

## Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are characterized by significantly below average cognitive functioning (IQ scores typically below 55 or 3 or more standard deviations below the mean) occurring with commensurate deficits in adaptive behavior that are frequently evident in early childhood. Further, the cognitive disability must significantly impact the child's performance and ability to generalize learning across settings (educational, home, community). Substantial modifications to the general education curriculum are required. Augmentative communication devices are often necessary to communicate with others. These students require substantial supports for all activities of daily living including meal preparation, dressing, grooming, and personal hygiene. Their personal safety is dependent upon constant supervision and will be a concern throughout their lifetime. They will likely require supported or assisted living which may involve a guardian when the student turns 18.

## Arkansas Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Tool

The Arkansas Alternate Assessment Eligibility Decision-Making Tool is to be used by Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in determining eligibility for Arkansas's chosen Alternate Assessment, Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM). DLM is appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who meet all four requirements listed below. Additional considerations are provided that further define the criteria and assist the IEP team in decision making. Factors that the IEP team should not consider in eligibility determination are also identified. Although each requirement must be met, the decision for participation in the alternate assessment must be based on a holistic view of the student and no single element.

The IEP team must answer "YES" to all four criteria in order for the student to be eligible to participate in the DLM. If the answer is "NO" to any of the questions, the student must participate in the ACT Aspire with or without accommodations. The IEP team will determine whether an eligible student shall participate in the DLM or the general assessment.

Does the student have a disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning?

Intellectual functioning well below average (IQ typically below 55 or 3.0 or more standard deviations below the mean).

\_\_\_ Yes

Does the student have a disability that significantly impacts adaptive behavior?

Adaptive behavior\* scores are typically two to three standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas.

\_\_\_ Yes

Does the student require extensive adaptations and supports in order to perform and/or participate meaningfully and productively in the everyday life activities of integrated school, home, community, and work environments?

A significant cognitive disability is pervasive, affecting student functioning across all academic, social, and community settings. The student is expected to require intensive and ongoing supports after graduation and throughout life.

\_\_\_ Yes

Does the student require substantial modifications to the general education curriculum?

Substantial modifications change the content expectation through a significant reduction in depth, breadth, and complexity of grade-level standards.

\_\_\_ Yes

\* The term *adaptive behavior* is defined as those skills that are essential for someone to live and function independently and safely in daily life. The student's post-secondary outcomes for independent living will likely require supported or assisted living and may involve a guardian when the student turns 18.

Eligibility determinations for the alternate assessment are NOT based on --

- IQ score or disability category alone (i.e., All students with an intellectual disability do not automatically meet the criteria for the alternate assessment.)
- English Learner (EL) status
- Poor attendance
- Expected poor performance on the general assessment
- Educational environment or instructional setting
- Low reading or achievement level
- Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional duress
- Impact of scores on accountability system
- Administrative decision