

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

Statewide testing was cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year, so there is no official data to include in a new waiver extension request; however, enrollment data indicated that 1.13% of students were expected to participate in the alternate assessment. The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Special Education Unit (DESE-SEU) submitted our waiver extension request for 2020-21 on June 14. The waiver extension request included 2018-19 testing data and 2019-20 assessment portal enrollment data.

Professional Development

The Curriculum and Assessment team has developed two virtual trainings pertaining to alternate assessment. As of mid-June, 444 teachers across the state had attended a training based on the updated alternate assessment criteria. Five additional sessions on this topic will be held in late July and early August. As of mid-June, 471 teachers have registered to attend a training that will explain how to use the Dynamic Learning Maps Essential Elements in IEP goal writing.

Alternate English Language Proficiency Exam Development

Arkansas has joined a collaborative of states working to develop an alternate English language proficiency assessment for students who are English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. 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. The team meets on a weekly basis.