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TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
Administrator of an Approved Private School for the Disabled

FROM: Jeffrey B. Hauger, Ed.D, Director *Joh*
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SUBJECT: Common Core State Standards and Alternate Assessments for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

The purpose of this memo is to provide information on the implementation of New Jersey's alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for the next two school years. This information will inform instruction and the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for the 2013-2014 school year.

Cumulative Progress Indicator (CPI) Links

The APA, New Jersey's current alternate assessment, assesses students on their performance and progress in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) through the use of skill statements called CPI Links. The CPI Links represent modified levels of complexity and difficulty of the knowledge and skills within the standards. These CPI Links, of which there are approximately 1100, were written as a tool for teachers to align instruction and assessment for students with the most significant cognitive impairments to grade-level content with the appropriate modifications and supports. The CPI links can be used as a tool in identifying IEP goals and objectives, as well as methods of assessment, for students who participate in the APA.

While it is expected that students are learning the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics this year, with the exception of grades 6-8 mathematics, which will be implemented beginning September 2013, the current APA does not directly assess the new standards through the test specifications and CPI links. However, since the CPI links identify the essential skills within the standards, there is significant overlap with the content and concepts included in the CCSS.

For the 2013-2014 school year, the department planned to engage New Jersey teachers in an initiative to revise the CPI links to ensure alignment of instruction of all students to the new CCSS. **The new alternate assessment, the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment, which will be aligned to the CCSS, is scheduled to be implemented during the 2014-2015 school year; therefore, the department has decided not**

to revise the current APA test specifications and will continue to use the current CPI Links for the 2013-2014 APA administration. It was determined that it would not be in the best interest of our students to require a shift in the content of the APA for 2013-2014 and then transition to a new assessment in 2014-2015. Developing new CPI Links for use during 2013-2014 and moving to a new assessment only one year later would also create an unnecessary burden for district personnel since it would require two consecutive years of significant changes to instruction and assessment. As a result, the decision was made to fully transition to assessing the CCSS when the DLM assessment is implemented.

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Consortium

The DLM consortium is an initiative, headed by the University of Kansas and funded by the Office of Special Education, United States Department of Education, to develop a new alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The DLM consortium is working with 14 states, education assessment technical experts, special education staff with expertise in educating students with intellectual disabilities, research staff, and educators to build an alternate assessment that will measure achievement of the CCSS. New Jersey is one of the 14 states in the consortium that will be implementing the DLM assessment. Staff members from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and New Jersey school districts and programs educating students with intellectual disabilities have participated in assessment development activities.

Although the DLM assessment will not be implemented until 2014-2015, it is critical that teachers, service providers and child study teams involved in educating students who participate in the APA become familiar with the new assessment during 2013-2014. Information about the DLM alternate assessment is available for review on the web at <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>. Current topics include test features, project updates, resources for educators, and Frequently Asked Questions. Districts interested in having teachers participate in reviewing content skill statements in Mathematics and English Language Arts Literacy for the DLM, pilot testing assessment items, and providing feedback to the DLM on other requested topics may indicate their desire for more information by emailing Elizabeth Celentano at elizabeth.celentano@doe.state.nj.us.

In August 2013, you will receive more information about administrator training registration, obtaining teacher training materials, and submitting a Pre-ID file for your 2013-2014 APA students. You may also obtain information by viewing the website for Questar Assessment, the current APA vendor, at <https://nj-servicepoint.questarai.com/>.

Many thanks for serving the students of New Jersey, and we hope that the remaining school year is productive and exceptional.

JBH/PM/EC/memo:ccss-apa

Attachments

c: Members, State Board of Education
Commissioner Christopher D. Cerf
Senior Staff
Amy Ruck
Elizabeth Celentano
Executive County Superintendents
County Test Coordinators
District Test Coordinators
Executive Directors for Regional Achievement Centers
Executive County School Business Administrators
NJ LEE Group
Garden State Coalition of Schools