



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Statewide Alternate Assessment Eligibility Process – 2025-26 School Year

Updated September 2025

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is committed to providing equitable assessment opportunities for all students in the District of Columbia. We are committed to working with our stakeholders to provide assessment options for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Alternate statewide assessments are available for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities as an alternative to participating in the general statewide assessments. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) places a 1% cap on the student participation in the alternate assessments. This cap is intended to limit the number of students to ensure that the alternate assessments are only given for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

General information regarding the following alternate assessments can be found on OSSE’s [Alternate Assessments](#) webpage:

- Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics for grades 3-8 and 11, and students enrolled in the third year of the Certificate of IEP Completion pathway (C3)
- Dynamic Learning Maps Science Alternate Assessment (DLM) for grades 5, 8 and students enrolled in high school biology
- WIDA Alternate ACCESS English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment for grades K-12

Table 1

Assessment	Content	Grades Assessed
Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)	ELA and mathematics	Grades 3-8, 11, and students enrolled in the third years of the Certificate IEP completion pathway (C3)
Dynamic Learning Maps Science Alternate Assessment (DLM)	Science	Grades 5, 8 and students enrolled in high school biology
WIDA Alternate ACCESS	English Language Proficiency	Grades K-12

Local education agencies (LEAs) must complete OSSE’s application process for students to be determined eligible to participate in alternate statewide assessments. OSSE makes determinations for students in grades 3-12. Individualized education program (IEP) teams make determinations for students in grades K-2 taking WIDA Alternate ACCESS. OSSE has published [guidance](#) for IEP teams to support them in making statewide assessment participation decisions for students with significant cognitive disabilities. To be determined eligible for alternate assessment participation, students must first meet all the following minimum requirements:

1. The student has a significant cognitive disability;

2. The student is learning content linked to grade-level Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and WIDA English Language Development standards (ELD); and
3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial support in the grade-appropriate curriculum.

Please note: Meeting the above requirements does not guarantee eligibility for alternate assessment participation.

Applying for Alternate Assessment Eligibility in the Special Programs Database

Eligibility for participation in any alternate assessment begins with LEAs completing the appropriate documentation in the Special Programs database. During the IEP development process, IEP teams are to carefully review and fully complete the DC Alternate Assessment Application within Special Programs for students applying for alternate assessment(s).

Every fall, OSSE reviews new applications and existing student records to determine eligibility for alternate assessment participation for the current school year. For OSSE to review a student for alternate assessment eligibility, LEAs must ensure the following documentation is present in the Special Programs database:

- a. A current IEP that indicates “Alternate Assessment”;
- b. A “DC Alternate Assessment Application Form”, fully completed and dated within 3 calendar years; and
- c. All sources of supporting evidence indicated on the Alternate Assessment Application form, dated within 3 calendar years¹.

OSSE recommends that IEP teams begin completing the appropriate documentation in the Special Programs database as soon as the new school year begins. Students who were determined eligible for alternate assessments in the 2024-25 school year will be determined eligible for the 2025-26 school year with the above-mentioned documentation in place.

New Applicants and Renewals

Students who have not been previously approved for alternate assessment participation are considered new applicants. This includes students who may have applied for alternate assessment in previous years and were denied, students who took the alternate assessments off-policy, as well as students who did not meet the deadline for applying in the prior school year.

Applications for students who have been approved for alternate assessment participation in previous school years are considered renewals. LEAs are responsible for ensuring that all documentation for student renewals is up-to-date for the current school year.

The table below lists documentation requirements for each type of alternate assessment applicants.

¹ To meet the three-calendar year requirement for the 2025-26 school year, documents must be dated January 1, 2022 or later.

Table 2

New Applicants	Renewals
Ensure there is an active IEP (dated within 12 months) in the Special Programs database that indicates "Alternate Assessment"	
Complete the Alternate Assessment Application form in Special Programs	Ensure the existing Alternate Assessment Application form is dated within 3 calendar years
Upload all sources of supporting evidence in Special Programs	Ensure all sources of supporting evidence are dated within 3 calendar years

Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application

LEA Assessment Managers and LEA Special Education points of contact (POCs) will be granted access to the Alternate Assessment Quickbase application. Within this application, LEAs will be able to see a roster of students with alternate assessment applications on file. In addition, LEAs will be able to see if any intended applicants are missing. If there are students missing, or any missing requirements, LEAs are responsible for making corrections to the students’ records in the Special Programs database. Initial and final eligibility determinations are recorded by OSSE in this Quickbase application.

Alternate Assessment Application Deadlines

Table 3

Initial Application Window Closes	Oct. 14, 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Determinations Available in Quickbase • Late Submissions Window Closes 	Nov. 21, 2025
Appeals Window Closes	Dec. 5, 2025
Final Determinations Available in Quickbase	Jan. 7, 2026

The initial deadline to apply for alternate assessment eligibility for the 2025-26 school year is October 14, 2025. LEA Assessment Managers and Special Education POCs are responsible for ensuring that all student application requirements are met and documentation is uploaded in the Special Programs database by the deadline. Applications submitted after October 14th but prior to November 21st are considered late submissions. Late submissions are not eligible for appeal.

OSSE will review applications submitted between Nov. 21, 2025 and March 30, 2026 only for those students who meet one of the below criteria:

- a. Are transfer students (new to the LEA)
- b. Newly meet the criteria outlined in the OSSE guidance for IEP teams, due to a new disability determination

Applications submitted after Nov. 21st that do not meet the above conditions will **not** receive an alternate assessment eligibility determination. These students are expected to participate in the applicable general

statewide assessments in spring 2026 and can apply for alternate assessment eligibility for the next school year in fall 2026.

OSSE Review of Applications for Alternate Assessment Eligibility

OSSE will review alternate eligibility applications submitted for the 2025-26 school year according to the timelines shown in Table 4. Eligibility determinations will be returned to LEAs in the Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application. Denied applications will be marked with a denial code, code description, and details about the denial in the “additional notes” column. See Appendix A of this document for a list of denial codes used in the eligibility process.

Within the Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application, there are columns for Initial and Final Determinations. If an application is approved, the approval from the Initial Determination column will feed into the Final Determination column.

Determination Appeals

If an application received by Oct. 14 is denied, the LEA may submit an appeal through the Alternate Assessment Quickbase application. For most appeals, additional documentation that supports the IEP team’s request will need to be uploaded in the Special Programs database (e.g., new evaluations, case records, IEP amendments). Appeals and supporting documents must be submitted by Dec. 5th. Once OSSE makes a final determination it will be populated in the Final Determination column in the Alternate Assessment Quickbase application.

Should a LEA need to communicate with OSSE about a specific student or case, they must utilize the OSSE Support Tool platform to ensure student information security. As a reminder, late submissions (submitted after Oct. 14) are not eligible for appeal.

Timeline for the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Process

Table 4

Task	Timeline	System
LEAs add or update documentation for alternate assessment applications in the Special Programs database	Start of School Year – Oct. 14	Special Programs Database
LEAs can view the roster of students with alternate assessment applications on file in the Alternate Assessment Quickbase application	Sept. 30 – Oct. 14	Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application
Final deadline for LEAs to update alternate assessment applications and supporting documentation	Oct. 14, 2025	Special Programs Database
OSSE reviews documentation in Special Programs for eligibility determinations	Oct. 15 – Nov. 20, 2025	Special Programs Database
Initial eligibility determinations made available to LEAs	Nov. 21, 2025	Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application
Final deadline for late applications	Nov. 21, 2025	Special Programs Database
LEAs may appeal initial eligibility determinations in Quickbase and submit additional evidence in Special Programs	Nov. 21 - Dec. 5, 2025	Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application; Special Programs Database
OSSE reviews appeals documentation and eligibility applications for transfer students or students who have new disability determinations	Dec. 6, 2025 – Jan. 6, 2026	Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application; Special Programs Database
Final Eligibility Determinations available to LEAs	Jan. 7, 2026	Alternate Assessment Quickbase Application

Appendix A: Denial Codes

The following codes are used by OSSE to indicate the reason(s) for denial of an application for alternate assessment participation. While one primary denial code is listed in the Alternate Assessment Quickbase application, LEAs are encouraged to review the notes provided by OSSE to address all possible areas that need to be addressed in an appeal.

Table 5

N1	Student records do not indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior
N2	IEP goals and instruction are not linked to enrolled grade-level CCSS and/or do not address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for student
N3	Student does not require extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and support, nor use substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across academic content
N4	Alternate Assessment not indicated on active IEP
N5	IEP not active in Special Programs database
N6	Supporting sources of evidence missing or insufficient to support participation in alternate assessment
N7	Supporting sources of evidence not current (not dated within three calendar years)