



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Catherine Truitt, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

www.dpi.nc.gov

February 3, 2025

Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
US Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

Pursuant to 34 C.F.R. §200.6(c)(4), the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) requests an extension for the previously granted 1.0 percent participation waiver, in part, from specific statutory and regulatory requirements established under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This extension waiver request, if granted, would allow the state to exceed the 1.0 percent cap on students with significant cognitive disabilities who are administered the alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) to meet the statewide assessment requirement.

As presented in Table 1, the NCDPI anticipates exceeding the 1.0 percent cap on alternate assessment participation in mathematics and English Language Arts/reading at grades 3–8, science at grades 5 and 8, mathematics at grade 11, and science at grade 11 for the 2024–25 school year. Table 1 displays the reported data from the 2023–24 school year and indicates where there were overages.

Table 1. *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Participation for the 2023–24 School Year*

Subject and Grade(s)	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
Mathematics Grades 3–8*	7,673	691,199	1.1%
Mathematics Grade 11*	1,137	105,368	1.1%
ELA/Reading Grades 3–8*	7,681	691,508	1.1%
ELA/Reading Grade 10	1,076	119,926	0.9%
Science Grades 5 & 8*	2,585	233,210	1.1%
Science Grade 11*	1,144	106,410	1.1%

*Subject areas that exceeded 1.0 percent of test population.

OFFICE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA SUPERINTENDENT

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Table 2 below displays the participation rates from the 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 school years. The participation rate percentages for 2023–24 mirror pre-pandemic rate percentages. Based on the percentages in Table 2, the NCDPI anticipates exceeding the 1.0 percent cap in the 2024–25 school year.

Table 2. *North Carolina Statewide Alternate Assessment Participation Rates for the 2017–2018, 2018–2019, 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, 2022–2023, and 2023–24 School Years*

Subject and Grade(s)	Participation Rate Percentages						
	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24*
Mathematics Grades 3–8	1.1%	1.1%	Testing Waived	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
Mathematics Grade 11	1.2%	1.1%		0.2%	1.6%	1.0%	1.1%
ELA/Reading Grades 3–8	1.1%	1.1%		1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
ELA/Reading Grade 10	0.9%	0.9%		0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%
Science Grades 5 and 8	1.1%	1.1%		1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
Science Grade 11	1.1%	1.1%		0.2%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%

*The 2023–24 school year participation rate percentages are used to anticipate exceeding the 1.0 percent for the 2024–25 school year.

2024–25 School Year Required State–Level Data

As required by 34 C.F.R. §200.6(c)(4), the NCDPI is submitting this waiver ninety days prior to the administration of the AA-AAAS spring 2024 administrations. Also, as required, included in this request is state-level data from the 2023–24 school year that shows the number and percentage of students in each subgroup who participated in the AA-AAAS. In previous years, North Carolina has followed and met the federal participation assessment requirement and measured the achievement of at least ninety-five percent (95%) of all students and ninety-five percent (95%) of students with disabilities subgroup under section 1111(c)(2)(C) of ESSA who are enrolled in grades for which the assessment is required under §200.5(a).

Table 3, on the following page, shows a comparison of the 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 school year participation data, which includes the number and percentage of students in each subgroup of students defined in section 1111(c)(2)(A), (B), and (D) of ESSA who took the alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards

Table 3. North Carolina Alternate Assessment 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 School Year Participation by Subgroup

Subgroup	Total Number of Alternate Assessments Administered			Total Number of Assessments Administered			Percentage of Alternate Assessments Administered		
	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
English Learners	2,586	2,733	2,200	157,596	186,719	207,367	1.6%	1.5%	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	9,565	14,739	14,773	719,250	995,424	977,624	1.3%	1.5%	1.5%
Students with Disabilities	19,839	20,778	20,995	235,838	251,089	258,084	8.4%	8.3%	8.3%
Hispanic	3,716	3,842	4,007	379,417	402,672	419,771	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Asian	736	867	980	73,175	81,019	86,273	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Black	7,001	7,274	7,248	466,916	479,078	474,133	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
White	7,513	7,584	7,559	834,116	849,152	834,553	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Native American	241	248	234	19,522	19,644	18,825	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%
Multiple Ethnicities	1,051	1,179	1,223	98,964	106,867	111,434	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%

The NCDPI requires all students enrolled in a public school unit (PSU) to be assessed using the general assessment under standard conditions, the general assessment with accommodations, or the alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards with or without accommodations. The only exception to participation is for medical exceptions approved by the NCDPI Medical Exception Committee. As previously stated, North Carolina in the 2023–24 school year met the ninety-five percent (95%) participation rate requirement of all students and the subgroup of students with disabilities under section 1111(c)(2)(C) of ESSA who are enrolled in grades for which the assessment is required under §200.5(a).

As shown in Table 4, data from all required assessments in the 2021–22 school year, the participation rates for all students and students with disabilities was at or above ninety-five percent (95 %) for each subject and grade assessment. In the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years, the participation rates for all students and students with disabilities was greater than ninety-five percent (95 %) for each subject and grade assessment.

Table 4. North Carolina Statewide General Assessment Participation Rates for the 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 School Years

Subject and Grade(s)	Student Group	2021–22 Percent Participation	2022–23 Percent Participation	2023–24 Percent Participation
Mathematics Grades 3–8	All Students	>95%	>95%	>95%
	Students with Disabilities	>95%	>95%	>95%
Mathematics Grade 11	All Students	>95%	>95%	>95%
	Students with Disabilities	95%	>95%	>95%
ELA/Reading Grades 3–8	All Students	>95%	>95%	>95%
	Students with Disabilities	>95%	>95%	>95%
ELA/Reading Grade 10	All Students	>95%	>95%	>95%
	Students with Disabilities	95%	>95%	>95%
Science Grades 5 and 8	All Students	>95%	>95%	>95%
	Students with Disabilities	>95%	>95%	>95%
Science Grade 11	All Students	>95%	>95%	>95%
	Students with Disabilities	95%	>95%	>95%

2024–25 School Year Participation Requirements for AA-AAAs

The NCDPI verifies that each PSU anticipated to assess more than 1.0 percent of its students in any subject using the alternate assessment followed the State’s guidelines for participation in the AA-AAAs. The NCDPI examines and updates the alternate assessment eligibility criteria annually and provides training to all PSU exceptional children (EC) and accountability and testing personnel involved with determining if a student has a significant cognitive disability. The *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flowchart*, found in [Appendix L](#), is guidance provided for Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, initially developed and implemented in the 2018–19 school year. In June of 2023, this guidance document was updated using stakeholder feedback. This tool is for IEP teams to use when considering the appropriate educational program and related assessments for students who may have a significant cognitive disability. At the beginning of August 2023, the NCDPI Office of EC added the [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet](#) to the statewide IEP system, Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS). Completion of the *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet* is a requirement for any student considered for the AA-AAAs. After the eligibility worksheet is completed, the IEP team must complete the assurance document which provides a clear understanding to all team members, including the parents or guardians, that the student will receive a certificate of completion rather than a high school diploma. To assist with this new worksheet and assurance document, the Office of EC provided PSUs with a [Tip Sheet](#), a [Technical Assistance Package](#), and a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document that included a video to help schools determine alternate assessment eligibility. The purpose of the

Technical Assistance Package is to assist all PSU's in answering questions involving students with significant cognitive disabilities, while ensuring compliance with federal law. Included in the user guide are the Timeline of Activities, Extended Content Standards Key Details, Alternate Assessment Worksheet, Extended Content Standard Course Credit Requirements, District Resources, Family Resources, North Carolina Alternate Assessment FAQ, and accompanying appendixes.

In the 2019–20 school year the Office of EC collaborated with the Office of Accountability and Testing by implementing a concentrated monitoring to include reviewing PSUs (with an n-size greater than fifteen) who identify students with atypical eligibility categories and rates higher than two percent. The targeted monitoring efforts continued through the 2020–21 and 2021–22 school years with technical assistance provided during the 2022–23 school year. To improve these efforts during the 2023–24 school year, the NCDPI required the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process*, found in [Appendix M](#), to assist PSU's in ensuring the proper students are being identified to be assessed using an alternate assessment. For the 2024–25 school year, the NCDPI will continue to require the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* for any PSU that is at or above 1.1% in reading, mathematics, or science.

2024–25 School Year Plan and Timeline

Special educators are trained on the use of the *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flowchart* to effectively facilitate IEP team meetings in which decisions about alternate academic achievement standards and alternate assessments may be considered. This tool guides teams through the acceptable data sources and the questions that should be answered when considering if a student has a significant cognitive disability and is eligible for the instruction and assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards. The alternate assessment eligibility criteria is reviewed annually using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, and district and school level input. This annual review and revision process remains active as the NCDPI continues to provide schools with the resources and tools needed to appropriately determine the educational plan for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

In October 2020, the Office of EC developed and disseminated an optional Canvas course to professionals in the field titled, *North Carolina Extended Content Standards*, which was updated in 2023 and renamed, *Significant Cognitive Disabilities 2023*. The course was designed for educators to understand the history of education for students with significant cognitive disabilities, alternate academic achievement standards, and strategies to assist educators understand the standards. The course progresses from the laws, to the identification, to the alternate academic achievement English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities. With the implementation of the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* in the 2023–24 school year, the Canvas course was once again revised to provide uniform training and decision-making information pertaining to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for special education staff and LEA representatives. Since the NCDPI plans to continue the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* for the 2024–25 school year, the Canvas course has undergone another update to keep the information relevant for new and returning participants of the course. The course will include some engaging scenario-based activities for participants to actively work through and provide an opportunity for thought-provoking questions.

As stated earlier, the Office of EC collaborated with the Office of Accountability and Testing to implement a targeted monitoring system beginning in the 2019–20 school year through the 2021–22 school year with technical assistance provided during the 2022–23 school year. Beginning in the

2023–24 school year, the Office of EC implemented the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process*, found in [Appendix M](#). For the 2024–25 school year, the NCDPI will continue to use the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* as it has proven to be beneficial to the participants. Participants’ feedback indicated the Case Management Report in ECATS provided EC directors and coordinators with information in a way that could be sorted and analyzed in an effective manner. The majority of participants stated they were previously unaware of the Case Management Report and through this process, they learned how to utilize the report to have a better idea of the decisions being made within the district or charter school. The following excerpts were captured from participants who completed the process:

- “The whole process provided a new perspective on how to view data and make decisions about compliance with our students with cognitive disabilities and alternate assessments.”
- “The new process really assisted in analyzing and determining a root cause analysis of the overrepresentation of students on the alternate assessment.”
- “The support provided by state-level personnel, step-by-step directions, timeline with this huge task broken down into smaller parts due at intervals, and office hours via Webex were most helpful.”
- “This does provide a tool for accessing our role within the alternate assessment process, as well as provides a tool for coaching and professional development to our teachers.”

The NCDPI will continue to use this process for the 2024–25 school year. Each PSU is responsible for ensuring appropriate student eligibility, identification, and placement in special education. The *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* is designed for PSUs to monitor student participation rates on the alternate academic achievement standards and the alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Any PSU at or above 1.1% must complete and submit a set of tasks provided by the NCDPI Office of EC. The set of tasks required for submission are detailed in length in Appendix M, however, the key pieces are outlined below:

1. In the statewide IEP system, ECATS, the EC Director or Coordinator runs and downloads the [Case Management Report](#). The EC Director or Coordinator will complete each step in the process outlined in Appendix M.
 - a. Public school unit personnel must review the students’ eligibility and course of study. The EC Director or Coordinator must contact and inform each case manager that the student(s) with the primary eligibility areas of SLD, SI, and OI and participating on the ECS, must convene an IEP team meeting to either change the student(s) course of study or initiate a re-evaluation to determine eligibility for the student(s). The decision to change the student(s) course of study or complete the re-evaluation process must be completed by June 30, 2025.
 - b. The EC Director or Coordinator must complete and submit the [Case Management report spreadsheet](#) only if students with the primary eligibility areas of SLD, SI, and OI are found to be instructed on the ECS. If no students are found to match this criteria, N/A should be entered into the Qualtrics link.
2. Complete the *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course* in Canvas.
 - a. The *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course* is designed to provide educators and LEA representatives with the proper information pertaining to the identification of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
3. Complete the *Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide* and submit Part G only.
 - a. The PSU [Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide](#) is a resource for use in reviewing PSU policies, practices, and procedures for determining whether the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments are appropriate for students with disabilities. Sections A through G of the guide

organizes a particular component with essential questions for problem-solving. This organization is intended to support the identification of areas to strengthen and prioritize first steps.

Additionally, the *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course* has been updated to include information participants shared on how to improve the current course or school year's implementation. Updates included scenarios to assist special education teachers and LEA representatives think through the decision-making process, a necessary process in an IEP meeting.

Also, as part of the plan and timeline, the NCDPI provides comprehensive training annually for all staff involved with identifying students with a significant cognitive disability. This training includes the eligibility criteria defined by the state, and information about the impact the decision to identify a student with a significant cognitive disability has on a student's graduation and post-secondary opportunities.

In North Carolina, students who participate on the *North Carolina Extended Content Standards* and take the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment receive a certificate of completion, not a high school diploma. To ensure students identified as having a significant cognitive disability are participating on the *North Carolina Extended Content Standards* and participating on the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment, the NCDPI will continue to cross check students who received a diploma and participated on the alternate assessment from the previous year. Through the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process*, PSUs are required to use the *Case Management Report* to verify that all high school students participating on the Extend Content Standards have "Extended Content Standards: Leading to Graduation Certificate" selected on their IEPs. EC directors are also required to sample transcripts to ensure all high school ECS students are enrolled in "AX" courses. (Courses that use the Extended Content Standards, have an "A" as the fifth digit of the course code. The letter in the sixth digit space denotes whether it is an elementary, middle, or high school course code.) This information will assist the NCDPI with identifying PSUs who may need to review their local policies and procedures for proper identification, placement, course of study, and assessment alignment. Any PSU exhibiting discrepancies in the identified area will be notified of the issue by the NCDPI and assistance to trouble shoot the discrepancies will be provided by the Office of EC.

Feedback provided by the participants of the *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* stated, "This process has been positive for ensuring that students who are given the chance to gain a high school diploma are afforded that chance. Through this process we found students that should not have been aligned with the ECS course of study, and they were caught early enough to afford these students a chance to gain a high school diploma."

Lastly, as part of the process to ensure students are appropriately placed in a course of study, the correct assessments, and the desired graduation path, the NCDPI provides informational resources to schools that can be shared with parents of students with disabilities. Parent resources include, but are not limited to, [post-secondary and transition planning](#) for students with significant cognitive disabilities, a document about the implications of selecting the alternate content standards, and supplemental aids to support participation in the general assessment, if appropriate.

After the 2024–25 school year testing window, the NCDPI will analyze participation data in each subject for the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards to determine the anticipated participation rates for the 2025–26 school year. The *Justification Process*, found in

[Appendix J](#), requires each PSU that anticipates exceeding 1.0 percent participation on the AA-AAAS to address disproportionality found in the data analysis.

Addressing Disproportionality

The NCDPI Offices of Exceptional Children and Accountability and Testing will continue to address disproportionality in the percentage of students participating in the alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards by requiring a justification from each district and charter school that exceeds the 1.0 percent cap. Public school units were encouraged to analyze their data for disproportionality to include, but not limited to, internal audits and compliance checks to ensure students taking the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment meet the eligibility criteria. The NCDPI will continue to provide professional development opportunities through face-to-face and webinar format to present current data as well as updated training on the eligibility criteria. In addition, the NCDPI will provide technical assistance as needed to individual districts and charter schools where disproportionality is present. The NCDPI requires PSUs that exceed the 1.0 percent cap for the total student population assessed in a subject area using an alternate assessment to complete the disproportionality excel worksheet to assist in identifying subgroup and subject areas of concern. Staff members tasked with interpreting the disproportionality data are provided guiding questions to pinpoint concerns and develop hypotheses. PSUs are expected to submit the worksheets along with an action plan that addresses how the areas of concern will potentially be rectified in future years.

2024–25 School Year Testing Window

The North Carolina Operational Testing Calendar is available on the [NCDPI website](#). Students who are instructed on the *North Carolina Extended Content Standards* (i.e., reading, mathematics, science) are assessed using the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment during the final ten instructional days of the school year.

2024–25 School Year Public Comment Process

On December 16, 2024, the NCDPI posted its notice of the waiver request for public comment with a link to a comment's submission form. The public comment period closed January 15, 2025.

Table 5 outlines North Carolina’s evidence of progress for the 2023–24 school year. Appendix E outlines the evidence of progress for the 2022–23 school year. Appendix F outlines the evidence of progress for the 2021–22 school year. Appendix G outlines the evidence of progress for the 2020–21 school year. Appendix H outlines the evidence of the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years. Appendix I outlines the evidence of progress for the 2017–18 school year.

2023–24 School Years Evidence Towards Progress

Table 5. North Carolina’s Evidence of Progress 2024–25 School Year

Plans for the 2023–24 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2024–25 School Year:
<p>1. IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</p>	<p><i>On-going</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool video is still current and available on our website. (June 2023)* • Reviewed the tool with the Office of Exceptional Children Leadership Institute participants (March 2024)* • Reviewed the Decision-Making tool and no updates were warranted (August 2024)* • Reviewed the tool with the Office of Exceptional Children Leadership Institute Advanced participants (October 2024)*
<p>2. Alternate Assessment Criteria is reviewed using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, district and school level input, as well as stakeholder feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed annually with EC and Accountability Staff* • Office of EC and Office of Accountability and Testing Collaborative Meeting Dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - October 25, 2024* - January 10, 2025* - April 11, 2025
<p>3. Informational resources available to parents of students with disabilities so parents can contribute to the IEP decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent resources for post-secondary transition planning for students, implications, and supplemental aids. 	<p>The Office of EC has a working relationship with the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (ECAC). This is a training and information center that provides free information and assistance with educational issues to parents of children with disabilities. They offer a lending library, newsletter, and a parent info line answered by parents.</p> <p>Parent friendly informational charts, manuals, and handbooks available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool* - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities—Amended March 2021* - Parents Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards—July 2016* <p>Other parent resources are available on the Exceptional Children’s website under Parent Resources. A parent liaison is on staff to assist with communicating information and resources to parents and guardians.</p>

*Completed tasks.

Plans for the 2023–24 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2024–25 School Year:
<p>4. Explicit training annually for all professionals involved with identifying students as having a significant cognitive disability.</p> <p>Training encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eligibility criteria, - identification and impact on graduation/post-secondary outcomes, - additional monitoring, - support, and - technical assistance. 	<p><i>June 2023 –North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Flow Chart Guidance Provided for IEP Teams Video*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video was presented by the NCDPI IDEA consultant for Intellectual Disabilities (Office of EC). This video focused on how to implement the use of the flow chart within IEP meetings as well as addressing the updates made to the guidance flow chart. The video is still current and relevant. <p><i>February 2024 – Participation in the North Carolina Alternate Assessment: An NCEXTEND1 User Guide*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this technical assistance package is to assist all PSU’s in answering questions around students with significant cognitive disabilities and to ensure compliance with federal law. Included in the user guide is the Timeline of Activities, Extended Content Standards Key Details, Alternate Assessment Worksheet, Extended Content Standard Course Credit Requirements, District Resources, Family Resources, North Carolina Alternate Assessment FAQ, and accompanying appendixes. <p><i>March 15, 2024 – 1.0 Percent Justification Form 2023–24 Training Video*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video was presented by the NCDPI Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) consultant for Intellectual Disabilities (Office of EC) as well as the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This video elaborated on the one percent participation justification form. This video was designed to review each question of the form to assist test coordinators and EC directors with how to respond using their PSU information. In addition, we reviewed ways to analyze the one percent participation data, and how to appropriately complete the new disproportionality excel worksheet and answer the related questions based on the PSU’s data. <p><i>November 2024 – Revised Canvas Course— Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course</i> is designed to provide educators and LEA representatives with the proper information pertaining to the identification of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. <p><i>January 2025—September 2025 – 1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each PSU is responsible for ensuring appropriate student eligibility, identification, and placement in special education. The <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i> is designed to assist PSUs with monitoring participation on the alternate academic achievement standards and the alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. • The <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i> has been created to assist PSUs in ensuring the proper students are being identified to be assessed using an alternate assessment. Any PSU at or above 1.1% must complete the required tasks outlined in the <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i> document and submit to the NCDPI Office of EC. • Four opportunities for office hours will be provided throughout the year to ensure all PSUs receive answers to their questions and complete the process as outlined.

*Completed tasks.

Honorable Miguel Cardona
February 3, 2025
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Thank you for your consideration of the 1.0 percent participation waiver extension as the NCDPI continues to ensure all students have access to grade-level content standards and extended grade-level content standards as appropriate. Please contact Tammy Howard at tammy.howard@dpi.nc.gov for any additional information or clarification.

Best Regards,

Catherine Truitt
State Superintendent

CT/TLH/lm

- c: Shelby Armentrout, Chief of Staff
Derrick D. Jordan, Deputy State Superintendent, Educator and Student Advancement
Michael Maher, Deputy Superintendent, Division of Standards, Accountability, and Research
Tammy Howard, Senior Director, Office of Accountability and Testing
Carol Ann Hudgens, Senior Director, Office of Exceptional Children
Ashley Baquero, Director, Office of Charter Schools

Appendix A: Overall Rates of Assessment Participation for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24

Group	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2021-22	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2021-22	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2022-23	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2022-23	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2023-24	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2023-24
Students Assessed	695,850	89,828	694,717	93,161	811,761	108,805
Students Enrolled	702,184	91,458	699,144	94,340	817,253	110,177
Assessment Participation Rate	>95% grades 3-8 and 10	>95% grades 3-8 95% grade 10	>95% grades 3-8 and 10	>95% grades 3-8 and 10	>95% grades 3-8 and 10	>95% grades 3-8 and 10
Group	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2021-22	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2021-22	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2022-23	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2022-23	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2023-24	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2023-24
Students Assessed	694,882	89,725	694,326	93,130	801,701	107,065
Students Enrolled	702,013	91,460	699,136	94,339	807,065	108,429
Assessment Participation Rate	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 95% grade 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11
Group	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2021-22	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2021-22	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2022-23	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2022-23	All Students Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2023-24	Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2023-24
Students Assessed	235,072	29,833	235,724	30,696	343,656	42,732
Students Enrolled	237,929	30,542	237,610	31,209	346,947	43,567
Assessment Participation Rate	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 95% grade 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11	>95% grades 3-8 and 11

Appendix B: Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Subgroup for 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24

Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2021-22	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2021-22	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2021-22
All Students	817,990	8,593	1.1%
English Learners	97,907	1,119	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	318,102	4,124	1.3%
Students with Disabilities	104,679	8,388	8.0%
Hispanic	166,468	1,561	0.9%
Asian	32,249	316	1.0%
Black	205,770	3,007	1.5%
White	360,168	3,135	0.9%
Native American	8,545	101	1.2%
Multiple Ethnicities	43,580	453	1.0%
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2022-23	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2022-23	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2022-23
All Students	822,646	8,835	1.1%
English Learners	101,864	1,166	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	428,242	6,178	1.4%
Students with Disabilities	108,377	8,718	8.0%
Hispanic	172,508	1,630	0.9%
Asian	34,448	379	1.1%
Black	204,516	3,029	1.5%
White	355,800	3,180	0.9%
Native American	8,343	103	1.2%
Multiple Ethnicities	45,858	494	1.1%
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2023-24	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2023-24	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School R/LA 2023-24
All Students	817,226	8,756	1.1%
English Learners	110,095	1,205	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	415,051	6,055	1.5%
Students with Disabilities	110,174	8,625	7.8%
Hispanic	177,256	1,669	0.9%
Asian	36,357	408	1.1%
Black	200,282	2,983	1.5%
White	346,922	3,078	0.9%
Native American	7,845	95	1.2%
Multiple Ethnicities	47,458	502	1.1%

Appendix C: Math Assessment Participation Rates by Subgroup for 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24

Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2021-22	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2021-22	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2021-22
All Students	762,339	8,365	1.1%
English Learners	93,824	1,102	1.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	296,064	3,982	1.3%
Students with Disabilities	96,890	8,169	8.4%
Hispanic	154,154	1,533	1.0%
Asian	30,347	310	1.0%
Black	189,776	2,900	1.5%
White	338,321	3,069	0.9%
Native American	7,927	104	1.3%
Multiple Ethnicities	40,683	432	1.1%
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2022-23	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2022-23	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2022-23
All Students	804,360	8,680	1.1%
English Learners	98,164	1,134	1.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	413,501	6,077	1.5%
Students with Disabilities	105,320	8,567	8.1%
Hispanic	166,325	1,593	1.0%
Asian	33,923	367	1.1%
Black	198,978	3,009	1.5%
White	351,183	3,104	0.9%
Native American	8,112	100	1.2%
Multiple Ethnicities	44,689	486	1.1%
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2023-24	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2023-24	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Math 2023-24
All Students	806,932	8,809	1.1%
English Learners	105,917	1,196	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	406,326	6,105	1.5%
Students with Disabilities	108,398	8,682	8.0%
Hispanic	174,162	1,662	1.0%
Asian	35,970	416	1.2%
Black	196,396	2,981	1.5%
White	345,005	3,123	0.9%
Native American	7,809	102	1.3%
Multiple Ethnicities	46,502	506	1.1%

Appendix D: Science Assessment Participation Rates by Subgroup for 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24

Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2021-22	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2021-22	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2021-22
All Students	329,998	3,344	1.0%
English Learners	36,388	417	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	120,606	1,459	1.2%
Students with Disabilities	40,949	3,282	8.0%
Hispanic	66,427	622	0.9%
Asian	11,883	110	0.9%
Black	82,923	1,094	1.3%
White	148,014	1,309	0.9%
Native American	3,409	36	1.1%
Multiple Ethnicities	16,859	166	1.0%
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2022-23	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2022-23	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2022-23
All Students	344,243	3,530	1.0%
English Learners	37,860	433	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	169,473	2,484	1.5%
Students with Disabilities	42,422	3,493	8.2%
Hispanic	70,930	619	0.9%
Asian	13,879	121	0.9%
Black	84,829	1,236	1.5%
White	152,564	1,300	0.9%
Native American	3,439	45	1.3%
Multiple Ethnicities	18,108	199	1.1%
Group	Total Number of Students in Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2023-24	Number of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2023-24	Percent of Students Taking State AA-AAAS Grades 3-8 and High School Science 2023-24
All Students	346,907	3,729	1.1%
English Learners	41,439	519	1.3%
Economically Disadvantaged	168,335	2,613	1.6%
Students with Disabilities	150,192	1,358	0.9%
Hispanic	74,679	676	0.9%
Asian	14,949	156	1.0%
Black	84,402	1,282	1.5%
White	150,192	1,358	0.9%
Native American	3,311	37	1.1%
Multiple Ethnicities	18,895	215	1.1%

Appendix E: 2022–23 School Years Evidence Towards Progress

Plans for the 2022–23 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2023–24 School Year:
<p>1. IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</p>	<p><i>On-going</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated the tool this year and posted on the NCDPI website (June 2023)* • Reviewed in Regional Meetings as well as within the posted NCEXTEND1 webinar* • The Office of Exceptional Children (EC) created a video on how to use <i>the IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</i> to include (June 2023)*
<p>2. Alternate Assessment Criteria is reviewed using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, district and school level input, as well as stakeholder feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed annually with EC and Accountability Staff* • Office of EC and the Office of Accountability and Testing collaborative meeting dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - October 20, 2023* - January 22, 2024* - April 12, 2024*
<p>3. Informational resources available to parents of students with disabilities so parents can contribute to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent resources for post-secondary transition planning for students, implications, and supplemental aids. 	<p>The Office of EC has a working relationship with the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (ECAC). This is a training and information center that provides free information and assistance with educational issues to parents of children with disabilities. They offer a lending library, newsletter, and a parent info line answered by parents.</p> <p>Parent friendly informational charts, manuals, and handbooks available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool* - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities—Amended March 2021* - Parents Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards—July 2016* <p>Other parent resources are available on the EC’s website under Parent Resources. A parent liaison is on staff who shares information and resources with parents and guardians.</p>

*Completed tasks.

Appendix E (continued)

Plans for the 2022–23 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2023–24 School Year:
<p>4. Explicit training annually for all professionals involved with identifying students as having a significant cognitive disability.</p> <p>Training encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eligibility criteria, - identification and impact on graduation/post-secondary outcomes, - additional monitoring, - support, and - technical assistance. 	<p>March 15, 2023 – 1.0 Percent Justification Form 2022–23 Training Video*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video was presented by the consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) as well as the consultant for testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This video elaborated on the one percent participation justification form. This video was designed to go through each question of the form to assist test coordinators and EC directors with how to respond to each of the questions using their public school unit information. In addition, we reviewed ways to analyze the one percent participation data and how to appropriately complete the new disproportionality excel worksheet and answer the related questions based on the public school unit’s data. <p>June 2023 –North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Flow Chart Guidance Provided for IEP Teams Video*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video was presented by the consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC). This video focused on how to implement the use of the flow chart within IEP meetings as well as addressing the updates made to the guidance flow chart. <p>August 2023 – Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet in Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS) and accompanying training materials*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet was created to ensure careful consideration by IEP teams for any student being considered for the alternate academic achievement standards and alternate assessments. The worksheet is comprised of questions that must be answered that align with the Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Flow Chart. In addition to the worksheet, a video, tip sheet, and frequently asked questions were developed to assist IEP teams with the new requirement to complete this form in ECATS. Technical assistance continues to be provided to the field on an as needed basis for support with the new worksheet. <p>August 2023 – Revised Extended Content Standards Canvas Course*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>ECS Canvas Course</i> is designed to provide educators with an understanding of the history of education for students with significant cognitive disabilities and to assist educators with understanding the alternate academic achievement standards. The seven modules in the course provide information on legislation, the IEP team and identification, communication, and lastly, alternate academic achievement English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities. • 13,712 individuals completed the <i>ECS Canvas Course</i> as part of the <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i>. This included LEA representatives and exceptional children teachers. <p>January 2024—September 2024 – 1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each public school unit is responsible for ensuring appropriate student eligibility, identification, and placement in special education. The <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i> is designed to assist public school units with monitoring participation on the alternate academic achievement standards and the alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. • The <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i> has been created to assist public school units in ensuring the proper students are being identified to be assessed using an alternate assessment. Any public school unit at or above 1.1% must complete the required tasks outlined in the <i>1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process</i> document and submit to the NCDPI Office of Exceptional Children. • PSUs were offered four opportunities for office hours to ask questions and gain clarity on the process. • 156 PSUs completed this process (103 LEAs and 53 charter schools).

*Completed tasks.

Appendix F: 2021–22 School Years Evidence Towards Progress

Plans for the 2021–22 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2022–23 School Year:
<p>1. IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</p>	<p><i>On-going</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted on webpage* • Reviewed in Regional Meetings as well as within the posted NCEXTEND1 webinar* • The Office of Exceptional Children (EC) created a video on how to use the <i>IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</i>
<p>2. Alternate Assessment Criteria is reviewed using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, district and school level input, as well as stakeholder feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed annually with EC and Accountability Staff* • Office of EC and the Office of Accountability and Testing collaborative meeting dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - July 19, 2022* - October 10, 2022* - January 25, 2023* - April 19, 2023*
<p>3. Informational resources available to parents of students with disabilities so parents can contribute to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent resources for post-secondary transition planning for students, implications, and supplemental aids. 	<p>The Office of EC has a working relationship with the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (ECAC). This is a training and information center that provides free information and assistance with educational issues to parents of children with disabilities. They offer a lending library, newsletter, and a parent info line answered by parents.</p> <p>Parent friendly informational charts, manuals, and handbooks available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool* - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities—Amended March 2021* - Parents Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards—July 2016* <p>Other parent resources are available on the EC’s website under Parent Resources. A parent liaison is on staff who shares information and resources with parents and guardians.</p>

*Completed tasks.

Appendix F (continued)

Plans for the 2021–22 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2022–23 School Year:
<p>4. Explicit training annually for all professionals involved with identifying students as having a significant cognitive disability.</p> <p>Training encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eligibility criteria, - identification and impact on graduation/post-secondary outcomes, - additional monitoring, - support, and - technical assistance. 	<p><i>March 2020 – Decision-Making Consideration Process Tool Webinar*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This webinar was presented by the NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) and the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This webinar was focused on how to implement the flow chart in IEP meetings as well as addressing any concerns or questions from the field. <p><i>March 15, 2022 – 1.0 Percent Justification Form 2021–22 Training Video*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video was created by the NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) and the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This video elaborated on the one percent participation justification form. This video was also designed to review each question of the form and assist test coordinators and EC directors with how to respond using their public school unit (PSU) information. In addition, the video reviewed ways to analyze one percent participation data, how to appropriately complete the new disproportionality excel worksheet, and answer the related questions based on the PSU’s data. <p><i>August 2022 – Webinar for EC Directors*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this webinar, EC directors were informed and provided with information on the targeted monitoring process to assist with appropriate identification and placement of students participating on the <i>Extended Content Standards</i> and the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessments. <p><i>January—June 2023*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided technical assistance from the targeted monitoring process for PSUs requiring corrective actions. • Each PSU will have completed corrective actions outlined in their report by June 2023.

*Completed tasks.

Appendix G: 2020–21 School Years Evidence Towards Progress

Plans for the 2020–21 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2021–22 School Year:
<p>1. IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</p>	<p><i>On-going</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted on webpage* • Reviewed in regional meetings and during the posted NCEXTEND1 webinar* • The Office of Exceptional Children (EC) created a video on how to use the <i>IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</i>.
<p>2. Alternate Assessment Criteria is reviewed using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, district and school level input, as well as stakeholder feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed annually with EC and Accountability Staff* • Office of EC and the Office of Accountability and Testing collaborative meeting dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - August 12, 2021* - November 22, 2021* - January 24, 2022* - April 8, 2022*
<p>3. Informational resources available to parents of students with disabilities so parents can contribute to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent resources for post-secondary transition planning for students, implications, and supplemental aids. 	<p>The Office of EC has a working relationship with the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (ECAC). This is a training and information center that provides free information and assistance with educational issues to parents of children with disabilities. They offer a lending library, newsletter, and a parent info line answered by parents.</p> <p>Parent friendly informational charts, manuals, and handbooks available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</i>* - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities—Amended March 2021* - Parents Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards—July 2016* <p>Other parent resources are available on the EC’s website under Parent Resources. A parent liaison is on staff who shares information and resources with parents and guardians.</p>

*Completed tasks.

Appendix G (continued)

Plans for the 2020–21 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2021–22 School Year:
<p>4. Explicit training annually for all professionals involved with identifying students as having a significant cognitive disability.</p> <p>Training encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eligibility criteria, - identification and impact on graduation/post-secondary outcomes, - additional monitoring, - support, and - technical assistance. 	<p>March 2020 – Decision-Making Consideration Process Tool Webinar*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This webinar was presented by the NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) and the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This webinar was focused on how to implement the flow chart in IEP meetings as well as addressing any concerns or questions from the field. <p>April 13, 2021 – 1.0 Percent Participation Video*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video was presented by the NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) and the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This video elaborated on the one percent participation information provided as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the NCDPI’s definition of a significant cognitive disability, the decision-making flow chart, and eligibility requirements for student participation on the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments. In addition to those topics, the video reviewed ways to analyze one percent participation data and the one percent justification form for the 2020–21 school year. <p>August 2021 – Administration Support Video for the ECS Classroom Training Video*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of EC created a video for school-based administrators. The video titled, Administration Support Video for the ECS Classroom, elaborates on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESSA requirements, - who should be instructed using the <i>Extended Content Standards (ECS)</i>, - the <i>IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</i>, - a resource titled, <i>Using the Least Dangerous Assumption in Educational Decisions</i>, from the TIES Center, - district and teacher matrix identifying needs in professional learning opportunities, - identifying communication needs for students, and - analyzing core instructional time in the ECS classroom. <p>October 2021*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of public school units (PSUs) exceeding 1.6% or above with a “n” size of 15 or greater. <p>January—June 2022*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate targeted monitoring of some PSUs with the Policy, Monitoring and Audit section of the Office of EC. • Coordinate and conduct desk reviews for the additional PSUs. <p>July 2022—June 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed targeted monitoring with 59 PSUs • A total of 852 records were reviewed • 46 out of 59 public school units have corrective actions and other PSUs received recommended actions

*Completed tasks.

Appendix H: 2018–19 and 2019–20 School Years Evidence Towards Progress

Plans for the 2018–19 and 2019–20 School Years:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 School Years:
<p>1. IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</p>	<p><i>On-going</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted on webpage* • Reviewed in regional meetings and during the posted NCEXTEND1 webinar* • The Office of Exceptional Children (EC) will conduct a webinar on how to use the <i>IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool</i>.
<p>2. Alternate Assessment Criteria is reviewed using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, district and school level input, as well as stakeholder feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed annually with EC and Accountability Staff* • Office of EC and the Office of Accountability and Testing collaborative meeting dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - October 11, 2019* - January 24, 2020* - April 8, 2020* - July 8, 2020* - October 23, 2020* - January 27, 2021* - April 14, 2021
<p>3. Informational resources available to parents of students with disabilities so parents can contribute to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent resources for post-secondary transition planning for students, implications, and supplemental aids. 	<p>The Office of EC has a working relationship with the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (ECAC). This is a training and information center that provides free information and assistance with educational issues to parents of children with disabilities. They offer a lending library, newsletter, and a parent info line answered by parents.</p> <p>Parent friendly informational charts, manuals, and handbooks available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool* - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities—Amended August 2020* - Parents Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards—July 2016* <p>Other parent resources are available on the EC’s website under Parent Resources. A parent liaison is on staff who shares information and resources with parents and guardians.</p>

*Completed tasks.

Appendix H (continued)

Plans for the 2018–19 and 2019–20 School Years:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 School Years:
<p>4. Explicit training annually for all professionals involved with identifying students as having a significant cognitive disability.</p> <p>Training encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eligibility criteria, - identification and impact on graduation/post-secondary outcomes, - additional monitoring, - support, and - technical assistance. 	<p><i>December 4–5, 2019—EC Regional Meetings (Regions 3 and 4) *</i> This training was provided by the Office of EC. The NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities is available to present relevant information to EC Directors in different regions within the state. The NCDPI utilizes the train-the-trainer model both in the Offices of Accountability and Testing and the Office of EC. The following information was presented: the eligibility criteria and requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities, impact on student outcomes, IEP goal writing, and progress monitoring.</p> <p><i>January 23, 2020 - New EC Director’s Conference*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information included in this presentation addressed all of the components new EC director’s need to be aware of, from initial eligibility to graduation requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities. <p><i>January 2020*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of LEAs with the subgroup of atypical eligibility categories. <p><i>February 2020*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with Accountability Services to conduct a webinar with testing coordinators and EC directors in specific LEAs and charter schools. <p><i>March 2020 – Decision-Making Consideration Process Tool Webinar</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This webinar will be presented by the NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) and the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Accountability Services). This webinar will be focused on how to implement the flow chart in IEP meetings as well as addressing any concerns or questions from the field. <p><i>March—May 2020</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate targeted monitoring of some LEAs by the Policy, Monitoring and Audit section of the Office of EC in the 2019–20 monitoring cycle. • Coordinate and conduct desk reviews for the additional LEAs and charter schools.

*Completed tasks.

Appendix I: 2017–18 School Year Evidence Towards Progress

Plan for the 2017–18 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2018–19 School Year:
1. IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool	<p><i>On-going</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted on webpage—November 2018* • Reviewed in regional meetings and during the posted NCEXTEND1 webinar*
2. Alternate Assessment Criteria is reviewed using the latest scholarly research, state partnerships, district and school level input, as well as stakeholder feedback.	<p><i>March 4–7, 2019—March Institute*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative Planning Consortium – Stakeholder Group (Exceptional Children (EC) Directors, EC Teachers, Disability Rights individuals, Parents, and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Staff)* • Reviewed annually with EC and accountability staff* • Offices of Exceptional Children and Accountability and Testing collaborative meeting dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - July 13, 2018* - December 3, 2018* - March 11, 2019* - May 13, 2019*
3. Informational resources available to parents of students with disabilities so parents can contribute to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision making process. - Parent resources for post-secondary transition planning for students, implications, and supplemental aids.	<p>The Office of EC has a working relationship with the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (ECAC). This is a training and information center that provides free information and assistance with educational issues to parents of children with disabilities. They offer a lending library, newsletter, and a parent info line answered by parents.</p> <p>Parent friendly informational charts, manuals, and handbooks available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP Team Decision-Making and Consideration Process Tool* - NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities—Amended March 2018* - Parents Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards—July 2016* <p>Other parent resources are available on the EC’s website under Parent Resources</p>

*Completed tasks.

Appendix I (continued)

Plan for the 2017–18 School Year:	Evidence and Dates of Implementation for the 2018–19 School Year:
<p>4. Explicit training annually for all professionals involved with identifying students as having a significant cognitive disability.</p> <p>Training encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eligibility criteria, - identification and impact on graduation/post-secondary outcomes, - additional monitoring, - support, - and technical assistance. 	<p>September 19, 2018—NCEXTEND1 Webinar*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This webinar encompassed information on the one percent population as related to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the 1.0 percent justification form, what constitutes a significant cognitive disability, eligibility requirements, who makes the determination, course codes, guidance documents and review of 2016–17 data. <p>October 2, 2018—Test Coordinators’ Meeting*</p> <p>1.0 Percent Participation as It Relates to LEAs, Charter Schools, and the State</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This session was designed to provide more clarity regarding the 1.0 Percent Participation on the Alternate Assessment and requirements of school districts and charter schools in terms of the law. Test Coordinators received information on the changes to the ESSA and its impact on the state. Other important information that was shared included: eligibility requirements for students who participate in the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment, the appropriateness of this assessment for students with disabilities, the impact on student learning as it relates to different learning pathways, and information about the justification form that is submitted for LEAs and charter schools that exceed the 1.0 percent participation rate. <p>December 4–7, 2019—EC Regional Meetings (Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4) *, February 12–13, 2019—EC Regional Meetings (Regions 7 and 8)*, and May 16–17, 2019—EC Regional Meetings (Regions 5 and 6)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities in the Office of EC presented to EC Directors in different regions within the state. The information included in the presentations was: the eligibility criteria and requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities, NCEXTEND1 data from the 2017–18 school year, impact on student outcomes, IEP goal writing, and progress monitoring. <p>January 9, 2019 and January 17, 2019 - New EC Director’s Conference*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This presentation was presented multiple times to different regions within the state. This information included the eligibility requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities, NCEXTEND1 data from the 2017–18 school year, IEP goal writing, and progress monitoring. <p>February 18, 2019 - New 1.0 percent justification form training for Regional Accountability Coordinators (RACs)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RACs were trained on the new 1.0 percent justification form required by LEA and charter schools when exceeding the 1.0 percent participation rate. The form was reviewed as well as expectations for completing and returning the form. <p>March 4–7, 2019 - March Institute*</p> <p>Alternate Achievement Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The alternate achievement standards were presented multiple times throughout the conference. The presentation included the following information: using the Extended Content Standards, instructional and assessment alignment, eligibility requirements and considerations, the review of 2017–18 NCEXTEND1 data, documentation of justification in the IEP, and the new one percent participation justification form. <p>March 18, 2019 - Connecting Communities of Education Stakeholders Conference (CCES)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This session was designed to provide clarifying information regarding the 1.0 percent participation on the NCEXTEND1. Alternate assessment data was presented and reviewed from the 2017–18 school year to review trends, areas of concern, and areas of strength within LEAs and charter schools. Information was provided about the changes to the Every Student Succeeds Act and its impact on LEAs and charter schools. Other important information included: eligibility requirements for students who participate in the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment, the appropriateness of this assessment for students with disabilities, the impact on student learning as it relates to different learning pathways, and information about the justification form that is submitted by LEAs and charter schools that exceed 1.0 percent. <p>April 8, 2019 – 1.0 Percent Participation Webinar*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This webinar was presented by the NCDPI consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Office of EC) and the NCDPI consultant who helps facilitate testing students with disabilities (Office of Accountability and Testing). This webinar included the following information: eligibility criteria for students with significant cognitive disabilities, data from the 2017–18 school year, resources for IEP teams, and an overview of the new 1.0 percent justification form.

*Completed tasks.

Appendix J: Justification Process for Exceeding the 1% Participation Rate in the Alternate Assessments based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

The NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment measures the content standards specified in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study Extended Content Standards for all assessed content areas. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject using the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards does not exceed 1.0 percent of the total number of all students assessed in each subject. States that anticipate they will exceed 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards must submit a waiver request to the US Department of Education.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has reviewed participation data for the NCEXTEND1 assessment in 2023–24 and found that just over 1.0 percent of students in North Carolina participated in each of the NCEXTEND1 content areas. For this reason, the NCDPI will submit a waiver for the 2024–25 school year. Furthermore, the ESSA requires that the waiver be submitted ninety (90) days prior to the beginning of the alternate assessment testing window. To ensure this deadline is met, the NCDPI will submit the waiver request to the US Department of Education on February 1, 2025.

The ESSA requires each district or charter school to complete and submit a justification when it anticipates exceeding 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject area with the alternate assessment. In North Carolina, there are approximately 158 public school units (PSUs) that exceeded the one percent participation in the alternate assessment during the 2023–24 school year and are predicted to do the same in 2024–25. Justifications from each district and charter school will be reviewed by the NCDPI and follow up actions will be determined based on the information found in the justification document. Staff from the Office of Exceptional Children and the Office of Accountability and Testing in each district and charter school should collaborate to provide the following information in the justification document:

Section 1: Contact Information

- Contact information for the primary public school unit staff member responsible for the justification document.

Section 2: Analyzing Contributing Factors

- Did the Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams utilize the alternate assessment eligibility criteria and the *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart* and make alternate assessment participation decisions?
- Describe how Exceptional Children case managers have been informed and trained on the *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet* and *Assurance document* included in the Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS).
- Does the public school unit have any student(s) participating in the alternate assessment with the primary eligibility areas of: Specific Learning Disability, Orthopedic Impairment, or Speech Language Impairment? If yes, explain the criteria the IEP team

used to determine how the students met the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment.

- Does the public school unit have a small overall student population that increased the likelihood of exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold?

Section 3: Assurances

- What data sources are used to determine eligibility for students participating on the *Extended Content Standards* that align with the alternate assessment?
- Describe the public school units process for generating and utilizing the Case Management Report in ECATS to monitor placement of students instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards*.
- Describe the public school unit's process for transitioning a student's instruction from the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* to the *Extended Content Standards* or from the *Extended Content Standards* to the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*.
- In the public school unit, how are parents or guardians directly informed annually about the implications of the *Extended Content Standards* in relation to not earning a high school diploma.
- Describe the process for auditing Exceptional Children IEP records for students instructed on the *Extended Content Standards* and participating in the alternate assessment.
- After completing the Disproportionality Excel document, answer the following guiding questions.
 - In reviewing the data, what subgroups in your public school unit have the largest discrepancy between participants on the general assessment and the alternate assessment?
 - When looking at subgroup discrepancies, what hypotheses can be formed?
 - What problem-solving actions will the public school unit take to address the identified hypotheses?

Section 4: Resources and Technical Assistance

- What resources and technical assistance does the public school unit need from the NCDPI to ensure that students are being assessed using the appropriate assessment?

The completed justification document must be signed by the superintendent or charter school director, exceptional children's director, and testing coordinator. The document must be scanned and emailed to alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov. The justification document will be publicly posted. As such, the document **must not contain any personally identifiable information**. The NCDPI will notify districts or charter schools in writing if further information is needed and include next steps. For questions, contact your exceptional children director or regional accountability coordinator.

Appendix K: NCEXTEND1 Eligibility Criteria

To determine participation in any of the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments, the following eligibility requirements must be met:

- The student must have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The student must have a significant cognitive disability.
 - The student’s disability significantly impacts cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviors, defined as those skills which are essential for someone to live and function independently.
 - The student requires extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains.
 - The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways.
- The student must be instructed using the *North Carolina Extended Content Standards* (i.e., reading, mathematics, science).
- The student must be enrolled in grades 3–8, 10, or 11, according to PowerSchool or the NC Student Information System. Only those students enrolled in 11th grade for the first time are required to take the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment at grade 11.

The vast majority of students with disabilities do not have a significant cognitive disability. The NCEXTEND1 is **not** appropriate for students who

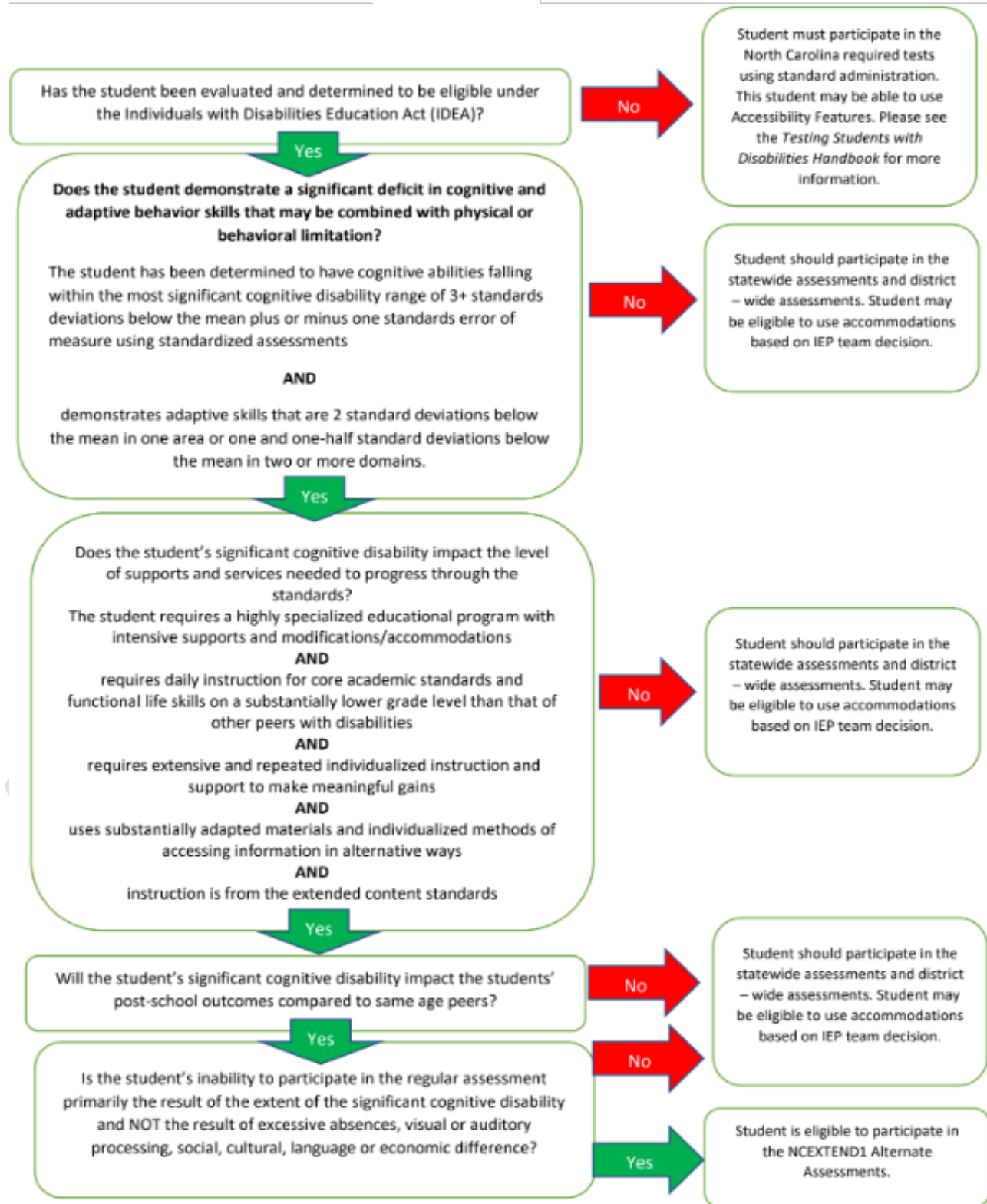
- are being instructed in any or all the assessed general grade- or course-level content standards of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* (i.e., reading, mathematics, science);
- demonstrate delays only in academic achievement;
- demonstrate delays only in selected areas of academic achievement;
- demonstrate delays owing primarily to behavioral issues; or
- if in high school, are pursuing a North Carolina high school diploma (including students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study pathway).

Evidence for the decision to participate in NCEXTEND1 is **not** based on:

- a disability category or label;
- poor attendance or extended absences;
- native language, social, cultural, or economic differences;
- expected poor performance on the general education assessment;
- academic or other services the student receives;
- educational environment or instructional setting;
- percent of time receiving special education services;
- English Learner status;
- low reading level or achievement level;
- anticipated disruptive behavior;
- impact of student scores on the accountability program;
- administrative decisions;
- anticipated emotional distress; or
- need for accommodations to participate in the assessment process.

IEP teams may use the following *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart* to aid in decision making regarding the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment for students.

Appendix L: North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Flow Chart—Guidance Provided for IEP Team



Appendix M: 1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process

1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process

Background Information

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) empowers states to look more carefully at the participation rate on the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Under the Act, the total number of students assessed in a subject using an alternate assessment may not exceed 1.0 percent of the total number of students in the state who are assessed in that subject. If a State anticipates that it will exceed the cap with respect to any subject for which alternate assessments are administered in any school year, the State may request a waiver for the cap for the relevant subject for one year. The regulation in question, 34 C.F.R. §200.6(c)(2), requires State Education Agencies, such as the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), to adhere to a 1.0 percent cap for the total number of students assessed statewide in a subject area using an alternate assessment. Since the inception of ESSA, North Carolina has continued to exceed the 1.0 percent participation rate.

Purpose

Each public school unit (PSU) is responsible for ensuring appropriate student eligibility, identification, and placement in special education. The *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* is designed for PSUs to monitor student participation rates on the alternate academic achievement standards and the alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. As stated in the *State Approaches to Monitoring AA-AAAS Participation Decisions Brief*, “Although it is IEP teams that determine which students participate in the AA-AAAS, the state must monitor and support LEAs to help ensure IEP teams are making appropriate decisions. It is important to know how states are monitoring IEP decision making because ultimately the responsibility resides with the state for ensuring that only students who qualify for participation in the AA-AAAS take the assessment.”¹

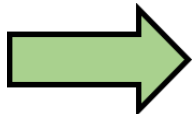
1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process

The *1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process* ensures students are being appropriately identified and assessed using an alternate assessment. Any PSU at or above 1.1% must complete the tasks on the following pages and submit to the NCDPI Office of Exceptional Children. As a reminder, the PSU test coordinator has access to the participation rate data via the secure shell.

¹Hinkle, A. R., Thurlow, M. L., Lazarus, S. S., & Strunk, K. (2022). State approaches to monitoring AA-AAAS participation decisions (NCEO Report 432). National Center on Educational Outcomes.

1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process (any PSU at or above 1.1%)

1. In the Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS):
 - Run and download the [Case Management Report](#) and open with Excel.
 - In the Excel document, on the top right of the menu bar, click the “Sort and Filter” button and then select “Filter”.
 - Locate the “Extended Content Standard” column. Filter and select “Yes” only.
 - Locate the “Primary Disability” column. Filter and select Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Speech-Language Impairment (SI), and Orthopedic Impairment (OI).
 - The Extended Content Standards (ECS) are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Students with SLD, SI, and OI as their primary disability area and instructed towards the ECS, should alert public school unit personnel of a potential error in identification, course of study, and/or participation in state-mandated assessments.
 - Public school unit personnel must review the students’ eligibility and course of study. The EC Director or Coordinator must contact and inform each case manager that the student(s) with the primary eligibility areas of SLD, SI, and OI and participating on the ECS, must convene an IEP team meeting to either change the student(s) course of study or initiate a re-evaluation to determine eligibility for the student(s). The decision to change the student(s) course of study or complete the re-evaluation process must be completed by June 30, 2025.
 - The EC Director or Coordinator must complete and submit the [Case Management Report spreadsheet](#) only if students with the primary eligibility areas of SLD, SI, and OI are found to be instructed towards the ECS. If no students are found to match this criteria, N/A should be entered into the Qualtrics link provided below.
 - Locate the “Primary Disability” column. Filter and select Intellectual Disabilities-Mild (IDMI) and Autism (AU).
 - These two primary disability categories may be used for students instructed towards the ECS. Personnel should review the report to ensure students are receiving the appropriate instruction and assessment based on their eligibility and the data used to justify participation in the alternate assessment is documented in the student’s IEP.
 - Locate the “Primary Disability” column. Filter and select all.
 - Locate the “Grade” column. Filter and select 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.
 - Locate the “Course of Study” column. All ECS high school students must have “Extended Content Standards: Leading to Graduation Certificate” selected as their Course of Study.
 - Students may **not** have “Future Ready Occupational Course of Study: Leading to a NC Diploma” or “Future Ready Course of Study: Leading to a NC Diploma” selected. Public school unit personnel should review the course of study selected for any ECS student if there is a misalignment.
 - Check a sample of
 - transcripts to ensure all high school ECS students are enrolled in “AX” courses.
- *Required to submit to the NCDPI using the Qualtrics survey link below.**



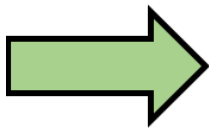
Submit the above item to this link by June 30, 2025:

https://ncdpi.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_73UE9hfF5eexuK2

2. All exceptional children teachers and LEA representatives in a PSU are required to complete the [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course](#) in Canvas.
 - The [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course](#) is designed to provide an overview of North Carolina's identification process for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
 - The EC Director or Coordinator will submit the [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Training Course Completion Log](#) which includes each staff member's first, name, last name, and completion date.

*** Required to submit to the NCDPI using the Qualtrics survey link below.**
3. Complete the *Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide* and submit Part G only.
 - The PSU [Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide](#) is a resource for use in reviewing PSU policies, practices, and procedures for determining whether the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments are appropriate for students with disabilities. Sections A through G of the guide organizes a particular component with essential questions for problem-solving. This organization is intended to support the identification of areas to strengthen and prioritize first steps.

***Required to submit Part G only to the NCDPI.**



Submit the above items to this link by **September 30, 2025**:
https://ncdpi.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4PCageMfC53OtJs