



# Companion to Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines, Most Significant Cognitive Disability Definition, and IEP Team Decision-Making Flowchart

This document is a companion to the Alternate Assessment Criteria; Most Significant Cognitive Disability Definition and the IEP Team Decision-Making Flowchart that will assist IEP teams in making appropriate decisions regarding student participation in Nebraska's Student Centered Assessment System - Alternate Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (NSCAS-AA).

IEP teams must use several types of data when reviewing a student's eligibility to take NSCAS-AA. These could include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Multi-disciplinary reports (MDT)
- ❖ Cognitive Ability Assessment
- ❖ Adaptive behavior skills assessments, checklists, and inventories
- ❖ Benchmark academic assessments
- ❖ Present levels of academic functional performance
- ❖ District-wide assessments
- ❖ Diagnostic assessments
- ❖ Assistive technology evaluation
- ❖ Speech and language assessments that determine expressive and receptive language communication status
- ❖ IEP progress data on goals and objectives
- ❖ Formative academic assessment data
- ❖ Informal assessment data
- ❖ Transition assessment data
- ❖ Progress on functional, daily living and life skills
- ❖ Data from researched based interventions
- ❖ Sensory and/or motor assessments describing access modes for communication, fine and gross motor skills

Evidence for the decision to participate in the NSCAS-AA is **NOT BASED** on:

1. Specific disability or label
2. Poor attendance or excessive/extended absences
3. Native language/social/cultural or economic differences
4. Educational environment or instructional setting
5. Percent of time receiving special education
6. English Learner status
7. Academic and other services the student receives
8. Low reading or achievement level
9. Anticipated disruptive behavior
10. Anticipated emotional duress
11. Administration decision
12. Impact of student scores for accountability system
13. Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
14. Need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology; augmentative and alternate communication - AAC) to participate in the assessment process

**NOTE:** *Intelligence quotient (IQ) scores are not a reliable measure for determining eligibility as many of the assessment tools used to determine IQ are not fully accessible for learners with the most significant motor, communication, and sensory complexities. Educators should never use IQ scores in isolation to determine eligibility.*

Review the student's IEP and related documents/documentation to answer the following questions.

1. Does the student have a current IEP?

\_\_\_\_\_ NO. Stop here. Student is not eligible for the alternate assessment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes. Continue evaluation.

2. Review the student's IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) disability category.

\_\_\_\_\_ IDEA disability category does **not** include intellectual or cognitive impairment as a characteristic.

\_\_\_\_\_ IDEA disability category **does** include intellectual or cognitive impairment as a characteristic.

3. Does the data reviewed provide evidence of a **most significant cognitive disability** (a person's ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly, and learn from experience)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Presence of disability documented no evidence that a cognitive disability interferes with learning: goals and objectives are designed to support students in learning grade-level skills and concepts in the standards.

\_\_\_\_\_ Documentation shows the student may have benchmark and diagnostic data that show a wide skill gap in reading, math etc. Prescriptive, direct, and systemic instruction is present in the IEP. (**Note:** *Complex academic difficulties do not qualify the student as having a most significant cognitive disability nor does it mean that the student should be taking the alternate assessment.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Evidence that the disability **significantly** interferes with learning grade-level skills and concepts. Presence of goals and objectives that support acquisition of expressive and receptive language and communication skills and/or sensory/motor access for active participation and engagement. Goals and objectives address grade level academic skills and concepts through Nebraska's College and Career Ready Academic Extended Indicators.

4. Does the student's data document a **significant deficit across all domains of adaptive behavior**? Does the student require systemic, direct instruction of adaptive behavior skills? Adaptive behavior refers to an individual's ability to apply conceptual, social, and practical skills in everyday life.

**Conceptual skills:** receptive and expressive language, reading and writing, money concepts, self-direction.

**Social skills:** maintaining interpersonal relationships, understanding emotions and social cues, understanding fairness and honesty, obeying rules and laws.

**Practical skills:** daily living activities such as: personal activities - eating, dressing, mobility, and toileting; instrumental activities – preparing meals, taking medication, using the telephone, managing money, using transportation, and doing housekeeping activities; occupational skills – maintain employment, work under supervision, cooperate with coworkers; maintaining a safe environment.

\_\_\_\_\_ NO instruction needed in any adaptive skills.

\_\_\_\_\_ General instruction needed in one or more domains of adaptive skills, which are covered in district core instruction initiatives, Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) and/or Multi-Systems of Support (MTSS).

\_\_\_\_\_ Prescriptive, systemic, direct instruction needed across many or *all adaptive* skills within each domain.

5. Does the student participate in grade-level instruction with learning targets aligned to Nebraska's College and Career Academic Extended Indicators with integrated supports and outlined on the IEP?

\_\_\_\_\_ Present levels of performance on the IEP indicates that the student's skills are aligned to the Nebraska College and Career Ready Academic Standards.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's IEP goals and objectives are aligned to the Nebraska College and Career Ready Academic standards. Instruction includes intervention and accommodations that are provided to the student to be able to access grade-level content.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's IEP includes present level performance statements that link student's grade-level access to the extended indicators. Goals and objectives are based on data determined needs and linked to the extended indicators for instruction, interventions, and accessibility.

6. Does the student require individualized accommodations, access features and materials beyond those provided through Universal Tools and Accommodations as outlined in NSCAS (Nebraska Student Centered Assessment System) Accessibility Manual?

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's IEP does not state any specific accommodations, supports, services and/or materials that are required for access to assessment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's IEP outlines some accommodations, supports, services and/or materials that are required for access to assessment as outlined in NSCAS Accessibility Manual. (**Note:** *Complex academic difficulties alone do not qualify the student as having a most significant cognitive disability nor does it mean that the student should be taking the alternate assessment.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's IEP outlines individualized accommodations and supports beyond those provided through universal tools as outlined in the NSCAS Accessibility Manual to meet the communication, motor and/or sensory needs of the student and provide them the opportunity to demonstrate what they know.

7. Does the student require the use of assistive technology to engage and participate meaningfully and productively in daily instructional activities in school, home, community and work environments? (**Note:** *The assistive technology section on the IEP should be a quick reference before taking a deeper look into the supports, services and testing accommodations section of the IEP.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Student requires no assistive technology as indicated on the IEP.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student requires assistive technology supports and services as indicated on the IEP but is not evident within the IEP.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student requires multiple assistive technology supports and services as indicated on the IEP. The student is being provided with the individualized assistive technology to support instruction, communication, sensory or motor access needs and is currently learning to use or is independently using assistive technology to access learning and his/her environment.

**Participation in the NSCAS-Alternate Assessment:** After completing this document, the student should fall in the last choice of each question in order to be eligible for participation in the NSCAS-AA.