

How are the alternate assessments designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities?

The South Carolina Alternate Assessment is designed to be accessible to students with diverse and significant disabilities. First, the test contains performance tasks that range in complexity. Second, the test uses picture symbols and stimuli to engage students in the content. Third, the test allows students to complete the task using their preferred method of communication (e.g., pointing, eye gaze, assistive technology, oral response, sign language). Fourth, two types of scripted test items are used: engagement, where the teacher rates the student's level of involvement; and scaffolded, where students are often given multiple opportunities to respond correctly. Finally, there is no time restriction on the assessment at any point.

Can a student earn a high school diploma if he or she participates in the South Carolina Alternate Assessment?

No, students who the IEP team determines meet the participation criteria for South Carolina Alternate Assessments are participating in a curriculum that does not lead to a high school diploma.

Who do I contact to find out more about the South Carolina Alternate Assessments?

If your child participates in the South Carolina Alternate Assessment, you may contact your child's teachers. For more information on the South Carolina alternate assessment, you may go to:

sc-alt.portal.airast.org

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet, ask your child's teachers for assistance in obtaining copies of information about the South Carolina Alternate Assessments.

Tell me more about South Carolina Alternate Assessments.

SC-NCSC ELA and Mathematics

South Carolina was a member of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), a collaborative of 24 states and five organizations. The collaborative was funded by a General Supervision Enhancement Grant (GSEG) from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Services (OSES) to develop an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities aligned to academic standards in ELA and mathematics.

SC-Alt Science/Biology and Social Studies

First administered in 2004, the SC-Alt Science/Biology and Social Studies are alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards in science and social studies for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

SC-Alt Online Assessment

In the spring 2017 administration, a new test and test delivery system will be field tested to begin the transition from the SC-Alt and the SC-NCSC to the new SC-Alt Online Assessment. In the first year, the test will introduce new items and a new test delivery system as the unscored Independent Field Test (IFT). The purpose of the IFT is to obtain psychometric information about item performance, eliminate poorly performing items, and support subsequent activities, such as test form development, standard setting, scaling, and scoring. Subsequent administrations will build on this framework, leading to a scorable, Operational Field Test (OFT) in the spring 2018 administration.

**South Carolina
Department of Education
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201
sc-alt.portal.airast.org**



South Carolina Alternate Assessments

What are the South Carolina Alternate Assessments?

The South Carolina Alternate Assessments are a state assessment system designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in a school curriculum that includes functional and life skills as well as academic instruction.

The South Carolina Alternate Assessments consists of a series of performance tasks that allow students to respond in a variety of ways, such as pointing or eye gazing to the correct response; selecting objects, pictures, or picture symbols that represent the correct answer; or reading letters, words, or sentences to complete a task. The tasks are linked to the state academic content standards in science and social studies and the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

The following assessments make up South Carolina's Alternate Assessments for the spring 2017 administration:

- South Carolina National Center and State Collaborative (SC-NCSC) ELA and Mathematics
- South Carolina Alternate Assessment (SC-Alt) Science/Biology and Social Studies
- SC-Alt Online Assessment, all subjects

What are the academic standards?

Academic standards are general statements about what students should know and be able to do when they complete each grade or finish their school program.

These standards help to ensure that students with IEP (individualized education program) designations are provided with multiple ways to learn and demonstrate knowledge. The standards for each subject are available on the South Carolina Alternate Assessment portal (sc-alt.portal.airast.org).

Why should students with significant cognitive disabilities participate in academic instruction and assessment?

The primary reason to teach academic content to students who also require instruction in functional and life skills is to promote access and equity to the educational content all students receive as part of a free appropriate public education. Educators are finding that once this opportunity is provided, many students gain useful skills that benefit them now and in the future. Students may not master all of the grade level content, but they may master some content for their grade level. The South Carolina Alternate Assessment provides a way for them to demonstrate this mastery.

There are also laws that require that all students participate in academic instruction and assessment. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997 and IDEA 2004) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), require that states provide an alternate assessment for students with grade-level academic content standards. The state Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA) specifies that all students must be included in state accountability systems.

What are criteria for participation in alternate assessment?

The decision about a student's participation in required state assessments is made by the student's IEP team and documented in the IEP. Students must meet the following criteria:

- The student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability and adaptive skills that result in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations and modifications.
- The student accesses the state approved curriculum standards at less complex levels and with extensively modified instruction.
- The student has current adaptive skills requiring extensive direct instruction and practice in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of skills necessary for application in school, work, home, and community environments.
- The student is unable to apply or use academic skills across natural settings when instructed solely or primarily through classroom instruction.
- The student's inability to achieve the state grade-level achievement expectations is not the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences.

Who are students with significant cognitive disabilities?

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are students who require substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to meaningfully access the subject area content and require intensive individualized instruction in order to acquire and generalize knowledge. Their school curriculum includes functional and life skills as well as academic instruction.

Who decides if a student participates in the South Carolina Alternate Assessments?

The individualized education program (IEP) team, which includes the parents as equal members, determines how students will be assessed. The team reviews information about the student's progress across multiple years and areas and decides whether or not the student should take the state assessment with accommodations or whether the student meets the criteria for alternate assessment.

In what grades do students take the South Carolina Alternate Assessments?

Students are assigned a test form for science and social studies based on their age. Students ages 9–10 are assigned to the elementary school form; students ages 11–13 are assigned to the middle school form; and students age 16 take the high school form. For ELA and mathematics, students are assigned a test based on their grade.