



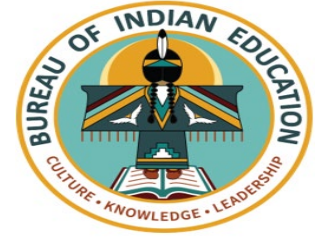
BIE Alternate Assessment

Thinking Through the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Process

*IEP Team Decision Making for Student with
Significant Cognitive Disabilities*



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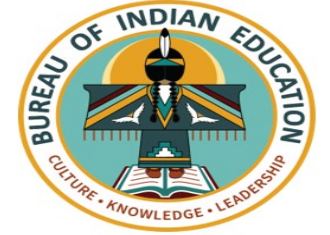
Don's extensive quarter-century career in education has been in providing education and services for students with disability as a teacher, case manager and education administrator.

Don is a tribal member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma. His Bachelor degree is from Regis University - Denver. His graduate work was accomplished through Ft. Hays State University. He has a Master degree in Special Education and in K-12 Building Administration.

Don has been married to Rhonda for 44 years. Their home is in Garden City, Kansas. They are the parents of 3 grown sons and the grandparents to 6 grandchildren, 4 girls and 2 boys.

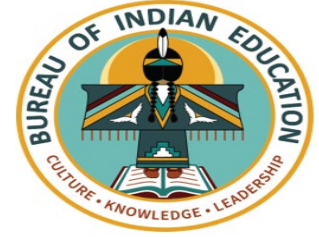
Learning Objectives

What is it?



- **BIE's Unified Academic Assessments –**
- **Assessment Participation Decision -**
- **Alternate Assessment -**
- **Define Significant Cognitive Disability -**
- **Alternate Assessment participant –**
- **Alternate Assessment participation criteria –**
- **Not Allowable Considerations –**
- **NASIS IEP Assessment Participation annotation –**
- **Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) –**
- **Student Response Check (SRC) & Early Stopping Rule (ESR)**

BIE's Unified Academic Assessments



English/Language Arts and Mathematics: Grades 3 through 8 and 11

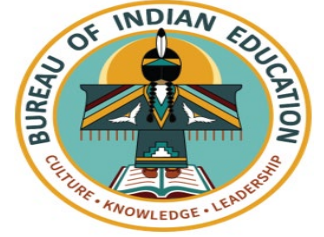
BIE General Assessment (Pearson) – BIE Alternate Assessment (MSAA/Cognia)

Science: Grades 3, 5 and 11

BIE General Assessment (Cognia) - BIE Alternate Assessment (MSAA/Cognia)

Grade	No assessment administered	ELA/Math	Science
K, 1, 2	X		
3-4		X	
5		X	X
6-7		X	
8		X	X
9-10	X		
11		X	X
12	X		

Assessment Participation Decisions



- School wide assessments decisions are made annually by the IEP team and annotated in the student IEP.
- Parents and guardians are members of the IEP team and need to remain engaged in the assessment decision process
 - Thus, parents and guardians need to receive accurate information about academic assessments.
- Resources should be made available to all IEP team members including well before assessment participation decisions are made.

Alternate Assessment



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required alternate assessments and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) confirmed the alternate assessment is for **students with most significant cognitive disabilities** who are unable to participate in the general assessment even with accommodations.

- Up to 1.0% of total tested BIE student population in a subject area may participate in the alternate assessment.
- Alternate Assessment is aligned to grade-level content in each subject area (English/Language Arts, Mathematics and Science).

Definition



- Significant Cognitive Disability:
 - Indicates a disability, or multiple disabilities, that require intensive or extensive levels of direct support that is not of a temporary or transient nature.
 - Requires specially designed instruction to acquire, maintain, or generalize skills in multiple settings - including the home, school, workplace, and community.
 - Has a significant impact on intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.
- Having a significant cognitive disability is not determined by an IQ test score, but rather a holistic understanding of a student.

Who should participate in Alternate Assessment?

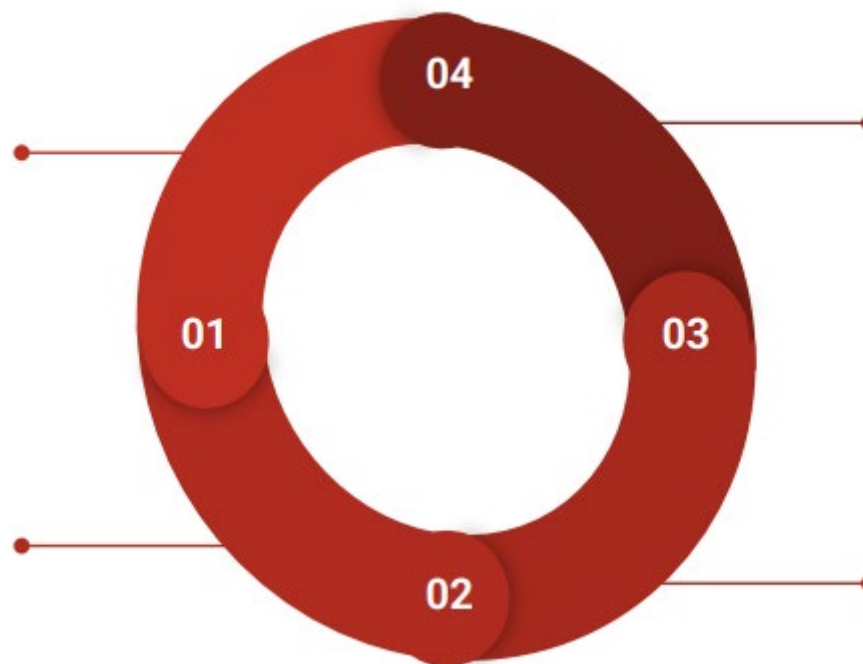


- Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should participate in the Alternate Assessment.
- IEP team decides whether the student should participate in the general assessment or the alternate assessment.
- Decisions should not be based on the category of a student's disability, the setting in which a student receives instruction, or the percentage of time a student spends in a general education classroom.
- BIE participation guidelines should be followed. (To meet criteria for alternate assessments, the student must meet all participation criteria).

Criteria for Participation Eligibility

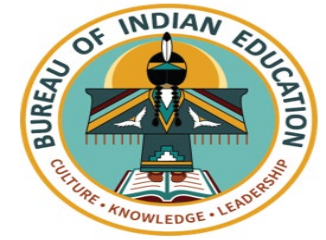
1. Student has a significant disability.

2. Student has an active IEP and receives services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



4. Student requires direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer new skills.

3. Student is learning content linked to (derived from) state (BIE) content standards.



Not Allowable Considerations

The following are NOT appropriate decision points for determining participation in an alternate assessment:

- a disability category label
- poor attendance or extended absences
- native language, social, cultural, or economic differences
- expected poor performance on the general education assessment
- academic and other services student receives
- educational environment or instructional setting
- percent of time receiving special education
- English Learner (EL) status
- Low reading level or achievement level
- Anticipated disruptive behavior by the student
- impact of student's scores on accountability system
- administrator decision
- anticipated emotional duress
- need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology) to participate in assessment

BIE Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines and Eligibility Determination



Alternate Assessment

Participation Guidelines and Eligibility Determination

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) offers an alternate assessment, to qualified students, based on alternate achievement standards in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education's federal regulations and guidance. A student must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to be considered for participation in an alternate assessment. Students demonstrating mild to moderate cognitive disabilities may be more appropriately placed in the general assessment system with accommodations. Anticipated or past low achievement on the general assessment does not mean the student should be participating in MSAA. Determinations for student participation in statewide assessments must be evidence-centered and made individually for each student by the IEP team. Alternate assessments are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. When looking at a standard bell curve, eligible students would be in the lowest 1%. An IEP team may determine that an alternate assessment is appropriate for the student and document why the assessment is selected.

All students must participate in state assessments. IEP teams should consider the testing cycles that will occur during the student's IEP year and include suitable instructional time for assessed areas before test administration windows. For example, an IEP team that determines alternate assessment eligibility before the close of the Student Selector Application in the fall, must first carefully consider the instructional time given to the student, prior to the date of the test administration. An IEP team making the alternate assessment determination in the spring shall document the student's preparation for the assessment during the following school year.

BIE's Alternate Assessments:

Each IEP Team will discuss and determine a student's need for participation and eligibility using the Alternate Assessment Participation Decision Documents. A student will be eligible for the alternate assessment in all areas (ELA, Mathematics and Science) in the grades in which assessment is to be administered (see Table below, X indicates assessment to be administered at each grade level).

Alternate Assessment English/Language Arts and Mathematics: Grades 3 through 8 and 11 - Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)

Alternate Assessment Science: Grades 5, 8, and 11 - Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)

Grade	No assessment administered	ELA/Math	Science
K, 1, 2	X		
3-4		X	
5		X	X
6, 7		X	
8		X	X
9-10	X		
11		X	X
12	X		

Student Name _____ Birthday _____ Grade _____
NASIS# _____ School _____ ADD Region _____
Special Education Case Manager _____

Note: The IEP team must complete the parent notification of alternate assessment participation on page 5.

☐ Alternate assessments are not administered at the student's grade level for this school year.

Alternate Assessment Participation Decision Documentation

To meet criteria for alternate assessments, the student must meet all participation criteria descriptors.

The student may participate in alternate assessments if all responses to Participation Criteria below are marked yes.

Participation Criterion 1

The student has a significant cognitive disability.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Participation Criterion 1 Descriptor

Review of student records indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. (Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.)

Sources of Evidence for Criterion 1 (check if used)

- ☐ Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Test
- ☐ Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment
- ☐ Results of individual and group administered achievement tests
- ☐ Results of informal assessment
- ☐ Results of individual reading assessments
- ☐ Results of district-wide alternate assessments
- ☐ Results of language assessments including English Learner (EL) language assessments if applicable.

Describe the sources of evidence that were used for criterion 1 and how that evidence supports eligibility.

Source _____

Description _____

Participation Criterion 2

The student is learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Participation Criterion 2 Descriptor

The student's goals and instruction that are listed in the IEP are linked to the enrolled grade-level state standards and address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student. IEP goals are written to allow for suitable instructional time prior to test administration.

Sources of Evidence for Criterion 2 (check if used)

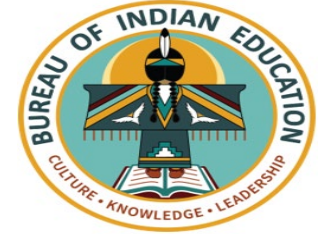
- ☐ Examples of curriculum, instructional objectives and materials including work samples
- ☐ Present levels of academic and functional performance, goals, and objectives from the IEP
- ☐ Data from scientific research-based interventions
- ☐ Progress monitoring data

Describe the sources of evidence that were used for criterion 2 and how that evidence supports eligibility.

Source _____

Description _____

NASIS IEP Assessment Section

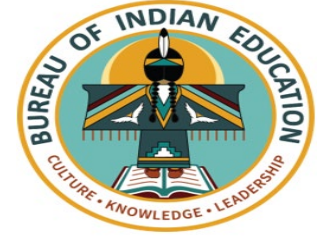


SCHOOL WIDE ASSESSMENT (§300.320(a)(6))

A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child.

- The student:
- ☐ Will participate with no accommodations.
 - ☐ Will participate with the following testing modifications or accommodations. (**Specific to state identified codes**)
 - ☐ Will not participate because the student's grade level will not be assessed during the IEP period.
 - ☒ Will participate in the state alternate assessment. (*Complete Alternate Assessment Form*)
 - ☐ Will not participate because: _____

BIE Unified Alternate Summative Assessment Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)



- Comprehensive assessment system designed to promote increasing higher academic outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities in preparation for a broader array of postsecondary outcomes.
- Measures academic content that is aligned to and derived from content standards and the Core Content Connectors (CCCs).
- Contains many built-in supports that allow students to use materials they are most familiar with and communicate what they know and can do as independently as possible.
- Administered in the core academic areas of English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11. Administered in the core academic area of Science in grades 5, 8 and 11.
- MSAA Spring 2026 Testing Window: March 9 - April 24, 2026



Early Stopping Rule and the Student Response Check

- Task to assess a student's preferred mode(s) of communication.
- Determines whether the student can participate meaningfully in the assessment.
- Student responses are not scored.
- Ensures observable response mode for test participation.



Student Response Check (SRC)

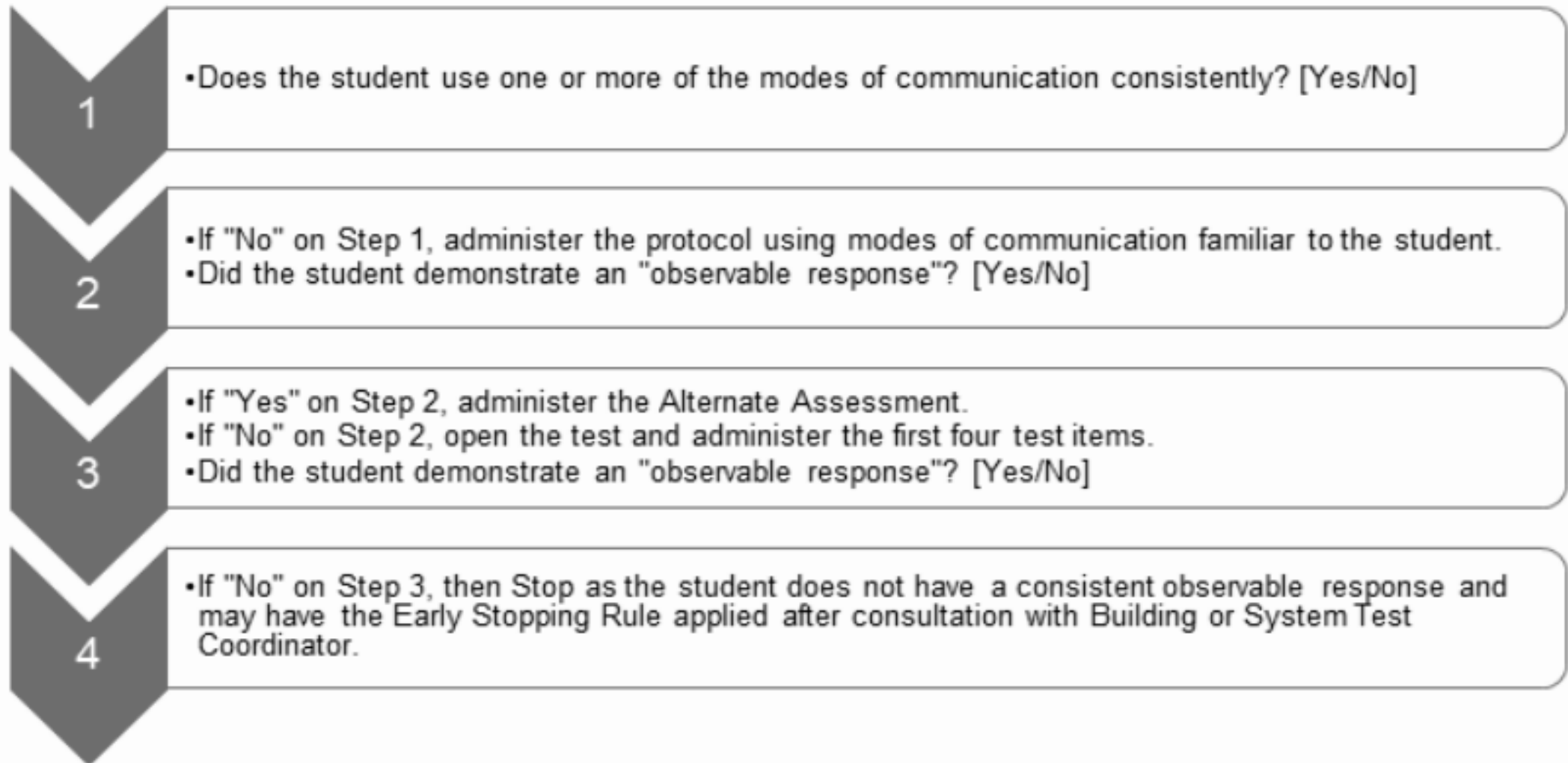
The purpose of the Student Response Check (SRC) is to ensure that the TA clearly understands a response the student has indicated for a test item.

Students who have a consistent mode of communicating are not required to complete the SRC.

If a student's response to a test item is not clearly observable, or is not understood by the TA or scribe, then the TA or scribe cannot enter the student's response in the MSAA System.

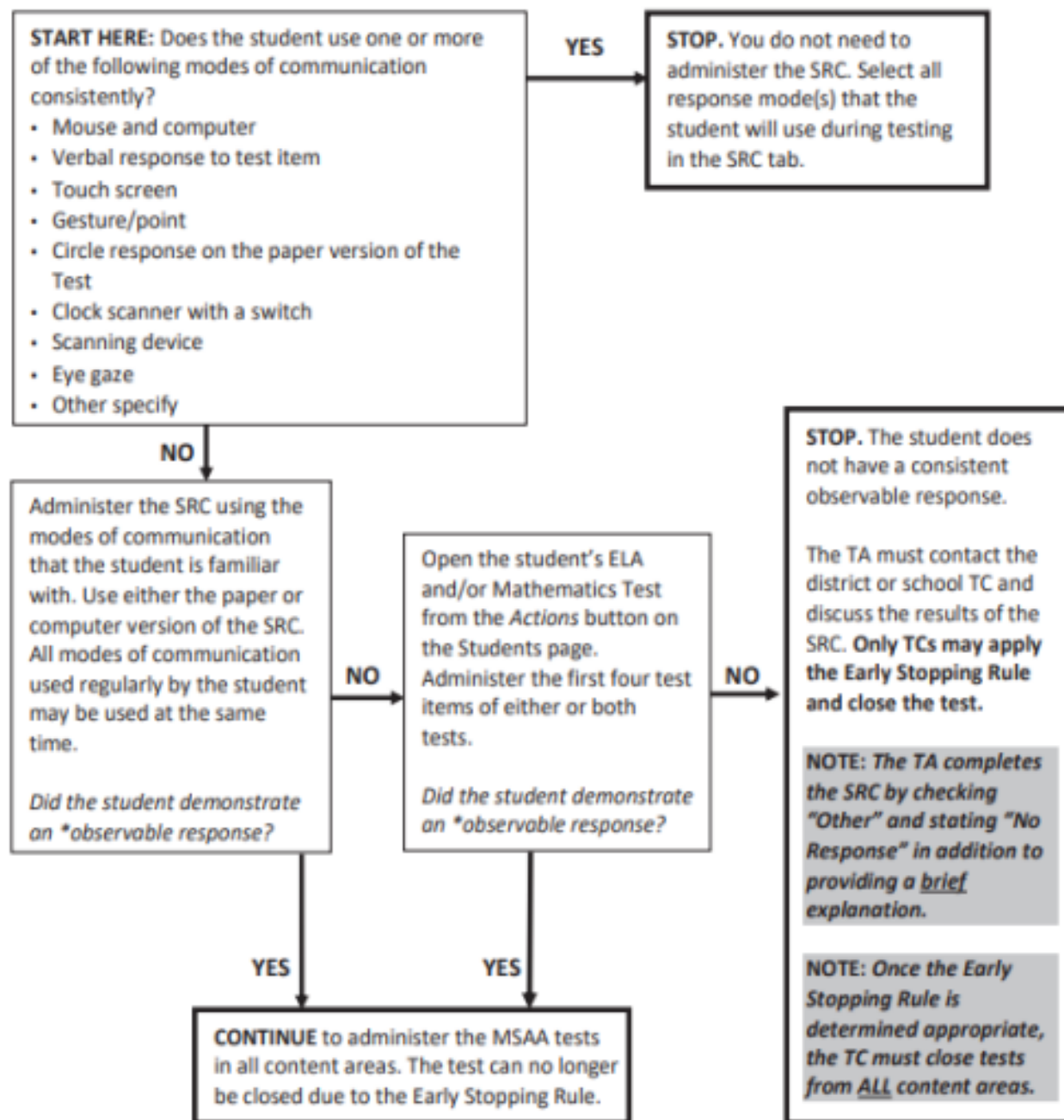
The SRC is a content-neutral task during which a student is asked to demonstrate their preferred mode(s) of communication. A student may use as many, or as few, communication modes as they are comfortable with and use on a daily basis.

Student Response Check (SRC) Protocol



The Student Response Check (SRC) Flowchart:

When to Apply the ESR

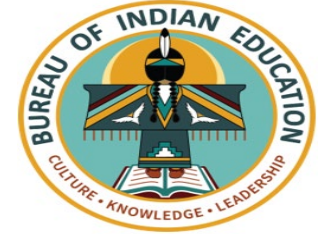




Early Stopping Rule (ESR) Reminders

- The lack of an observable response mode is the only reason the Early Stepping Rule (ESR) can be applied.
- The Early Stopping Rule cannot be applied based on a student's behavior, stamina, knowledge of the content, frustration level, or refusal to participate in the test.

MSAA Important Dates and Activity



- Week of October 6-10, 2025, Posting to BIE Website (Academic Success> Chief Academic Office> Assessments and Accountability>)
 - Presentation Recording (2025-2026 Alternate Assessment Prep)
 - Alternate Assessment Eligibility IEP Team Decision-making document
- December 19, Alternate Assessment Determination annotated in the students' IEPs in School wide Assessment Section for Assessment Participation Enrollment (**A transfer student with an IEP is an allowable addition to the alternate assessment participation enrollment after the initial enrollment submission**).
- January 8, 2026, MSAA In-person Training for Test Coordinators and Test Administrators - Nation Indian Program Training Center, Albuquerque
- TBD (February), MSAA Virtual Training for Test Coordinators and Test Administrators
- February 17, 2026, MSAA Platform Open for Test Coordinators and Test Administrators On-line Module Training and Testing Materials Prep
- March 9, 2026 - April 24, 2026, MSAA Student Testing Window

Question and Comment Session

