March 13, 2023

The Honorable Richard Woods
Superintendent
Georgia Department of Education
205 Jesse Hall, Jr. Drive, SE
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Superintendent Woods:

I am writing in response to the Georgia Department of Education’s (GaDOE) request on November 29, 2022, for a one-year extension of the State’s waiver of section 1111(b)(2)(D)(i)(I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which stipulates that a State may not assess more than 1.0 percent of the students in the grades assessed using an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). GaDOE requested this waiver because, based on State data for the 2021-2022 school year, GaDOE has concluded that it will assess more than 1.0 percent of students using an AA-AAAS in reading/language arts (R/LA), mathematics, and science in the 2022-2023 school year.

After reviewing GaDOE’s waiver request, I am declining to exercise my authority under section 8401(b) of the ESEA to issue a one-year (school year 2022-2023) waiver of section 1111(b)(2)(D)(i)(I) of the ESEA, so that the State may assess more than 1.0 percent of the total number of students with an AA-AAAS in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. GaDOE has not demonstrated progress in reducing the percentage of students taking the AA-AAAS in R/LA, mathematics, and science between the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years.

If the data reported by GaDOE are erroneous and the State can demonstrate that it has made progress in reducing the percentage of students taking the AA-AAAS between the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years, GaDOE may revise its waiver request, consistent with section 8401(b)(4)(B)(ii) of the ESEA, to meet the requirements under 8401(b)(1)(C) and (F) and 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)(ii). The revised waiver request must address how the requirements are met in 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4), including the requirement to demonstrate substantial progress towards achieving each component of the prior year’s plan and timeline. The revised waiver request must be submitted no later than 60 days from the date of this letter.
I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for your students. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

James F. Lane, Ed.D.
Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Allison Timberlake, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, GaDOE
November 29, 2022
The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC  20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

Pursuant to 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4), the Georgia Department of Education is requesting a one-year waiver extension from the alternate assessment 1.0 percent participation cap placed on states under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Georgia requested, and was granted, a similar waiver for 2021-2022. As detailed in this waiver request, Georgia utilized the time granted by the waiver to plan and implement a number of changes that support the State’s objective of being at or below the cap. Receiving a one-year waiver extension will afford Georgia the time necessary to continue to review, revise, and implement State guidelines and LEA supports to address the percentage of students who are administered the State’s alternate assessment.

The Georgia Department of Education is committed to ensuring that the State’s alternate assessment is administered to only those students for whom it is intended. Within this waiver request, you will find updated alternate assessment data, documentation of changes to policies and guidelines, and details on State supports to LEAs. Additionally, all waiver submission requirements have been provided along with a plan and timeline for continuing the State’s alternate assessment cap efforts during the 2022-2023 school year.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding this waiver request. Should you have questions, please feel free to contact Allison Timberlake, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, by phone at 470-579-6353 or email at atimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Woods
Georgia’s School Superintendent
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1. ESSA’s 1.0 Percent Cap and Georgia’s Alternate Assessment

Section 1111(b)(2)(D)(i)(I) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) places a state-level 1.0 percent cap on the number of students who can be assessed using a State’s alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) in each subject area. Assessment participation data from the 2021-2022 school year reveal that Georgia was above the 1.0 percent cap for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, having utilized the State’s alternate assessment to assess greater than 1.0 percent of students in all content areas. GaDOE anticipates that Georgia will exceed the 1.0 percent cap in at least one content area in 2022-2023. Therefore, the State is seeking a one-year waiver from the requirement as detailed in 34 CFR §200.6(c)(3). Georgia is seeking this waiver for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Receiving the waiver will provide the requisite time to further review, revise, and implement the guidelines and local educational agency (LEA) supports developed during the previous waiver. Under ESSA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, states must ensure that all students, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, have access to a general curriculum that encompasses challenging academic standards and are assessed in their progress toward meeting the academic standards. The Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA) 2.0 is the State-provided AA-AAAS for those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the general statewide assessment program, even with maximum allowable accommodations.

The GAA was initially developed in 2007 as a portfolio of student work that demonstrated progress and achievement on selected skills aligned to the State’s curriculum. The assessment was redesigned significantly during 2017-2018, and the GAA 2.0 was implemented for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year. The GAA 2.0 includes standardized tasks with multiple levels of complexity, and it was designed to ensure that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are provided access to State academic content standards and are given the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the knowledge, concepts, and skills inherent in the standards. The assessment was administered in 2018-2019 to all eligible students in grades K, 3-8, and 11 for English language arts and mathematics and in grades 5, 8, and 11 in science and social studies. Were it not for the COVID pandemic and testing had occurred in the 2019-2020 school year, it would have been administered as in the 2018-2019 school year. Due to recent changes in practice and in state law, the GAA 2.0 assessment is no longer administered in grade K and in grade 5 social studies. Those changes include the adaptation of the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) 2.0 assessment to meet the needs of all learners, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities, thus eliminating the need for kindergarten students to take the GAA 2.0, and the discontinuation of the state grade 5 social studies Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG) assessment. The GAA 2.0 was administered in 2020-2021 and again in 2021-2022 to all eligible students in grades 3-8 and 11 for English language arts and mathematics, in grades 5, 8, and 11 in science, and in grades 8 and 11 in social studies.

2. Waiver Submission Requirements

2.1 Ninety-day Requirement and Public Interest Threshold Requirement

States are required (34 CFR §200.6(c)(4)i) to submit the alternate assessment waiver at least 90 days prior to the start of the relevant subject testing windows. The 2022-2023 testing window for GAA 2.0 is March 27 through May 5, 2023. In submitting this waiver on November 29, 2022, and an updated version on December 29, 2022, the State has met this requirement.
Additionally, in order to meet the public interest threshold in section 8401(d)(2)(B) of the ESEA, the State has (1) provided the State’s entire waiver extension request (including the State’s plan, timeline, and progress implementing that plan) to the public and any interested LEA in the State, in the manner in which the State customarily provides similar notice and opportunity to comment to the public, and (2) is submitting the comments and input to the Department (Appendix D). It should be noted that 713 responses (representing more than 95 counties in the state) to the associated survey were submitted, with 99% supporting this waiver. GaDOE acknowledges the requirement to describe how the State addressed the comments and input received; however, it has been determined that those comments either indicated a desire to change a federal requirement or did not actually apply to this GAA waiver request.

2.2 Data Requirements

States are required (34 CFR §200.6(c)(4)ii) to provide the number and percentage of student subgroups defined in section 1111(c)(2)(A), (B), and (D) who were assessed using the AA-AAS. (Appendix A.1).

The percentage of students assessed via the GAA 2.0 in 2021-2022 was 1.4 for English language arts, 1.3 for mathematics, 1.4 for science, and 1.5 for social studies. These rates remained the same for ELA and science and decreased for mathematics and social studies from 2021 to 2022. ELA and science held steady at 1.4% in 2021 and 2022; mathematics decreased from 1.4% in 2021 to 1.3% in 2022, a decrease of 0.1%; and social studies decreased from 1.8% in 2021 to 1.5% in 2022, a decrease of 0.3%.

Appendix A.5 provides the estimated count and percentage of students who will be assessed on the GAA 2.0 in 2022-2023 using Pre-ID data.

States are also required to provide data showing that 95 percent of all students and the students with disabilities subgroup, as identified in section 1111(c)(2)(C), were administered a State assessment. Appendices A.3 and A.4 provide the number and percentage for both of these student subgroups for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies for the 2021-2022 school year and the 2020-2021 school year. It is important to note that there are no major discrepancies in the participation rates of the all students group and the participation rates of the students with disabilities subgroup.

The requirement that 95 percent of all students and students with disabilities be assessed was met for all content areas by grade level in 2021-2022. State level 2021-2022 participation files by content area, grade level, subgroup, and assessment are published on the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) CCRPI webpage. It should be noted that in 2021-2022, English language arts and mathematics assessments were required for students in grades 3 through 8 and in American Literature and Algebra I or Coordinate Algebra in high school courses. Science was assessed in grades 5 and 8 and in the Biology high school course, and social studies in grade 8 and the U.S. History high school course.

Appendix A.2 provides the percentage of LEAs exceeding the 1.0 percent cap by student subgroup for the 2021-2022 school year and the 2020-2021 school year for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. There was a decrease in the percentage of LEAs exceeding the 1.0 cap from 2021 to 2022 in the following subgroups/content areas:

- American Indian / Alaskan Native in mathematics;
- Black in ELA;
- Hispanic in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies;
- Multi-Racial in science;
- White in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies; and
- English Learners in mathematics, science, and social studies.
3. Implementation and 2023 Plan

During 2018-2019, GaDOE developed a plan to address the 1.0 percent cap and began implementing the guidelines and supports designed to ensure that the State’s alternate assessment, based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAAS), is administered to only those students for whom it is intended. Activities continued in the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 school years. This section details completed, ongoing, and newly-planned waiver-related work by the State since the submission of the initial waiver. These efforts include an overhaul of the participation guidelines provided to LEAs, technical assistance and supports to LEAs, and ensuring that any disproportionality issues in alternate assessment administration are addressed. Most recently, the monitoring of this work has been integrated into Cross-Functional Monitoring and implementing planned technical assistance for districts based on their data.

3.1 Improving the Implementation of State Guidelines

As required by 34 CFR §200.6(c)(4)(iv)(A), the State improved its guidelines to ensure that all regulations included in §200.6(d) (State guidelines for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities) have been adequately addressed. The new guidelines ensure that the State has established, consistent with section 612(a)(16)(C) of the IDEA, clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP teams to apply when making participation determinations and monitoring the implementation of these guidelines.

3.1.1 State Eligibility Criteria: The State reviewed and revised the eligibility criteria for the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAAS). In developing eligibility criteria for the administration of GAA 2.0, GaDOE completed a significant overhaul of the participation guidelines made available to districts. The Participation Guidelines for the Georgia Alternate Assessment were revised through an iterative process with educators and were finalized for publication as the Eligibility Criteria for the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA) 2.0 in November of 2018 for the 2018-2019 school year. It was expected at that time that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams would utilize the previous participation guidelines if teams had met and established participation in the alternate assessment prior to November of 2018 until the IEP team met next. Those students whose IEP teams met following November of 2018 were required to utilize the revised eligibility criteria. Any subsequent meetings to establish participation on the GAA 2.0 would be required for all IEP teams considering assessment options for students with cognitive disabilities utilizing only the revised eligibility criteria as published in the Student Assessment Handbook the following 2019-2020 school year. Simply stated, since the guidelines were published in November 2018, most IEP decisions for 2018-2019 were already made and would not have been changed based on the new guidelines. Therefore, the new guidelines would have been first used statewide in spring 2019 and would impact placement decisions for the 2019-2020 school year and subsequently, in the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years.

The Georgia Department of Education Special Education Division and Assessment Division provided several training sessions intended to inform IEP teams of the usage of the new eligibility criteria and provided information regarding data sources and rationale for making evidence-based decisions.

In previous years, participation guidelines were provided as a flowchart. The revised eligibility criteria accompanying GAA 2.0 (Appendix B.1) involve a two-step process. First, the IEP team must review and answer the four eligibility criteria listed below.
1) **Does the student require intensive, individualized instruction in a variety of instructional settings?** The student needs specialized academic instruction and techniques over a period of time to ensure that he or she can learn, retain information, and transfer skills to other settings.

2) **Does the student have a significant cognitive disability?** A significant cognitive disability is determined by the IEP team and must be based on evaluation information performed by a qualified evaluation team. The significant cognitive disability must affect the student’s intellectual functioning and be documented as such in the student’s individualized education program (IEP).

3) **Does the student require specialized supports to access and participate in the grade-level Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) that require modifications based on the student’s Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)?** Access to the grade-level curriculum is mandated by the federal government. A student with a significant cognitive disability requires access to the GSEs through prerequisite skills that are linked to the grade-level curriculum.

4) **Does the student require specialized supports to demonstrate age-appropriate adaptive behavior?** A student with a significant cognitive disability needs specialized support throughout the day in areas such as expressing his or her needs, getting from place to place, eating lunch, negotiating social situations, and/or taking care of personal needs.

For a student to be eligible to participate in the GAA 2.0, the IEP team must answer “yes” to all four questions. Additionally, IEP teams are expected to document sources of evidence and justifications for each criterion marked with a “yes”.

Step two of the determination process requires the IEP team to provide an assurance that each member of the team received training and guidance regarding student participation in State mandated assessments. The assurances include the following:

- Under 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 300.320(a)(6) and [O.C.G.A § 20-2-281], if the IEP team determines that the student will take the GAA, the IEP team may provide additional summary statements of why the student cannot participate in the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, with or without allowable accommodations, and why the alternate assessment is appropriate for the student, including that all of the eligibility criteria are met.

- The decision to administer GAA is based on multiple sources of measurable, objective evidence, including, but not limited to, current IEP PLAAFP statements, goals and/or objectives, report cards, progress reports, work samples, teacher observations, Full and Individual Evaluations (FIE), standardized achievement test results, and classroom, district, and statewide assessment results. This decision is not based solely on the student’s previous performance on statewide assessments.

- The decision to administer GAA is made by the IEP team, not administratively based on federal accountability requirements, which limit the number of students taking an alternate assessment in the state. Although GAA is intended for a small number of students, the participation cap does not limit the number of students receiving special education services who may take the alternate assessment.
• The decision to administer GAA is made by the IEP team based on the student’s educational needs and the instruction the student is receiving. This decision is not based solely on the student’s disability category and is not based on the student’s racial or economic background, excessive or extended absences, or amount of time or location of service delivery.

3.1.2 Definition of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities: The State’s definition of intellectual disability is provided in Appendix B.2. GaDOE reviewed this definition and determined that no revisions were required, as the current definition sufficiently ensures that:

The identification of a student as having a particular disability or as an English learner does not determine whether a student is a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities §200.6(d)(1)(i);

A student with the most significant cognitive disabilities is not identified solely on the basis of the student’s previous low academic achievement, or the student’s previous need for accommodations to participate in the general State or districtwide assessments §200.6(d)(1)(ii); and

A student is identified as having the most significant cognitive disabilities because the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards §200.6(d)(1)(iii).

Additionally, GaDOE has emphasized with LEAs that participation on the State’s alternate assessment should only occur when all eligibility criteria have been met and a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines that the student cannot meaningfully access the general statewide assessments, even with the maximum appropriate accommodations. IEP teams are required to follow the revised guidelines, and participation decisions shall not be based on any of the following:

• Disability category or label
• Expectation of poor performance on the Georgia Milestones assessment
• Accommodation requirements to participate in assessment process
• Previous poor performance
• Instructional setting or percent of time receiving special education services
• Attendance issues
• Anticipated emotional distress
• Anticipated disruptive behavior
• Native language or English learner status
• Economically disadvantaged status
• Impact of student scores on an accountability system
• Administrator or parent request

With the goal of reducing the state to at or below the 1.0 percent cap and ensuring that the State’s alternate assessment is administered to only those students for whom it is intended, the State realizes that the work must start with kindergarten students. To that end, GaDOE has partnered with LEAs and school staff to identify the instructional supports necessary to help students in kindergarten through second grades better access the Georgia Standards of Excellence and the associated general assessment. With the understanding that once IEP teams have made the decision to place students on the GAA 2.0, it is difficult for them to reconsider their original decision, the following steps were taken to reduce the number of students in grades 3-8 and high school who are participating in the alternate assessment and to provide inclusive and accessible assessment resources for kindergarten students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
GKIDS 2.0

Phase 1 – Focus Groups and Training
- Implemented a series of educator focus groups and development meetings with kindergarten educators, specialists, district personnel, etc. with expertise with students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to identify the key needs of these students in accessing the state’s kindergarten assessment resource (GKIDS).
- Through training and expanded teacher resources informed by the partnership with educators and school and district partners, increased awareness of supports in place and available to serve students being assessed on GKIDS with maximum access to content in the learning progressions.
- In training and communication with district and school leaders, increased focus on aligning assessment practices to instruction in that students instructed on the general content standards with support must be assessed on the general assessment with support.

Phase 2 – Development
- Developed fully integrated comprehensive supports, guidance, and resources to extend access to GKIDS 2.0 learning progression content without separating out students who need additional support. The resources and guidance for using the learning progressions for Georgia’s existing kindergarten assessment were expanded to allow teachers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to assess a student’s current skill level with comprehensive supports when necessary, and in doing so, preserve valuable information regarding the student’s current support needs. In addition to best serving these students, a goal/intended outcome is to reduce the number of students tested using GAA 2.0 in 3rd grade, by preventing overidentification in early grades, and providing teachers guidance on assessing students who require additional support on the general assessment given appropriate support.
- Developed an enhanced reporting process for GKIDS 2.0 that focuses on adding descriptive information (about the level of supports needed) as opposed to reducing or qualifying information (conditionalizing a score).

Phase 3 – Implementation
- Released extensive resources and training on the use of comprehensive supports to extend access to GKIDS 2.0 learning progression content to all students.
- Monitored use of comprehensive support and provided districts with information on the use of this support information through individual student reports and data.
- Returned information on comprehensive support use back to educators and stakeholders within enhanced reports and expanded system data files.
- Began development of additional detailed reporting enhancements, such as expanded system data files with learning target data included, to support detailed/individual progress tracking throughout the year. This enhancement will support instructional use of GKIDS results for all students but may be particularly useful for instructional decisions for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are accessing the earlier stages of the progressions using comprehensive support throughout the school year, as learning target data provides a look at progress along smaller steps within a given progression level.

Estimates for alternate assessment participation in grade 3 dropped by over 15% between Spring 2019 actuals and Fall 2019 pre-identification (Pre-ID) counts (Spring 2020 actuals not available due to assessment cancellations), and this decrease appears to be moderately maintained as this cohort rises, with
a 7% decrease in grade 4 based on Fall 2020 Pre-ID (Spring 2021 actuals not comparable) as compared to grade 4 rates in Spring 2019, and a 2% decrease in grade 5 based on Spring 2022 actuals as compared to grade 5 rates in Spring 2019. These drops remain notable given increased enrollment statewide. Based on the Spring 2022 administration, the reduction initially observed in the lowest grades has shifted upwards as expected, with grades 3 through 6 all consistently proportionally a lower percentage of the tested population (around 13% per grade) compared to the proportion of the population in grades 7, 8, and high school (around 15-16% per grade). This pattern may be interpreted to be the result of the efforts in place to reduce early overidentification for alternate participation. Although comparing test rates across years must be taken into consideration with pandemic-related disruptions, this decrease, in conjunction with the ongoing efforts in place to reduce overidentification in early grades, is expected to continue to roll up, such that the decrease in the current lower grades is maintained in subsequent years, as that proportional decrease continues for future cohorts entering grade 3. This decrease in younger grades is expected to continue, with Fall 2022 Pre-ID rates for grade 3 representing both a count and proportional decrease when compared to Spring 2022 actuals. Note that total student test counts from spring administrations following 2020 cannot be used as a direct reference for growth or reduction due to pandemic-related disruptions which resulted in systemically lower participation across all of Georgia’s assessments. However, proportions (e.g., proportion across grades, proportion by primary disability) may be used to examine patterns. Also note that the rate of high school students tested in Spring 2022 is an after-effect of the pandemic-related participation disruptions in Spring 2021; 11th grade students in Spring 2021 receiving instruction on alternate academic content standards who did not take the GAA 2.0 in 11th grade are still required to take the assessment to graduate and receive an alternate diploma. As such, the proportion of GAA 2.0 testers in Spring 2022 who are high school students is significantly higher than all other grades. This effect is not expected to continue in future administrations and is not present in Fall 2022 Pre-ID.

Importantly, a decrease of 15% is observed in students with mild intellectual disability documented as their primary disability placed on this assessment, when comparing Fall 2022 Pre-ID to Spring 2019 actuals, and this pattern of decrease is also reflected when examining the Spring 2022 actuals with prior years. In contrast, primary disabilities which reflect appropriate placement, such as severe and profound intellectual disabilities, maintain most consistent rates, with only a 2% decrease observed in moderate/severe/profound intellectual disabilities when comparing Fall 2022 Pre-ID rates to Fall 2021 Pre-ID. This represents the impact of extensive training efforts in the past few years to support the placement of only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities on this assessment. In addition to the continuation of this training and support regarding eligibility, use of Learner Characteristic Inventory data is prioritized for 2022-2023 to identify student profiles which may indicate the need for eligibility review. Using the expressive communication, receptive language, reading, and mathematics learner characteristics data, higher-functioning student profiles were defined representing around 20% of student records from the Spring 2022 administration, which informed Fall 2022 Special Education Director training and district assistance in considering learner characteristics when determining placement on the alternate learning track (alternate content standards instruction, alternate assessment placement, alternate diploma eligibility).

3.1.3 LEA Assurances and Certifications: In completing the Georgia Department of Education’s (GaDOE) mandatory GAA Participation Application, LEAs are required to provide assurances to the following statements.
A review of local policies, procedures, and practices has been conducted to assure they support appropriate identification of students for GAA 2.0 participation in accordance with State guidelines.

The LEA has provided training and support to Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to ensure that IEP teams are adhering to eligibility guidelines for GAA 2.0.

A review of local GAA 2.0 participation will occur to ensure the LEA will identify and address, if necessary, any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup participating in the GAA 2.0.

Any LEAs failing to answer in the affirmative for all three assurances are identified to receive targeted technical assistance and supports. In August 2022, there were only six (6) LEAs that anticipated administering the GAA 2.0 to students in the 2022-2023 school year that failed to answer in the affirmative for all three statements regarding the 2022-2023 school year administration.

3.2 Support and Oversight of LEA Implementation

In addition to updating State guidelines, GaDOE developed technical assistance and supports, as required by 34 CFR §200.6(c)(4)(iv)(B), to promote proper implementation of the guidelines among LEAs. GaDOE has devised a three-tier approach to technical assistance and supports. The intensity of services provided to each LEA is determined by the Division of Special Education Services and Supports following an analysis of district-level GAA (2017-2018) and GAA 2.0 (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022) participation data.

It should be noted that GaDOE staff members from the Division of Special Education Services and Supports, as well as the Division of Assessment and Accountability, have regularly participated since 2018 in the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) Community of Practice for the 1% Participation Threshold and the NCEO Peer Learning Groups (Digging into Your Data: Building a 1% Data Analysis and Use Plan; Guiding and Evaluating District Justifications IEP Team Decision Making)(Appendix B.3). GaDOE will continue to actively participate in similar sessions in order to learn from peers how best to support implementation of the 1.0 percent participation threshold for AA-AAAS participation by providing technical assistance.

3.2.1 Universal Technical Assistance and Supports:

GaDOE began providing universal technical assistance and supports to LEAs in 2017-2018 and continues to do so. These supports include guidelines, resources, and training to assist LEA administrators and local IEP team members during the GAA eligibility determination process. All LEAs were provided the GAA 2.0 eligibility criteria in 2018-2019. GaDOE has provided numerous resources and training opportunities to ensure LEAs and IEP teams understand and follow the updated criteria.

There were numerous conference presentations and webinars provided to special education directors, coordinators, and teachers, as well as parents, between January 2022 and November 2022, with many more planned through April 2023 (Appendix B.4). Other resources and supports include the 2022-2023 Student Assessment Handbook (which includes accessibility and accommodations guidance); monthly Assessment Update newsletters; GAA 2.0 Spring Test Administration Manual (Appendix B.5); GAA 2.0 resources including eligibility criteria forms, GAA 2.0 Pre and Post Administration Checklist, scoring,
reporting, and teacher resources, and GAA 2.0 trainings (Appendix B.6); GAA 2.0 Parent Flyer (Appendix B.7); and GAA 2.0 development and training plan aimed at reducing placement of early learners on the alternate assessment pathway (Appendix B.8).

GaDOE has provided district level reports to assist LEAs in examining data and determining potential areas where additional scrutiny is warranted. LEAs have also received face-to-face, virtual, and on-line instructions on how to access this data on-demand at the LEA level. The State is utilizing components of the District Dialogue Guide from NCEO to assist all districts in this process.

The State has presented sessions addressing the participation rate at conferences for the Georgia Council of Special Education Administrators (GCASE) and Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders (GCEL). Consistent with the emphasis on instruction, a session on Specially Designed Instruction was presented during the November 2021 GCASE Conference.

During 2018-2019 and continuing in 2019-2020, face to face, “make and take” day-long professional learning opportunities were available to teachers in LEAs. By the end of the 2020 school year, ten of these sessions had occurred in regional locations. With the state hiatus of face-to-face meetings during the COVID pandemic, regional opportunities continued, on a limited basis. There were at least seven in-person “make and take” sessions and two virtual sessions conducted by the regionally-based Georgia Learning Resource System. Webinars addressing instructional concerns were developed and posted on the State website during 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, along with multiple adaptive books, complete lessons and materials that are available on the Teacher Resource Link. In 2021, the Georgia Department of Education created a Significant Cognitive team to create and provide resources for teachers serving students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Significant Cognitive team consists of the following Georgia Department of Education personnel: Intellectual Disabilities Program Specialist, Autism Program Specialist, Speech and Language Pathologist/Preschool Program Specialist, Assistive Technology Program Specialist, and Results Driven Accountability Program Manager. Starting in August 2022, GaDOE staff will provide 12 face-to-face professional learning opportunities to teachers serving students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The professional learning opportunities are two-day trainings and consist of 25 teachers per session. “The Basics”, day one of the trainings, focuses on foundational teaching skills and strategies to serve and identify students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Topics for “The Basics” training include the following: Engagement, Building Relationships within the School and with Parents, Classroom Routines, Communication, Assistive Technology, Task Analysis, and Prompting/Levels of Support. “Make and Take,” day two of the trainings, focuses on aligning lessons/lesson plans to the Alternate Content Standards in all content areas and provides teachers with resources and materials to utilize in their classrooms. Topics for the “Make and Take” training include the following: Classroom and Individual Student Schedule Setting, Accessing the Curriculum Across Grade Levels/Curricular Areas/Cognitive Levels, Consortium Meeting Planning, Behavior, Communication, and ending the day with the “Make and Take”.

In partnership with Tools for Life, Georgia’s Assistive Technology Act Program, the Georgia Department of Education will provide six face-to-face workshops starting November 2022. The workshops will be centered around the assistive technology book “Make Stuff and Love People” and will be led by the book’s author, Dr. Therese Wilkomm. The six sessions will host 100 participants; each participant will learn how to use an assortment of 35 different tools and materials to make assistive technology solutions and receive the “Make Stuff and Love People” book. The book includes QR codes allowing the reader to follow step-by-step instructions on how to create each assistive technology resource within the book.
A virtual collaborative community targeted to educators who serve students with significant cognitive disabilities is planned to meet monthly, beginning September 2022. The collaborative community is designed for teachers to be able to share instructional resources with their peers. GaDOE staff will also facilitate a monthly webinar series (presentations will cover, but are not limited to, Learner Characteristic Inventory, Communication, Aligning Standards, Behavior, and Natural Environment Training) beginning September 2022, with the targeted audience being educators serving students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and district level administration.

As part of the cross-functional monitoring process, LEA participation rates in the alternate assessment are discussed and direct technical assistance is provided to support district efforts. Other needs for support are based on responses on the annual GAA Participation Application, LEA corrective action plans, GAA 2.0 participation data analysis, and field data collected by the Division of Special Education Services and Supports. Additionally, Georgia Learning Resources directors and district liaisons to each LEA were trained in eligibility criteria, instructional strategies, and examining district participation data to increase capacity to provide support and technical assistance to districts.

Since the GAA 2.0 was a new assessment for the 2018-2019 school year, webinar and in-person sessions regarding score interpretation included pointers for using score reports for potential indicators of participation appropriateness. GaDOE staff continues to provide support to districts and assist in identifying potential “red flags” that may warrant additional investigation.

GAA 2.0 now yields an achievement score that can be compared year to year. Once districts have more data points, they can examine trends in sustained proficiency. Additionally, the State is exploring ways to assist districts in utilizing data from the Learning Characteristics Inventory (new with the advent of the GAA 2.0) to include in the decision-making process.

3.2.2 Targeted Technical Assistance and Supports:

Since many students with the most significant cognitive disabilities presented unique instructional challenges when learning shifted to a virtual format, GaDOE reframed support to districts during 2020-2021. Emphasis on instructional resources continued, with GaDOE developing webinars focusing on instruction in both virtual and in-person formats. A discrete webpage for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, which consolidated resources across the special education division in one place, was established (Appendix B.9).

With the implementation of the State-Defined Alternate Diploma, new opportunities to assist districts in the decision-making process emerged. In addition to assisting districts in examining their decision-making process, GaDOE began renewed emphasis on instructional implications in addition to examining the percentage of students who participated in the alternate assessment.

With LEAs focusing on understanding which students would be appropriate for this credential, GaDOE developed a series of six, hour-long sessions addressing the characteristics of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The series began with a back-to-basics “Who are the Students?” and progressed through the series discretely addressing the cognitive, adaptive behavior, communication and technology needs of students for whom alternate content standards are appropriate.

To further support a shift in emphasis, the terminology for the data element in the GaDOE Student Record data collection that designates a student as a participant in the alternate assessment was changed from
“Georgia Alternate Assessment” (GAA) to “Alternate Content Standards” (ACS). This is intended to reinforce to LEAs that the GAA 2.0 is only appropriate for students with disabilities who require instruction in Georgia's alternate content standards because they cannot access the Georgia Standards of Excellence even when accommodations are provided.

In collaboration with GaDOE’s Special Education Department, the Assessment Administration Division developed a series of accessibility and accommodations training courses to help LEAs make instructional and assessment decisions for students with disabilities. The Accessibility and Accommodations series included Understanding Key Concepts of the Accessibility and Accommodations Framework, Review of Accessibility and Accommodations Charts, Using Best Practices and Effective Decision Making, and Monitoring the Assignment of Assessment Accommodations. These courses were developed based on LEAs’ feedback to the Allowable Accommodations Charts: Ease of Use Survey published in the March and April 2021 Assessment Update Newsletters.

GaDOE has developed the targeted technical assistance and supports that are provided to LEAs above 1.0 percent, and the State is focusing currently on building staff capacity for this work. To broaden the capacity of GaDOE to provide more comprehensive supports and to assure that these supports were cohesive, a team representing the assessment, assistive technology, results-driven accountability, transition, and communication teams began meeting monthly to determine additional support needs. Determinations for support are based on responses on the annual GAA Participation Application, LEA corrective action plans, GAA 2.0 participation data analysis, and field data collected by the Division of Special Education Services and Supports. These services include, but are not limited to, the following improvement targets:

- LEA capacity for gathering and analyzing district and school data pertaining to GAA participation rates;
- LEA capacity for gathering and analyzing data on the characteristics of students participating in the GAA;
- LEA capacity to address communication, adaptive behavior and technology needs of GAA participants;
- LEA capacity to provide and evaluate instructional and assessment accommodations;
- LEA capacity to provide professional development to IEP team members and other local educators on the nature of the GAA and who should participate; and
- Capacity of parents of Students with Disabilities to participate in the IEP decision-making process.

### 3.2.3 Intensive Technical Assistance and Supports:

The State is continuing to develop and improve the intensive technical assistance and supports to appropriate districts. This includes LEA-specific, one-on-one services for those LEAs demonstrating significant needs that cannot be addressed sufficiently through targeted services. In August 2022, the department presented to Georgia Learning Resources System’s (GLRS) special education directors to review the GAA 2.0 eligibility criteria, statewide GAA 2.0 participation data, and individual district GAA 2.0 participation data to collaboratively target districts requiring intensive technical assistance and supports. Additionally, statewide, day-long technical assistance sessions are scheduled for March 2023 to specifically address the issues surrounding participation rates on the alternate assessment. These sessions are anticipated to review participation criteria and LEA level data to support improved LEA decision-making. It is anticipated that there will be two sessions with 300 participants at each.
GAA 2.0 eligibility modules to support LEA staff training and consistent understanding of participation guidelines is being developed in conjunction with resources developed by the NCEO Peer Learning Groups and Community of Practice. In 2019, Jennifer White, a national consultant, conducted training at GaDOE. As a result, a group was formed to connect professionals who instruct students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Georgia Brigade was established as a monthly community of practice (CoP) open to professionals across the state to share resources and promote best practices for students with significant cognitive disabilities. To augment this CoP, additional resources to support technology use, promote enhanced communication skills development, and improve transition practices were developed and made available on the Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SCD) webpage (Appendix B.9). There is also a monthly webinar series that targets specific aspects of providing instructional supports to students with significant cognitive disabilities. GaDOE is continuing to provide layers of support that are targeted to meet the discrete needs of classroom teachers who are instructing students and who are most likely the individuals who are providing direct input to IEP Teams as alternate content standards/alternate assessment decisions are being made.

Likewise, the State expanded the availability of parent information. A *Frequently Asked Questions* document (FAQ) for parents addressing the State-Defined Alternate Diploma was developed and posted on the website in both English and Spanish. Through Parent Mentor Partnership and other outlets, live and recorded presentations continue to be available to be sure parents have adequate information to guide their participation in the process. Information on the State-Defined Alternate Diploma was presented during the September 2021 Parent Mentor Kickoff meeting. More parent resources are planned to support parent understanding of the State-Defined Alternate Diploma and the impact of students receiving instruction using alternate content standards.

### 3.3 Disproportionality

The State began addressing student subgroup disproportionality in GAA participation through an LEA assurance included in the GAA Participation Application. During 2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022, additional State disproportionality work includes an annual analysis of risk ratios and the incorporation of disproportionality into universal and targeted technical assistance and supports.

#### 3.3.1 Assurance from Districts: In August 2022, GaDOE administered its annual GAA Participation Application. All LEAs that anticipated administering the GAA to one or more students under 34 CFR §200.2(a)(1) in 2022-2023 were required to provide assurances that the LEA adhered to State guidelines and that disproportionality issues were addressed. The GAA Participation Application contained an item addressing potential disproportionality among student subgroups. LEAs were required to provide assurance that any disproportionality in GAA participation among student subgroups listed under section 1111(c)(2)(A), (B), or (D) of ESSA was addressed. LEAs provided that assurance by answering affirmatively to the following statement:

“A review of local GAA participation will occur to ensure the LEA will identify and address, if necessary, any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup participating in the GAA.”

Among the LEAs that anticipated administering the GAA, three responded “No” to this assurance. LEAs that responded “No” were identified for additional follow-up by the Division of Special Education Services and Supports.
3.3.2 Disproportionality Data and Technical Assistance and Supports: GaDOE is working to address any disproportionality issues, as required by 34 CFR §200.6(c)(4)(iv)(C). In January 2019 (for school year 2017-2018), October 2019 (for school year 2018-2019), and in March 2022 (for school year 2020-2021), LEAs were provided with relative risk ratios (RRR) for all student subgroups included in 1111(c)(2)(A), (B), and (D) of ESSA for all four content areas. The ratios for 2021-2022 are currently being calculated by GaDOE utilizing the following formulas.

\[ \text{Relative risk ratio} = \frac{\text{subgroup risk}}{\text{comparison group risk}} \]

\[ \text{Subgroup risk} = \frac{\# \text{ students in subgroup assessed via the GAA}}{\# \text{ students in subgroup assessed via Georgia Milestones}} \]

\[ \text{Comparison group risk} = \frac{\# \text{ students not in subgroup assessed via the GAA}}{\# \text{ students not in subgroup assessed via Georgia Milestones}} \]

These ratios are calculated annually and provided to LEAs to support local disproportionality efforts. Following the analysis of disproportionality data, GaDOE will determine what guidelines, if any, the State needs to provide to LEAs. Additionally, disproportionality resources are included in the universal and targeted technical assistance and supports. Additional assistance and supports will be provided to LEAs as deemed appropriate and based on State-level personnel capacity.

4. Data and Reporting

4.1 LEA Reporting to State

The annual GAA Participation Application serves as the State’s primary collection tool for projected GAA participation data, assurances, justifications, and other information pertaining to local GAA administration. Additionally, the projected participation data submitted by LEAs provides the State with approximate counts of the districts that require the targeted and intensive assistance and supports outlined in 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. In August 2022, LEAs completed the GAA Application with information regarding 2022-2023, including projected GAA participation data, assurances, justifications, and other information pertaining to local GAA administration participation.

4.2 LEA Reporting to Parents

LEAs and IEP teams are required (34 CFR §200.6(d)(3)) to ensure that parents of students being considered for participation in the GAA are informed, consistent with 34 CFR §200.2(e), that the student’s achievement will be measured based on alternate academic achievement standards. IEP teams are also expected to provide guidance to parents regarding the impact of participation on high school graduation and graduation requirements. The State’s Division of Special Education Services and Supports continues to work with LEAs to ensure this requirement is met by all LEAs.

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1 Actual participation data were obtained from the assessment vendors after the testing window closed.
2 Actual participation data were obtained from the assessment vendors after the testing window closed.
4.3 LEA Reporting to the State and the Public

Justifications will be publicly posted by February 2023 for those LEAs with a districtwide participation rate of greater than 1.0 percent for the 2021-2022 school year (34 CFR §200.6(c)(3)(ii)). Justifications will be collected for those LEAs that exceed a districtwide participation rate greater than 1.0 percent for the 2022-2023 school year as part of the GAA Participation Application in the late summer/early fall of 2023. These justifications will be publicly posted (34 CFR §200.6(c)(3)(ii)) by February 2024.

4.4 State Reporting to LEAs

GaDOE generated 2021-2022 district-level GAA Participation Data Reports that included the percentage of each student subgroup assessed via the GAA by content area. These reports were provided to LEAs in October 2022 to assist LEAs in examining data and determining potential areas where additional scrutiny is warranted.

In addition to participation rate reports, the State began generating annual district-level disproportionality reports in January 2019 based on 2017-2018 participation data and continued the practice in October 2019, providing 2018-2019 data, and in March 2022, providing 2020-2021 data. Disproportionality reports for 2021-2022 will be generated and provided to LEAs to assist in local efforts to ensure that alternate assessment administration is reserved for only those students for whom the GAA is intended. Additionally, these reports will continue to be provided to the Division of Special Education Services and Supports to assist in the provision of technical assistance and supports to LEAs, including those detailed within this waiver request.

5. Timeline and Activities

5.1 General Calendar of Waiver Activities for 2017-2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2019 Waiver</th>
<th>2020 Waiver</th>
<th>2021 Waiver</th>
<th>2022 Waiver</th>
<th>2023 Waiver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## 5.2 Training and Activities 2017-2023

### October - December 2017
- GAA Participation Application (a.k.a. Survey)
- Development of eligibility criteria for the GAA 2.0

### January - March 2018
- 2017-2018 GAA assessment window
- State guidelines revised
- 2016-2017 GAA Participation Data Reports provided to LEAs
- Development of eligibility criteria for the GAA 2.0 continued

### April - June 2018
- 2017-2018 GAA assessment window, continued
- Meeting: State Advisory Panel for Special Education—presentation on GAA 2.0 covered eligibility criteria
- Development of eligibility criteria for the GAA 2.0 continued

### July - September 2018
- 2017 GAA Participation Data Reports provided to LEAs
- GaDOE explored possible technical assistance from U.S. Department of Education
- Development of eligibility criteria for the GAA 2.0 continued
- Eligibility criteria for the GAA 2.0 released
- Training: Special Education Services and Supports – General Supervision and Implementation Training
- Training: Special Education Director’s Webinar

### October - December 2018
- Training: GAA 2.0 fall training webinar: Orientation to new assessment / deeper look at test design
- Training: GAA 2.0 Administration Procedures Training
- Training: Orientation to new assessment / deeper look at test design
- Training: GAA 2.0 G-CASE Conference presentation
- Training: Instructional Support for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
- 2018 GAA Participation Data Reports provided to LEAs
- 2019 GAA Participation Application

### January - March 2019
- 2019 GAA Participation Application continued
- Creation and dissemination of 2018 GAA 2.0 Participation Disproportionality Reports
- Meeting: State Advisory Panel for Special Education
- Posting of 2018 LEA justifications for administering the GAA to greater than 1.0 percent of assessed students
- Training: GAA 2.0 Pre-Assessment Training webinar: Final test set-up/preparation
- GAA 2.0 assessment window

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* Activities could not be completed due to cancellation of all spring 2020 state testing (Ga Milestones and GAA 2.0) due to COVID-19.
April - June 2019
- GAA 2.0 assessment window continued
- 2019 GAA 2.0 participation rates calculated

July - September 2019
- 2019 GAA Participation Data Reports provided to LEAs
- 2019 GAA 2.0 Participation Disproportionality Report calculated and shared with Special Education
- Training: GAA 2.0 Test Administration Procedures – Part 1

October - December 2019
- 2020 GAA Participation Application
- Training on the Eligibility Criteria for the Intervention District Study. Reducing the number of students participating in the alternate assessment
- Training: GAA 2.0 Test Administration Procedures – Part 2

January - March 2020
- Instructional Training on Effective Instruction for Teachers of Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
- Posting of 2019 LEA justifications for administering the GAA to greater than 1.0 percent of assessed students
- Training at the Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders, Inc. (G-CEL) - A Deeper Look at the 1% CAP for the Alternate Assessment
- GAA 2.0 Nextera Platform Training
- GAA 2.0 Pre-Administration Training
- GAA 2.0 GAA 2.0 Test Setup and review of Nextera Online Platform
- GAA 2.0 assessment window
- Instructional Support for Teachers of Significant Cognitive Disabilities “Choice Making” webinar
- Distance Learning Support for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities webinar

April - June 2020
- GAA 2.0 assessment window continued
- GAA 2.0 Eligibility Criteria Updated to include both elements of the Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI) and eligibility to earn a state-defined alternate diploma (SBOE 160-4-2-48)
- 2020 GAA 2.0 estimated participation rates calculated
- Training: GAA 2.0 Eligibility Criteria Presentation
- Training: Instruction for the GAA 2.0
- Training: Distance Learning Support

July - September 2020
- 2020 GAA Participation Data Reports provided to LEAs
- 2020 GAA 2.0 Participation Disproportionality Report calculated and shared with Special Education
- Training for District Liaisons in alternate assessment participation criteria
- Training for District Liaisons in instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities
- Training for District Liaisons in understanding LEA data
- Training: GKIDS 2.0 Pre-Administration/Readiness Check Training Part 1
- Training: GKIDS 2.0 Pre-Administration/Readiness Check Training Part 2
- Training for GLRS and District Liaisons: A Deeper Look at the 1% Threshold for the Alternate Assessment
- Training: Curricular support for students with cognitive disability: Providing Access to GSE Science Standards for Students with SCDs
- Training for District Liaisons: GAA 2.0 Eligibility Criteria, Student Assessment Handbook (SAH) Accessibility and Accommodations Manual
- Webinar: Classroom Management Promotes Home and School Instruction

**October - December 2020**
- 2021 GAA Participation Application
- Preparation to post 2020 LEA justifications for administering the GAA to greater than 1.0 percent of assessed students
- Training: GAA 2.0 Test Administration Procedures
- Training: GKIDS 2.0 and Readiness Check Reporting – Part 3
- Special Education Directors’ Webinar: Addition of LCI as evidence to GAA eligibility criteria
- Training: Instructional Access to Science for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
- Training: Support for Teachers who teach Social Studies to Students with SCDs
- Training: Supports for Teachers who teach Math to Students with SCDs

**January - March 2021**
- Training: GAA Nextera platform Training
- Training: GAA 2.0 Pre-Administration Webinar
- Training: GKIDS 2.0 Mid-year Reporting – Part 4
- Virtual “Make and Take” teacher support
- Directors’ Webinar: State-Defined Alternate Diploma
- ASES Winter Meeting
- State-Defined Alternate Diploma Session 1: Who are the students
- State-Defined Alternate Diploma Session 2: Why is communication and assistive technology essential
- State-Defined Alternate Diploma Session 3: What is the role of adaptive behavior
- State-Defined Alternate Diploma Session 4: What is the State-Defined Alternate Diploma
- State-Defined Alternate Diploma Session 5: What are best practices for transition to life

**April - June 2021**
- Training: GKIDS 2.0 End-of-Year Reporting – Part 5
- GAA 2.0 Bi-weekly meetings
- State-Defined Alternate Diploma Bonus Session: FAQ- Understanding the State-Defined Alternate Diploma

**July - September 2021**
- GAA 2.0 Bi-weekly meetings
- Georgia Alternate Assessment Presentation
- Fall Assessment Conference (GAA 2.0)
- Accessibility and Accommodations Part 3: Implementation Scenarios
- Significant Cognitive Disabilities Monthly Meeting (August)
- Significant Cognitive Disabilities Monthly Meeting (September)
- The Georgia Brigade- Community of Practice
- Supporting Student with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities Webinar: The importance of an appropriate communication system
- Presentation to Parent Mentor Partnership Annual Kickoff Conference on State-Defined Alternate Diploma (September)

**October - December 2021**
- 2022 GAA Participation Application
- GAA 2.0 Bi-weekly meetings
- Significant Cognitive Disabilities Monthly Meetings
• Supporting Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities webinar: The difference between CBI and WBL
• Supporting Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities webinar: Teaching Strategies
• GAA 2.0 Math Test Design and Expectations
• GAA 2.0 Overview and Eligibility Meeting
• The Georgia Brigade- Community of Practice
• CCSSO Conference- Assessment, Standards and Education for Students with Disabilities

January - March 2022
• Supporting Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities webinar: Including student in elementary, middle and high school classrooms
• Significant Cognitive Disabilities Monthly Meeting
• The Georgia Brigade- Community of Practice
• GAA 2.0 Bi-weekly meetings

April - July 2022
• GAA 2.0 Assessment Meetings
• Director’s Webinar- Georgia’s Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria
• Significant Cognitive Professional Learning Team Planning
• 1% Technical Assistance Planning for FY23 Meeting
• NCEO 1% CoP Meetings
• GAA 2.0 Meeting- Instructional Delivery Modes and Provisions of Accommodations
• ESOL Director’s Munch and Learn Webinar Series- ESOL Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
• GAA 2.0/1% Professional Learning Module Planning Meeting
• GAA 2.0 Test Development Summer Educator Meetings
• GAA 2.0 Assessment Summer Meetings
• GAA 2.0 Planning Meetings

August - December 2022
• GAA 2.0 Eligibility, Justification, and Supports Presentation
• Significant Cognitive Face-to-Face Trainings: “The Basics”
• Significant Cognitive Face-to-Face Trainings: Make-and-Take
• Significant Cognitive Virtual Webinar Series
• Virtual Georgia Brigade Community of Practices
• GAA 2.0 Assessment Meetings
• Significant Cognitive Professional Learning Team Planning
• NCEO 1% CoP Meetings
• Therese Wilkomm- “Make Stuff and Love People” Workshops

January - April 2023
• NCEO 1% CoP Meetings
• GAA 2.0 Test Development Summer Educator Meetings
• GAA 2.0 Assessment Meetings
• GAA 2.0 Assessment Summer Meetings
• Significant Cognitive Face-to-Face Training: “The Basics”
• Significant Cognitive Face-to-Face Training: Make-and-Take
• Significant Cognitive Face-to-Face Training: “Advanced”
• Significant Cognitive Virtual Webinar Series
• Virtual Georgia Brigade Community of Practice
• Statewide GAA 2.0 Technical Assistance- Participation Criteria and LEA Data
### 5.3 34 CFR §200.6(d) Regulations

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<tr>
<td>(d) State guidelines for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. If a State adopts alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and administers an alternate assessment aligned with those standards, the State must -</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Establish, consistent with section 612(a)(16)(C) of the IDEA, and monitor implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP teams to apply in determining, on a case-by-case basis, which students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards. Such guidelines must include a State definition of “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities” that addresses factors related to cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, such that -</td>
<td>Completed; with monitoring work ongoing</td>
<td>Completed; with monitoring work ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>(i) The identification of a student as having a particular disability as defined in the IDEA or as an English learner does not determine whether a student is a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities;</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>(ii) A student with the most significant cognitive disabilities is not identified solely on the basis of the student's previous low academic achievement, or the student's previous need for accommodations to participate in general State or districtwide assessments; and</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>(iii) A student is identified as having the most significant cognitive disabilities because the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled;</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<td>(2) Provide to IEP teams a clear explanation of the differences between assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards and those based on alternate academic achievement standards, including any effects of State and local policies on a student's education resulting from taking an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards, such as how participation in such assessments may delay or otherwise affect the student from completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma;</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Ensure that parents of students selected to be assessed using an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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achievement standards under the State's guidelines in §200.6(d) of this section are informed, consistent with §200.2(e), that their child's achievement will be measured based on alternate academic achievement standards, and how participation in such assessments may delay or otherwise affect the student from completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma;

(4) Not preclude a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities who takes an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards from attempting to complete the requirements for a regular high school diploma;

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(5) Promote, consistent with requirements under the IDEA, the involvement and progress of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in the general education curriculum that is based on the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled;

(6) Incorporate the principles of universal design for learning, to the extent feasible, in any alternate assessments aligned with alternate academic achievement standards that the State administers consistent with §200.2(b)(2)(ii); and

(7) Develop, disseminate information on, and promote the use of appropriate accommodations consistent with §200.2(b) of this section to ensure that a student with significant cognitive disabilities who does not meet the criteria in §200.2(a)(1)(ii) of this section -

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<td>(i) Participates in academic instruction and assessments for the grade in which the student is enrolled; and</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Is assessed based on challenging State academic standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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5.4 Implementation Status for Recommended Strategies

GaDOE has incorporated into its work the strategies for meeting the cap from the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). Each strategy is provided below, along with the State’s current implementation status.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather district and school data on current participation rates in the alternate assessment.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>Gather data on the characteristics of students participating in the alternate assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create or examine a state definition of “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities” and revise guidelines, as needed, for determining whether a student should participate in the alternate assessment.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<td>Provide professional development for IEP team members and other educators on the nature of the alternate assessment and who should participate in it.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide information sessions for parents of students with disabilities so that they can participate in the IEP decision-making process about the assessment in which their child participates.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>Ongoing</td>
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3 https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOBrief12OnePercentCap.pdf
Appendices

Appendix A: Assessment Participation Data
A.1 Count and Percentage of Students Assessed via Georgia Alternate Assessment
A.2 Count and Percentage of LEAs Exceeding 1.0 Percent Participation by Student Subgroups
A.3 Participation Rates for Elementary and Middle School GAA Assessments and Georgia Milestones Assessments
A.4 Participation Rates for High School GAA Assessments and End-of-Course Assessments
A.5 Estimated Count and Percentage of Students Assessed via Georgia Alternate Assessment

Appendix B: Guidelines, Resources, and Training
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B.2 State Board Rule Intellectual Disability Definition
B.3 NCEO CoP and PLG Participation
B.4 Educational Support GAA January 2021- April 2023
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B.7 GAA 2.0 Parent Flyer Year
B.8 Development and Training Plan – Supporting Reduced Alternate Assessment Placement for Early Learners
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C.1 Public Notice Document
C.2 Website Location
C.3 Emails Announcing Public Notice

Appendix D: Public Comments
### A.1: Count and Percentage of Students Assessed via Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0

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Georgia Department of Education
November 29, 2022 (Updated December 29, 2022) • Page 25 of 62
### A.2: Count and Percentage of LEAs Exceeding 1.0 Percent Participation by Student Subgroups

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<th>2021 Math</th>
<th>2021 Science</th>
<th>2021 Social Studies</th>
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<td>31.5%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
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<td>55.4%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>162</td>
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<td>69.9%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>63</td>
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<td>Percent: 35.2%</td>
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A.3: Participation Rates for Elementary and Middle School GAA Assessments and Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade Assessments

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## 2021 Georgia Alternate Assessments and Georgia Milestones Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Language Arts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>124,477</td>
<td>126,190</td>
<td>129,083</td>
<td>133,887</td>
<td>137,612</td>
<td>138,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>98,268</td>
<td>98,034</td>
<td>98,475</td>
<td>93,124</td>
<td>90,382</td>
<td>84,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>78.94%</td>
<td>77.69%</td>
<td>76.29%</td>
<td>69.55%</td>
<td>65.68%</td>
<td>61.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>17,439</td>
<td>18,547</td>
<td>19,451</td>
<td>19,736</td>
<td>19,889</td>
<td>19,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>13,811</td>
<td>14,555</td>
<td>14,894</td>
<td>13,742</td>
<td>13,327</td>
<td>84,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>79.20%</td>
<td>78.48%</td>
<td>76.57%</td>
<td>69.63%</td>
<td>67.01%</td>
<td>64.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>124,464</td>
<td>126,184</td>
<td>129,067</td>
<td>133,882</td>
<td>137,604</td>
<td>138,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>97,652</td>
<td>97,330</td>
<td>97,878</td>
<td>92,091</td>
<td>89,171</td>
<td>82,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>78.46%</td>
<td>77.13%</td>
<td>75.84%</td>
<td>68.79%</td>
<td>64.80%</td>
<td>59.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>17,436</td>
<td>18,545</td>
<td>19,447</td>
<td>19,735</td>
<td>19,886</td>
<td>19,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>13,723</td>
<td>14,452</td>
<td>14,791</td>
<td>13,548</td>
<td>13,135</td>
<td>81,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>78.70%</td>
<td>77.93%</td>
<td>76.06%</td>
<td>68.65%</td>
<td>66.05%</td>
<td>62.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>130674</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>140,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>98856</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>84,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>75.65%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>60.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>21055</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>21,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>16098</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>76.46%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>63.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>138,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>82,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>59.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>19,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>12,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>61.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.4: Participation Rates for High School GAA Assessments and Georgia Milestones End-of-Course Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2022 Georgia Alternate Assessments and Georgia Milestones Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2021 Georgia Alternate Assessments and Georgia Milestones Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td># Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Tested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.5: Estimated Count and Percentage of Students Assessed via Georgia Alternate Assessment

Note that the following table shows credible estimates calculated using the same methodology as that used in the 2021-2022 waiver request. The “Student Count” values below may be artificially low due to continued effects of the pandemic. In 2021-2022, All Student counts tended to fall in the 97-99% range; we expect the “Student Count” values to continue to increase towards the 99% participation that was more consistently observed in pre-pandemic years. Thus, it is our expectation that the observed 2022-2023 GAA participation rates will not be as high as shown here, although we do expect the participation rates in at least one content area to exceed 1.0 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>12,895</td>
<td>12,895</td>
<td>5,631</td>
<td>3,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>899,230</td>
<td>906,219</td>
<td>357,217</td>
<td>233,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>TFS</td>
<td>TFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>1.680</td>
<td>1.692</td>
<td>TFS</td>
<td>TFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>TFS</td>
<td>TFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>43,108</td>
<td>41,671</td>
<td>14,595</td>
<td>9,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>5,882</td>
<td>5,882</td>
<td>2,584</td>
<td>1,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>330,514</td>
<td>335,110</td>
<td>137,396</td>
<td>89,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>162,037</td>
<td>165,581</td>
<td>63,407</td>
<td>43,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>38,709</td>
<td>39,310</td>
<td>14,524</td>
<td>8,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>1,762</td>
<td>1,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>323,162</td>
<td>322,834</td>
<td>126,588</td>
<td>81,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count**</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Student Count*/**</td>
<td>494,518</td>
<td>506,655</td>
<td>197,801</td>
<td>123,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Percent**</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>Alternate Assessment Count</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>Student Count*</td>
<td>112,144</td>
<td>116,419</td>
<td>37,619</td>
<td>21,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Student Count is the count of students in 2021-2022 who completed assessments.
** Economically Disadvantaged data is not collected as part of the October FTE data collection, so these counts/percentages are not available.
## B.1: Eligibility Criteria for the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 (GAA)

### Eligibility Criteria for the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 (GAA)

**Step 1: Review the Eligibility Criteria for GAA**

Prior to reviewing the eligibility criteria for GAA, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must understand all assessment options, including the characteristics of each assessment and the potential implications of each assessment choice. According to O.C.G.A § 20-2-281, school districts are required to follow the procedures specified in the applicable test administration materials. As a result, the IEP team must use this form to document its assessment decisions.

If GAA is being considered, the IEP team must review the four criteria below and select Yes or No if applicable to the student. To be eligible to participate in GAA, the answer to four of the questions below must be Yes. If the answer to any of the questions is No, the student is not eligible to participate in GAA and must participate in the Georgia Milestones Assessment System. Each Yes answer requires a justification that contains evidence that the student meets the criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sources of Evidence (if used)</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the student require intensive, individualized instruction in a variety of instructional settings?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anecdotal Notes and Observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmark Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Progress Monitoring Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the student have a significant cognitive disability?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skills Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the student require specialized supports to access and participate in the grade-level Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) that require modifications based on the student’s Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anecdotal Notes and Observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmark Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Progress Monitoring Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Results of Language assessments including English Learner (EL) assessments, if applicable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the student require specialized supports to demonstrate age-appropriate adaptive behavior?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B.2: State Board Rule Intellectual Disability Definition

160-4-7-.05-24 ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION AND CATEGORIES OF ELIGIBILITY

Definition.

Intellectual disabilities refer to significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning which exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that adversely affects educational performance and originates before age 18. [34 C.F.R § 300.8(c)(6)] Intellectual disability does not include conditions primarily due to a sensory or physical impairment, traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorders, severe multiple impairments, cultural influences or a history of inconsistent and/or inadequate educational programming.

(a) Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning is defined as approximately 70 IQ or below as measured by a qualified psychological examiner on individually administered, nationally normed standardized measures of intelligence.

(1) All IQ scores defining eligibility for children with intellectual disabilities shall be interpreted as a range of scores encompassed by not more than one standard error of measurement below and above the obtained score. The standard error of measurement for a test may be found in the technical data section of the test manual.

(2) Any final determination of the level of intellectual functioning shall be based on multiple sources of information and shall include more than one formal measure of intelligence administered by a qualified psychological examiner. There may be children with IQ scores below 70 who do not need special education. Interpretation of results should take into account factors that may affect test performance such as socioeconomic status, native language, and cultural background and associated disabilities in communication, sensory or motor areas.

(i) Significantly subaverage intellectual functioning must be verified through a written summary of at least one structured observation that demonstrates the child's inability to progress in a typical, age appropriate manner and with consideration for culturally relevant information, medical and education history.

(b) Deficits in adaptive behavior are defined as significant limitations in a child’s effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age-level and cultural group, as determined by clinical judgment.

(1) The child demonstrates significantly subaverage adaptive behavior in school and home, and, if appropriate, community environments. These limitations in adaptive behavior shall be established through the use of standardized adaptive behavior measures normed on the general population, including people with disabilities and people without disabilities. On these standardized measures, significant limitations in adaptive behavior are operationally defined as performance that is at least two standard deviations below the mean of either (a) one of the following three types of adaptive behavior: conceptual, social, or practical, or (b) an overall (composite) score on a standardized measure of conceptual, social, and practical skills. Documentation must include information from at least two sources. The first source shall be someone from the local school who knows the child and the second source shall be someone who
knows the child outside of the school environment such as a parent, guardian, or person acting as a parent.

(i). Interpretation of results should consider the child’s cultural background, socioeconomic status and any associated disabilities that may limit or impact the results of the adaptive behavior measures.

(c) Deficits in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior must have existed prior to age 18.

(d) A child must not be determined to be a child with an Intellectual Disability if the determinant factor for that determination is:

1. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction;
2. Lack of appropriate instruction in math;
3. Lack of appropriate instruction in written expression;
4. Limited English proficiency;
5. Visual, hearing or motor disability;
6. Emotional disturbances;
7. Cultural factors;
8. Environmental or economic disadvantage; or
9. Atypical educational history (multiple school attendance, lack of attendance, etc.).

Eligibility and Placement.

A child may be classified as having an intellectual disability (at one of the levels listed below) when a comprehensive evaluation indicates deficits in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior shall be considered equally in any determination that a child is eligible for services in the area of intellectual disability. A comprehensive educational evaluation shall be administered to determine present levels of academic functioning. The report shall be prepared for each child to provide an adequate description of the data collected and explicit pre-referral interventions prior to evaluation and to explain why the child is eligible for services in a program for children with intellectual disabilities. In situations where discrepancies exist between test score results from intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior and academic achievement, the eligibility report must contain a statement of specific factors considered which resulted in the decision of the eligibility team. Eligibility teams must establish that any limits in performance are not primarily due to the exclusionary factors and must document this in the eligibility report:

A child may be classified as having an intellectual disability at one of the levels listed below.

Mild intellectual disability (MID).

(1) Intellectual functioning ranging between an upper limit of approximately 70 to a lower limit of approximately 55; and

(2) Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child’s effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual’s age level and cultural group, as determined by clinical judgment.
Moderate intellectual disability (MOID).

(1) Intellectual functioning ranging from an upper limit of approximately 55 to a lower limit of approximately 40; and

(2) Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child’s effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual’s age-level and cultural group as determined by clinical judgment.

Severe intellectual disability (SID).

(1) Intellectual functioning ranging from an upper limit of approximately 40 to a lower limit of approximately 25; and

(2) Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child’s effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility and especially school performance that is expected of the individual’s age-level and cultural group as determined by clinical judgment.

Profound intellectual disability (PID).

(1) Intellectual functioning below approximately 25; and

(2) Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child’s effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility and especially school performance that is expected of the child’s age-level and cultural group, as determined by clinical judgment.
B.3: NCEO and CoP and PLG Participation

A. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Department of Special Education and Supports participates in The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) Community of Practice for the 1% Participation Threshold. The group meets every two weeks. The Special Education Department has had someone participate in the majority of the sessions.

*Participants: Program Manager for Special Education Services and Support*
November 1, 2018 - Present

B. GaDOE staff members participate in National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) 1% Participation Threshold Peer Learning Groups

1) Digging into Your Data: Building a 1% Data Analysis and Use Plan

*Participant: Program Manager for Special Education Services and Support and Director of Assessment Administration*

The purpose of this group is to have the participants work collaboratively to examine data related to the 1% Threshold to determine ways to approach the provision of technical assistance to districts.

February 13, 2019
February 27, 2019
March 13, 2019
March 27, 2019
April 10, 2019
April 24, 2019

2) Guiding and Evaluating District Justifications

*Participants: Program Manager and/or Program Specialist for Special Education Services and Support*

The purpose of this peer group is to have states work with each other to identify what should be required in district justifications for exceeding the 1% threshold; how to evaluate justifications that the state receives; and how to act on the evaluations. We discussed how NCEO will support the CoP in developing student profiles to use for training LEAs. We also shared with the group Georgia’s resources for training educators and provided parent resources.

May 30, 2019
June 13, 2019
June 19, 2019
July 25, 2019
July 31, 2019
August 8, 2019
September 5, 2019
September 19, 2019

3) IEP Team Decision Making

*Participants: Program Manager Specialist for Special Education Services and Support*
## B.4: Educational GAA Support April 2022-April 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>APRIL 2022</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/5/2022</td>
<td>GAA 2.0 Assessment Meeting</td>
<td>State Level Personnel, Questar Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/12/2022</td>
<td>Director’s Webinar- <em>Georgia’s Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria</em></td>
<td>District Level Admin., District Test Coordinators, State Level Specialists</td>
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<td>4/18/2022</td>
<td>Significant Cognitive Professional Learning Team Planning</td>
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<td>4/21/2022</td>
<td>1% Technical Assistance Planning for FY23 Meeting</td>
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<td>4/7, 4/21/2022</td>
<td>NCEO 1% CoP Meeting</td>
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<td>4/27/2022</td>
<td>GAA 2.0 Meeting- Instructional Delivery Modes and Provisions of Accommodations</td>
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<td><strong>MAY 2022</strong></td>
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<td>Significant Cognitive Disabilities Team Meeting</td>
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<td>5/11/2022</td>
<td>ESOL Director’s Munch and Learn Webinar Series- ESOL Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities</td>
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<td>5/16/2022</td>
<td>GAA 2.0/1% Professional Learning Module Planning Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/17/2022</td>
<td>GAA 2.0 Assessment Meeting</td>
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<td>5/5, 5/19/2022</td>
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<td><strong>JUNE 2022</strong></td>
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<td>6/1/2022</td>
<td>Significant Cognitive Team Meeting</td>
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<td>6/3/2022</td>
<td>GAA 2.0 Test Development Summer Educator Meetings</td>
<td>State Level Specialists</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/14-6/16/2022</td>
<td>GAA 2.0 Assessment Summer Meetings</td>
<td>State Level Personnel, Questar Personnel, NWEA Personnel, District Level Teachers</td>
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<td>Date(s)</td>
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<td>Attendees</td>
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<td>8/16/2022</td>
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<td>8/2, 8/9, 8/16, 8/23, 8/30/2022</td>
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<td>The Georgia Brigade Community of Practice</td>
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B.5: Assessment Manuals, Handbooks, and Newsletters

For Educators

- Memoranda & Announcements
- Georgia Assessment and Training Calendar
- 2022-2023 Student Assessment Handbook

User Guides and Forms

- Assessment Resource Request User Guide
- Georgia Milestones Accommodations Workbook
- MyGaDOE Portal Navigation Guide
- Principal Certification Form
- School Assessment Plan Template
- Special Accommodation Request User Guide
- Superintendent Test Certification User Guide
- Testing Irregularity Form User Guide
- Georgia Assessment and Training Calendar Quick Start Guide

Newsletters

2022-2023
- Assessment Update September 2022
- Assessment Update August 2022
- Assessment Update July 2022

2021-2022
- Assessment Update June 2022
- Assessment Update May 2022
- Assessment Update April 2022
- Assessment Update March 2022
- Assessment Update February 2022
- Assessment Update January 2022
- Assessment Update December 2021
- Assessment Update November 2021
- Assessment Update October 2021
- Assessment Update September 2021
- Assessment Update August 2021
- Assessment Update July 2021

Testing/Assessment For Educators webpage

2022-2023 Student Assessment Manual

GAA 2.0 Test Administration Manual 2022 (2023 manual to be published in January, 2023)
B.6: GAA 2.0 Resources and Training Calendar

GAA 2.0 Resources

Training Webinars

All GAA 2.0 live training webinar registrations are available from the GaDOE Professional Learning Events Catalog. Training Webinar recordings and associated presentation handouts will be posted to the GaDOE Professional Learning Events Catalog approximately a week following the live presentation.

Administration Resources

GAA 2.0 Eligibility Criteria - 2022-2023
Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI) Form
Validation Form for Transcription of Answer Documents

Educator Resources

GAA 2.0 Achievement Level Descriptors
GAA 2.0 OSEP Extended Content Standards
GAA 2.0 Sample Tasks
GAA 2.0 Score Interpretation Guide 2022
GAA 2.0 Teacher Resource Guides
GAA 2.0 Test Blueprints
GAA 2.0 Test Score Ranges
GAA 2.0 Vocabulary Units

Parent Resources

GAA 2.0 Parent Flyer
GAA 2.0 Parent Flyer - Spanish
Understanding the GAA 2.0 Achievement Levels

Technology Resources
B.7: GAA 2.0 Parent Flyer

Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0

What is the GAA 2.0?
The Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 (GAA 2.0) is designed to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities are provided access to the state academic content standards and given the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the knowledge, concepts, and skills inherent in the standards.

The Georgia Standards of Excellence and Extended Content Standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities drive the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment.

What are Extended Content Standards?
The Extended Content Standards reflect how a grade-level standard can be made accessible for students with significant cognitive disabilities for both instruction and assessment. They are separated into three access points, starting with the least complex and moving to the most complex concepts and skills. GAA 2.0 tasks are written to these access points.

How are Assessment Items Structured?
Each test has 11 tasks. Tasks begin with a scenario, followed by three parts that increase in complexity to give students the opportunity to show what they know and can do.

How will the test be administered to students?
Test administrators will assess each student individually. Most students will be able to use the same communication mode on the GAA 2.0 test as they would typically use in their classroom. The assessment is not timed and can be paused for a variety of reasons.

How will scores be used?
Parents can use scores to learn more about their student’s achievement. Educators can use assessment results to plan for classroom instruction and monitor student progress. Scores are also utilized in the state’s school accountability system, the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRP).

Who will take the GAA 2.0?
The GAA 2.0 will be administered to all eligible students in the following areas:
- Grades 3-8 and high school will be assessed in English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- Grades 5, 8, and high school will be assessed in Science.
- Grades 8 and high school will also be assessed in Social Studies.

When will my child take the test?
Georgia’s Spring 2021 GAA 2.0 test administration window is March 22 through April 30, 2021. School district administrators determine when students within their district will test during this state window.
**B.8: Development and Training Plan Supporting Reduced Alternate Assessment Placement for Early Learners**

This table outlines development and training events that took place in the 2020, 2021, and 2022 school years to target the reduced placement of early learners on the alternate assessment pathway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants/Audience</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/22/19-10/23/19</td>
<td>Development meeting</td>
<td>Educators and specialists with expertise in instructing students with significant cognitive disabilities</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>In this two-day meeting, educators and specialists closely reviewed the current GKIDS 2.0 leaning progression content and administration processes to identify what supports were needed to extend access to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/28/20</td>
<td>Stakeholder focus group</td>
<td>Educators and specialists with expertise in instructing students with significant cognitive disabilities</td>
<td>Webinar</td>
<td>Based on the requests and guidance offered by educators in the fall development work, an updated framework was proposed and review, using the addition of comprehensive support to ensure GKIDS is inclusive of all students and avoid requirement of alternate assessment placement until 3rd grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5/20</td>
<td>Development meeting</td>
<td>Educators and specialists with expertise in instructing students with significant cognitive disabilities as well as content area experts.</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>Detailed parts of implementing the framework of comprehensive support were addressed during this workday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2020</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/6/20</td>
<td>Training resources</td>
<td>Educators and district/school test coordinators</td>
<td>Posted to Website</td>
<td>GKIDS Resources for the 2020-2021 school year included an updated Test Administration Manual and Resource Guide, with guidance on including all kindergarten students in this assessment aligned to the standards for which they are receiving instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2020 and 2021</td>
<td>Pre-Administration Training Training</td>
<td>District/school test coordinators</td>
<td>Webinar</td>
<td>In the Pre-Administration training for district and school coordinators responsible for the administration of GKIDS, guidance was offered on interpreting the new report elements related to comprehensive support, as part of the broader goal of ensuring all</td>
</tr>
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ESSA Alternate Assessment 1.0 Percent  
Cap Waiver Request for 2022-2023

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Delivery Method</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<td>10/13/20 and 10/21/21</td>
<td>Special Ed. Director Training</td>
<td>Special Education Leaders and Directors</td>
<td>Webinar</td>
<td>In this training for special education leaders and directors, guidance on the new GKIDS comprehensive support resources were specifically tied to direction on eligibility criteria for alternate assessment on alternate academic content standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2020 and June 2021</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>District test coordinators</td>
<td>Posted to portal</td>
<td>Final reports and data were provided to districts, which included information on students receiving comprehensive support by progression. This information is also made available on-demand throughout the year in the GKIDS platform. Training and interpretation content on the reports guide users in understanding how standard and comprehensive supports can help all students access the academic content in the progressions. This reporting framework is designed to avoid over-identification of early learners for placement on an alternate track.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
B.9: Significant Cognitive Disabilities Webpage

ESSA Alternate Assessment 1.0 Percent
Cap Waiver Request for 2022-2023

Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

To have a significant cognitive disability a student must have a documented cognitive disability that affects intellectual functioning. This could include students with scores at or below the 22nd percentile on two or more of the measures in Table 1. Students with significant cognitive disabilities may have a wide range of characteristics, depending on the combination of severity of disabilities and the student's age. Features may include:

- Limited access or control over the environment
- Difficulty with basic physical mobility
- Difficulty calming or focusing on tasks
- A need for support in major life activities (e.g., eating, dressing, community use, etc.)

Students with significant cognitive disabilities and multiple disabilities typically need an individualized education program of special education services and supports that include specially designed instruction, related services, assistive technology, and other services required for the provision of a free appropriate public education.

Specific Resources

- [Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SCD) 2020 – 2023 Professional Learning Curriculum Resources for Fall of 2021](#)
- [Instructional Strategies - November 2021](#)
- [Adapted Teaching – December 2021](#)

Georgia Department of Education
November 29, 2022 (Updated December 29, 2022) • Page 45 of 62
Appendix C: Public Notice

LEAs and the public were provided an opportunity to submit feedback to GaDOE prior to the submission of this waiver request. The public comment period lasted from October 11, 2022, to November 11, 2022, meeting the 30-day state requirement. Public notice of the intent to submit the waiver (C.1) as well as a draft of the full waiver request were posted to the GaDOE Title I, Part A webpage and the Special Education Services and Supports webpage (C.2). Emails were sent to LEA superintendents, assessment directors, special education directors, Title I directors, and accountability contacts; and members of the State’s Special Education State Advisory Panel which include Ga PTA. (C.3).

- C.1 Public Notice
- C.2 Public Notice Posting on Websites
- C.3 Public Notice Emails
C.1: Public Notice

Georgia Department of Education

Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver for 2022-2023

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is seeking comments on a waiver request (draft waiver request at this [link]) for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (US ED). A survey with an opportunity for comments is provided at this [link] until 11:59 p.m. November 11, 2022. Questions should be submitted to Allison Timberlake, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, at atimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us no later than November 11, 2022.

The ESSA includes a statewide 1.0 percent participation cap in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) for each content area (1111(8)(2)(D)(I)(J)). States can request a one-year waiver from this requirement if the state anticipates being above the cap. Georgia received a one-year waiver from the requirement for the 2021-2022 school year. GaDOE is submitting a similar request for the 2022-2023 school year to provide the necessary time to continue to implement policies and district supports to ensure the alternate assessment is only administered to those students for whom it is intended.

The percentage of students assessed via the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0) in 2021-2022 was 1.2 for English language arts, 1.2 for mathematics, 1.0 for science, and 0.9 for social studies. GaDOE anticipates that Georgia will be above the 1.0 percent cap in at least one content area in 2022-2023 as well. The waiver submission for the 2022-2023 school year includes a demonstration of progress in the work of reducing the percentage of students assessed via the GAA as well as the following information, as outlined in 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)i-v:

- State-level data analysis (2022) showing the number and percentage of students in each subgroup who took the GAA 2.0, and
- assurances from the State that each local education agency (LEA) anticipated to exceed the 1.0 percent cap a) followed State guidelines under paragraph 200.6(d) - excluding (d)(6), and b) will address any disproportionality in the percentage of student subgroups utilizing 2022 data under section 1111(c)(2)(A), (B), or (D) being administered the GAA; and
- a plan and timeline by which a) the State will improve its guidelines under § 200.6(d), b) the State will take additional steps to support and provide appropriate oversight to each LEA that the State anticipates will use the GAA to assess more than 1.0 percent of its students in a content area, and c) the State will address any disproportionality in the percentage of students taking the GAA 2.0.

Prior to submitting this ESSA waiver request, GaDOE is providing public notice to all interested parties across Georgia and requesting comments. GaDOE has posted a draft of the full waiver request on the [Title I, Part A webpage], as well as on the [Special Education Services and Supports webpage]. In addition, GaDOE has emailed information pertaining to the waiver to all district superintendents, Title I directors, assessment directors, special education directors, parent groups, and the State Advisory Panel for Special Education. Copies of all comments the State may receive from stakeholders in response to this notice will be attached to the waiver request sent to US ED.

Public Comment Notice for SEA Waiver October 11, 2022
C.2: Public Notice Posting on Websites

Public Notice Posting – Title I, Part A
C. 2 Public Notice on Special Education Services and Supports Webpage

Special Education Services and Supports

The Georgia Department of Education (Division for Special Education Services, and Supports) provides necessary infrastructure and supports for leaders, teachers, and families to meet the whole child needs of each student improving student outcomes and school climate resulting in an increased quality of life and workforce ready future. We must commit to effective collaboration across agencies and school/home partnerships to support local school districts in their efforts to provide special education and related services for students with disabilities.

The GaDOE must provide state General Supervision for local school districts to improve educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and ensure that the requirements of IDEA are met. We believe that all students must have an equitable opportunity for school completion and successful postsecondary outcomes.

Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023

Draft ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver Request

OSEP updated Feb 2023 Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools - NEW

This revised Q&A document updates and supersedes the Department's April 2011 guidance and includes additional questions and answers that address topics that have arisen as state and LEAs continue to implement the provision of IDEA related to proportionate share and equitable services.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Professional Learning is the means by which teachers, administrators, and other staff acquire, enhance, and refine the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students.

Purpose: To provide leadership, technical assistance, and resources to the Georgia education community in order to improve student learning through organizational development and professional learning.

GaDOE Professional Learning Events

Contact Information

Shaun Owen
Deputy Superintendent
Federal Programs
Email: sowen@doe.k12.ga.us

Wini Low
State Director, Special Education Services and Supports
Email: wlow@doe.k12.ga.us

Staff Contact List

Special Education Help Desk

Special Education Questions & Support
Email: SequoiaK12
Website: SequoiaK12.com
Phone: 404-814-3171

Frequently Access Resources

Events
C. 3: Public Notice Emails

Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023

Allison Timberlake
To: K12 Charter School Superintendents
Cc: Richard Woods; Matt James; Meghan Frick; Lauren Holcomb; Paula Swartzberg; Sandra Greene; Wims Low; Shawn Owen

Please forward this message on to: 11/10/2022 2:41 PM


Superintendents:

[cc: Assessment Directors, Special Education Directors, Title I Directors]

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) will be seeking a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) regarding the alternate assessment 1.0 percent participation cap put in place under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Prior to submitting the waiver, GaDOE is seeking comments from local education agencies (LEAs) and other education stakeholders. ED has stated that "the Department has determined public comment would be highly relevant to the question of whether a State’s request to extend its waiver of the 1.0 percent cap is in the public interest." Thus, we urge you to review the waiver request and provide public comment via this survey.

In submitting the 1.0 percent participation cap waiver, GaDOE is requesting that ED allow the State a year to further implement guidelines and interventions to support LEAs in ensuring the appropriate administration of the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 3.0). During the one-year waiver period, GaDOE’s Office of Special Education, Accountability, and Assessment would work collaboratively to ensure LEAs are provided the necessary support and technical assistance.

Additional waiver details are available in the alternate assessment waiver public notice attached to this email. Additionally, a draft of the full waiver request is available on the Title I Part A webpage, as well as on the Special Education Services and Supports webpage. A survey with an opportunity for comments is provided at this link until 11:59 p.m. November 11, 2022. Questions should be submitted to me via email no later than November 11, 2022.

Thank you,
Allison

Allison Timberlake, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent
Office of Assessment & Accountability
Phone: 470.579.3533
alltimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us
Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube

FW: Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023

Paula Swartzberg
To: Paula Swartzberg
Cc: Allison Timberlake; August Olugbala; Kris Denic; Lacy Andrews; Theresa Dell-Ross


Accountability contacts:

Please see the email body.

Bet,
Paule

Paula Swartzberg
Director of Accountability
Office of Assessment & Accountability
Phone: 470.579.3644
Cell Phone: 678.857.4766
paula.swartzberg@doe.k12.ga.us
Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube

From: Allison Timberlake <atimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us>
Sent: Tuesday, October 11, 2022 1:04 PM
To: K12 Charter School Superintendents <k12charterschoolsuperintendents@doe.k12.ga.us>
Cc: Richard Woods <richwood@k12.ga.us>, Matt James <matthew.james@k12.ga.us>, Meghan Frick <meghan@k12.ga.us>, Lauren Holcomb <lauren.holcomb@k12.ga.us>, Paula Swartzberg <paula.swartzberg@k12.ga.us>, Sandra Greene <sandra.greene@k12.ga.us>, Wims Low <wims.low@doe.k12.ga.us>, Shawn Owen <shawn.owen@doe.k12.ga.us>
Subject: Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023

Superintendents:

[cc: Assessment Directors, Special Education Directors, Title I Directors]

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) will be seeking a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) regarding the alternate assessment 1.0 percent participation cap put in place under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Prior to submitting the waiver, GaDOE is seeking comments from local education agencies (LEAs) and other education stakeholders. ED has stated that "the Department has determined public comment would be highly relevant to the question of whether a State’s request to extend its waiver of the 1.0 percent cap is in the public interest." Thus, we urge you to review the waiver request and provide public comment via this survey.

In submitting the 1.0 percent participation cap waiver, GaDOE is requesting that ED allow the State a year to further implement guidelines and interventions to support LEAs in ensuring the appropriate administration of the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 3.0). During the one-year waiver period, GaDOE’s Office of Special Education, Accountability, and Assessment would work collaboratively to ensure LEAs are provided the necessary support and technical assistance.

Additional waiver details are available in the alternate assessment waiver public notice attached to this email. Additionally, a draft of the full waiver request is available on the Title I Part A webpage, as well as on the Special Education Services and Supports webpage. A survey with an opportunity for comments is provided at this link until 11:59 p.m. November 11, 2022. Questions should be submitted to me via email no later than November 11, 2022.

Thank you,
Allison

Georgia Department of Education
November 29, 2022 (Updated December 29, 2022) • Page 50 of 62
FW: Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023

Patti,

Please share the information below with the State Advisory Panel. It is the annual notice about the Georgia Alternate Assessment. The Division for Assessment and Accountability is seeking feedback. Highlighted links will open to the documentation. There is also a message from Dr. Timberlake seeking input.

Thanks,

Wina

Wina Low  
State Director  
Division for Special Education Services and Supports  
Cell Phone: 470.316.8336  
Email: wlow@doe.k12.ga.us  
Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube

Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023

Yes, it is posted on our website in the middle of the main page, Special Education Services and Supports (spedlow.org) See below or follow the link. I also discussed this information on today’s Director’s Webinar. I will also share with our State Advisory Panel.

Thanks,

Wina

Special Education Services and Supports

The Georgia Department of Education (Division for Special Education Services and Supports) provides necessary infrastructure and supports for leaders, teachers, and families to meet the whole child needs of each student improving student outcomes and school climate resulting in an increased quality of life and workforce ready future. We must commit to effective collaboration across agencies and school-home partnerships to support local school districts in their efforts to provide special education and related services for students with disabilities.

The GaDOE must provide state General Supervision for local school districts to improve educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and ensure that the requirements of IDEA are met. We believe that all students must have an equitable opportunity for school completion and successful postsecondary outcomes.

Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver 2022-2023  
Draft ESSA Alternate Assessment 1.0 Percent Cap Waiver Request  
OSEP (updated Feb 2022) Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools - NEW

This revised Q&A document updates and supersedes the Department's April 2011 guidance and includes additional questions and answers that address topics that have arisen as state and LEAs continue to implement the provision of IDEA related to proportionate share and equitable services.

Wina Low
Dear Colleague:

Please review these updates from the Division of Federal Programs.

Federal Programs Year-at-a-Glance

Please review our online calendar for upcoming events and/or deadlines. The Year-at-a-Glance calendar is found here. Meeting information is included on the calendar.

Coming Up Next Week:

- October 10 at 3:00 PM - Consolidation of Funds Information
- October 10 at 12:00 PM - Deploying the Title III Part A English Learner (EL) Program Plan
- October 20 at 12:00 PM - Learn and Grow with the Georgia SEP
- October 21 at 9:00 AM - Equitable Services: Drop In
- October 21 at 12:00 PM - Consolidation of Funds: Drop In

Public Notice of ESSA Alternate Assessment Cap Waiver for 2022-2023

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is seeking comments on a waiver request (draft waiver request at this link) for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (US ED). A survey with an opportunity for comments is provided at the link until 12:00 PM, November 11, 2022. Questions should be submitted to Alissa Timbers, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, at attimbers@doe.k12.ga.us no later than November 11, 2022.
Appendix D: Public Comments

The following question was posed in the online survey linked in the public notice and in emails.

Please select “Yes” or “No” to provide your opinion on this matter.

I support Georgia’s ESSA one-year waiver from the 1.0 percent participation cap in alternate assessments (GAA 2.0) based on alternate achievement standards in each content area, as it is in the public’s interest.

There were 713 responses to the survey with 705 (99%) supporting the waiver. The following groups from more than 95 counties in the state responded to the survey.

- Parents
- Educators
- Students
- Business and Industry
- Interested Citizens
- Other – please specify

Comments submitted follow.

It is imperative that GA receives this waiver.

As a small, rural district with an overall student enrollment <1800, even a small number of students found eligible to participate in the alternate assessment would result in a participation rate in excess of 1.0 percent. The ESSA Alternative Assessment 1.0 percent cap waiver would be beneficial to the Georgia DOE, as well as small districts like ours.

Smaller districts are often held liable for the populations they serve when there is no way to control some instances of identification and need for students with the most significant disabilities. The increase of percentage of those students eligible is often not able to be “fixed” or "controlled" by simply improving instruction. A single student with a significant disability that requires alternate content standards or assessment can push smaller districts well over the 1% participation cap just as it can for disproportionality.

School systems are required to adhere to the rubric that has been established to determine if a student qualifies for GAA. This rubric is being utilized to ensure correct identification. This criteria helps to ensure that participants are being correctly identified even when the overall number of students participating in GAA extends beyond 1%.

I do not think the 1% cap is reasonable. I think if appropriate documentation is provided for each GAA student, a cap is not necessary. Therefore, US Ed needs to spend additional time revisiting this anyway.

I support this waiver since I live in a rural district where only a small number of students who qualify for GAA will put our district over the cap. If these students meet the eligibility criteria then they should be taught and assessed accordingly.

GAA is based on students’ needs so you cannot put a cap on an assessment.

Our district has appropriate training, procedures, and monitoring in place to ensure that we adhere to state guidelines in the consideration of the Georgia Alternate Assessment. IEP teams must act in the best interest of the individual child when making individualized decisions about assessment.
participation. These teams need to consider the needs of the child, not the number of other students in the state assessed on alternate achievement standards when making these decisions. In our district, the number of students participating in dual enrollment reduces the overall number of students participating in state assessments, which impacts our participation rate for the GAA and creates an inaccurate measure for our district.

This seems like a reasonable request that will give sufficient time to properly implement the new policy.

Putting a numeric cap on the number of students who can take the alternate assessment is both counterintuitive and of borderline moral/ethical standing. All the children who qualify should be able to test appropriately.

Placing a cap on the number of students who may receive certain types of services or assessments is not in students' best interest. These decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis and should not be limited by caps such as this.

Please know that the 1% waiver is not fair and equitable for all districts, especially those districts in areas of poverty who have higher rates of intellectual disabilities across the board. I believe the cap should be a range of 1-3 percent.

In recent years, there has been an increase in students with significant disabilities that require alternate achievement standards. The 1.0 percent participation cap requires districts to make difficult decisions when deciding how many students can attend these classes.

The one year waiver will give our county more time to develop more resources for students over the cap. Our county tries to limit numbers but such a small percentage for a small low income district it seems impossible.

Simply put, more than 1% of our students would benefit from from assessing via GAA.

On behalf of Carrollton City Schools, I would like to let you know that we support the ESSA waiver request for 1% participation cap for GAA administration. The GAA enrollment in Carrollton City Schools currently exceeds the 1% cap because a special program exists in our system that has drawn large numbers of students with the most significant disabilities. Families of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities move to the Carrollton City School district specifically to receive specialized services due to the exceptional special education services and supports provided. The GAA is a vital assessment for our students that meet the criteria for administration. Thank you for your consideration as we continue to administer the GAA for all students that meet the criteria, even if participation exceeds 1%.

Qualifications for the Georgia Alternate Assessment should be data driven based on present levels of performance and academic achievement and an updated comprehensive psychological evaluation that provides evidence that the student is incapable of understanding and retaining academic content at the rate of their same-aged peers. This criteria is far greater than the 1% rule currently in place.

I am anticipating that GaDOE will implement, consistent with the plan submitted in GaDOE's waiver request, system improvements and will monitor future administrations of AA-AAAS to avoid exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold.

We have a high percentage of military both active and retired that choose Chatham County when they have a child with Special needs. It does not seem that a specific number (1%) should limit a student to access the alternative testing that allows them to show what they know and have learned when the student population does fit with those parameters.

There are extenuating circumstances that result in some districts having more students qualify for the Alternate Assessment in excess of a 1% limit.
Every school system must follow the guidelines of students requiring GAA. If a student meets the requirements, and all stakeholders, including parents, are in agreement, then the school system should be allowed to make this decision based on the facts and what is in the best interest of the individual student’s needs. A student’s education should not be based on fitting into a random percentage of the state or district’s population. Teachers should always do what is best for their students and meet their needs for success.

Many families are still moving from other states and districts due to financial impacts of COVID, which may lead to an influx of students on an alternate assessment in a district. Those districts need time to evaluate students and determine appropriate assessments and/or eligibility categories.

Our district because of the military base being one of the bases that can provide special services and support to students with disabilities as well as the community resources available that are not available in other areas have a larger statistical average of students who qualify and need alternative assessments. We will not be able to adequately meet this special populations needs without being allowed to use assessments that meet their needs.

Students with disabilities are required by federal law, IDEA, to have an individualized education plan. If that team feels it is appropriate for the student to study and alternative curriculum and, therefore, have an alternative assessment, that decision should be valid. School systems should not be punished for providing what a student needs.

With the huge emphasis on the Whole Child (which is great), why can’t all students have the opportunity to have differentiation in assessments? If this is not possible, then, it would seem simpler and yield more effective data if a standardized test like the Iowa Test of Basic Skills would be "the" test of administration for all states. The comparisons would yield better data. (like the SAT or PSAT)

Parents and educators need to be surveyed to find the best solutions for students who struggle. Are the current tests providing authentic results of what students can do? Why can’t true standards-based assessment (checklist of what the students can do) be utilized? Test anxiety is real for students! In my opinion, we test students too much. The testing process needs to be simplified.

Thanks for allowing us to make confidential comments.

IEP Teams should be allowed to make the best decision possible regarding state assessments for students with disabilities. The cognitive level of students with disabilities is not the same system to system. Stating a cap that can not be waived is not in the best interest of providing students with cognitive disabilities an individualized plan that works specifically for them.

Due to the number of students served by our county through the Georgia Alternate Assessment, we support waiving the 1% cap so that our students’ individual needs can be met through their IEP goals and objectives as well as a standardized assessment that measures growth and progress. We are not able to control the number of special needs students that come to us nor are we willing or able to deny them the appropriate services simply to meet a percentage of participation mark.

We are a small rural district where many families move here for the school system. This causes our population of SWDs to be high, therefore, those meeting GAA requirements would be higher than normal.

As a public institution, we have no control of the students who enter our schools, meet special education eligibility criteria, and receive services and programming available to these students. If students are truly qualifying for the GAA, based of the state’s criteria, how can we as public servants,
working for the goal of educating all, be asked to caps the number of students who actually qualify for the GAA. What do you expect us to do? Be more stringent than the state’s qualifying criteria?

As a parent of a special needs child, I want to make sure my child is assessed in the best way possible. I want him to have the attention and instruction he needs. If that requires an alternative assessment, I want him to have that. With careful planning and proof of need, all students when require this unique assessment should have the ability regardless of a number of allocated spots.

I support the waiver because I know the Division of Special Education Services staff is working with districts to lower the number of students who take the GAA 2.0.

A waiver for the 1% participation cap for the alternate assessment is needed. Our District has diligently worked to appropriately identify the eligible students; however, we continue to exceed the 1% cap. We have many students that fall within this category and need an alternate assessment.

Whitfield County Schools fluctuate between 2% and 3% participation on GAA, so the waiver will help our district.

Since this population has been adversely affected by the pandemic, this would be in their best interest.

It is ridiculous to expect that any school system's SPED population will have one percent or less of their students who will need a GAA, particularly when the state has adopted the "everyone is going to college" mentality and done away with so many classes that could have been much more appropriate for our self-contained population. This policy creates so much anxiety in our self-contained students and leads to many of these students leaving school without any type of diploma.

Districts all over the state of Georgia are experiencing an increase in the number of special needs students. We are seeing more students who qualify for special education services than ever before. The current cap is unrealistic and does not align with the reality of what schools are experiencing.

Why are we capped at 1%? Is the 1% cap really equitable for the larger school districts who have a large population of students with disabilities?

It is in the best interest of our students and schools.

It is important to provide flexibility. School systems should not be held accountable for the number or percentage of students who qualify for GAA. This is out of the hands of educators and based on student needs.

Small school systems often have percentages slightly higher than the 1.0 percent cap due to a small enrollment size.

I support this waiver of the 1% participation cap in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards in each content area.

The need for the alternate assessment remains for students identified using appropriate criteria. Potential limits to this provision of support for students would create barriers for meeting individual needs and could interfere with FAPE. The GAA 2.0 provides a way to assess progress toward the standards for students who are unable to have meaningful participation in the Georgia Milestones Assessment System.

I support this waiver.

The determination of whether a student is assessed using an alternate assessment is made by an IEP team based on the individual needs of a student. A strict 1% cap prioritizes state compliance over individual student needs. I support the continuation of the waiver.

I support the waiver because it allows districts not to be penalized after having another year of Covid disruptions. This school year, we can resume teaching and learning and should be able to be measured appropriately.
This waiver provides the opportunity for schools to properly meet the assessment needs of this vulnerable population and should be honored another year.

The ability to assess using GAA instead of Milestones data should be based on set criterion applied to each student and not a percentage of overall populations. Schools with primarily affluent college educated house houses will fall far beneath the 1% cap whereas communities like mine with multi-generational poverty and history of severe learning disabilities will have far more than 1% who should qualify.

For that matter, if best practice dictates that all instruction be differentiated to meet the needs of students, why would you require a student with a 72 IQ to take the exact same test as a student with a 130 IQ? As it is, even with excessive modifications and accommodations, many of my students cannot achieve grade level standards on any classroom assessment, and yet they are also not eligible for GAA. How does this even remotely begin to access what these children know and can do?

Due to the widening of learning gaps created by the closure of schools due to the China Virus, it would be academically prudent to grant a waiver from 1% to 2%. This would at least give educators a chance to try to help the students catch up academically.

It is unfair to assign an arbitrary cap on the number/percentage of students who can take the GAA. Whether or not a student should take the GAA should be determined by an IEP team of professionals which includes a close partnership with parental input.

I use the GAA scores as data for my students.

I believe that IEP teams along with the GAA Eligibility Criteria Form questions should be able to make the determination of GAA for students. I do not believe a state percentage should play a part in this decision. An IEP team should be able to consider the data and the needs of the student in order to provide FAPE.

GAA eligibility and testing must be based on student need and not on an arbitrary cap. We have no control over who moves in to the state and what student needs are in any given year.

I believe that the waiver will allow for leaders and teachers to ensure that students who need the alternate assessment format are receiving it. Right now, the 1% cap is currently limiting some students from receiving the alternate assessment that would benefit from it.

One percent is simply not a realistic expectation for our population of students. The impact of COVID has also had unprecedented negative consequences on our students, that can't fully be quantified just yet, much less be ignored.

If we want equity in schools then we need to have a better understanding as to what the "disadvantaged" student looks like. High stakes testing is not bridging gaps, in any capacity, with or without waivers. I would rather see reform and modifications in how students are held accountable and for the State to see that the teachers are becoming the "Disadvantaged" and implement a "Every Teacher Succeeds Act". I have already witnessed students that can barely read be passed along by the masses. Learning is no longer taking place unless the student is self motivated through intrinsic factors.

I am not sure what steps the state would want us to take because we already exclude mild ID from participating in the assessment in GCPS. This is something that the state mentions in their draft waiver request as an area that other districts have improved upon. We feel that Gwinnett has done a great job of doing everything possible to stay under the 1%. We continue to go over because our district population of students served on an adapted curriculum is so large.

I've never been involved with previous waivers submitted, but I can say that we currently only have our students with the most significant cognitive disabilities taking the GA Alternate Assessment and
we still exceed the 1% cap because that population is so large within our district.

I am in support of pursuing the Waiver Cap because of our large numbers, but I'm also not sure what more we could do to show we are working to reduce the number of students that take the GA Alternate Assessment.

Putting an arbitrary number on something like this makes no sense. We serve everyone who comes to our doors regardless of need.

Due to COVID, many students have fallen behind and will not make sufficient gains during a single year.

Schools need greater flexibility

Our district needs more time to ensure that those who take the alternate assessment are the ones who really need it. It is in the best interest of all our students that this be taken into consideration and done correctly. We need to time to continue to implement policies and district supports that assist in this.

This is absolutely in the best interest of the public. Please consider granting.

The current alternative assessments and procedures do not give consideration to the student's cognitive limitations and their ability to process the questions in the verbal format that is required. It also places an unreasonable burden on schools to restructure special education classroom across several days to allow the teacher to conduct one-on-one testing with each student. While the intent of the alternative assessment was meant to be positive the outcome has had a negative impact due to the demands placed on teachers in this field.

In my opinion, this one year waiver would provide the time for Georgia to continue to implement policies and district supports to ensure the alternate assessment is only administered to those students for whom it is intended.

If we are required to test students in this manner, then we should be able to test all students, who require it, and not have to pick and choose because of a rule about 1%.

All students who require GAA should be allowed to take GAA. There should not be a cap for what students need.

Our school district has exceeded the 1% cap for the past several years. We need this waiver to best serve our students.

Teachers are still dealing with the effects of time out of school due to the pandemic.

The need for the ESSA Alternate Assessment has grown larger over the last few year and continues to grow with the population.

Our local district rate has consistently exceeded the 1% cap, so the cap isn't necessary.

By not allowing our district to participate in a waiver if needed it limits our abilities to assess our most needed individuals in the most appropriate ways.

I feel that providing an extra year to comply with the 1% cap will allow districts to fully implement the guidelines and provide the most appropriate supports to the most cognitively impaired students. In a small district, a few increases or transfers that require GAA greatly impact the percentage.

Students who qualify for the GAA based on the rubric provided by the state should be allowed to participate in the GAA despite the population percentage cap. Special education is designed to meet the needs of the student, not a number set by the state.
Educators should be able to serve their students based on individual needs with appropriate general supervision and clear direction in regard to rules for eligibility for GAA 2.0. IEP teams should not be restricted by a cap, but rather take into account the individual needs of students.

I believe that GA should look to adopting a "General Education" diploma that doesn't require the higher level math/science. While our graduation requirements are suitable for students who are college bound—the reason for eliminating the varying diplomas in 2010 failed to account for students who should be able to demonstrate mastery of basic education skills but should not be required to complete some of the classes currently deemed necessary for receiving a diploma.

If a student is Ellie able and it’s their least restrictive environment, we should not be constrained to a percent of the population.

It is extremely unfair to limit the number of GAA tests based on a percentage. If a student needs this assessment, he or she should have the opportunity.

There are definitely more than 1% of children that need an alternate assessment!!

There is a population of students within the county that are not able to take the common form of achievement assessments. At times, that population is above the 1.0 percent cap. Those students should be able to have an alternative assessment so that all can participate appropriately.

A school does not have any control over it’s student population and how many special education students they have. To assume that only 1% of the population qualifies for an alternative assessment is short sighted. Different communities have different student populations!

Not all students can take a standardized test.

Being able to provide each student with the best/most appropriate education. Also with the past couple of years dealing with covid and the loss of education. So being granted a waiver makes the state of Georgia capable of educating our students to the best of their ability.

Imagine being a child sitting in front of a computer screen to take the Milestones and not being able to read it on your own, or understand what has been read to you if you have special academic needs. How would you feel? Children are not "standardized." We as educators are made to differentiate and provide the "least restrictive environment" for our students. Then we sit them down to the exact same test and expectations as though only one type of student exists. This is asinine.

People can’t decide how many students should or should not be considered in need of the GAA. If a student requires that form of testing, they do. It does not matter how many students need that form of testing.

The 1% waiver is important to systems like ours.

Yes

Yes

US ED should consider whether or not the 1% cap is a reasonable expectation. Medical breakthroughs now allow for infants to be viable at 24 weeks as well as increases in the survival rates of traumatic injuries to children. Students with intellectual disabilities have the right to be afforded an appropriate education and subsequent assessment of that education based on their specific and individual needs, not a contrived statistical cap.

The demographics of our county have changed significantly due to a variety of factors (drugs, poverty, child abuse/neglect) over the past several years and this has greatly effected the number of students we serve who would qualify and benefit from an alternate curriculum. Based on the current limitations of the cap; I am afraid many of our most vulnerable students with special needs are going to be underserved and ill prepared for the postgraduate world.

The population of students with lower cognitive levels continues to increase rapidly. The improvements with Child Find within school districts and the medical advancement of premature

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infants survival have also impacted school districts. A large number of these students require alternative/functional instruction and testing. Therefore, the 1.0 percent waiver should continue to be applied due to this consistently growth.

As a former special education teacher, I support waiving the cap for GAA participation. It is unfair to students, and educators, to require students that are not on a high enough cognitive level to take the Georgia Milestones. Requiring every student, above the 1%, to take the GA Milestones does damage to a student's self-esteem and self-worth, along with skewing the data for schools and districts.

If the purpose of the exam is to help guide instruction, the alternate assessment can give us stronger feedback concerning our special education population than the milestones exam.

I do not believe it is fair or beneficial to our students to place a limit on how many students can participate in GAA. As an educator, we have students that are forced to take the GMAS simply because we are at GAA capacity. It is not fair to ask students who are significantly below grade level, to all of a sudden take an assessment on their age related grade level simply because we have reached a limit on who can participate in GAA.

We have an unprecedented amount of students who qualify for an alternate curriculum. Many have moved to us from other districts with an alternative curriculum indicated on their IEP. We use the decision making process provided in GOIEP and students qualify.

Georgia is still being affected by a huge learning gap due to COVID-19. Children are still having learning loss complications.

It is important that students receive and participate in the appropriate assessments. Districts have more than 1% of its population of students needing the alternate assessment.

Students who are significantly intellectually impaired should be allowed to have an alternate assessment. There really should not be a cap on the number of students who can participate. The criteria should be based on need, not number.

At our school we have a lot of students that would benefit from this waiver. From my personal experience, students are continuing to struggle with adapting to the academic environment, both socially and behaviorally. This directly impacts their academic performance. Students are still dealing with learning gaps and teachers are trying their best to fill in the gaps while staying on grade level.

Students benefit from this waiver because they will have access to appropriate accommodations. They will receive the support they need.

Each year it is hard to determine who will need to be assessed using the GAA 2.0 because it is based on the students who have those disabilities. Students should receive the assessment that is needed for them to determine if they are progressing based on their individualized education plan.

Georgia continues to reduce the number of students taking the GAA 2.0 and is making progress toward 1% compliance. It is in the public interest to allow Georgia to continue on their current path for improvement--it is working.

It would great to have another year to implement policies that would allow the alternate assessments to be given to the students who it is intended for.

School districts have procedures to ensure that students are appropriately placed. Helps the children.

The time we need in this waiver will help us determine the best needs for the students. Having a plan in place, will help us have a plan for their success. What are our next steps for the students on the line? How will we make sure they are successful? These questions need answers - and these answers are not quick to respond to. Having the one year waiver will allow us to analyze, plan, and prepare for our students.
It only makes sense to grant a waiver if educators can anticipate the need for one, based on their school’s demographics and disabled-student population.

Getting a waiver will help us better plan for those students that are on the line between GAA and Milestones.

The process for students to qualify under an alternate assessment is long and thorough. If more than 1 percent of our population needs alternative assessment, we are either a great state in educating students with special needs or better at early intervention. Neither of these is a reason to penalize the Department of Education.

Having been in the school setting, I know that there are times that we can not meet the 1% cap due to the severity of the students that we serve. We also can not control the number of students that might transfer into our school system from another system with the eligibility to take the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0.

The need for GAA is individually based on the child. Some districts will have population differences due to location. It is not fair to say all, no matter their population, should have the same 1%.

I feel that there should not be a cap for participation. We teach Special Education. We need constant flexibility to meet all the needs of our students.

The 1% is given sparingly and only when exacting criteria are met. Educators must be able to meet the needs of students and not be hamstrung by pre-determined percentages.

It is very unrealistic to limit all school systems to a 1% of the school population being able to take the GAA 2.0. Working in a smaller school district, this forces some students to not be able to take the assessment they need due to the number limitations. Areas of extreme poverty, heavy drug usage, and large crime rates will have more students with severe needs than a area that is well off and limiting the number of students allowed to take the test is unrealistic. The world is not perfect and it is unreasonable to assume that it would be and only 1% of a school population would need access to this recourse. School districts should be trusted to ensure that students are taking the appropriate test and a limit on the number of students we allow a school district to have should not be in place.

Our local district rate has consistently exceeded the 1% cap.

There are many students with low IQs and other special needs who greatly benefit from this waiver. Our district asks that we continue this.

Students in a Self-Contained classroom i.e. MIID, MOID, SID-PID, Autism etc. are not able to contend with a general education student and needs more resources and alternate access to the curriculum and which impedes them taking the Georgia Milestones.

We are a small district and often go over 1%.

Students with disabilities should be placed based on their needs and not on a federal limit.

Schools must be responsive to kids’ needs, not an arbitrary number set forth by the federal government.

Our school system is in a heavily populated area and we are one of the better school system’s in this area. Parents move to this area for their child with special needs to attend our school system. The USAF Base also stations parents with children with special needs here because of our school system.

Please keep in mind that our students are more than a number to calculate a percentage. All students in need of alternative assessments should be given the opportunity to take the GAA 2.0.

Not every student can fit within an arbitrary percentage point. As an educator, I work every day with students that take the alternate assessment and can verify first hand that each of those students qualify. You can’t sit back in an office and just give a parameter without seeing first hand the needs of students on a daily basis.
Our students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Eligibility have increased greatly. Students with Autism have significant delays in communication and adaptive skills. Overall IQ measures may not reflect moderate to severe intellectual deficits as nonverbal skills typically are higher for our students with Autism. However, the demands of the general curriculum requires language skills at a level that our students with Autism are not able to access without significant modifications. From Oct of 2020 school year to Oct of 2023 our Autism population has grown from 388 to 502 students. 127 of our ASD (25%) students are participating in GAA

| Students with special needs should not have to take the same assessments as regular Ed students. |
| The 1% cap is based off of antiquated data. It does not reflect our current population or what is best for the children. |
| We should not have to pick and choose which students get to take the Alternative Assessment because of a cap if they qualify to take it. |
| Yes, because we have SO many many more than 1% of students with an IQ BELOW 69. |
| If students need assistance at this level they should be provided assistance based on their need, not a quota. |