

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

Alternate Pathway to Graduation

The Alternate Pathway to Graduation has been implemented for current ninth grade students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This pathway is intended to positively affect teaching and learning for students who meet the criteria and participate in this pathway. Trainings have been provided at every educational service cooperative and at several districts. Information pertaining to the pathway may be found at tinyurl.com/ArAltPathway.

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 stated that any state that has 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 have been put into place for districts. Districts are currently submitting documentation showing that the actions have been completed. The deadline for submission of documentation is January 31, 2020. For districts anticipating administering the alternate assessment to more than two percent of its students, DESE-SEU staff is making onsite visits to review student due process folders.

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 English Language Proficiency Assessment

Arkansas has joined a collaborative of states working to develop an alternate English language proficiency assessment for students who are English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. The collaborative was recently awarded a federal grant for the development of this assessment. Tabitha Riendeau and Robin Stripling from the DESE-SEU and Dr. Alan Lytle from the DESE Assessment Unit are the state members on this team.

Collaborative Work

Members of the Curriculum and Assessment team are working with other DESE units to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are being met. Tabitha Riendeau attends the DESE Math Unit's meetings and Robin Stripling attends the DESE Literacy Unit's meetings as well as the State Dyslexia Specialists' meetings. Additionally, Danita Pitts attends the State Dyslexia Specialists' meetings. Robin and Danita will join the state's literacy specialists at the Plain Talk for Literacy and Learning conference in January.