

Arkansas Special Education State Advisory Council Report

Curriculum and Assessment, October 2017

CCSSO Assessment Updates

The CCSSO State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) is meeting in Dallas, Texas, on October 24 and 25. The agenda focused on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and what its implementation will mean for students with disabilities. This group will continue to discuss the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), focusing on students with disabilities.

Waiver Request for Alternate Assessment

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject using the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities does not exceed one percent (1%) of the total number of students in the state assessed with Arkansas statewide assessments. States that anticipate that they will exceed 1.0 percent in alternate assessment participation must submit a waiver request to the US Department of Education ninety (90) days prior to the beginning of the State's alternate assessment testing window. Furthermore, the ESSA requires that each district complete and submit a justification when it anticipates exceeding 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject with the alternate assessment. For the 2016-2017 school year, the State's participation rate on the alternate assessment was approximately 1.38 percent of all students assessed with more than half of Arkansas districts exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold. Justifications by each district were reviewed by the Arkansas Department of Education on October 11. All district justifications will be posted and made publicly available, provided that the justification does not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student. Additional support will be provided to districts over the 1.0 percent threshold. The waiver request will be posted for public comment in the coming weeks. The request will be posted for public comment.

The waiver request must include

- A plan and timeline by which –
 - The State will improve the implementation of its guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment so that the State meeting the 1.0 percent cap in future school years;
 - The State will provide additional support and oversight to each district that the State anticipates will exceed the 1.0 percent threshold; and
 - The State will address any disproportionality in the percentage of students taking an alternate assessment.
- Evidence that the State provided an opportunity for the public and LEAs to comment and provide input;
- Copies of all comments and a description of how the State addressed the comments.

Alternate Assessment and Alternate Diploma

A task force convened on October 19 to review the participation guidelines for the alternate assessment and to begin work on a definition of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This work will support the State's development of an alternate diploma for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The task force will reconvene in November, December, and January.