

ISBE's Special Education Alternate Assessment Participation – 1% Threshold Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1: Who is eligible to take the DLM-AA?

The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA) is intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The [DLM-AA Participation Guidelines Tool](#) specifies that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may take the DLM-AA, as determined by their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), if participation in the state's regular assessments is not appropriate, even with accommodations, and they meet all the criteria below.

- The student has a most significant cognitive disability.
- The student's instruction is linked to grade-level content and reflective of the Common Core Essential Elements.
- The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

Question 2: Who is not eligible for consideration to take the DLM-AA?

Students who do not meet all three eligibility criteria are not eligible to take the DLM-AA. ISBE will analyze students rostered for spring alternate assessments and future years assessment. The analysis will review students rostered with Specific Learning Disabilities, Emotional Disabilities, Speech Language Impairments, Other Health Impairments, Deafness/Hearing Impairments, or Visual Impairments to ensure a significant cognitive disability also has been documented.

Question 3: Can an English learner with an IEP participate in the DLM-AA?

English learners who have an IEP should not automatically take the Alternate ACCESS. Only students who take the DLM-AA in lieu of regular testing should take the Alternate ACCESS, and this should be documented in the student's IEP. See ISBE's [WIDA Alternate ACCESS Participation Guidance Document](#) for additional information.

Question 4: How does participation in the DLM-AA impact a student's graduation?

Students who participate in alternate assessment may not qualify for a regular high school diploma upon graduation because, while the student is taught using grade-level standards, their educational programming may be modified to align with alternate achievement standards. See [ISBE's FAQ on Graduation Rate Coding for Students](#) for additional information.

Question 5: How is testing handled for children with disabilities?

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 requires that all children with disabilities must be part of state and districtwide assessments with appropriate accommodations; this includes English language proficiency, where appropriate. The IEP team decides whether a student should be given state and/or district assessments, with or without accommodations, or if the student should take the alternate assessment.

Students must participate in the state assessment in one of the following ways:

- Regular state assessment for the student's grade, without accommodations;
- Regular state assessment for the student's grade, with accommodations; or
- Alternate state assessment for the student's grade.

Question 6: How are DLM-AA- scores calculated?

The proficiency rate percent for students taking the DLM-AA is calculated below in Figure 1. Proficiency rates are calculated separately by subject (reading and math) and by grade (fourth, eighth, and high school). The proficiency rate includes both children with IEPs enrolled for a full academic year and those not enrolled for a full academic year. See ISBE's [Special Education Indicator 3: Statewide Assessments](#) webpage for additional information.

Figure 1

$$\frac{\text{The number of children with IEPs scoring at or above proficient against academic achievement standards}}{\text{The total number of children with IEPs who received a valid score and for whom a proficiency level was assigned for the alternate assessment}}$$

Question 7: How is the 1% calculated?

The percentage of students taking the DLM-AA is calculated below in Figure 2. State accountability assessments include the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, the Illinois Science Assessment, the SAT, the DLM, and the DLM-AA. The PSAT is not included in the calculation.

Figure 2

$$\left(\frac{\text{The total number of students in grades 3-8 and 11 taking ALTERNATE assessment}}{\text{Total number of students testing in grades 3-8 and 11 across ALL assessments}} \right) \times 100$$