



TO: Montana Educators
FROM: Jessica Eilertson, State Assessment Director
Frank Podobnik, Special Education Director
RE: Eligibility Guidelines for MontCAS Alternate Assessments
DATE: Fall 2017

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires that “The state has established goals for the performance of children with disabilities in the state that are consistent, to the maximum extent appropriate, with other goals and standards for children established by the state.” IDEA further requires that all students be included in the state’s accountability systems.

For student, who as a result of their disability cannot participate in the state’s general assessment, the state education agency (Montana Office of Public Instruction) is required to construct and implement guidelines for their participation in an alternate test. Montana meets this requirement through the following alternate assessments, the results of which will be included in the state accountability system on a yearly basis.

- Science CRT: Science CRT-Alternate Grades 4, 8, and 10
- Smarter ELA and Math: MSAA Grades 3 through 8
- ACT with Writing (ELA and Math): MSAA Grade 11
- ELP: Alternate for English Language Learners Grades K through 12

Eligibility Criteria Worksheet
MontCAS Alternate Assessments

This form is intended to assist IEP teams in determining whether the student should participate in the general or alternate assessments and to address documentation requirements under IDEA. The IEP team must decide which MontCAS assessments (general or alternate) the student will participate in. When completed, this form must be attached to the student's IEP.

Student: _____

District: _____ **Grade/Age:** _____

For each of the statements below, circle yes or no

Does the student have an active IEP and receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)? YES NO

Do the student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum? YES NO

Do the student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application of skills, as illustrated in the student's IEP's annual goals and short term objectives? YES NO

Does the student require direct and extensive instructions to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer new skills? YES NO

If you answer "NO" to any of the above questions, the student must participate in the general assessment. If all answers are "YES", the student is eligible to take the alternate assessment and considered to be a student with a significant cognitive disability.

*The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in an alternate assessment **may not be based on:***

- *Excessive or extended absence*
- *Disability category*
- *Social, cultural or economic difference*
- *The amount of time receiving special education services and/or*
- *Academic achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers*

NOTES:

- IF a special education student is in grades 3-8 or grade 10 or 11, or in an ungraded program, and is of the chronological age of a grade 3-8 or grade 10 or 11 student, the student's special education teacher must review the student's current IEP to ensure that the IEP appropriately documents the student's participation in the general or alternate assessment.
- In addition, students who are designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and also meet the criteria to participate in an alternate assessment are required to participate in ELP test for as long as they are designated as LEP in grades K-12. This means that IEP teams need to take extra care to consider statewide assessment participation for students who meet the criteria in all grades and document participation in the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs in the IEP.
- If the student's IEP does not include all of the required assessment documentation for the alternates and/or it is felt that the student may participate in the assessments in a different manner than was previously determined (ie: instead of an alternate, the student can participate in the general assessment with or without accommodations), the IEP team must reconvene to address how the student will participate. It is permissible to hold this IEP meeting through a teleconference call with IEP team participants.
- Students who are eligible for the MontCAS alternate assessments must participate in all of them and in all content areas offered.
- If you have a student who is eligible to take the alternate assessments, mark the Alternate Assessment checkbox under the **Statewide Assessments editor** in your AIM system. For students who are both eligible to take the alternate assessments and are designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP), please indicate LEP in AIM and also mark the Alternate Assessment checkbox.

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