Equity in Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the federal law governing special education, enables students with disabilities to receive equitable educational services. In the most recent authorization of that law Congress noted that “disability is a natural part of the human experience” and that “improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities”. The reauthorization noted that implementation of the federal law has been “impeded by low expectations and an insufficient focus on applying replicable research on proven methods of teaching and learning for children with disabilities”.

Congress also noted that research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by:

- Having high expectations and ensuring access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible
- Strengthening the role and responsibility of parents
- Coordinating with other local, State, and Federal school improvement efforts so that special education is a service rather than a place
- Providing appropriate special education and related services, and aids and supports in the regular classroom
- Supporting high quality, intensive preservice preparation and professional development for personnel to improve academic achievement and functional performance (including the use of scientifically based instructional practices)
- Providing incentives for whole-school approaches, scientifically based early reading programs, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and early intervening services
- Focusing resources on teaching and learning while reducing paperwork
- Supporting the development and use of technology including assistive technology
Congress expressed a need to address discrepancies in referrals and special education placements of students with limited English proficiency and in the percentage of minority students served in special education compared to the percentage of minority students in the general population.

Congress said providing effective transition services to promote successful post-school employment or education is an “important measure of accountability for children with disabilities”.

These comments express the intent of the law to ensure equity.

In 2017 a unanimous decision was issued by the Supreme Court in Endrew F versus Douglas County that also clarifies the intent of IDEA and expectations for its implementation. In that case it was found that “to meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP (Individualized Education Program) reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress in light of the child’s circumstances”. The decision states that “The IEP must be constructed only after careful consideration of the child’s present levels of achievement, disability, and potential for growth”. And it adds that the “educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of his circumstances, just as advancement from grade to grade is appropriately ambitious for most children in the regular classroom. The goals may differ, but every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives”.

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**We’ll Be Your Connection**

**Monthly Parent-to-Parent Chats**

Parents of children with special education needs, do you care to chat? Facebook chat that is. We offer a Parent-to-Parent Chat on the first Tuesday of every month (Except June, July & Aug) at 12:30 PM through Facebook Live. We will broach a subject, but the chat can be about anything you want to discuss. Parents offer each other tips on things like preparing for IEP meetings, finding appropriate assistive technology to assist with learning, getting behavioral supports, and more. “Like” our page and click “See First” to get all our Facebook notifications.
Archived Webinars

Our webinars are available any time of day as archived recordings on our website. Learn beneficial information as your schedule allows. Just visit www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings and search by topic category, title, date of recording, or presenter name. Click on the event you plan to watch, submit basic registration data (name, email, etc.), and the webinar will begin.

- [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4210](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4210) Accessing and Using Data from Your Child’s Student Record Nancy Mader
- [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4632](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4632) Parental Rights in Special Education Karrie Potter
- [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4572](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4572) Alternate Assessment Rights in Special Education Amy Deegan, ISBE
- [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4659](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4659) Understanding Special Education Basics in Illinois Karrie Potter

Items Available From Our Lending Library

800+ Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives for Use in K-12 Classrooms
Chris De Feyter, M.Sc., M.Ed.

SMART goals to address diverse student learning.

The Goal Mine—Nuggets of Learning Goals and Objectives for Exceptional Children
Donald & Maureen Cahill

How to specify effective IEP goals and measure student progress and ability

Writing Measurable IEP Goals & Objectives
Barbara Bateman, Ph.D. & Cynthia Herr, Ph.D.

How to write goals and objectives and move a child’s performance to the goal.

To borrow these items free of cost go to: www.fmptic.org/library
The Volunteer Advocacy Project

The Volunteer Advocacy Project is a training program for Illinois residents who are willing to become advocates for themselves and other families as they navigate their way through the world of special education.

Requirements:

◊ Commit to participate in 12 weekly online sessions
◊ Commit to advocate for four families of children with disabilities over the year following graduation

Training content will focus on:

◊ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
◊ State Law Related to Special Education
◊ Every Student Succeeds Act
◊ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
◊ Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Registration deadline is Monday, January 25, 2023.

https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1387615987588714080

Registrants will be emailed presentation slides and handouts prior to each weekly webinar.

Contact Family Matters for additional information at 866-436-7842 X3516

The 2023 WEBINAR sessions will be held on 12 consecutive Thursday evenings beginning January 26th and ending April 13th. Sessions run from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM.
Family Matters is recruiting volunteers who would like to become educational surrogate parents

**WHAT IS AN EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT?**

An Educational Surrogate Parent is an individual who has been appointed to represent the educational interests of a child with disabilities when:

- No parent (as defined under 34 CFR 300.30) can be identified;
- The parent cannot be located;
- The child is a youth in care; or
- The child is an unaccompanied homeless youth.

What are the responsibilities?

- Learns about the student’s educational needs by getting acquainted with the student, communicating with personnel involved in the student’s education and/or care, and observing the student at school;
- Acts as the student’s advocate for educational matters;
- Provides or withholds consent for assessment and services/placement;
- Attends educational meetings on the student’s behalf;
- Works with school staff to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the student;
- Negotiates for appropriate services on behalf of the student;
- Abides by the laws of confidentiality when sharing information about the student;
- Requests complaint, mediation or due process procedures, if necessary;
- Reports services twice a year (also basis for reimbursement).

By volunteering as an educational surrogate parent, he/she becomes an important member of a team in determining and ensuring a child receives a free and appropriate public education. The educational surrogate parent must:

1. Complete the entire training (An educational surrogate parent application must be completed during the training.),
2. Pass the training exam, and
3. Complete and pass a background check.

Is there reimbursement for expenses?

An educational surrogate parent (ESP) is eligible to receive a flat fee ($50) stipend for expenses incurred while providing services. To be eligible for the stipend, the ESP must have provided at least one of the following services:

1. Observed the student at school
2. Met with personnel involved in the student's education
3. Met with personnel involved in the student's care
4. Attended meetings in person (virtually during Covid) to develop or review the student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP)

ESPs submit a form twice a year to request the stipend for services provided to each student the ESP serves. An ESP can also choose to forego the stipend and volunteer their time.

See training options available on page 6.
Family Matters Provides Training for the Illinois State Board of Education’s Educational Surrogate Parent Program

If you are interested in serving as an educational surrogate parent for children in Illinois who need representation, or if you are already serving as an educational surrogate parent and need a refresher training, contact our office for more information. The required training on the special education process is six hours in length. Want to learn more about what Educational Surrogate Parents do? Read more in the article on page 6. Our office number is 866-436-7842.

**EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT VIRTUAL TRAINING**
**FEBRUARY 8, 2023 9AM-4PM**
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1483669323544364377

**EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT VIRTUAL TRAINING**
**MARCH 1, 2023 9AM-4PM**
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7715399960429422352

Want to help make a difference while you shop in the Amazon app, at no extra cost to you? Simply follow the instructions below to select "Family Matters Parent Training Andinformation Center" as your charity and activate AmazonSmile in the app. They’ll donate a portion of your eligible mobile app purchases to us.

How it works:
1. Open the Amazon app on your phone
2. Select the main menu tap on "AmazonSmile" within Programs Features
3. Select "Family Matters Parent Training Andinformation Center" as your charity
4. Follow the on-screen instructions to activate AmazonSmile in the mobile app

Donate to Family Matters each time you order from amazon. Just shop at http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-5808691. You will have access to the same merchandise and pricing as you do when shopping at amazon.com.

**Family Matters’ Board of Directors**

If you have an interest in serving as a Board member, please visit our website and complete an application.
http://www.fmptic.org/sites/default/files/prospective%20board%20member%20questionnaire2.pdf

We welcome parents that fulfill demographic needs including geographical locations; parent representation of disability types; representation of age ranges, gender, and diversity; related professional interests; and volunteer experiences.

**During the school year, our hours of operation at Family Matters are:**
**Wednesday and Thursday 8:00 AM to 6:30 PM**
**Monday, Tuesday, and Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM**
Progress monitoring is key when it comes to tracking your child’s success in the special education process. When your child receives special education and related services you want to know that the supports and services implemented in the IEP are effective and helping your child gain necessary skills. Your child’s IEP includes measurable annual goals that are written to address identified areas of need. Understanding and reviewing these measurable goals can help you when determining whether or not your child is making progress.

Each measurable goal in the IEP must include:

- Your child’s beginning level of performance, either in a section on “present levels of educational performance” or in the goal statement,
- Each goal statement must outline the skills or behaviors to be changed, the direction of the desired change, and
- The expected ending level of performance.

Reviewing IEP goals can be intimidating and you may question whether or not the goals are measurable. From Gobbledygook to Clearly Written Annual IEP Goals is an easy to understand resource that helps take the mystery out of writing measurable IEP goals. This book covers the importance of having measurable IEP goals, and takes actual goals, which were poorly written and turns them into productive goals that will help the IEP team guide the child to success.

Here is a sneak peek of a before and after goal that is included in Barbara’s book:

**Goal:** Nelson will improve his ability to speak clearly to communicate meaning.

**Measurable Goal:** Nelson will orally answer 9 of 10 questions (to which he knows the answers, e.g., “What are you wearing now?”), using at least three meaningful and understandable words in each answer.

Writing measurable goals might take some practice and it’s helpful to remember that measurable goals are able to be counted or tracked or observed and should be skills that will enhance the individual’s life. If you look at a written goal and can’t see a way to measure an increase in the skill level of the student’s performance, then it’s time to revise the goal as in the example above. While participating in IEP meetings for your child, make sure that all the goals are written so that measurable progress can be seen. Parents are part of the IEP team and can question the way that the draft goals are written, can ask for clarifications, and can ask for revisions whenever the draft goals are not measurable or clear to you.

Dr. Bateman’s book can help you understand what appropriate goals look like and give you ideas for providing your own input during your child’s IEP meetings. If you would like to check out this resource contact Family Matters at 866-436-7842, or request this resource by visiting Family Matters’ Lending Library here: [https://www.fmptic.org/library](https://www.fmptic.org/library)
CHECK OUT OUR

Upcoming Events

January 11, 2023 12:00pm-1:00 Instructional Practices to Support Implementation of the IEP – Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs

or 6:30pm-7:00 Instructional Practices to Support Implementation of the IEP – Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs

February 8, 2023 12:00pm-1:00 Post-Secondary Outcomes for Youth: Real Stories - Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs

February 8, 2023 6:30pm-7:30 Post-Secondary Outcomes for Youth: Real Stories - Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs

February 8, 2023 Educational Surrogate Parent Virtual Training, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

March 1, 2023 Educational Surrogate Parent Virtual Training, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

March 8, 2023 6:30pm-7:30 Supported Decision Making - Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs

March 8, 2023 12:00pm-1:00 Supported Decision Making - Transition Series for Those with Complex Support Needs
TOT SPOT

Parent Engagement during the Early Childhood Assessment Process

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) offers a toolkit for early childhood professionals and for family members that contains guidance to help improve early childhood educational practices. Some of the tools contained in that kit are checklists for various areas of the assessment and educational practices implementation. The checklists are for evaluators, educators and administrators to check themselves on how well they are carrying out the DEC Recommended Practices, the research-based educational practices that have been reviewed and recommended by the Division of Early Childhood, ECTA, and the U.S. Department of Education for early intervention/early childhood education. The checklists are also useful for parents as a way to see if the providers working with their children and their families are following the recommended practices. If some of the options are marked “seldom or never” than parents can use the checklists as a talking point with their IFSP or IEP team members. Parents can ask their teams about how to get more of the recommended practices in place for their families.

Engaging Families as Partners in Their Child’s Assessment Checklist

This checklist includes practices for engaging families throughout the assessment process. Assessment is the process of gathering information to make informed decisions and is a critical component for intervening with young children who are at risk for developmental delays or have delays/disabilities and their families. Families are important sources of information about what a child can do, likes to do, is interested in, and how well he/she functions throughout the day. This helps practitioners and families focus on child participation, interaction, and independence in everyday activities that are most meaningful and important to the family. The checklist indicators can be used to develop a plan to improve practitioner’s engagement of families in a child’s assessment process. The checklist rating scale can be used for a self-evaluation to determine whether the different practices were used to engage a family in their child’s assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner:</th>
<th>Child:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate which practice characteristics you were able to use as part of evaluation and assessment of a child:</td>
<td>Seldom or never (0 - 25%)</td>
<td>Some of the time (26 - 50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Solicit input from the family about the reasons for referral including their questions and concerns about their child.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Explain to the family the purpose of an assessment and how results will be used.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Schedule times for child assessments that the family feels would work best for their child and family.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Share ways that the family can be involved in the assessment process (e.g., interacting with their child, being an informant, sharing information).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Use appropriate assessment strategies (e.g., open ended questions, interviews, checklists) for encouraging the family to participate in ways they choose.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use formal tools, interviews, or other informal methods (e.g., observations) to identify child’s strengths or what might be challenging for the child’s participation in everyday activities.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Explicitly acknowledge the family’s observations about their child’s behavior, skills, and development.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Solicit the family’s input on the assessment findings and engage the family in a discussion of their priorities and/or the focus for next steps.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We all have hopes and dreams for our children, often related to having the best educational opportunities. If you are a family member of a child who is under five years old and want to learn more about what that looks like for children with disabilities, Early CHOICES has a webinar series just for you! The Inclusive Education Series for families started this fall, but still has four sessions remaining. We gather in the evening for just one hour, and feature a different guest speaker each time. Upcoming topics include the Least Restrictive Environment, the benefits of inclusion, and inclusive settings. Please see this flyer for registration information and dates of future sessions: https://www.eclre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Family-series-22-23-1.pdf

If you would like to learn more about inclusion, and are unable to attend, please visit our website for the Understanding Inclusion Modules. Created with families for families, the modules are on-demand, self-paced, and available in English and Spanish. Each topic comes with a printable guide to help you reflect and record your ideas. Please visit our website: https://www.eclre.org/good-to-know/understanding-inclusion/

The Early CHOICES team wish you and yours a healthy and happy New Year!

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn: @earlychoicesorg

For videos regarding inclusion, please subscribe to our YouTube channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIfVTAREF2X-9-BTZiZuOHg

Early Childhood Resources from the Clearinghouse

The end of the year can be chaotic. Holidays, school breaks, and family visits can be fun but also difficult to navigate depending on your child’s needs. Because of the changes to your routine, you may be spending more time with your child over the coming weeks. You may be looking for new resources and activities to do with your child. The Early Intervention Clearinghouse (EIC) has 60 early childhood speech book kits. The kits are available in English and Spanish. We are loaning them, for free, to families across Illinois. In each kit, you will find two books for families with information and activities to promote communication. These books could include “We’re Parenting a Toddler! The First-Time Parents’ Guide to Surviving the Toddler Years” by Adrian Kulp. You will also find two books to be shared with your children to promote communication. These books include “I Love You to the Moon and Back” by Amelia Hepworth.

Learn more about our speech and language kits at: https://eiclearninghouse.org/everyday/speech-kits/

Are you interested in a speech and language kit? Request a kit by completing the form at: https://eiclearninghouse.org/contact/ or contacting us at (877)275-3227 or Illinois-eic@illinois.edu
Questions:

1. Progress monitoring is required for all students, including students with IEP’s, at least twice each school year. True or False?
2. Parents can use their child’s IEP and data collected by the school to determine if their child is making progress. True or False?
3. The IEP does not have to document how a student’s progress will be monitored. True or False?
4. If you are concerned your child is not making meaningful educational progress you can request an IEP meeting to discuss revisions to your child’s IEP. True or False?

Answers:

1. **False.** Progress monitoring is a very important part of the special education process. The point of progress monitoring is to see how a student is doing. Progress monitoring can answer questions such as, “Is the extra help or the intervention enough for the student, or do they need more or a different kind of help?” The information gathered when doing progress monitoring is used to help the IEP team decide how to most appropriately help students. The IEP document must show how often your child’s progress toward annual goals will be measured and how you as a parent will be informed of the progress. Parents must be informed at least as often as parents are informed of nondisabled children’s progress, which is typically done through quarterly report cards.

2. **True.** Parents often ask how they will know if their child is learning or making progress. This question can be answered by looking at a variety of data. This includes looking at information from both special education and general education sources as well as information or data from outside the school. Types of data that may be reviewed to determine progress include: results from recent evaluations, measurable annual goals, progress reports, annual IEP review, information from the classroom teacher, state and district-wide assessments, independent evaluations, and observations of skills at home or in the community. Being familiar with your child’s IEP goals, and checking the progress report data you get from the teacher will keep you informed on how well your child is learning during each school year.

3. **False.** Parents may be informed of their child’s progress in different ways including but not limited to, periodic report cards, other written reports, and meetings. Each of your child’s goals is required to include a statement about how it will be measured (teacher observation, charting, testing, etc.), how often it will be measured, and who is responsible for collecting the data. Monitoring progress helps parents determine whether their child’s progress is sufficient enough for them to achieve their IEP goals within that IEP year.

4. **True.** If you are concerned your child is not making educational progress you can request an IEP meeting at any time in order to express your concerns and to figure out what changes might be needed. The school cannot guarantee that a child will achieve the goals in the IEP; however, the school must make a “good faith effort” to assist the child to do so. An IEP meeting can be held to discuss and plan revisions to improve opportunity to make progress. Your child may need changes in special education or related services, assistive technology, curriculum, method of instruction, the amount of time spent on instruction, the level of material used or the educational setting.
Preparing for Transition to College

When a student with a disability is preparing to attend college it is important for them to understand their rights. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) strongly encourages students with disabilities to know their rights and responsibilities and the responsibilities of institutions of postsecondary education under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Institutions of postsecondary education have no legal obligations under IDEA. IDEA requirements apply to state education agencies, school districts and other public agencies that serve IDEA-eligible children.

Disability supports and services in college differ significantly from those a student may receive during elementary and secondary school. During elementary and secondary school a student with an IEP may receive accommodations and modifications. Once a student graduates from high school and receives their diploma the IEP expires, meaning the IEP does not follow a student to college. Colleges are required to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, but are not necessarily required to provide the same type of services that were in the high school IEP.

Some common college accommodations may include extended time, use of a calculator, copies of notes from a classmate, use of audiobooks, or use of speech to text programs.

It is important for students to understand what supports and services are part of their IEP during high school. Students also should understand the difference between an accommodation and a modification. An accommodation allows a student to complete the same assignments as other students, but permits a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response or presentation. An accommodation does not alter what the test or assignment measures. A modification adjusts the expectations for an assignment or a test. It permits a change in what a test or assignment measures. Examples include: a) a child is permitted to complete only part of a standard; b) a child is given an alternate assignment at a different level instead of the standard assignment.

Families and students should maintain copies of high school records. These records are important when requesting accommodations at the college level and obtaining other disability related adult services. A Summary of Performance (SOP) must be completed during the final year of a student’s high school education. The SOP along with additional documentation may be necessary as the student applies to a college or university. To learn more about the contents of the Summary of Performance, contact Family Matters.

For several years, advocates have been pushing a bill called the Respond, Innovate, Support and Empower (RISE) Act. The RISE Act would make the transition to college a little smoother by requiring colleges and universities to accept students’ individualized education programs (IEPs) and evaluations from school districts as proof of the need for accommodations and supports. This would eliminate the need for students to again undergo expensive evaluations just to provide evidence to the post-secondary schools that they have a disability and need certain supports in order to participate in college coursework. Students who have disabilities such as cognitive impairments, dyslexia, dysgraphia, auditory processing disorders, autism, and other learning disabilities, will still have those disabilities when entering college and there should be no
need to have to go through the time-consuming process of re-evaluations to show that they still have those learning differences.

Although the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) which requires IEPs for students with disabilities during primary and secondary school, no longer applies after high school graduation, there are other federal disability rights laws that entitle adults with disabilities to reasonable accommodations in education and employment. Those laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Recently released federal data shows that among college students who were ever diagnosed with a disability, just 13% informed their college of their disability status. Some undergraduate students don’t disclose their learning disabilities to their colleges and universities because they never learned to advocate for themselves while in high school, or may be unaware of the services that could be available to them in post-secondary schools, or because they fear disclosing a disability might count against them.

In addition to requiring colleges to accept students’ primary and secondary school records as proof of disability, the RISE Act would create a $10 million technical-support center for college faculty to learn more about the needs of students with disabilities, provide a centralized source of information about accommodations for students with disabilities and their families, and require colleges and universities to report more data on students with disabilities.

After years of advocacy efforts, this year for the first time, the RISE Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives, the furthest it has advanced in the legislative process. There is no vote yet scheduled in the U.S. Senate. If you would like to see this legislation passed by both chambers and sent to the President to be signed into law, you can contact your state senators to encourage their support of the RISE Act. If you need help finding the contact information for your senator, visit this website: https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member

Helpful resource: https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/parent-20070316.html
Why Statewide Testing Participation Matters for All Students
Statewide testing requirements have been a feature of public K–12 education since 1994 but questions about testing participation persist, such as:

“Why is it necessary for students to participate?”
“Which students should participate?”
“What is the impact of participation on funding and decision making?”

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) has developed a toolkit to identify and describe reasons why all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities should take state tests. The toolkit is intended to provide a neutral but useful mechanism to guide positive, thoughtful conversations about student testing participation. It includes:

Flyer for Families at https://nceo.info/Resources?text=%22NCEO+Participation+Communication+Toolkit:%22

that addresses:

How does taking state test help my child?
How does taking state tests help my school?
How can I support my child?

Flyer for Students at https://nceo.info/Resources?text=%22NCEO+Participation+Communication+Toolkit:%22

to help them understand:

How does taking state tests help me?
How does taking state tests help my school?
What can my family and I do so I feel supported?

Materials that IEP Teams can use when making decisions about state test participation decisions.

View the entire toolkit here:
https://nceo.info/Resources?text=%22NCEO+Participation+Communication+Toolkit:%22
Alternate Assessments

U.S. Department of Education regulations require the participation of every child in state and federal district-wide assessments in certain subject matters: (Reading, Math, and Science) at certain grade levels. Students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 are assessed in Reading and Math. Students in grades 4, 7, and 11 are assessed in Reading, Math, and Science. In 2007 Illinois required Writing be assessed in grades 5, 8, and 11.

Alternate Assessments (AA) are used with students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in regular assessments even with accommodations. The Dynamic Learning Maps-Alternate Assessment is the required state assessment in Illinois for students, in grades 3-11, with the most significant cognitive disabilities. As determined by the IEP, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may take the DLM if participation in the state’s regular assessments is not appropriate, even with accommodations.

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are defined as students whose intellectual functioning is well below average (typically associated with an IQ below 55), who have impairments or deficits in adaptive functioning such as communication or self-care, who have high intensity needs, and who are unable to participate in regular assessments even with significant accommodations.

Students who strictly have academic, language, social/emotional, physical or sensory disabilities without also having a significant cognitive disability do not qualify to take the AA.

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) each state is limited to offering the Alternate Assessment to a maximum of 1% of students who participate in assessments. It is important to make “The Least Dangerous Assumption.” IDEA tells us the IEP should be geared toward accessing the general education curriculum and IEP goals and instruction should reflect high expectations.

The Dynamic Learning Maps-Alternate Assessment is administered by a trained professional one on one. It is computer based and is tailored to the student. Students are assessed using the DLM in the areas of Math, English Language Arts, and Science. The student’s progress is determined through testlets that take about 15 minutes each, and as the student progresses the testlets advance in skill level.

If a student does not qualify to take the AA they will take the regular assessment with accommodations that reflect their individual needs and are identified in the student’s IEP. These accommodations may include, extended time, human scribe, human reader, large print, braille, sign language interpreter, augmentative/alternative communication, calculator, captions, and assistive technology. These accommodations need to be the same accommodations the student has listed in their IEP for every-day instruction.
If you are not sure if your child qualifies for the AA you can talk to your students IEP team. Things you can think about include:

- Your student’s current level of functioning,
- The goals for your student: graduation and beyond,
- Accommodations and supports required and available to your student, and
- Universal Design for Learning and Inclusion.

For more information about the Alternate Assessment watch the following archived webinar on the Family Matters website:

Annual State Testing of Students Does Your Child Need an Alternate Assessment, Presented by, Amy Deeghan: [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4572](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4572)

You can also check out the following book from the Family Matters Lending Library:
Alternate Assessment of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings: [https://www.fmptic.org/library](https://www.fmptic.org/library)