Students with Significant Disabilities:
Eligibility and Instructional Supports

September 2018 Collaborations
Today we will:

• Apply eligibility criteria to determine whether a student qualifies for the LEAP Connect alternate assessment

• Utilize Louisiana Connector-aligned resources to prepare for planning and instruction of students with significant disabilities
• Criteria for LEAP Connect Alternate Assessment Eligibility
• Louisiana Connector-Aligned Instructional Resources
LEAP Connect
Alternate Assessment Eligibility
Louisiana believes that all students, including students with the most significant disabilities, should be held to the highest possible grade-level expectations. Over that past three years, much progress has been made to deliver on this belief, including:

- new Louisiana Connectors standards in ELA, mathematics, and science
- aligned LEAP Connect for Students with Significant Disabilities statewide assessment
BSESE policy outlines specific criteria a student must meet to participate in the LEAP Connect alternate assessment. **IEP teams are responsible** for determining if a student should participate in the alternate assessment, based on the state’s criteria:

1. **The student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and/or adaptive behavior.**

2. The student requires extensive modified instruction aligned with the Louisiana Connectors to acquire, maintain, and generalize skills.

3. The decision to include the student in the alternate assessment is not solely based certain factors (placement, behavior, English learner status, etc.).
The first criterion states that the student must be functioning significantly below the mean on an assessment of cognitive and/or adaptive functioning. Significance varies by grade level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Not completed the 5th grade: an eligible student is functioning <strong>3 or more standard deviations</strong> below the mean.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Completed 5th grade: an eligible student is functioning <strong>2.3 or more standard deviations</strong> below the mean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Completed the 5th grade: a student may be eligible if they are functioning <strong>2.0 - 2.29 standard deviations</strong> below the mean with <strong>additional empirical evidence</strong>.</td>
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The first criterion states that the student must be functioning significantly below the mean on an assessment of cognitive and/or adaptive functioning. Cognitive and adaptive assessments are part of a formal psychological evaluation, typically conducted as part of a student’s initial evaluation, or as part of a reevaluation, when additional information on the student’s performance is needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
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<td>development is characterized by the way a child learns, acquires knowledge and interacts with his or her surrounding environment. A cognitive assessment provides information on a student’s ability to reason, to think abstractly, and to solve problems.</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior is how a child meets the demands of their environment. Assessments of adaptive behavior typically measure conceptual (communication, self-direction, etc.), social (leisure, etc.) and practical (community use, self-care, etc.) functioning.</td>
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IEP teams do not always have the full evaluation available and/or do not always know how to interpret cognitive and/or adaptive assessment results. **IEP teams need the right information at the right time to make an informed decision** as to whether a student is eligible for the alternate assessment and whether that’s the best decision for his/her educational goals.

To help IEP teams in the decision-making process, LDOE is adding enhancements to the special education reporting (SER) system that will capture and display cognitive and adaptive assessment results clearly and transparently. These will:

- Require pupil appraisal teams / SER clerks to add specific elements of cognitive and adaptive evaluation results under the evaluation link in SER.

- Automatically add those results to the IEP’s LEAP Connect form, the place where the IEP teams document the student meets the state’s criteria.
Pupil appraisal teams / SER clerks should add specific elements from the cognitive and adaptive assessments under the evaluation link in SER.

### Intellectual Functioning / Cognitive Assessments

- **Assessment Completed:** Yes
- **Assessment Name:** Woodcock–Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities (WJ)
- **Date Administered:** 7/11/2018
- **Standard Deviation:** 3.02

### Adaptive Behavior Assessments

- **Assessment Completed:** Yes
- **Assessment Name:** Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS)
- **Date Administered:** 7/12/2018
- **Standard Deviation:** 3.42
SER will automatically add those results to the IEP’s LEAP Connect form, the place where the IEP team documents that the student meets the state’s criteria.
School systems need to ensure cognitive and adaptive evaluation results are captured for all students with disabilities on the following timeline:

**Now**

- By **January 4, 2019**, enter evaluation results to verify eligibility of any student who will take the alternate assessment.

**Over Time**

- During the next evaluation, enter evaluation results for all other students with disabilities.
Common Questions

- Do students have to participate in LEAP Connect if they meet the state’s participation criteria?
- Does the school system need to complete a new evaluation with cognitive and adaptive assessment every 3 years?
- What should the school system do if there are multiple evaluations with cognitive and adaptive results?
- What happens if a student does not have a cognitive or adaptive assessment?
- What should the school system do if the cognitive assessment results are reported as a range?
- Do school systems need to document cognitive and adaptive results for students who are gifted / talented or 504?
School systems can access resources to help IEP teams and pupil appraisal / SER personnel navigate the documentation requirements:

- Alternate Assessment Eligible FAQ for IEP Teams
- Evaluation Updates in SER Q&A for School Systems

In addition, the Department school systems will be able to track progress through:

- Validation report updates during fall 2018
- SER evaluation results and alternate assessment eligibility report coming soon
Louisiana Connectors-Aligned Instructional Resources
Louisiana believes that all students, including students with the most significant disabilities, should be held to the highest possible grade-level expectations. Over that past three years, much progress has been made to deliver on this belief, including:

- new Louisiana Connectors standards in ELA, mathematics, and science
- aligned LEAP Connect for Students with Significant Disabilities statewide assessment
The Louisiana Connectors for Students with Significant Disabilities are a set of aligned standards that have been developed to provide access to and support towards mastery of the Louisiana Student Standards.

The Louisiana Connectors are predicated on a belief in
- High Expectations
- Access and Achievement
- Specially-Designed Instruction
- Least Restrictive Environment
The Louisiana Connectors

• provide concrete pathways for academic achievement
• represent the major benchmarks along the pathway to achieving the standards
• ensure developmentally-appropriate, scaffolded instruction for all grades
# Mathematics Connectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Louisiana Student Standards</th>
<th>Draft Louisiana Connectors (LAC)</th>
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</table>
| **8.NS.A.1** Know that numbers that are not rational are called irrational. Understand informally that every number has a decimal expansion; for rational numbers, show that the decimal expansion repeats eventually. Convert a decimal expansion that repeats eventually into a rational number by analyzing repeating patterns. | **LAC.8.NS.A.1a** Identify π as an irrational number.  
**LAC.8.NS.A.1b** Round irrational numbers to the hundredths place. |
## Grade 3 English Language Arts

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Louisiana Connectors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RL.3.1</strong> Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.</td>
<td><strong>LAC.RL.3.1a</strong> Answer questions related to the relationship between characters, setting, events, or conflicts (e.g., characters and events, characters and conflicts, setting and conflicts). <strong>LAC.RL.3.1b</strong> Answer questions (literal and inferential) and refer to text to support your answer. <strong>LAC.RL.3.1c</strong> Support inferences, opinions, and conclusions using evidence from the text including illustrations.</td>
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**Grade 5 Science**  
**EARTH’S PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE**

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<tr>
<th>Louisiana Student Standards</th>
<th>Louisiana Connectors (LC)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-ESS1-2 Represent data in graphical displays to reveal patterns of daily changes in length and direction of shadows, day and night, and the seasonal appearance of some stars in the night sky.</td>
<td>LC-5-ESS1-2a Describe similarities and differences in the timing of observable changes in shadows.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LC-5-ESS1-2b Describe similarities and differences in the timing of observable changes in day and night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LC-5-ESS1-2c Describe similarities and differences in the timing of observable changes in the appearance of stars that are visible only in particular months</td>
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To assist teachers in providing standards-based instruction for students with significant disabilities, aligned resources include:

- **Louisiana Connectors (aligned with Louisiana Student Standards)** – a document which presents the Louisiana Connectors which are aligned to the Louisiana Student Standards and represent the most salient grade-level, core academic content in Science.
To assist teachers in providing standards-based instruction for students with significant disabilities, aligned resources include:

- **Case Studies** – which provide models for how teachers and specialists may best modify objectives, assessments, activities, and materials for students based on LDOE’s available resources.

**Student Background:** Tara is beginning third grade at age 8. She has cerebral palsy with spasticity and limited use of her arms and legs. She relies on a wheelchair for mobility. Tara also is legally blind. She can perceive some enlarged images. Although Tara’s intellectual level is uncertain, she is currently diagnosed as having a severe intellectual disability. Tara’s strength is her social ability. Tara loves read-aloud stories and has learned to show recall by selecting between two objects placed on her lap tray by moving her arm right or left. She has learned to make simple sets in math by pushing large checkers across a line. One of Tara’s interests is dogs. Her parents hope that someday she might learn to work with a therapy dog. Her teacher worries about how Tara will perform in her first experience with the state’s alternate assessment this spring. Tara needs a lot of adaptations in the form of objects to supplement the assessment materials. 

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<th>Louisiana Connector</th>
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<td>RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.</td>
<td>LC.RL.3.3b Describe a character’s traits in a story using details from the text and illustrations.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**High-Quality, Standards-Based Instruction:** The third-grade class will spend the next six-to-eight weeks using “Because of Winn-Dixie” as a foundational text to explore how characters change based on their relationships with one another. Tara’s teacher is excited for the focus of this theme because it plays to
To assist teachers in providing standards-based instruction for students with significant disabilities, aligned resources include:

- **Lesson Plan Adaptation** – a document which serves as a template for adapting whole class lesson plans to more individualized instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
To assist teachers in providing standards-based instruction for students with significant disabilities, aligned resources include:

- **Student Response Modes** – a document which supports teachers in identifying the best way for all students to demonstrate their understanding in each lesson.

It is important to identify the best way for your student to show what they know in each lesson. Here are some options to consider:

- **Point to the correct response when given an array** - The number of options in the array may vary depending on the student’s current skills. An array of four is often used with one correct answer, at least one plausible incorrect answer, and two other distractors. Be sure to vary the location of the correct answer in the array. This array can be placed on the students’ communication system.

- **Pull-off** - Some students have difficulty pointing but may be able to make a selection when the responses are attached to a page. The array of four options is used, but the student pulls the correct response.

- **Eye gaze** - Students who do not have the motor skills to point, but have vision, may be able to indicate the response by looking at the correct option. The array can be attached to each corner of a piece of see-through plexiglass (available from most hardware stores). By looking through the plexiglass, the teacher can see where the student focuses his or her eyes to indicate the answer.

- **Say or Type** - Some students can verbalize the correct answer. This answer may be given after viewing an array of options or by generating the answer when asked a question. Other students may be able to generate the answer by typing a response. Saying or typing the answer provides students with the most flexibility to describe what they know.

- **Show** - Some learning can be demonstrating through showing the answer. The student may be able to indicate the area of the rectangle by moving his or her hand across the shape. Or, a student may answer a comprehension question by pantomiming the answer.

- **Write or type on computer** - Sometimes the student may be able to write the answer, for example, by writing the correct number in an equation or writing the name of the main character in a story.

- **Use material from the lesson** - Students may be able to show the correct math answer by using a number card or plastic numbers or with other manipulatives. Similarly, in language arts, the student may use a picture on the page in the book or one that is used with a story to answer a comprehension question.
To assist teachers in providing standards-based instruction for students with significant disabilities, aligned resources include:

- **Louisiana Connectors Essential Elements Cards** - The cards, which are a primer for differentiating instruction for students with significant disabilities, break down the instructional task into knowledge and skills, suggested instructional strategies, and possible supports and scaffolds for student learning.
Aligned Resources

To assist teachers in providing standards-based instruction for students with significant disabilities, aligned resources include:

- **Science Component Cards** — The cards are arranged by grade levels for kindergarten through grade 8 and content areas for high school. The Component Cards include detailed Connectors for element of the performance expectations found in the LSS.
Next Steps

Find

• The LEAP Connect eligibility resources for school systems and IEP teams.
• The Louisiana Connectors for ELA, Mathematics and Science, and all aligned resources, on the Louisiana Believes website.

Email

• specialeducation@la.gov with questions about LEAP Connect eligibility
• louisianastandards@la.gov with questions on standards and instruction
• assessment@la.gov with questions about the LEAP Connect assessment