

Hello,

Slide 1- You have joined the webinar for the one percent participation in the alternate assessment, known in North Carolina as the NCEXTEND1. This webinar will be hosted by Molly Britt an education consultant for testing students with disabilities from the Accountability Services Division and Matthew Martinez, education consultant for students with significant cognitive disabilities from the Exceptional Children Division. This webinar will be recorded and posted on the alternate assessment page on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's website as well as on the Exceptional Children website. An FAQ document will be created and posted along with this webinar. Today, we will review the one percent participation information provided under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), North Carolina'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, we will review ways to analyze your one percent participation data and the one percent justification form for the 2020–2021 school year.

Slide 2- Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a state cannot prohibit a public school unit from assessing more than one percent of its assessed students. Also, a public school unit must submit a justification for the need to exceed the one percent. In addition, the state must provide appropriate oversight to public school units. Finally, the state must make the justification forms publicly available while not revealing personally identifiable information.

Slide 3- ESSA requires states to ensure the total number of students assessed in each subject area using an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards does not exceed one percent of the total number of all students assessed in each content area. Those areas are reading, mathematics and science. Public school units who exceed the one percent participation for a given school year are required to provide the NCDPI a justification of the need to assess more than one percent of their students on the NCEXTEND1 in any subject area.

Slide 4- ESSA reaffirmed that the alternate assessment is the appropriate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. ESSA gives final authority to Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams regarding programmatic planning and the assessment that matches the course of study. However, the IEP

team must follow the state guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment. ESSA includes assurances for informing parents about the standards to which their child's academic achievement will be measured and how participation in the alternate assessment may delay or otherwise affect completing requirements for a high school diploma.

Slide 5- The importance of this slide cannot be overstated. If you do not have procedures in place to ensure parents are informed of the implications when students participate on the Extended Content Standards, leading to a certificate of completion rather than a diploma, the public school unit should take steps to put procedures in place. It is the IEP team's duty to inform the parent of the implications of a student participating on the Extended Content Standards and being assessed on the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment. The IEP team needs to discuss this annually with the parent, guardian, or surrogate parent to ensure all team members are aware that upon completing high school the student will not receive a high school diploma, rather a certificate of completion. Appropriate places to document this discussion is on the prior written notice and in the meeting minutes.

Slide 6- In the next section we will discuss and answer, "How does North Carolina define a significant cognitive disability?"

Slide 7- What is a significant cognitive disability? What resources and tools are available to assist IEP teams make appropriate decisions?

Slide 8- Students with a significant cognitive disability are defined as the following: Students who have cognitive and adaptive behavior functioning deficits that may prevent them from attaining grade level achievement standards, even with substantial program modifications and accommodations.

Slide 9- The student may require extensive individualized instruction across multiple settings to access and make progress in the learning environment.

Slide 10- The significant cognitive disability cannot be the primary result of: excessive or extended absences, social, cultural, and economic differences, identification as an English Learner (EL), pre-determined poor performance on grade level assessments, an administrator decision, educational environment or instructional setting.

Slide 11- Since the decision to place a student on the extended content standards is based on the student having a significant cognitive disability, the NCDPI Exceptional Children Division has created a decision making flow chart to assist IEP teams in making the most appropriate decisions for each student. This flow chart can be utilized when making the decision to place a child on the extended content standards. Remember, only students who are instructed on the Extended Content Standards participate on the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment. This flow chart can be found on the NCDPI Exceptional Children website by clicking disability resources, significant cognitive disabilities, and Extended content standards support tools. The flowchart can be found under the NCEXTEND1 Webinar heading.

Slide 12- Now, we are going to review the flow chart. Although this is not a NCDPI policy, this chart is intended as a guidance document to assist IEP teams. A preliminary note: all questions must be answered yes to move through the flowchart. If the answer is no, the student should participate in the general state-wide tests aligned with the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. The first question in the flow chart: Has the student been evaluated and determined eligible under IDEA? If the answer is no, the student should participate in the North Carolina required general state tests with or without accommodations. If yes, follow the green arrow to the next section.

Slide 13- As a reminder, both parts of the question must be answered yes to follow the green arrow to the next box. The first part of the question is about cognitive abilities falling within the most significant cognitive disability range of 3 plus standard deviations below the mean plus or minus one standard error of measure using standardized assessments. If this answer is yes, continue reading after “AND” to answer Does the student demonstrate adaptive skills that are 2 standard deviations below the mean in one area or one- and one-half standard deviations below the mean in two or more domains. If both are yes, proceed to the next box below. If either answer or both answers are “no” the student should participate in the general state and district wide assessments with or without accommodations.

Slide 14- As a reminder, all parts within the question should be answered yes to move towards the next section on the flowchart. If the student requires a highly specialized educational program with intensive supports and modification, requires daily instruction for core academic and life skills on a substantially lower grade level than that of other peers with disabilities,

requires extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains, uses substantially adapted materials and methods of accessing information in alternative ways. In addition, the student requires services and support provided outside the general education classroom for greater than 60% of the day and requires constant immediate supervision. If the IEP team answers yes to all, move forward to the next box under the yes arrow. When looking at the appropriate assessment that aligns with instruction, is the student receiving instruction from the extended content standards, if so, follow the yes arrow. If the student is not receiving instruction on the extended content standards, the answer is no and the student must participate in state and/or district wide assessments with or without accommodations. A student's instruction must match the assessment. If a student is placed on the Extended Content Standards, the student is instructed in all academic areas within those standards. A student cannot have a significant cognitive disability in only one academic area. For example, a student cannot be instructed towards the North Carolina English Language Arts *Standard Course of Study* and the Extended Content Standards in the area of math. If a student is being instructed on the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* in any academic area, the NCEXTEND1 is not the appropriate assessment for the student.

Slide 15- The next question is in terms of looking to the future for the student. Will the student's significant cognitive disability impact the student's post-school outcomes compared to same age peers. As a reminder, the intent behind ESSA is for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to be instructed towards alternate achievement standards as well as being assessed with the alternate assessment that aligns with the standards. If the answer is yes, continue down following the "yes" arrow, if the answer is no, the student should be instructed on the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*.

Slide 16- And finally, the last question. To ensure there is a significant cognitive disability, the factors of absences, processing, social, cultural, language and economic differences must be discussed and determined not to be the causation.

Slide 17- If this question is yes, then the student will be instructed on the extended content standards and eligible to take the NCEXTEND1 in grades 3-8, 10 and 11. If the answer is no, the student will take the general state tests with or without accommodations.

Slide 18- Now we will shift gears and discuss eligibility requirements and considerations for participation on the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments.

Slide 19- In order for a student to be eligible to participate in the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments, the student must meet four requirements. The student must have a current IEP, the student must have a significant cognitive disability, the student must be instructed using the North Carolina Extended Content Standards for reading and mathematics, and the North Carolina Extended Essential Standards in science, and the student must be enrolled in grades 3–8, 10 or 11 according to PowerSchool. This is determined by the IEP team based on appropriate data from assessment and evaluations.

Slide 20- The NCEXTEND1 is not appropriate for students who are: being instructed on the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* (NCSCOS) for any subject area, demonstrate delays in selected areas of academic achievement, delays attributed primarily to behavioral issues and if in high school, are pursuing a North Carolina High School diploma, including students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) pathway.

Slide 21- Best practice indicates a student should be taught for one-hundred twenty school days before the testing window in the content area being assessed. The one-hundred twenty days is a best practice to ensure the student has adequate exposure to the content standards in the assessed area.

Slide 22- We've discussed why the US Department of Education requires justifications to assess more than one percent of students on the alternate assessment, how to work through the decision-making flow chart, and what the eligibility requirements are to participate in the NCEXTEND1. Next, we will talk about how to analyze data that is readily available to each public school unit.

Slide 23- As a result of the approved federal testing and accountability waiver, state testing did not occur in North Carolina schools at the end of the 2019–20 school year. The United States Department of Education recommended to states that public school units use the most recent data available when submitting justification forms for the 2020–21 school year. In North Carolina, the most recent data is from the 2018–19 school year. Currently, North Carolina is over the one percent ESSA mandate. For a state-wide data analysis, please refer to what is

called the Green Book. The pathway of how to access this from the NCDPI website is located in the box in the middle of this slide. The Green Book is divided into ten sections, to include: Achievement Level Ranges, Achievement Level Results, All Student and Subgroup Performance, Historical Trends and Results, Exceptional Student Results, Testing Accommodations, Goal Summary Reports, EOG and EOC Score Frequency Distributions, Stem and Leaf Plots of Proficiency, and NC Final Exams Score Frequency Distributions. The three areas with relevant information for students testing using the NCEXTEND1 are listed on the bottom of this slide. This data is helpful when comparing your public school unit to the state of North Carolina. The All Student and Subgroup Performance provides detailed information on the number of students taking the NCEXTEND1 that fall within different subgroup categories. For example, the information is broken down by primary eligibility area as well as by different demographic subgroup identifiers.

Slide 24- Now let's look at how can we use information provided through ECATS to analyze our one percent participation in terms of appropriate identification. Once you are logged in to ECATS and you are on your public school unit's landing page. There is a box that is labeled "My Reports" as seen to the right on this slide. In that box there is a link to the most recent "Child Count". When you click on "Child Count", an excel file will open. This excel file displays all students included within the child count for your public school unit. Please note this excel file contains a large amount of Personally Identifiable Information. This excel file can be sorted in different ways to assist public school unit's in identifying students who may be inappropriately placed on the Extended Content Standards. So, where should you start sorting? Looking at the setting and primary eligibility areas would be a good starting point.

Slide 25- We will now open a sample excel spreadsheet with data to show how to quickly sort information to assist in this process. Please note: all information in this spreadsheet does not include real student data. This was designed to provide practice.

(Open Excel Spreadsheet) Once the spreadsheet is opened, you see all the different column headings at the top. In your child count excel file, all of the cells will have information contained within them. For the purpose of this exercise, we only put information into the columns we will be manipulating. I will highlight the two columns that I am wanting to sort, which in this case are primary eligibility and setting. Then click on the Sort & Filter button on

the top toolbar. Then click Filter. You will notice a little funnel shaped icon appear at the top of those two columns. If I click the downward facing arrow next to setting, you will see REG for regular, RES for resource, and SEP for separate. Again, this excel sheet was designed for practice. Please note that there are many other settings that will appear when you sort your actual spreadsheet. I am going to unclick select all and choose SEP. Then click ok. You will now see that out of the 30 entries previously listed, now only 13 are showing. Those 13 students are listed as being in a separate setting. If I wanted to narrow down things some more, I would click on the downward arrow next to primary eligibility. Unclick select all and choose what you would like to look at specifically. For this task, I am going to choose LD for specific learning disability and SI for Speech Language Impairment. I know that these are two eligibility categories that are considered atypical for being in a separate setting, participating on the Extended Content Standards and participating on the NCEXTEND1. These two simple steps of sorting this file have narrowed down my list from 30, to 13, to 4. I now have 4 students that I may need to look at auditing their files to ensure these students are appropriately placed. When you do this with the public school unit excel file, there will be more than 30 students listed for child count, but as you saw here, the list will become quite narrowed and assist the public school unit in determining how to best audit and look at files to ensure students are appropriately placed and receiving the appropriate instruction and services.

Slide 26- In the next section we will be discussing justification information as well as the 2020–21 one percent justification form, which is due to the NCDPI by July 6th of 2021. As we move through the revised form you will notice that almost all of the “yes” “no” check boxes have been removed from the form. The US Department of Education requires a justification for addressing the questions within the form; therefore, there has to be thoughtful consideration and information provided when answering these questions for the public school unit. Just as a reminder, all questions require a response and no question should be left blank. If questions are left unanswered, the form will be returned with the expectation to resubmit with the missing information.

Slide 27- This form must be completed when a public school unit anticipates exceeding the one percent participation in a given grade or subject area for the current school year. When reviewing assessment data from the 2018–19 school year, if the public school unit exceeded the

one percent, then you should anticipate submitting for this year. If you submit a form and are under the one percent mandate, those will not be publicly posted. Only those that exceed the one percent must be made publicly available. Let's talk about the form: Section one, labeled contact information must be completed. Enter contact information for the primary public school unit staff member responsible for overseeing the completion of the form. The six fields listed are the LEA or charter three-digit code, contact name, contact phone number, Public School Unit name, contact title and contact email.

Slide 28- Section two: analyzing contributing factors. The first question that must be addressed is, was there thoughtful consideration for placing a student on the NCEXTEND1 through the use of eligibility criteria and the flowchart? Both documents are linked on the form. The *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart* found on the exceptional children webpage is designed to help facilitate IEP team decisions about placing a student on the Extended Content Standards. As we discussed in length previously, it is a great resource for IEP teams to use and explore when discussing educational options for students. The second question in this section asks the public school unit to describe how all members of the IEP teams have been informed and trained on the use of the eligibility criteria and the decision-making flow chart. The third question is asking about students participating on the NCEXTEND1 whose primary eligibility area is Specific Learning Disability, Other Health Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, or Speech Language Impairment? When answering this question on the justification form, the search capabilities in ECATS can assist public school units to monitor atypical areas of eligibility. Again, careful consideration must be made to ensure these students are appropriately placed. Although a student may be functioning at a lower or much lower rate than their same age peers, that doesn't automatically necessitate participation on a different course of study and test. An explanation is necessary to justify why IEP teams are making these determinations.

Slide 29- The next two questions in this section are as follows: does the public school unit provide a targeted program that may contribute to a higher enrollment of students with significant cognitive disabilities? Similarly, does the public school unit have a small overall student population that increased the likelihood of exceeding the one percent? Both of these questions warrant an explanation to justify exceeding the one percent. This may be an

appropriate place to discuss enrollment versus students participating in the NCEXTEND1. As a reminder, there must not be any personally identifiable information within the form.

Slide 30- Section three is all about Assurances. You will see in this section that there have been some changes to some of the questions. The first question asks what data sources are used to determine eligibility for students participating on the Extended Content Standards that align with the alternate assessment? There should be a variety of sources, data, and information collected to inform the IEP team and assist in making appropriate decisions for students. What is used to make these decisions? The next question digs a little deeper in asking the public school unit to describe the 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*. When receiving a student transfer, whether in or out of state, it is the school's duty to ensure the student is appropriately placed on the appropriate curriculum that aligns with the correct assessments. IEP teams should evaluate student progress at a minimum of annually to ensure students are participating on the correct course of study, monitor placement, and ensure adjustments are made where appropriate to promote student progress. When students are transitioning from one set of standards to the other, what steps and safeguards does the public school unit have in place to assist the student with the transition? The last question on this slide aims to ensure that IEP teams are evaluating student progress on an annual basis or before, when necessary. Student's should have the ability to receive the appropriate instruction based on their individual needs. Are special education case managers and other IEP team members evaluating the need to remain on the Extended Content Standards on an annual basis? Is the student progressing at a rate that it would be a possibility that the student may need to slowly transition to the *Standard Course of Study*? The NCEXTEND1 is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and assesses the Extended Content Standards.

Slide 31- We will continue with the Assurances section and walk through the next three questions. The first question on this slide is asking how parents, guardians, or surrogate parents are directly informed annually about the implications of the Extended Content Standards in relation to not receiving a high school diploma. While this is a difficult topic to discuss with parents, guardians, or surrogate parents it must be done to ensure that the IEP is providing the

parent, guardian, or surrogate parent with the important and relevant information. The IEP team must inform parents, guardians, or surrogate parents upon initial identification as well as at each IEP meeting. This is to ensure that the parent, guardian, or surrogate parent are well-informed that their child will not receive a high school diploma rather a certificate of completion. The next question wants public school units to describe their process for auditing Exceptional Children IEP records for students on the Extended Content Standards and participating on the alternate assessment. Public school unit leadership team members should be conducting internal audits of student IEP folders to ensure students are appropriately placed as well as the accuracy of the various parts of the record(s).

Slide 32- This leads into the last question about disproportionality. Public school units need to describe their process for identifying and addressing disproportionality for students participating on the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment. How do you monitor for disproportionality? When monitoring for disproportionality, the public school unit needs to compare the percentage of the sub-group within the population of students identified for the alternate assessment to the percentage of the sub-group within the total population. An example would be: In a middle school, they looked at the subgroup percentage of economically disadvantaged students taking the End-of-Grade tests compared to the same subgroup of students taking the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment. The students who were in the economically disadvantaged subgroup and took the EOG was 49.1% of students. When looking at the same sub-group for the alternate assessment, 67% of students were economically disadvantaged taking the NCEXTEND1. This would mean that the percentage of students taking the NCEXTEND1 who are in the economically disadvantaged subgroup, is significantly higher. This data could lead to some probing questions: Is the school unintentionally over-identifying economically disadvantaged students for the alternate assessment? Should we look at auditing some of these students' files to ensure students are appropriately placed? When looking at the files, what data points were used to determine eligibility? These questions may be a good starting point when analyzing subgroup data.

Slide 33- Lastly, what resources and technical assistance can the NCDPI provide to assist public school units to ensure students are being instructed and assessed appropriately? When reviewing previous justification forms, it was helpful to see which areas public school units were

requesting assistance, training, and/or clarification. The required signatures are the superintendent or school director, exceptional children director or coordinator and the public school unit test coordinator. As a reminder, the form is a fillable Word document that must be electronically completed, scanned and emailed to alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov. These forms are reviewed for content as well as personally identifiable information. If personally identifiable information is within the form or there is content needed, the form will be sent back for revision and asked to be resubmitted. If the form is missing relevant justification information, it will be sent back for revisions in those areas identified.

Slide 34- Information was provided today about students with the most significant cognitive disabilities including background information in terms of the law, walking through the decision-making flow chart, and walking through the revised justification form. As a reminder, we will post this webinar, the transcript and the FAQ document on the exceptional children website under significant cognitive disabilities support tools and on the alternate assessment webpage. Please send instructional based questions to Matthew.Martinez@dpi.nc.gov and any accommodations, NCEXTEND1 testing, and/or justification form questions to Molly.Britt@dpi.nc.gov. We appreciate your time today. Thank you for attending!