term “visual impairment” does not include a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes, such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

designated supports

Within California’s statewide testing accessibility system, designated supports are available to all students when determined for use by an educator or team of educators (with parent/guardian and student input, as appropriate) or specified in the student’s IEP or Section 504 plan.

English learner student

English learner students are students whose primary or home language is identified as other than English who need language assistance to effectively participate in school instructional programs.

feature match

A feature match means matching a learner’s strengths and needs with resources of tools, instructional methods, or materials.

modes for communication

Modes for communication can include, but are not limited to, sign language, bilingualism, cued speech, verbal therapy, braille, assistive technology devices, and written language.

significant cognitive disability

Significant cognitive disability is not a disability category under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Students with the most significant cognitive disability are those students who meet all the criteria in Part B of this tool. Students are eligible to participate in the alternate assessment if they meet the criteria in parts A through D of this tool.

specially designed instruction

Specially designed instruction is “...adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction (i) to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and (ii) ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children” (34 CFR Sec. 300.39[b][3]).

universal tools

Universal tools are resources or preferences that are either built into the assessment system or provided externally by test administrators. Universal tools are available for all students taking California’s CAASPP and ELPAC Tests. Since these resources are available for all students, they are not classified as accommodations.

unlisted resources

Unlisted resources are instructional resources that a student regularly uses in daily instruction, assessment, or both, that have not been previously identified as a universal tool, designated support, or accommodation. Unlisted resources shall be made available, if specified in the eligible student’s IEP or Section 504 plan, only on approval by the CDE. For unlisted resources that do not change the measured construct, a student who receives these accessibility resources will receive a valid score.

For unlisted resources that change the construct of what was being tested:

- CAASPP—These are not considered valid for aggregation of scores. The student will receive a score with a footnote that the test was administered under conditions that resulted in a score that may not be an accurate representation of the student’s achievement.
- ELPAC—The student will receive the lowest obtainable scale score for the affected domain when an approved unlisted resource changed the construct of what was being tested. However, the student’s test results will still be used for aggregation of scores.

Resources

- The CDE CA Assessment Accessibility Resources Matrix web page, available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/accessibilityresources.asp>, provides information about universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations.
- California Student Assessment Accessibility graphics, available on the CDE Student Accessibility Resources web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/accesssupport.asp>, include one-page graphics that show which accessibility resources are available on each assessment.
- CAASPP and ELPAC Accessibility Guide web page: <https://ca-toms-help.ets.org/accessibility-guide/introduction/manual-content/>
- Guidance on Using Eye Gaze as an Alternate Response Option (PDF): <https://www.caaspp.org/rsc/pdfs/CAASPP.eye-gazing-guidance.pdf>

- Smarter Balanced Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners web page: <https://smarterbalanced.org/our-system/accessibility/>
- Individual Student Assessment Accessibility Profile (ISAAP) Tool website: <https://isaap.ets.org/>
- How to Use the Online ISAAP Tool YouTube video tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S65paPkb10s>

Additional Resources

- Assistive Technology & Accessible Educational Materials Center Assistive Technology Domains (Word document): https://www.ocali.org/up_doc/AT-Domains.docx
- California Special Education Reference, California Code of Regulations, Title2, Section 3051.19 Assistive Technology Service. web page at <https://caser.specialedreference.com/?s=62311>
- CDE Assistive Technology Checklist web page: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/atexmpl.asp>
- CDE California English Language Development (ELD) Standards (PDF) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/eldstndspublication14.pdf>
- CDE Common Core State Standards web page: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/>
- ELD Connectors for the Alternate ELPAC (Word document): <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ep/documents/eldconnectorsaltelpac.docx>
- CCSS, Prioritized English Language Arts CCCs, and Essential Understandings: Reading (Word document): <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/ncscreading.doc>
- CCSS, Prioritized English Language Arts CCCs, and Essential Understandings: Writing (Word document): <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/ncscwriting.doc>
- CCSS, Prioritized Mathematics CCCs, and Essential Understandings (Word document): <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/ncscmath.doc>
- NGSS for California Public Schools web page: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/sc/ngssstandards.asp>
- NGSS CCCs for Alternate Assessments (Word document): <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/ngssaltconnectors.docx>

