



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING


GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 12, 2019

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Dr. Scott M. Koenigsknecht, Deputy Superintendent 
P-20 System and Student Transitions

SUBJECT: Notice and Request for Public Comment: Alternate Assessment Waiver
Request for the 1 Percent Cap

Michigan's alternate assessment (MI-Access) is aligned to the Michigan alternate content standards in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. The alternate assessment is designed to allow students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

In 2018-2019, as provided for under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Michigan applied for, and received, a waiver on the 1 percent cap for the participation rate regarding students taking the alternate assessment (MI-Access). Part of this federal waiver was an agreement for Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to implement a plan to ensure students are properly assessed using the state assessment system programs.

The plan demonstrated an innovative and cohesive approach that supports an aligned, coherent education system at all levels (state, ISD, district, and school) related to Michigan's Top 10 in 10 goal of being student-focused and supporting the education system at all levels. The waiver filed and approved by the U.S. Department of Education on April 12, 2019 can be found here:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/1_Cap_Waiver_renewal_request_and_approval_2018-2019_652598_7.pdf.

Analysis of the 2018-2019 state assessment data shows a reduction in the participation rate for the alternate assessment in Michigan from 2.2 percent to 2.0 percent in mathematics and 2.1 percent in ELA. This represents a reduction of approximately 3,000 fewer students taking the alternate assessment in Michigan from 2017 to 2019.

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Given the participation rate on the alternate assessment is still over 1 percent, Michigan intends to apply for a renewal of the federal waiver under ESSA for the 2019-20 school year. Michigan has made substantial progress on the plan and intends to take further measures to provide guidance and assistance to districts in making individualized and appropriate assessment decisions.

As required, Michigan's waiver application for grades 3-8 and 11:

- be submitted at least 90 days prior to the start of the testing window;
- provide state-level data from the 2019 testing cycle to show the number and percentage of students (including sub-groups) who took an alternate assessment of all students tested in each subject;
- demonstrate that Michigan has tested at least 95 percent of all students, and 95 percent of students with disabilities across all summative assessments; and
- provide assurances that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) contributing to the state exceeding the 1 percent cap have adhered to the participation guidelines and address any disproportionality in any sub-group of students taking the alternate assessment.

Further, the waiver will include a plan and timeline by which the state will do the following:

- explicitly define "students with the most significantly cognitive impairments" related to consideration of participation in the alternate assessment. This will be imbedded in guidance documents, and online learning tools and shared in a multitude of media formats.
- post ISD justification forms. Currently, MDE is putting justification forms into the electronic monitoring system to ensure extraction of this data, for the purposes of public reporting.
- require local agencies to calculate a projected participation rate for 2020, in addition to responding to 2019 data.
- set up data collection for justification forms in the electronic monitoring system to ensure ease of analysis of data.
- conduct a review of justification forms in a "train the trainer" format as follows:
 - MDE will coordinate offsite workshops with intermediate school districts to oversee review of LEAs by the ISDs.
 - MDE will support the ISDs in providing feedback to their constituent LEAs.
 - MDE will continue to provide targeted attention to districts considered to require Tier III supports.

- MDE will focus on determining the appropriate assessment for each and every student with a disability, and complement this effort by adding a focus on how IEP teams make decisions on targeting instruction unique to a student's need, whether by utilizing the general education or alternate content standards.

MDE seeks public comment on this plan. Any interested party may submit comments **by close of business on Monday, January 6, 2020** as follows:

- Survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/1_Pct_Cap_Waiver_2020
- Email: mde-oeaa@michigan.gov (be sure to include "1 percent alternate assessment waiver" in the subject line)
- U.S. mail: Michigan Department of Education, 608 W. Allegan Street, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, Attn: OEAA 1 percent waiver – 2nd floor

The following resources are available on the MI-Access Web Site (<https://www.michigan.gov/mi-access>) with direct links provided below:

- Michigan's guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment (MI-Access): [Alternate Assessment Guidelines](#)
- Guidelines for ISD's to provide support to LEAs regarding the 1 percent cap: [1 percent cap ISD Guidance](#)
- Michigan's alternate content standards: [alternate content standards](#)
- Assessment selection guidance training module online: [Assessment Selection Guidelines Training](#)
- Interactive assessment selection tool for IEP teams: [IEP Interactive Decision-Making Tool](#)

For further information, please contact John Jaquith at jaquithj@michigan.gov or 517-335-1987.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance