

Louisiana believes that all students, including students with significant disabilities, should be held to the highest possible grade-level expectations. To this end, Louisiana has developed the Louisiana Connectors in English language arts, mathematics, and science to provide developmentally- appropriate content for all grades and courses. While maintaining alignment with typical grade-level expectations, the Louisiana Connectors reinforce the “big ideas” found in Louisiana Student Standards. To measure progress towards the LEAP Connectors, Louisiana developed the LEAP Connect alternate assessment so that all students, including students with the most significant disabilities, are able to participate in an assessment of their knowledge.

State policy outlines specific [criteria](#) that a student must meet in order to participate in the LEAP Connect alternate assessment. IEP teams are responsible for determining if a student should participate in the alternate assessment, based on the state’s criteria. The first criterion states that:

The student must be functioning significantly below the mean on an assessment of cognitive and/or adaptive functioning. By grade level this is defined as:

- A. For students who have not completed the fifth grade, an eligible student is functioning three or more standard deviations below the mean in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior.
- B. For students who have completed fifth grade, an eligible student is functioning 2.3 or more standard deviations below the mean in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior.
- C. Students who have completed the fifth grade functioning between 2.0 and 2.29 or more standard deviations below the mean in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior may be eligible if the IEP team provides additional empirical evidence that the alternate assessment is appropriate.

Assessments of cognitive and/or adaptive functioning are administered as part of a psychological evaluation. IEP teams should use these results to determine if the student meets the criterion. However, IEP teams do not always have the full evaluation available or do not always know how to interpret the results. To help IEP teams in the decision-making process, LDOE is adding enhancements to the special education reporting (SER) system that will capture and display cognitive and adaptive assessment results clearly and transparently.

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO WILL TAKE THE ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

All students with disabilities who will take the LEAP Connect alternate assessment in Spring 2019 must have information on cognitive and adaptive assessments added to the evaluation link in SER. **This information must be entered in SER no later than January 4, 2019 -- 30 days prior to the alternate assessment administration window.**

- What elements of the cognitive and adaptive assessment results will the school system have to add in SER?

SER will have a new section under the evaluation link that asks for the following data points:

Cognitive Assessment Administered?	Name of Assessment	Standard Deviation	Date Administered
Adaptive Assessment Administered?	Name of Assessment	Standard Deviation	Date Administered

- What should the school system do if the results from the cognitive and/or adaptive assessment are from a prior evaluation? For example, if a student had an evaluation in 2014, and a waiver was completed in 2017, where should the school system add the results?

The school systems should add the results of the most recent evaluation. In the example above, this will be the 2014 evaluation. SER will then automatically enter these assessment results into the 2017 waiver and into the IEP LEAP Connect form.

If the school systems has administered multiple cognitive assessments or multiple adaptive assessments, the school system should enter the most recent results.

- A complete evaluation typically includes a cognitive assessment, adaptive assessment, and academic achievement assessment. Why is LDOE only asking for results from the cognitive and adaptive assessment?

The LEAP Connect alternate assessment is intended for students with a significant cognitive disability. Louisiana’s first criterion requires students to be a certain threshold below the mean on a cognitive and/or adaptive assessment. Academic achievement assessment (ex: Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement) results are not relevant for determining alternate assessment eligibility.

- How will this information help IEP teams determine if the student meets the state’s criteria?

SER will take the information from the evaluation section and add it automatically into the LEAP Connect eligibility form. IEP teams will now have clear, transparent information to make an accurate determination.

- When the school system adds cognitive and adaptive assessment results to prior evaluations, will it trigger an IEP amendment, requiring a parent’s signature?

No. Since SER is asking for information that already exists in evaluations, it will not trigger an IEP amendment.

FOR ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Beginning in August 2018, school systems must add cognitive and adaptive assessment results for all students with disabilities when the school system creates an initial evaluation or a reevaluation.

- What should the school system do if the student is not administered a cognitive or adaptive assessment?

In the evaluation section of SER, the school system will simply answer “No” to the question: “Was a cognitive assessment conducted?” and “Was an adaptive assessment conducted?” Students who have a “No” answer to both are not eligible to take the alternate assessment.

- When will school systems have to add cognitive and adaptive evaluation results for all students with disabilities who are not currently eligible for the alternate assessment?

If the student will take the regular statewide assessment (example: LEAP 2025 or EOC), the school system should add this information during the next evaluation, whether it be an initial evaluation or a reevaluation. Since evaluations typically occur on a three-year cycle, the Department expects it will take multiple years to capture this information in SER. School systems must meet the January 4, 2019 deadline for students who will take the LEAP Connect alternate assessment, but not for students who take the LEAP 2025 regular assessment.