**Actionable Steps to Reduce Over-Participation in the Alternate Assessments Aligned with
Alternate Academic Achievement Standards in Maryland**

Comparison of Participation Rates by Content Area:

Content Area	Alternate Assessment Based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS) Participation Rate 2018-2019	Alternate Assessment Based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS) Participation Rate 2019-2020	Alternate Assessment Based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS) Participation Rate 2020-2021	Alternate Assessment Based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS) Participation Rate 2021-2022
English Language Arts	1.07%	Not Administered	1.04%	1.14%
Mathematics	1.077%	Not Administered	1.05%	1.19%
Science	Information Not Available	Not Administered	1.18%	1.42%

Data for the 2021-2022 school year reflects that the participation rate for students with significant cognitive disabilities taking the alternate state assessment in Maryland has increased for the current school year despite intensive monitoring and correction activities. While the increase may be attributed to a variety of factors involving the impact on state assessment data during the pandemic, Maryland's current data shows an increase in the percentage of students participating in the alternate state assessment for the 2021-2022 school year. This proposed plan focuses on six main areas:

1. Revisions to current practices, procedures and documents;
2. Increasing partnerships and processes to address and improve communicative competence;
3. Increasing meaningful inclusive opportunities for students with significant disabilities, targeting pre-kindergarten through grade 5;
4. Increasing the capacity of general educators to meaningfully include students with significant needs in the general education setting;
5. Developing and implementing a comprehensive data collection, accountability and analysis structure to identify barriers for local education agencies (LEAs) who are above the 1% threshold and monitor corrective action and provide technical assistance (TA);

6. Identifying disproportionate representation among students participating in the alternate assessment at the state and LEA level, and implementing technical assistance to develop and monitor the implementation of corrective action plans.

Need: Clear and concise processes and procedures for finding students eligible for participation in the alternate assessment and eligible as a student with an intellectual disability that are consistent across the state.

Goal: By July 1, 2024, current practices, procedures, and documents will be reviewed, revised, and updated to support consistent assessment and disability category eligibility across the state as evidenced by 100% compliance evidenced by quarterly monitoring activities beginning December 1, 2023.

Objective	Partners	Activities	Deliverables
Use the work of the Intellectual Disability (ID) Workgroup to make recommendations for changes to increase consistency in language and decision-making.	Multidisciplinary ID Workgroup	Workgroup to: • Provide consistent definitions based on current research and benchmarking; • Revise and adapt existing checklists and practice documents to develop a comprehensive Guidance Document and accompanying Checklist for determining eligibility for ID in Maryland.	• Guidance Document from ID Workgroup • Intellectual Disability Checklist

Objective	Partners	• Activities	Deliverables
Build on ID checklist and definitions from ID Workgroup to develop checklist and guidance to determine significant cognitive disability.	Student Support Services (Psychology)	• Benchmark with LEAs to determine utility of "cut scores" based on data • Combine best practices from research, current practice, state guidance, recommendations from ID workgroup, to develop a checklist to identify a significant cognitive disability • Revise the "Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement" document to include specific information and tools to identify a significant cognitive disability	• Identifying Significant Cognitive Disability Checklist • Revisions to the "Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement" document.
Include the ID checklist and the Significant Cognitive Disability checklist in the Maryland On Line IEP (MOIEP) web-based tool.	Johns Hopkins Center for Technology in Education (CTE)	• Provide checklist to MOIEP to be included as a pop-up whenever a team checks that they are considering intellectual disability as an eligibility category. • Provide checklist to MOIEP to be included and incorporated into Appendix A as a pop-up whenever a team checks that they are considering a student eligible to participate in the AA-AAAS.	• Revisions to the MOIEP • Revisions to the MOIEP Process Guide

Objective	Partners	• Activities	Deliverables

Review and revise Appendix A and accompanying documents to provide more guidance and consistent decision-making.	Office of Attorney General
	Johns Hopkins CTE
	LEA Representatives
	Community Representatives
		• Create a committee including LEA and community representatives to review documents, revise existing documents.
		  o Provide more guidance in interpreting the legal language to reduce variability in decisions.
		  o Reduce the ability to make "questionable" decisions by clarifying terms, clarifying criteria, providing clear guidance.
			• Revisions to the IEP guidance
			• Revised MOIEPIEP forms

Need: LEAs are inconsistent in implementing correct procedures for identification of students to participate in the AA-AAAS.

Goal: By February 2024, all LEAs will have received guidance, professional learning opportunities, and technical assistance to correctly identify students eligible to participate in the alternate state assessment as evidenced by a reduction in total percentage of students eligible for the alternate assessment in at least 50% of locals over the 1% threshold for the Spring 2022 test administration.

Objective	Partners	Activities	Deliverables
Use the work of the ID Workgroup and the updated guidance documents and checklists to structure regionalized and targeted professional learning opportunities for LEAs.	ID Workgroup LEA Alternate Assessment Facilitators	• Develop professional learning to clearly define terms and reduce variability in decision-making (2.5 hours). • Include processes and procedures to complete revised forms in MOIEP, including ID checklist and Significant Disability Checklist, and Appendix A. • Include scenarios and problem-solving to demonstrate decision-making based on revisions and new and revised forms.	• Professional Learning Plan • Professional Learning Documents

Objective	Partners	• Activities	• Deliverables
Provide continued technical assistance and support for LEAs to reduce the number of students participating in the alternate assessment	LEA Teams	• LEAs will provide monthly data reports to MSDE Access Equity and Progress (AEP) Liaisons • LEAs reporting over 1% participation will receive targeted support through implementation of an internal monitoring plan, review of documentation, written report to MSDE of compliance with revised processes	• Technical Assistance Log • LEA Internal Monitoring Reports • LEA Monthly Data Reports

Need: Emphasis on importance of communication for all students, including those who are eligible for the alternate assessment.

Goal: By July 1, 2024, MSDE will develop partnerships with community members to develop an action plan to address communicative competence for students with significant cognitive disabilities and increase IEP team consideration of, and services for, students without a reliable means of communication.

Objectives	Partners	Activities	Deliverables
Reconstitute Assistive Technology (AT) State Steering Committee and establish subcommittee with LEA and community partners in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) needs to ensure LEAs have access to, and are using, the most current devices and methodologies.	LEA AT teams Community Partners Communications and Community Engagement American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Members	• Invite LEA representatives, community partners including ASHA, to meet as a committee to discuss the communication needs of students without reliable methods of communication. • Share ideas, create best practices document. • Make recommendations for an action plan to address needs of students with no reliable means of communication.	• Action Plan • Best Practices Document

Objective	Partners	• Activities	Deliverables
Revise the communication section of the MOIEP and Appendix A to develop consideration more fully for students with no reliable means of communication.	Johns Hopkins CTE LEA Representatives Community Representatives	• Revise the MOIEP Special Considerations section to ask whether the student has a reliable means of communication. o If not, the team should consider enhanced services to support the student's communication needs. • Include consideration of the student's communicative competence in determining eligibility to participate in the AA-AAAS on Appendix A.	• MOIEP revisions to the Special Consideration Section • Revisions to the MOIEP Process Guide • Revisions to Appendix A
Develop Parent Workshops/Modules to assist parents of students with no current method of communication	ASHA Members Parents' Place of Maryland	• Create workshops and/or parent modules to assist families of students that have difficulty establishing a reliable way of communicating	• Parent Workshops and/or Parent Modules

Need: Students with significant and complex support needs have limited access to the general education classroom setting. They need to receive more meaningful and intentional access to inclusive education.

Goal: By July 1, 2024, LEAs will increase the inclusion rate for students with significant cognitive disabilities in the general education setting in grades pre-k through 5 by 5%.

Objectives	Partners	Activities	Deliverables
Follow-up from the January 2023 Professional Learning with monthly collaboration through TA calls and site visits with LEAs	LEA partners	• Target barriers to inclusion of students with significant disabilities at the k-5 level for LEA by speaking and meeting with each LEA monthly.	• TA reports

Objective	Partners	• Activities	Deliverables
Develop statewide coaching team focused on supporting inclusive practices for students with complex support needs	Curriculum, Instructional Improvement and Professional Learning Leadership Development and School Improvement	• Identify MSDE participants from content areas to participate on the coaching team. • Participants will include members from: o Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) o Division of Early Childhood o Division of College and Career Readiness o Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement, and Professional Learning (Instructional programs as well as curriculum) o Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement • Develop an agenda and "Ask About" rubric for each conversation. • Plan for monthly coaching calls related to concepts including staffing, teacher capacity, material modification.	• Coaching Call Agendas and "Ask About" rubrics
Develop statewide regional professional learning - inclusion for students with significant cognitive disabilities: Part II.	Curriculum, Instructional Improvement and Professional Learning	• Using data from the "Ask About" rubrics, create targeted follow-up professional learning sessions to increase meaningful inclusive opportunities for students with significant cognitive disabilities. • Each LEA will be asked to provide a case study of a success and a call to action, and the group will discuss best practices and problem solve.	• Professional Learning materials • Professional Learning Plan

Need: General educators lack the confidence/skills to provide meaningful opportunities for inclusion for students with significant cognitive disabilities in the general education setting.

Goal: By July 1, 2024, there will be a virtual learning series for general educators designed to increase their capacity to meaningfully include students with disabilities into the general education classroom by utilizing existing staff, modifying activities, enhancing peer interaction, and identifying and overcoming barriers.

Objectives	Partners	Activities	Deliverables

Collaborate with Curriculum, Instructional Improvement and Professional Learning on developing a virtual learning series for general educators focusing on high leverage topics addressing inclusion of students with significant disabilities.	Curriculum, Instructional Improvement and Professional Learning	• Create learning modules for general educators to assist with including students with significant cognitive disabilities. Modules to include, but not be limited to:
		  o Best practices for effective use of staff
		  o Modifying grade level activities
		  o Enhancing peer interaction for students with different communication methods
		  o Meaningful inclusion strategies
			• Virtual Learning Series

Need: There is a need for comprehensive monitoring to support data for continuous improvement of outcomes related to the alternate assessment and for outcomes for students in minority groups.

Goal: By January 1, 2024, DEI/SES will develop and implement a comprehensive data collection and analysis system to identify LEAs over the 1% threshold, assign corrective action, monitor the corrective action, and implement accountability measures.

Objectives	Partners	Activities	Deliverables
Conduct on-going monitoring activities for all LEAs, developing corrective action plans with LEAs, and implementing accountability measures	Assessment, Accountability, and Performance	• MSDE monitors to set monitoring schedule for students participating in the AA-AAAS and assist LEAs to: o Develop corrective action plans, as needed o Monitor corrections o Establish and implement accountability measures o Provide immediate intervention for increasing identification of K-5 through site visits, coaching, on-going consultation o Assist LEAs in conducting a root cause analysis of the problem causing the increase	• Monitoring reports • Corrective Action Plans

Objective	Partners	• Activities	Deliverables
LEAs will create an internal monitoring process and develop a comprehensive improvement plan process if they are above the 1% threshold that includes MSDE feedback prior to submission.	Assessment, Accountability, and Performance Reporting	• LEAs will submit either quarterly or monthly data reports (tiered based on data- amount over or under the 1% threshold) based on a self-directed internal monitoring process. • LEAs to submit justification if they are over 1%, as well as a comprehensive improvement plan. • AEP liaisons to provide TA on the development and implementation of the improvement plan. • Progress on improvement plans to be submitted monthly; data to be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, grade, school, disability, other factors that can assist in root cause analysis. • Accountability measures to be built into action plans and monitored by AEP Liaisons.	• Data Reports • Improvement Plans • Progress Reports on Improvement Plans

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Objective	Partners	• Activities	Deliverables
LEAs with an overrepresentation of African American/Black students participating in the alternate state assessment will be identified, LEAs will be required to develop and implement improvement plans to be monitored monthly and accountability measures will be instituted until corrections are completed.	Assessment, Accountability, and Performance Reporting	• MSDE will run monthly internal monitoring reports identifying students participating in the AA-AAAS by race. • LEAs will also run monthly internal monitoring reports identifying students participating in the AA-AAAS by race. • AEP Liaisons will consult with any LEA with a disproportionate number of African American/Black students provide technical assistance in developing an improvement plan aligned with, and/or as a component of their Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) plan (as appropriate), including a root cause analysis and concrete steps toward improvement and accountability measures should the data not demonstrate improvement. • Monthly monitoring will continue until correction occurs.	• Data Reports • Improvement or CCEIS Plans • Monthly Progress Reports on Improvement Plans