

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Special Education Unit Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Curriculum and Assessment, April 2020

Alternate Assessment

Arkansas is required to submit to the US Department of Education a request for an extension on its 1% Alternate Assessment Waiver. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 mandates that any state with more than 1% of its tested population participating in an alternate assessment must request a waiver from the US Department of Education. In 2019, 1.32% of Arkansas students participated in the alternate assessment for literacy and math, and 1.29% of Arkansas students participated in the alternate assessment for science. Districts that administered the alternate assessment to more than one percent of its students were required to submit justification documentation to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education Unit (DESE-SEU). Based on the information provided in the justification documents, required actions were put into place for districts. Districts submitted documentation showing that the actions have been completed. All required documentation from districts has been received. For districts anticipating administering the alternate assessment to more than two percent of its students, DESE-SEU staff made onsite visits to review student due process folders.

On January 29, 2020, the DESE-SEU received approval from the US Department of Education for our 1% Alternate Assessment Waiver Extension Request. Work is ongoing to ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in the alternate assessment.

Work is currently being done to ascertain whether or not the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria should be updated to include more specific information.

Alternate Assessment Monitoring

Members of the DESE-SEU have collaborated with the DESE Assessment Unit in the monitoring of testing sessions for the DLM alternate assessment. To date, twenty-seven districts have been monitored.

Professional Development

The Curriculum and Assessment team will be providing professional development this spring in four educational service cooperatives pertaining to the Arkansas dyslexia law. Additionally, a member of the team recently provided training to novice special education teachers from Northwest Arkansas. The novice teachers have been providing special education for three years or less.

Members of the DESE-SEU are currently developing a training for self-contained teachers to be provided at all educational cooperatives this summer. This training will focus on using the DLM Essential Elements in the writing of IEP goals and for instruction.