

Arkansas Department of Education – Special Education Unit Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Curriculum and Assessment, January 2019

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 having more than 1% of its tested population participating in an alternate assessment must request a waiver from the US Department of Education. In 2017, 1.37% of Arkansas students participated in the alternate assessment for literacy and 1.39% participated in the alternate assessment for math. In 2018, 1.21% of Arkansas students participated in the alternate assessment for literacy and 1.20% participated in the alternate assessment for math. While the percentage of Arkansas students participating in alternate assessment declined, we are still required to submit a waiver extension request. That waiver extension request was submitted to the US Department of Education on December 7, 2018. Additionally, the ESSA requires that each district complete and submit justification if 1% or more of its student participate in the alternate assessment. After the ADE-SEU reviewed all district justification submissions, tiered actions were put into place. Those actions included the following:

- Districts develop a plan of action to ensure that assessment decisions are appropriate
- Districts review their data pertaining to alternate assessment participation
- Districts complete all components of the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) First Contact Survey
- Districts and ADE-SEU staff review student information
- Districts and ADE-SEU staff examine data in order to identify disproportionality

Alternate Pathway to Graduation

Arkansas is moving forward in its efforts to put an alternate pathway to graduation in place for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Dynamic Learning Maps alternate achievement standards are in place for literacy, math, and science. Arkansas created alternate achievement standards for Civics, Economics, US History, World History, Art, and Health and Wellness which are currently being piloted. The ADE-SEU is working collaboratively with Virtual Arkansas to develop an online Fine Arts course for this group of students. Wendy Pascoe and Robin Stripling have joined a Community of Practice hosted by the National Center on Educational Outcomes to guide this work. Training is being planned for Summer 2019 to inform Arkansas educators of this new pathway.

English Learners with Disabilities

A task force has been formed to develop policy and guidance documents for educators pertaining to English Learners with disabilities. A task force of ADE-SEU staff, ADE English Speakers of Other Languages staff, special education teachers, and ESOL educators met in October to begin this work. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is providing support for this work. CCSSO will meet with ADE staff in January to collaborate on this project.

IDEA and the Arkansas Dyslexia Law

Robin Stripling provided training at multiple educational cooperatives in November and December to help general education teachers and special educators understand how the Arkansas Dyslexia Law and IDEA work together for students with disabilities. Additional trainings are scheduled for the spring.