

How are the alternate assessments designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities?

The SC-Alt is designed to be accessible to students with diverse and significant disabilities. First, the test uses picture symbols and stimuli to engage students in the content. Next, the test allows for embedded and non-embedded accommodations which permits students to answer the items using their preferred method of communication (e.g., pointing, eye gaze, assistive technology, oral response, sign language). Students may also use tablet technology, interactive whiteboards, or laptops to make their selections. There are also multiple types of test items used on the assessment. Additionally, paper tests are available for students whose IEP outlines the need. Finally, there is no time restriction on the assessment at any point.

Can a student earn a high school diploma if he or she participates in the SC-Alt?

No, students who the IEP team determines meet the participation criteria for SC-Alt are participating in a curriculum that does not lead to a high school diploma.

Who do I contact to find out more about the SC-Alt?

If your child participates in the SC-Alt, you may contact your child's teachers. For more information, please visit the SC-Alt Portal at sc-alt.portal.cambiumast.com.

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet, ask your child's teachers for assistance in obtaining copies of information about the SC-Alt.

Tell me more about the SC-Alt.

The transition to a fully online test began during the spring 2017 administration with Independent Field Tests (IFTs) across all subject areas. This year, the SC-Alt is a fully operational and online field test. The purpose of this Operational Field Test (OFT) is to obtain psychometric information about item performance, eliminate poorly performing items, and support subsequent activities, such as test form development, standard setting, scaling, and scoring. Subsequent administrations will continue to build on this framework.

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What is the SC-Alt?

The primary purpose of the SC-Alt is to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities have the opportunity to participate in a challenging, standards-based curriculum that encourages high academic expectations. An assessment that provides a measure of student achievement and an opportunity to participate in the state's education accountability system facilitates this goal.

The spring 2021 SC-Alt administration consists of the following:

- ELA and Mathematics for grades 3–8
- Science for grades 4 and 6
- English, Algebra, Biology, and US History and Constitution for High School

What are the academic standards?

Academic standards are general statements about what students should know and be able to do when they complete each grade or finish their school program.

The Prioritized Standards preserve the essence of the academic standards but may be restricted in scope or complexity or may take the form of introductory or prerequisite skills to the grade-level standards. The Prioritized Standards for each subject are available on the SC-Alt Portal (sc-alt.portal.cambiumast.com).

Why should students with significant cognitive disabilities participate in academic instruction and assessment?

The primary reason to teach academic content to students who also require instruction in functional and life skills is to promote access and equity to the educational content all students receive as part of a free appropriate public education. Educators are finding that once this opportunity is provided, many students gain useful skills that benefit them now and in the future. Students may not master all of the grade level content, but they may master some content for their grade level. The SC-Alt provides a way for them to demonstrate this mastery.

There are also state and federal laws that require that all students participate in academic instruction and assessment. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 1997, 2004), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), require inclusion for all students with disabilities in the state assessment system.

What are criteria for participation in alternate assessment?

The decision about a student's participation in required state assessments is made by the student's IEP team and documented in the IEP. Students must meet the following criteria:

- The student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability and adaptive skills that result in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations and modifications.
- The student accesses the state approved curriculum standards at less complex levels and with extensively modified instruction.
- The student has current adaptive skills requiring extensive direct instruction and practice in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of skills necessary for application in school, work, home, and community environments.
- The student is unable to apply or use academic skills across natural settings when instructed solely or primarily through classroom instruction.
- The student's inability to achieve the state grade-level achievement expectations is not the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences.

Who are students with significant cognitive disabilities?

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are students who require substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to meaningfully access the subject area content and require intensive individualized instruction in order to acquire and generalize knowledge. Their school curriculum includes functional and life skills as well as academic instruction.

Who decides if a student participates in the SC-Alt?

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes the parents as equal members, determines how students will be assessed. The team reviews information about the student's progress across multiple years and areas and decides whether or not the student should take the state assessment with accommodations or whether the student meets the criteria for alternate assessment.

In what grades do students take the SC-Alt?

Students are assigned tests based on their registered grade level. Students in grades 3–8 take ELA and Mathematics. Students in grades 4 and 6 take Science. High school students take English, Algebra, Biology, and US History and Constitution. For these high school tests, the district will determine in which year students will take each assessment.