



**To:** Montana Educators  
**From:** OPI Assessment Division  
**Policy:** Student Eligibility and Participation in MontCAS Assessments  
**Date:** 2021-2022 School Year  
**Contact:** OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1-844-867-2569  
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### Memorandum of Eligibility Criteria Worksheet for Alternate Assessments

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.

Assessment Name	Grades Tested
<b>Montana Science Assessment:</b> Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA)	Grades 5 and 8
<b>Smarter English Language Arts (ELA) and Math:</b> Multi State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)	Grades 3 – 8
<b>ACT with Writing (Science):</b> Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA)	Grade 11
<b>ACT with Writing (ELA and Math):</b> Multi State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)	Grade 11
<b>English Language Proficiency (ELP):</b> Alternate for English Language Learners	Grades K – 12

**Note:**

The selection of accessibility supports (i.e., universal features, designated features, accommodations) is a systematic data-based process that is made by educators familiar with individual student needs. For English Learners (ELs) and students being served by IEPs, supports should be discussed, selected, and documented at plan meetings. The supports that are provided on statewide assessments must be familiar to the student and match those supports and accommodations that are provided for classroom instruction and assessments throughout the school year.



### 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:** \_\_\_\_\_

A student with a significant cognitive disability may be eligible to take the alternate statewide assessment if the IEP team determines that the student meets all the following criteria.

**For each of the statements below, check YES or NO:**

**Does the student have an active IEP and receives 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 illustrate in the student's annual goals and short-term objectives?\***      YES       NO

**Does the student require direct and extensive instruction 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 with or without accommodations. 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



## NOTE:

- IF a special education student is in grades 3-8 or 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 also 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 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 EL, please indicate EL in AIM and also mark the Alternate Assessment checkbox.

### 2021-2022 Updates:

This Page 2 "Eligibility Criteria Worksheet" assists IEP teams in determining whether a student should participate in the Alternate Assessments for the 2021-2022 school year along with the [Learner Characteristic Inventory \(LCI\) for Alternate Assessments](#). Based on the public comment procedures for the "Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines", the OPI will maintain this worksheet until the end of the school year. Effective on August 1, 2022, the OPI will implement the new eligibility guidelines for district use.

The [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines](#) guidance document was published in March 2022 for school district training and technical assistance purposes and will be effective in August 2022. This allows school districts time to transition and implement the updated policies and procedures. The new eligibility guidelines detail the OPI's policies and procedures for assessing students with significant cognitive disabilities (SwSCDs) using Montana's Alternate Assessments.