

Contact: Martin Ackley, Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, 517-241-4395
Bill DiSessa, Spokesperson, 517-335-6649

MDE Seeks Public Comment for Alternate Assessment Waiver

December 4, 2018

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is seeking public comment on its application for a renewal of its federal waiver on the one-percent cap for the participation rate regarding students taking the state’s alternate assessment (MI-Access).

In 2017-2018, as provided for under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Michigan applied for and received a waiver on the one-percent cap for the participation rate regarding students taking the alternate assessment (MI-Access). Part of this waiver was an agreement that MDE implement a plan to ensure students are properly assessed using the state assessment system programs.

The plan included clarifying the state guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment, as well as developing and posting professional development resources to assist staff and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in determining the appropriate assessment for each individual. These tasks have been completed.

Analysis of the 2017-2018 state assessment data shows a reduction in the participation rate of the alternate assessment in Michigan from 2.4 percent to 2.2 percent. The effects of the implementation of this plan may be better reflected in the 2018-2019 testing data, as districts have had one full year to apply the enhanced state guidelines for participation.

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

The plan demonstrates an innovative and cohesive approach that supports an aligned, coherent education system at all levels (state, ISD, district, and school) as it relates to Michigan’s Top 10 in 10 goal of being student-focused and supporting the education system at all levels. This guidance is further outlined below.

As required, Michigan's waiver application will (inclusive of 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 2018 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 school districts (LEAs) contribute to the state exceeding the one 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:

- Improve the implementation of its guidelines on the alternate assessment;
- Take additional steps to support and provide oversight to each school district that contributes to the state exceeding the one percent cap; and
- Address any disproportionality in the percentage of students taking the alternate assessment.

The specific plan will include the following activities:

- Provide more in-depth guidance to Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and local school districts on examining data for students taking the alternate assessment when overall LEA rate is over one percent.
- Create a tiered system of supports for districts to increase understanding and improve alignment with state guidance on assessment selection.
 - Tier I: for all would include additional
 - Communication about the training currently available online as developed for the 2017-2018 plan;
 - In-person training as requested by ISDs or LEAs;
 - Resources developed by MDE, ISDs, or LEAs for others to access and use for individual and group professional development (such as developing standards-based IEPs based on alternate content standards).
 - Tier II: for LEAs whose participation exceeds two percent or whose data indicate issues of disproportionality in state testing for students with disabilities. MDE will work with ISDs to provide increased support at this level, which will be determined on a case by case basis.
 - Tier III: for LEAs whose participation rates fall within the highest three percent of all participation rates in the state, or whose participation rate exceeds two percent and whose data indicate issues of disproportionality in state testing for students with disabilities. MDE will work with ISDs to provide support at this level.

The MDE seeks public comment on this plan. Any interested party may leave comments in the following ways before the end of the day on Tuesday, December 17, 2018:

- Survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MI_1pct_Cap_waiver_input
- Email: mde-oeaa@michigan.gov (be sure to include "1% alternate assessment waiver" in the subject line)
- Via mail: Michigan Department of Education, 608 W. Allegan Street, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, Attn: OEAA 1% waiver – 2nd floor

The following resources are available on the [MI-Access Web Site \(www.michigan.gov/mi-access\)](http://www.michigan.gov/mi-access) with direct links provided here:

- 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 one-percent cap: [1% 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](#)

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