

Participation Guidelines

Which Students Should Take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

Students with significant cognitive disabilities should be recommended to take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs if they:

- Are classified and reported to the state as an English learner; **and**
- Are students with an IEP who are reported in one of many primary disability categories; **and**
- Receive substantially modified instruction in academic content and English language development due to the severity of their cognitive disability; **and**
- Receive intensive, individualized instruction in order to acquire, demonstrate, and generalize knowledge and skills, and adapt their behavior to the environment; **and**
- Are unable to demonstrate knowledge and skills on a standardized paper or online test, even with the use of accommodations; **and**
- Are also assigned to take the state's alternate academic assessment (MCAS-Alt), or would be likely to be designated for the state's alternate academic assessment if it were offered in the student's grade; **and**
- Whose IEP team includes an ESL language and/or communication specialist and annually revisits the decision to assign the student to take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

A student should not be assigned to take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs solely because he or she:

- has previously scored at the lowest achievement level on the standard ACCESS or MCAS test(s), or requires accommodations to take the standard test;
- has taken an alternate assessment previously (since this is an annual decision);
- has been excluded from general curriculum instruction;
- has been absent from school excessively;
- has not received adequate instruction in English language development (either by an ESL teacher or someone trained/endorsed to address the student's English language development);
- has a specific disability (e.g., all students with intellectual disabilities should not automatically be assigned to take an alternate assessment);
- attends a program where it is expected that students will take an alternate assessment;
- is economically disadvantaged or a child in foster care;
- requires, but does not currently have access to, an alternative augmentative communication system or device.

IEP teams should carefully consider whether to recommend an EL student for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, since this may ultimately make it difficult for the student to exit EL status.