

APPENDIX F

ALTERNATE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Last Reviewed: September 2025

Alternate Eligibility Criteria Overview

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 students, who, because 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.

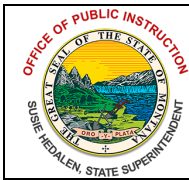
<input type="checkbox"/> Alternate Science: Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	Grades 5, 8, and 11
<input type="checkbox"/> ELA and Math: Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	Grades 3 - 8
<input type="checkbox"/> ACT with Writing (ELA and Math): Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	Grade 11
<input type="checkbox"/> English Language Proficiency: WIDA ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Assessment(s)	Grades K - 12

PLEASE NOTE:

- IF a special education student is in grades 3-8 or grade 11, or in an ungraded program, and is of the chronological age of a grade 3-8 or grade 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 English Learners (EL) and meet the criteria to participate in an alternate assessment are required to participate in the ELP test for as long as they are designated as EL 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 Assessment 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 (i.e., 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 alternate assessments **must participate in all of them and in all content areas offered.** *The state of Montana is a no-opt out state, meaning students must partake in required assessments.*
- If you have a student who is eligible to take the alternate assessments, mark the Alternate Assessment checkbox under the **Statewide Assessments editor** in the EDUCATE (IC) system. For students who are both eligible to take the alternate assessments and are designated as EL please indicate EL in EDUCATE (IC) **AND** mark the Alternate Assessment checkbox.

For more information on reporting EL in the state’s student information system, EDUCATE (IC), visit [EDUCATE \(IC\) Website](#).

For more information on state testing for ELs, review the Statewide Assessment Participation and Registration on the [MontCAS Statewide Testing Website](#).



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Eligibility Criteria Worksheet

Statewide 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
Does the student participate in statewide alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards?	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*