

**DYNAMIC<sup>®</sup>**  
LEARNING MAPS

# **ACCESSIBILITY MANUAL**

## **2025–2026**

ELA, MATHEMATICS, AND SCIENCE

Publication Date: 06/30/2025

All screenshots, data dictionaries, and templates shown or referred to in this manual are accurate on the Revision Date noted above.

When this manual is updated, the Revision Date will also be updated. An alert will be posted on the Test Updates webpage. A summary of changes is included in the Appendix under Document History.

Dynamic Learning Maps® Consortium. (2025). *Accessibility manual for the Dynamic Learning Maps® alternate assessment, 2025–2026*. Lawrence, KS.

A special thanks to our state partners who provided helpful feedback and to Pat Almond for her assistance with conceptualizing accessibility for the Dynamic Learning Maps® Alternate Assessment System. We are grateful for everyone’s time and efforts to improve this document.

## FINDING HELP

When the information in this manual and resources from your state Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) webpage do not lead to solutions, these contacts can provide additional support (Table 1).

HINT: Print this page and keep it handy!

**Table 1**

*Additional Supports for Users*

Local Technology Representative	State Education Agency	The DLM Service Desk 1-844-261-6481 (toll-free) or <a href="mailto:DLM-support@ku.edu">DLM-support@ku.edu</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Installing Kite® Student Portal app</li><li>• Installing a supported browser to access Educator Portal</li><li>• General computer support</li><li>• Internet availability</li><li>• Display resolution</li><li>• Issues with sound, headphones, speakers, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training requirements</li><li>• Assessment questions</li><li>• Assessment scheduling</li><li>• Test invalidation requirements</li><li>• Student Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements</li><li>• Test window dates, extensions, requirements, etc.</li><li>• Testlet resets (may take up to 72 hours)</li></ul>	<p>Only users with an <b>active</b> Educator Portal account can make inquiries to the Service Desk about the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data issues (rosters, enrollment, etc.)</li><li>• Unlocking Student Portal</li></ul>

### PLEASE REMEMBER, IF YOU CONTACT THE DLM SERVICE DESK:

- **Do not send any Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** for a student via email or via Live Chat in Educator Portal. This is a federal violation of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). PII includes information such as a student's name or state identification number. Each state has unique PII requirements. Please check with your assessment coordinator to find out what student information can be legally emailed or sent using Live Chat in your state.

- **Do send:**

- Your contact information (email address and name)
- Error messages, including the testlet number (if applicable to the problem)
- Service Desk ticket number when following up on a previously submitted issue

For all concerns for which the Service Desk requires student-specific information, you must call.

---

NOTE: All information in an email is taken into consideration when checking for PII violations. The electronic signature for the sender of an email may identify the district or school in which a student resides. If you need to communicate with the Service Desk via email or Live Chat, ensure the information you are providing meets your state's PII policies.

---

# ACCESSIBILITY MANUAL 2025–2026

## CONTENTS

Finding Help .....	3
Overview .....	8
Audience and Purpose .....	8
Additional Resources .....	8
What’s New in This Version .....	8
About the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System .....	9
Accessibility by Design .....	10
Accessible Content .....	10
Accessible Content for ELA and Mathematics .....	11
Accessible Content for Science .....	13
Testlet Design—The Engagement Activity .....	14
ELA Engagement Activities .....	14
Mathematics Engagement Activities .....	15
Science Engagement Activities .....	15
Testlet Item Design .....	16
Item Types .....	17
Customization for Each Student .....	18
About the First Contact Survey .....	18
Submitting the First Contact Survey .....	19
Six Steps to Customize Dynamic Learning Maps Accessibility Supports for Students .....	21
Step 1: Include Eligible Students in the DLM Alternate Assessment .....	21
Participation in a State Assessment .....	21
Participation Guidelines .....	22
Step 2: Learn About the Accessibility Supports .....	23
Accessibility Supports Provided in the DLM Alternate Assessment .....	23
Support Categories .....	25

Supports Not Available in Student Portal.....	29
Supports That Do Not Work Well Together .....	29
Using Practice Activities and Released Testlets .....	30
Changing PNP Profile Settings During Testing .....	30
System Timeout .....	32
Testlet Resets After an Extended Interruption .....	32
Step 3: Discuss and Select Appropriate Accessibility Supports: Considerations for IEP Teams.....	33
Deciding The Accessibility Supports That Are Needed.....	33
Guiding Questions for the Discussion and Selection of Appropriate Accessibility Supports .....	34
Supports: Allowed and Not Allowed.....	35
Combining Accessibility Supports With Allowable Practices in Test Administration Procedures.....	36
Practices Not Allowed .....	45
Other Assessment Resources for Students With Complex Needs .....	45
Testlet Information Pages (TIPs) and Accessibility .....	45
Step 4: Select and View Supports in the Kite® System .....	47
Demonstration of Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile Supports: What Students Will Experience .....	47
Step 5: Prepare for the Assessment: Using the Chosen Accessibility Supports .....	54
Prepare for the Assessments .....	55
Professional Development Modules for Instructing Students with the Most Complex Needs .....	55
Step 6: Evaluate the Accessibility Supports Used After Assessments .....	57
Questions to Guide Evaluation of the Accessibility Supports Provided to the Student	57
References .....	58
Glossary.....	59
Dynamic Learning Maps Appendices .....	70
Appendix A: Other Supports .....	70
Appendix B: Relevant Federal Legislation .....	73

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.....	73
Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.....	73
Appendix C: DLM Accessibility Worksheets for Test Administrators and IEP Teams .....	74
Appendix D: Downloading or Printing DLM Familiar Texts .....	76
Access Different Versions of a DLM Familiar Text .....	76
State Appendices.....	78
Document History .....	78

---

## OVERVIEW

---

### AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

The ACCESSIBILITY MANUAL for the Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) alternate assessment provides guidance to state leaders, district staff, test administrators, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in the selection and use of the accessibility supports available in the DLM Alternate Assessment System.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional procedural information on braille testlets, language translation, and sign language is provided in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL and the EDUCATOR PORTAL USER GUIDE, which are available on the DLM website at <https://dynamiclearningmaps.org>.

For instructions on using Kite® Educator Portal to select the supports appropriate for each student, access the EDUCATOR PORTAL USER GUIDE.

### WHAT'S NEW IN THIS VERSION

To learn about updates to test administration resources such as this manual, subscribe to [Test Updates and DLM News](#) on the DLM website.

Information about these topics has been added or enhanced in this version (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Changes in This Version of the Manual*

Topic	Starting Page
Minor general edits throughout	N/A



## **ABOUT THE DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

Educators use the Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) Alternate Assessment System to assess what students with the most significant cognitive disabilities know and can do in the DLM subjects in Grades 3–8 and one or more grades in high school. The subjects and grades that are assessed in each state are determined by the state’s department of education policy.

The DLM Alternate Assessment System provides accessibility by design and is guided by the core beliefs that all students should have access to challenging, grade-level content, and that test administrators must adhere to the highest levels of integrity in providing instruction and in administering assessments based on this challenging content.

The DLM Alternate Assessment System includes computer-based assessments and an administrative application to manage student information. The assessments can be administered on a variety of devices. When test administrators understand how the DLM alternate assessment is designed for accessibility and how accessibility supports can be customized for their students, they are better enabled to determine the supports that are most suitable for each student.

---

## ACCESSIBILITY BY DESIGN

---

### ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

Accessible content is essential for student success. Staff from states that use the Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) alternate assessments along with DLM staff worked together to develop assessments at various levels of complexity levels by using an appropriate vocabulary level and by creating item-writing guidelines based on Universal Design for Learning.

Universal Design for Learning is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practices for all students, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and students who have limited English proficiency (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). The framework enables students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills while allowing flexibility in the way they respond. The framework engages the content, maintains high achievement expectations, and reduces barriers in instruction while providing appropriate challenges and supports. This framework is critical to understanding how students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can achieve success within content standards that are enriched and enhanced with the use of technology for assessment administration.

The technology used for the assessments is an online testing interface that is part of the Kite® Suite. The two parts of the Kite Suite used for the DLM alternate assessments are Educator Portal, where educators perform their administrative tasks, and Student Portal, where students are assessed. The administrative work must be completed before students can be administered assessments in Student Portal. The assessments are at grade level but are at a reduced depth, breadth, and level of complexity while maintaining an appropriate balance of academic challenge and access to the content. This balance is determined from information about the student provided by the test administrator in a collection tool in Educator Portal called the First Contact Survey.

An overview and some specific information about the First Contact Survey is in this manual. However, detailed instructions on where to access the First Contact Survey and how to complete it are in the EDUCATOR PORTAL USER GUIDE. A complete list of the First Contact Survey questions is in the appendix of the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL. A helplet video, [Completing the First Contact Survey and PNP Profile](#), describes how to find and complete the First Contact Survey and Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile. The video is on the DLM website for each state.

The First Contact Survey includes information about the student's communication method, any assistive technology devices the student might use, motor and sensory impairments

the student may have, and the student's level of academic performance. Some items from the First Contact Survey are used to link the student with assessments at the most appropriate level of complexity in each subject. The DLM assessments are known as testlets, which are a grouping of a few items (questions) and are built to show the relationships between the knowledge and skills necessary to learn the information in the DLM standards called the Essential Elements.

The DLM Essential Elements are specific statements of knowledge and skills that are linked to each state's general education content standards. From the complete list of Essential Elements in each subject, some were selected to be used for assessments. These are called the testing blueprints for each subject. The blueprints are listed on each state's DLM webpage. Every Essential Element is also broken down into individual skills for instruction and assessment.

### **ACCESSIBLE CONTENT FOR ELA AND MATHEMATICS**


Both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics have a fully developed learning map used for assessments. Each map contains thousands of skills that are called nodes. Each map has small sections with one or more related nodes that represent critical concepts or skills needed to learn the Essential Elements for the subject. These small sections are at different levels of complexity called linkage levels. The DLM alternate assessment provides short assessments called testlets for ELA and mathematics at five linkage levels: Initial Precursor, Distal Precursor, Proximal Precursor, Target, and Successor.

The linkage level description for the Target linkage level is aligned to the DLM Essential Element learning outcome and is also aligned to the learning outcome for the grade-level standard.

Observe the alignment in the following example for Grade 6 ELA in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The Target Linkage Level Description Aligned to Both the DLM Essential Element and Grade-Level Standard*


**DYNAMIC<sup>®</sup>**  
 LEARNING MAPS

## Mini-Map for ELA.EE.RI.6.5

Subject: ELA

Reading Informational Text

Grade: 6

### Learning Outcome

DLM Essential Element	Grade-Level Standard
ELA.EE.RI.6.5 Determine how the title fits the structure of the text.	ELA.RI.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

### Linkage Level Descriptions

Initial Precursor	Distal Precursor	Proximal Precursor	Target	Successor
The student can move appropriately to demonstrate an understanding of action words spoken by adults in a familiar routine.	The student can identify concrete details, such as individuals, events, or ideas, in a familiar informational text.	Given a text with a clear structure, the student can determine whether the text tells about an event, gives directions, or provides information on a topic.	The student can understand how the title of an informational text reflects the structure, content, and purpose of the text.	The student can identify that events or facts may be tied together in a sequence in order to communicate steps or the need for a linear process.

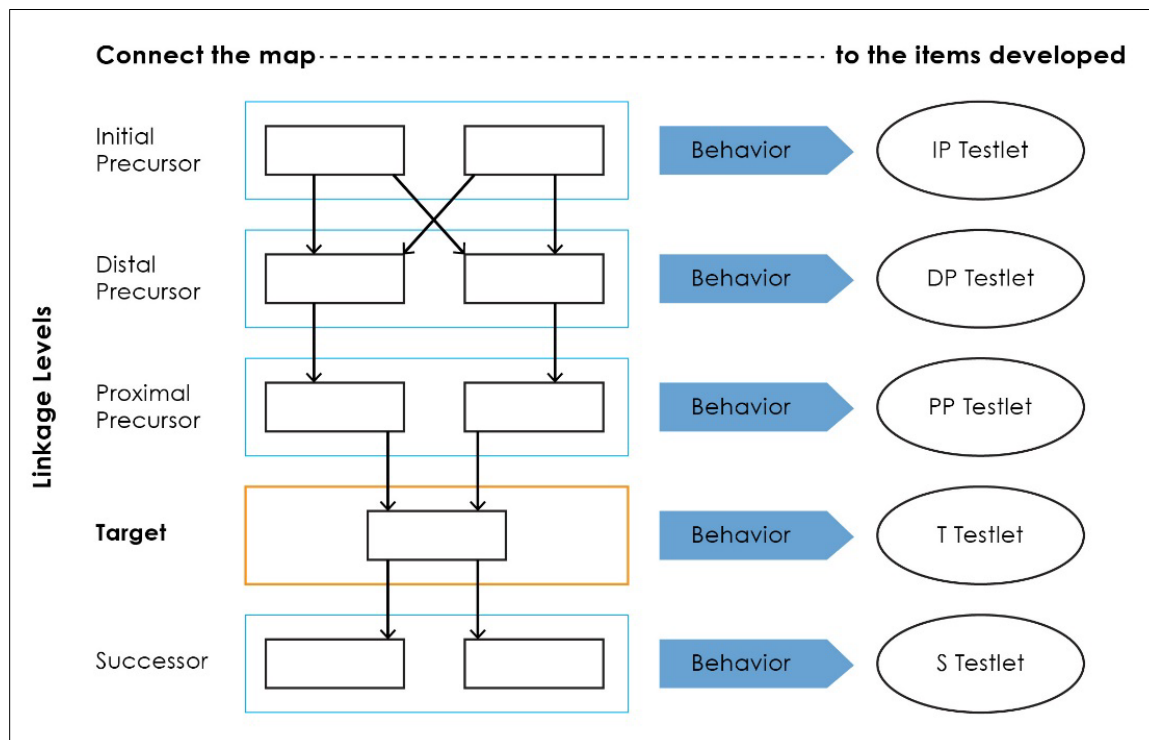
The Initial Precursor is the least complex linkage level. Testlets developed at that linkage level often reflect foundational nodes, which are skills and understandings necessary for learning subsequent academic content (e.g., “focus attention”). Testlets at the Initial Precursor linkage level are typically intended for students who do not yet have symbolic communication.

Two additional linkage levels, the Distal Precursor and the Proximal Precursor, reflect nodes along the multiple pathways in the learning map between the Initial Precursor and the Target linkage levels. Finally, testlets at the Successor linkage level give students the opportunity to take the next step beyond the Target expectations.

These five linkage levels identify significant milestones, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Linkage Levels Determine Testlet Development Content*



NOTE: IP = Initial Precursor; DP = Distal Precursor; PP = Proximal Precursor; T = Target; S = Successor.

### ACCESSIBLE CONTENT FOR SCIENCE

The science Essential Elements are the science learning targets for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Development of the learning map for science is still in progress. Therefore, some differences occur between the number of science linkage levels and the number of ELA and mathematics linkage levels.

The science Essential Elements are linked to each state's general education science standards. Test administrators can find the blueprints for science on their state's DLM webpage.

- Most states use the [General DLM Science Phase I Blueprint \(pdf\)](#).
- Three states use the blueprint with biology: [DLM Science Phase I Blueprint with Biology—DE, DC, and MD Only \(pdf\)](#).

Both science blueprints are described in grade-band performance expectations by the end of each grade band:

- Grade 5 for the 3–5 elementary grade band
- Grade 8 for the 6–8 middle school grade band
- Grade 11 for the 9–11 high school grade band

Each Essential Element in both blueprints has three complexity bands called linkage levels. Linkage levels describe where a student’s performance is in relationship to the grade-level target. From the least complex to the most complex, the linkage levels are the Initial, the Precursor, and the Target.

### *The Initial Linkage Level*

Testlets developed at the Initial linkage level often reflect foundational aspects of the content standards which include skills and understandings necessary for learning subsequent academic content (e.g., “focus attention”). Testlets at this level are typically intended for students who do not yet have symbolic communication. These testlets are administered by the test administrator who observes the student’s behavior, as directed by the instructions within the testlet, and then records their observations in the testlet.

### *The Precursor Linkage Level*

The Precursor linkage level is between the Initial linkage level and the Target linkage level. The Precursor linkage level identifies significant milestones on the way to the knowledge and skills described by the Essential Element, indicating a student’s performance relative to the grade-level standards.

### *The Target Linkage Level*

The Target linkage level is the highest linkage level currently and is written at the level of the Essential Element. The Precursor and Initial linkage levels are lower in depth, breadth, and complexity than the Target linkage level.

---

**NOTE:** [Go to your state’s webpage to determine if your state assesses DLM science.](#)

---

## **TESTLET DESIGN—THE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY**

Testlet structure differs slightly between subjects based on research of effective instructional practices for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Each testlet begins with an engagement activity that is designed to motivate the student, provide a context, and activate the student’s prior knowledge.

### **ELA ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

The engagement activity for a reading testlet is designed around a text that is adapted from grade-level themes but at a reduced depth, breadth, and level of complexity compared to

general education grade-level texts. The DLM texts are written to support assessment of the specific knowledge and skills described in the nodes at an appropriate level of challenge.

During a reading testlet, students participate in two readings of a text. The first reading is a shared reading activity that familiarizes students with the entire text and serves as an engagement activity. The second reading includes items that are either embedded within the text or sometimes placed at the end of the text. Embedded items are most often used because they reduce cognitive load and reliance on long-term memory.

During writing assessments, the test administrator follows a standardized procedure. The student selects and writes about a topic, which serves as the engagement activity. The test administrator observes the student's writing and then responds to items about their observations. Thorough information about the writing assessment is in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL for each state.

### **MATHEMATICS ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Mathematics testlets begin with an engagement activity that is designed to activate prior knowledge, prepare students for the cognitive process required in the items, and provide a context for the items. The engagement activity does not include any items or require any responses. Mathematics testlets are built around a common scenario to investigate related facets of a student's understanding of the targeted content.

### **SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Science testlets begin with an engagement activity that can be one of four types:

- The first type of engagement activity is simply a single screen with one or two pictures along with a short sentence that introduces the science topic to be assessed. The items in this testlet will not assess the engagement screen itself but will assess the Essential Element topic.
- A second type of engagement activity describes a scenario, which taps prior knowledge or experience, introduces the concept to be addressed, and provides context for the items. The items in this testlet type will assess information in both the engagement activity and in the Essential Element topic.
- A third type of engagement activity may be designed around a science story featuring an experiment or classroom activity that is presented twice, with items embedded within the second presentation of the activity or at the end of the second presentation. The items in this testlet type will assess information in the engagement activity and in the Essential Element topic.
- The fourth type of engagement activity is a short, silent video (up to 30 seconds) and is only found in the upper grade bands and the upper linkage levels. Students will access

the short video and then respond to three items that include still-frame photos from the video.

---

NOTE: The entire video clip is completely silent.

---

## **TESTLET ITEM DESIGN**

For all three subjects, testlets are delivered and student responses are collected in two general formats: computer-delivered or teacher-administered. The format is based on the information the test administrator recorded in the First Contact Survey. Most testlets are designed for direct student interaction via the computer, and many students can interact with the computer independently.

The student can use special devices, such as alternate keyboards, touch screens, or switches. However, in some instances, the student may need support from the test administrator to interact with the computer. For example, a technology-enhanced item may require physical manipulation that is difficult for the student to manage. While most items are in a multiple-choice format, some ELA and mathematics testlets at upper linkage levels use technology-enhanced items on a limited basis. These items require certain types of skills. Screenshots of item types in computer-delivered testlets are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

---

NOTE: All science items are formatted as single-select multiple-choice only.

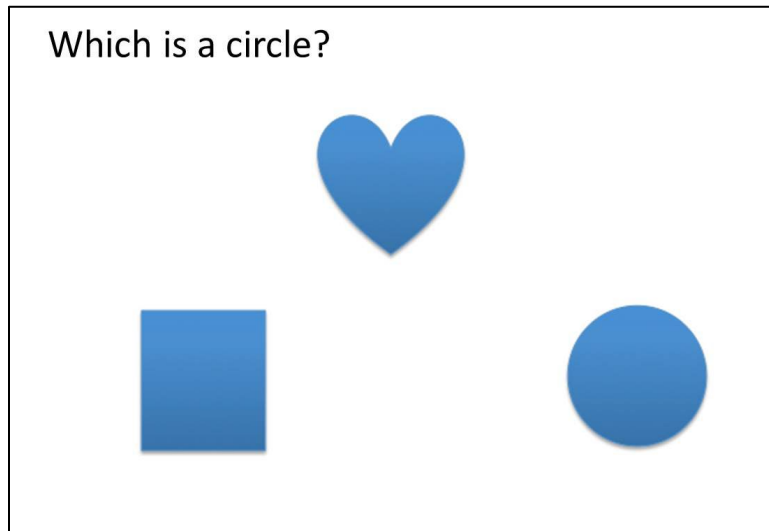
---



## ITEM TYPES

**Figure 3**

*A Single-Select Multiple-Choice Item With Images as Response Options*



**Figure 4**

*A Sentence Where the Student is to Respond to the Item by Selecting the Appropriate Word From the Three Outlined Words Presented in the Passage*

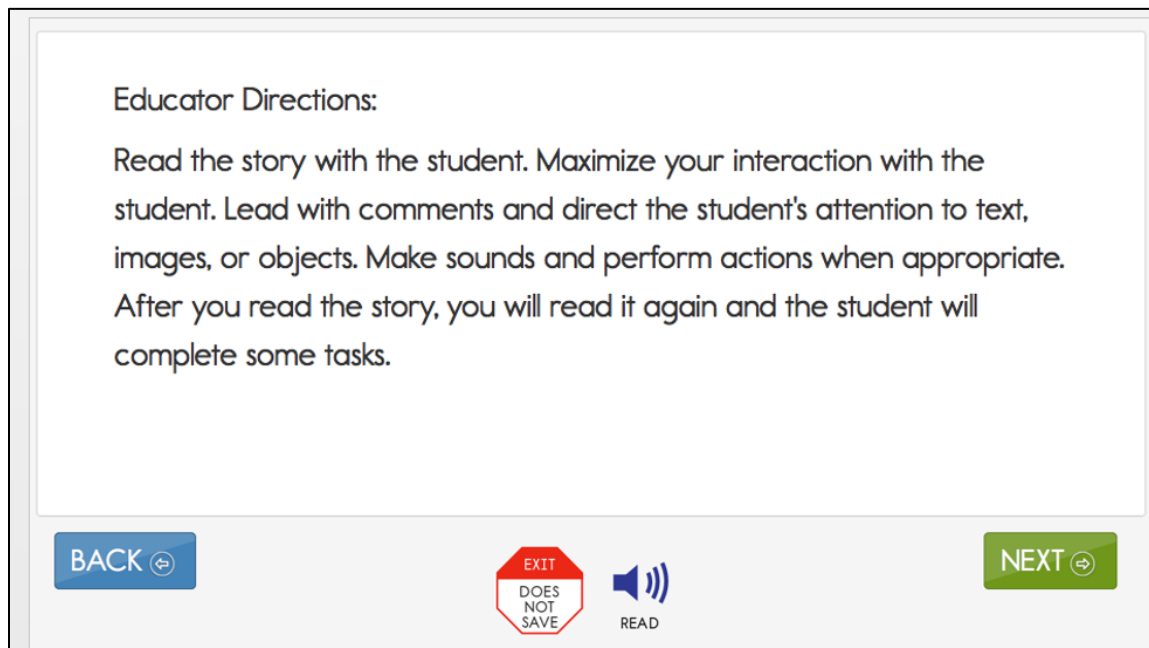


After the student selects a response, the outline around the word, phrase, or sentence becomes bold, and the outline is filled with transparent yellow as shown in Figure 4.

Teacher-administered testlets and writing testlets are designed so test administrators can administer them outside of Student Portal with step-by-step guidance provided in the educator directions within the testlet as shown in Figure 5. For these testlets, the test administrator records either the student's responses or their observations of the student's behavior in the testlet in Student Portal.

**Figure 5**

*Educator Directions in a Teacher-Administered Testlet*



## **CUSTOMIZATION FOR EACH STUDENT**

The First Contact Survey and the Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile are records of data in Educator Portal about the student that is entered by the test administrator. The system uses the data from the First Contact Survey and the PNP Profile to ensure the student is provided with the most appropriate testing experience possible. The data is used to

- recommend or assign the linkage level for the testlets
- customize the accessibility supports for the testlets (e.g., magnification)
- assign the appropriate form for the testlets (e.g., braille)

## **ABOUT THE FIRST CONTACT SURVEY**

The First Contact Survey includes information about the student's communication method, any assistive technology devices the student might use, motor and sensory impairments the student may have, and the student's academic performance. Some items from the First Contact Survey are used to link the student with assessments that are at the most appropriate level of complexity in each subject.

Although the First Contact Survey is used to determine the level of complexity or linkage level of a testlet, the PNP Profile is used to customize the testlets, making them more accessible to the student. Supports in the PNP Profile are listed under five tabs: Summary,

Display Enhancements, Language & Braille, Audio & Environment Support, and Other Supports. Also, the student can use special devices such as alternate keyboards, touch screens, or switches to access the items. After the appropriate supports are selected and saved, the test administrator may review them in the Summary tab as shown in Figure 6. More detail about the PNP Profile settings will be described later in this manual.

**Figure 6**

*The Accessibility Summary Tab With Fictional Student Data*

The screenshot shows a web application window titled "Polly Atwood". It has five tabs: "Summary", "Display Enhancements", "Language & Braille", "Audio & Environment Support", and "Other Supports". The "Summary" tab is selected. On the left, under "Student Demographics", the following information is displayed: FIRST NAME: Polly, MIDDLE NAME: Anne, LAST NAME: Atwood, STATE ID: 123456789, GRADE: Grade 4, GENDER: Female, and DATE OF BIRTH: MM/DD/YYYY. On the right, under "Current Profile Settings", there is a scrollable area with three sections: "Magnification" (Magnification : 2x), "Spoken" (Spoken Source Preference : Synthetic, User Spoken Preference : Text And Graphics), and "Supports Provided Outside System" (Human Read Aloud). An "Edit Settings" button is located at the top right of the settings area.

## SUBMITTING THE FIRST CONTACT SURVEY

Each assessment year, the test administrator must submit the First Contact Survey for each participating student. The assessment model being used by the state determines how the results from the First Contact Survey will function.

For states using the Instructionally Embedded model:

- The fall window is required for ELA and mathematics. The fall window is optional for science.
- During the fall window, the results from the First Contact Survey are used to recommend a linkage level for each Essential Element. Test administrators can accept the linkage level recommendations or choose another one.
- Test results for any ELA and mathematics Essential Element that was assessed during the fall window are used to recommend the linkage level for that same Essential Element in the spring window. However, if an ELA and mathematics Essential Element was not tested in the fall window, the First Contact Survey is used to recommend its linkage level in the spring window. The test administrators can accept the linkage level recommendations or choose another one.

- The First Contact Survey should only be submitted one time each year and covers both windows.
- Testing the science Essential Elements is required in the spring window. The data collected in the First Contact Survey determines the student's beginning placement into the assessment. Both the Essential Element and linkage level are system assigned when the spring window opens, and the test administrator cannot change them.
- If the student was not rostered to science in the fall window, to have a science testlet available on the opening day of the spring window, the student must be rostered to science 24 hours before the opening of the spring window with a submitted First Contact Survey.

For states using the Year-End model:

- During the optional instructionally embedded assessment window in the fall and winter months, the results from the First Contact Survey are used to recommend a linkage level for each Essential Element. The test administrator can accept the linkage level recommendation or choose another one.
- During the required spring assessment window, the data collected in the First Contact Survey determines the student's beginning placement into the assessment. Both the Essential Element and linkage level are system assigned when the spring assessment window opens, and the test administrator cannot change them.
- The system needs 24 hours to assign the linkage level of the first Essential Element being tested. To have testlets available on the opening day of the spring assessment window, the student must be on a roster with a submitted First Contact Survey 24 hours before the window opens.

Although the First Contact Survey is used to determine the complexity level or linkage level, the PNP Profile is used to customize the testlets, making them more accessible to the student. Information about accessibility supports is provided, beginning with Step 2: Learn About the Accessibility Supports.

---

## **SIX STEPS TO CUSTOMIZE DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS**

---

This section presents a six-step process for IEP teams, general and special education educators, test administrators, and district-level assessment staff to use in the selection, administration, and evaluation of accessibility supports available for students to use in Student Portal.

- Step 1: Include Eligible Students in the DLM Alternate Assessment
- Step 2: Learn About the Accessibility Supports
- Step 3: Discuss and Select Appropriate Accessibility Supports: Considerations for IEP Teams
- Step 4: Select and View Supports in the Kite® System
- Step 5: Prepare for the Assessment: Using the Chosen Accessibility Supports
- Step 6: Evaluate the Accessibility Supports Used After Assessments

Steps 1–3 are intended to assist IEP teams in determining the appropriate accessibility supports for eligible students, and Steps 4–6 are a guide for educators and test administrators for choosing, using, and evaluating the selected supports. These six steps are explained in detail in the following sections.

### **STEP 1: INCLUDE ELIGIBLE STUDENTS IN THE DLM ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT**

#### **PARTICIPATION IN A STATE ASSESSMENT**

Legislation focused on accountability and inclusion of all students for assessment has driven the need to ensure equal access to grade-level content standards. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are included in state and district accountability systems in order to receive the benefits gained from participation, such as improved instruction, higher expectations, and involvement in educational reforms (Thurlow et al., 1997).

Several important laws require students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to participate in standards-based instruction and assessment initiatives. These include federal laws such as

- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)
- Every Student Succeeds Act, which went into effect in 2015

## PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities often have one or more disabilities that significantly affect intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is behavior that is essential to live independently and function safely in daily life. The Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) alternate assessment is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who require significant instruction and support both in and out of the classroom.

The DLM alternate assessment provides three general participation criteria and **all three must be met**:

- 1) The student has a significant cognitive disability. Review of student records indicates one or more disabilities that significantly affect intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.
- 2) The student is primarily instructed using the Essential Elements as content standards. Goals and instruction listed in the student's IEP are linked to the enrolled grade-level DLM Essential Elements and address the knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for the student.
- 3) The student requires extensive, direct, repeated, and individualized instruction and substantial support that is not temporary or transient to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum. The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across multiple settings.

The following considerations are neither allowable nor acceptable for determining participation in the DLM alternate assessment:

- A disability or impairment category or 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 the student receives
- Educational environment or instructional setting
- Percent of time receiving special education
- English language learner status
- Low reading level or achievement level
- Student's anticipated disruptive behavior
- Impact of student results on accountability system
- Administrator decision
- Anticipated emotional distress

- Need for supports (e.g., assistive technology or Augmentative and Alternative Communication [AAC]) to participate in the assessment process

Individual states may set additional eligibility criteria to establish which students are eligible to take the DLM alternate assessment. IEP teams should refer to their state's department of education guidance.

## **STEP 2: LEARN ABOUT THE ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS**

### **ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS PROVIDED IN THE DLM ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT**

This section identifies the accessibility supports available to students taking the DLM alternate assessment. Some states provide a state-specific appendix to this manual and require documentation about certain accessibility supports in the student's IEP. Refer to the appendix (if provided) for more information or contact your assessment coordinator.

Decisions about the supports to include in the Kite system for use with the DLM alternate assessments were made using results from more than 50,000 First Contact Survey responses, feedback from national sensory impairment experts who also have expertise with this population of students, and lessons learned from test administration observation studies.

In Table 3, accessibility supports are categorized into three sections according to the amount of programming required in Student Portal. All supports must be selected in the Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile.

**Table 3***Accessibility Supports of the DLM Alternate Assessment System*

<b>Category 1: Settings in the PNP Profile that activate supports within Student Portal</b>	<b>Category 2: Settings in the PNP Profile that activate supports within Student Portal in addition to supports (tools) provided by the test administrator outside of Student Portal</b>	<b>Category 3: Settings in the PNP Profile that require supports provided by the test administrator outside of Student Portal</b>
Contrast color Invert color choice Magnification Overlay color Spoken audio	Alternate form-visual impairment Calculator Individualized manipulatives Single-switch system (PNP Profile enabled) Two-switch system English Braille American Edition (EBAE) for ELA with Nemeth Code for mathematics and science Uncontracted Unified English Braille (UEB) for ELA, mathematics, and science Uncontracted Unified English Braille (UEB) for ELA with Nemeth Code for mathematics and science	Human read aloud Language translation of text Partner-assisted scanning Sign interpretation of text Test administrator entering of student responses



## SUPPORT CATEGORIES

### *Category 1: Settings in the PNP Profile That Activate Supports Within Student Portal*

Online supports include contrast color, invert color choice, magnification, overlay color, and spoken audio. Directions detailing how to select the PNP Profile supports are found in Step 4: Select and View Supports in the Kite System, beginning on page 47.

Test administrators are advised to try out the supports in advance of an assessment window by using the practice demo testlets and released testlets. This helps ensure that the supports that were chosen are compatible with the student and provide the best access for them. Usernames and passwords for these testlets are available in the [Guide to Practice Activities and Released Testlets](#) on the [DLM website](#). Released testlets are like real testlets. They are selected from a variety of Essential Elements for ELA, math, and science, and linkage levels across Grades 3–8 and high school. Newly released testlets are added periodically.

- **Contrast color:** Allows test administrators to choose from color schemes for the background and font.
- **Invert color choice:** Makes the background color black and the font white. Images continue to display on a white background.
- **Magnification:** Allows test administrators to choose the degree of screen magnification during assessment. Test administrators can choose between a magnification of 2×, 3×, 4×, or 5×. Without magnification, the font is Report School, 22-point size. When the level of magnification is increased beyond the size of the screen, left to right and up and down scrolling will likely be required because the entire item will no longer be visible on the screen. Scrolling will vary according to the level of magnification, the amount of content in the item, and the size of the device's screen being used by the student. When a student needs a very large increase in magnification, an interactive whiteboard, projector, or any magnification device that works with the computer screen is allowed.
- **Overlay color:** The default background color of the assessment is white. Test administrators may select from the alternate colors of blue, gray, green, pink, and yellow. Practice demo testlets have specific presets, but more options are provided in the PNP Profile and actual live testlets.
- **Spoken audio:** Synthetic spoken audio (read aloud with highlighting) is read from left to right and top to bottom. Three preferences are available for spoken audio: text only, text and graphics, and nonvisual. The nonvisual preference also describes page layout for students who are blind or have visual impairments.

HINT: When using spoken audio, as the words are spoken, the text is highlighted in yellow. Therefore, do not choose yellow for overlay color in the PNP Profile or the spoken audio highlighting feature will be hidden to the student.

Screenshots showing these supports begin on page 47 of this manual, in the section Demonstration of Personal Needs and Preferences Supports: What Students Will Experience.

*Category 2: Settings in the PNP Profile That Activate Supports in Student Portal in Addition to Supports or Tools Provided by the Test Administrator Outside of Student Portal*

These supports include braille, switch system preferences, and the use of special supports and materials. These supports typically require prior planning and setup. The test administrator selects these supports in the PNP Profile. Practice activities and released testlets with some supports are available through several demo student accounts. Access the [Guide to Practice Activities and Released Testlets](#) and the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL on your state's website for a list of demo logins for practice testlets.

- **Alternate form-visual impairment:** This form is a suitable additional choice for
  - a student who can read braille
  - a student who is blind but cannot read braille
  - a student who has a significant visual impairment

The test administrator selects alternate form-visual impairment in the PNP Profile under the **Other** tab. Some educators refer to this alternate form as a BVI form because when this testlet form is available, it will have the letters BVI (Blind Visual Impairment) in the testlet name, in the test ticket, in the Testlet Information Pages (TIPs), and in Student Portal (e.g., SP\_BVI\_SCI\_MS.PS1-2\_P\_10455).

- **Calculator:**
  - **Mathematics testlets:** Students may use a calculator on mathematics testlets unless it interferes with the construct of the testlet. The Testlet Information Page (TIP) for each mathematics testlet will specify when a calculator is not permitted.
  - **Science testlets:** Use of a calculator is not permitted for science.
- **Individualized manipulatives:** Students may use familiar manipulatives (e.g., abacus, counters, interlocking blocks, linking letters, unit cubes). Refer to the TIP for constraints for a specific testlet.
- **Single-switch system:** This support is activated using one switch along with a switch interface that emulates the Enter key on the keyboard. In the PNP Profile, test administrators can set scan speed, indicate if scanning is to begin automatically when

the page appears, and select the number of times the scan cycle repeats before stopping.

- **Two-switch system:** This system does not require activation in the PNP Profile. Two switches and a switch interface are used to emulate the Tab key to move between choices and the Enter key to select the choice when highlighted.

## *Braille*

The DLM alternate assessment is designed to assess a student's knowledge, skills, and understanding of the Essential Elements, not the student's ability to use braille. Braille testlets are for students who read braille proficiently and should not be selected for emerging braille readers.

The test administrator must select the appropriate braille form in the student's PNP Profile. Three uncontracted braille forms are available:

- English Braille American Edition (EBAE) for ELA, with Nemeth code for mathematics and science
- Unified English Braille (UEB) for ELA, mathematics, and science
- Unified English Braille (UEB) for ELA, with Nemeth code for mathematics and science

A Braille Ready File (BRF) has the letters BRF as part of the naming convention in the testlet name, in the test ticket, the Testlet Information Pages (TIPs), and in Student Portal:

- UEB BRF File Name: SP\_BR\_SCI\_HS.PS1\_3-4\_T\_UEB.brf
- The naming convention means Spring>Braille>Science>High School>Physical Science>Matter and Its Interactions>Investigate and predict the temperatures of two liquids before and after combining to show uniform energy distribution>Target linkage level.

When braille has been selected for a student in the PNP Profile, the Kite system responds in the following order with these steps.

- 1) If a braille form is available for the Essential Element at the linkage level, the braille form is delivered.
- 2) If a braille form is not available for the Essential Element at the linkage level, the Kite system will automatically look for an alternate form-visual impairment form of the testlet (BVI form).
- 3) If a BVI form is available for the Essential Element at the linkage level, the BVI form is delivered.
- 4) When neither the braille form nor the BVI form is available for the Essential Element at the linkage level, the system will automatically provide a standard form of the testlet.

When a standard form is delivered, the test administrator of the student who is blind or visually impaired is responsible for making the information accessible, using permissible,

familiar methods that were used during normal classroom instruction with the student. When appropriate, the TIP for a standard form contains alternate text descriptions of pictures and graphics for the test administrator to read to the student.

**Braille TIP:** The Braille TIP only includes the TIP cover page.

- **ELA braille form testlets:** All items in an ELA testlet are based on the text portion of the story and not the images. Since the images are not part of the braille form that a student would be reading, the alt text is not needed for a student using a braille form to answer any items.
- **Mathematics or science braille form testlets:** The test administrator can use objects or tactile graphics when administering the testlet.

Table 4 has information about the availability of braille forms for each subject, grade, linkage level, and window.

**Table 4**

*Availability of Braille Testlets*

Subject	Grades	Linkage Levels	Window
ELA and mathematics	3–5	Target and Successor	Both fall and spring assessment windows
ELA and mathematics	6–8 and high school	Proximal Precursor, Target, and Successor	Both fall and spring assessment windows
Science	3–8 and high school	Target	Only the spring assessment window

*Category 3: Settings in the PNP Profile That Require the Test Administrator to Provide All Supports Outside of Student Portal*

These are supports presented outside of Student Portal that require actions by the test administrator, such as reading, signing, translating the assessment, or helping the student enter responses. These supports are recorded in the PNP Profile even though they are delivered by the test administrator outside of Student Portal.

- **Human read aloud:** Test administrators are always permitted to read the assessment aloud to students. When a testlet contains images (either in the text, engagement activity, items, or picture-response cards) alternate text is included in the TIP. The descriptions and alternate text are provided as additional pages after the main TIP.

- **Language translation of text:** Language translations are not provided via the computer. Test administrators may translate the text for students who are English language learners or who communicate best in a language other than English. State policy will guide whether translation can be used.
- **Partner-assisted scanning:** Partner-assisted scanning is a strategy in which test administrators assist students with scanning students' response options. Test administrators read and point to each response option, and students indicate their answer when they are presented with their desired response.
- **Sign interpretation of text:** Test administrators are always permitted to sign the content to students using
  - American Sign Language (ASL)
  - Signing Exact English
  - Personalized sign systems
- **Test administrator entering student responses:** If a student is unable to physically input their response options, they may indicate their responses through their typical response mode and form of communication (e.g., assistive device, eye gaze, gesture). Test administrators may key in a student's response in Student Portal only when a student is unable to record their responses independently.

#### SUPPORTS NOT AVAILABLE IN STUDENT PORTAL

Some supports not available in the system or not provided include the following:

- **Sign language using human or avatar videos onscreen:** Most students who are eligible for the DLM alternate assessment and who also communicate with sign language use Signed Exact English or their own personalized sign systems.
- **Tactile graphics:** Educators may use concrete representations for pictures that are presented onscreen. Educators may use objects, tactile graphics, or individualized tactile representations of pictures with their students, as appropriate.

#### SUPPORTS THAT DO NOT WORK WELL TOGETHER

Not all PNP Profile supports are compatible with each other in Student Portal.

---

**NOTE:** When the spoken audio support is selected, the text is highlighted in yellow as the words are spoken.

---

- Combining spoken audio with overlay color in yellow results in the spoken audio highlighting feature to be hidden to the student.

- Combining spoken audio with yellow text in contrast color results in the spoken audio highlighting feature to be hidden to the student.
- Combining contrast color, invert color choice, and overlay color results in a layering of the options, which is counterproductive and will not be helpful to the student.
- The single-switch and two-switch highlighting feature highlights in yellow. Therefore, combining overlay color in yellow with the single-switch or two-switch support results in the response options being hidden to the student.

A few screenshots showing a sampling of available supports begins on page 47 of this manual in Step 4: Select and View Supports in the Kite® System.

### USING PRACTICE ACTIVITIES AND RELEASED TESTLETS

To be prepared for how a testlet will be displayed with the chosen supports, before the beginning of an assessment window, open Student Portal. Use the practice activities and released testlets with the provided demo student usernames and passwords to evaluate whether the selected supports make the testlets accessible to the student. These resources are intended for three main purposes:

- To help make decisions about the PNP Profile supports that best fit a student's individual needs and preferences
- To help a test administrator draw conclusions about a student's ability to use a selected PNP Profile support during assessments
- To provide students with opportunities to practice using navigation tools in the testlets prior to the day of the student's first assessment

Released testlets are available for every subject, every grade level, and at every linkage level to allow a student to practice using any of the PNP Profile supports as often as needed, and to allow test administrators to observe a student's interaction with those supports. Test administrators can change the selections in the PNP Profile, depending on the conclusions drawn about a student's experience with the testlets. Additionally, repeated practice can increase both students' and test administrators' ease on the day the assessment window opens.

Use the [Guide to Practice Activities and Released Testlets](#) for demo student usernames and passwords and for step-by-step directions on how to use Student Portal for these activities and testlets.

### CHANGING PNP PROFILE SETTINGS DURING TESTING

Since the selected settings in the PNP Profile activate the supports in Student Portal, best practice is to select the supports **before** the student begins testing. However, when

necessary, the test administrator can adjust the PNP Profile settings if they are not working well for the student or if the student’s needs change during an assessment window.

To change a PNP Profile setting during testing, follow this process:

- 1) The test administrator exits the testlet by using the **Exit Does Not Save** button, if allowed by the state.
- 2) The test administrator logs in to Educator Portal, goes to the student’s PNP Profile, and selects or deselects the desired support settings.
- 3) The test administrator **must save** the new selections before exiting the PNP Profile.

---

**NOTE:** If your state does not allow the use of **Exit Does Not Save**, then pause the testlet (up to 90 minutes). Log into Educator Portal, go to the student’s PNP Profile, make any necessary changes, and select Save. Then allow the student to finish the paused testlet and submit it. Before launching another testlet, observe the following chart for how soon the PNP setting change appears in the next testlet.

---

Table 5 outlines how soon the change appears in the testlet after being updated in the PNP Profile.

**Table 5**

*Accessibility Support Delay Time After Updating the Student’s PNP Profile*

Support	How Soon the Change Appears in the Testlet
Alternate form-visual impairment	Overnight, if available for the Essential Element at the linkage level being tested
Braille (EBAE, UEB with Nemeth code, UEB ELA/math)	Overnight, if available for the Essential Element at the linkage level being tested
Calculator	Immediately
Contrast color	Immediately
Individualized manipulatives	Immediately
Invert color choice	Immediately
Magnification	Immediately
Overlay color	Immediately

Support	How Soon the Change Appears in the Testlet
Single-switch system	Overnight
Spoken audio	Overnight
Two-switch system	Immediately

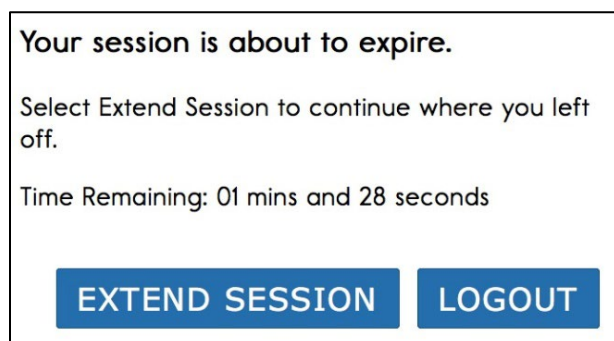
## SYSTEM TIMEOUT

The DLM alternate assessments are administered individually and are not subject to specific timeframes like most general education assessments. Any flexibility a student requires regarding the assessment time and location is permissible. A student may take as much time and as many breaks as needed, and work in settings that are most appropriate for them. However, if a student needs a significant break during the administration of a testlet, and if Student Portal sits inactive for as long as 90 minutes, the testlet will time out.

This is how the system timeout works: After 88 minutes and 30 seconds of inactivity in the testlet, the system prompts the student with a warning message as shown in Figure 7. A countdown of 90 seconds begins, during which the student may either extend the session or logout.

**Figure 7**

*Kite Student Portal Warning of Session Ending*



- If no activity occurs before the countdown reaches zero, the system closes the testlet and returns to the login screen. The testlet status returns to **Unused**, and the system retains no responses.
- If **Extend Session** is selected, the system disregards the idle time, closes the prompt, and returns to the screen where the student was working.
- If **Logout** is selected, the system closes the testlet and returns to the login screen. The testlet status returns to **Unused**, and the system retains no responses.

## TESTLET RESETS AFTER AN EXTENDED INTERRUPTION



Educators sometimes question why answers are not saved when a testlet times out. Research has revealed that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who qualify for the DLM alternate assessments require extensive, repeated, and individualized instruction and ongoing supports that are not temporary or transient in nature, and they have difficulty retaining information in working memory for extended periods of time. Therefore, testlets were created to be short with only a few items. Each testlet begins with an engagement activity that is designed to activate prior knowledge, motivate the student, and provide context.

While DLM test administration procedures are designed to be flexible and allow students to take breaks during a testlet, most students who experience an extended interruption during test administration have difficulty retaining information in working memory after that extended interruption. Research has shown that extended interruptions during test administration can have adverse effects on student performance (Sinharay et al., 2014). Because of this, the Student Portal was designed to time out after an extended period of inactivity without retaining the responses, allowing the student to begin the assessment afresh when ready.

### **STEP 3: DISCUSS AND SELECT APPROPRIATE ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS: CONSIDERATIONS FOR IEP TEAMS**

Best practice during testing is to have the student use only the PNP Profile supports or a combination of supports that the student has been using during regular classroom instruction. Unfamiliar supports may be distracting and even detrimental during assessment.

#### **DECIDING THE ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS THAT ARE NEEDED**

The IEP team determines an individual student's needs, and the test administrator then selects the accessibility supports based on those needs rather than based on the disability category, grade level, or instructional setting.

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are also English language learners need decisions about their language-related supports to be made by educators who understand them best. This person is typically the test administrator. Once the supports are selected, these students are best served when the accessibility supports are used consistently for both instruction and assessment.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION AND SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS

Some questions that teams may ask in the process of determining appropriate supports include the following:

- What are the student's learning strengths, and in which areas does the student need improvement?
- How is a student's knowledge and understanding of the Essential Elements impacted by the student's learning needs?
- What instructional and assessment tasks are difficult for the student to do independently when working one-on-one in the classroom or when interacting in an online environment?
- What current supports help the student with these difficulties when working one-on-one in the classroom or when interacting in an online environment? What kinds of instructional strategies work best for the student (e.g., auditory, tactile, visual, or combination)?
- What accessibility supports match these strategies and may help the student access the assessment?
- What supports or materials does the student prefer?
- What were the results of routine assignments and classroom testing when accessibility supports were used or not used?
- Did the student have any difficulties interacting with these supports in the past? If so, what were the difficulties and how can they be resolved?
- What accessibility supports will increase the student's access to the assessment by addressing their learning needs and reducing the effect of their impairment?
- What effective combinations of accessibility supports will help the student?

(Thompson et al., 2005)

Test administrators may need to amend a student's IEP to include additional appropriate supports available in the PNP Profile that were not listed on the IEP, depending on state policy. Check state policy about amending the IEP.

The user interface in Student Portal has been specially designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Testlets delivered directly to students via the computer are designed under the assumption that students can interact with the computer independently. However, students may need additional assistance during the assessment to be able to interact with the computer.

## SUPPORTS: ALLOWED AND NOT ALLOWED

The following supports are allowed:

- Adapted keyboards that include all 26 letters of the alphabet
- Alternate keyboard; onscreen switch-enabled keyboard
- Alternate pencils, including alphabet flip charts
- Eye-gaze displays of letters
- Letter-by-letter dictation of any sort
- Pens, pencils, markers, and crayons can be used for the writing product a student produces off the computer for the writing testlets
- Tablet computer keyboards using word processing software
- Traditional keyboards using word processing software
- Whiteboards
- Word prediction software

Word prediction is an intelligent word processing feature that can alleviate writing breakdowns for a range of students by reducing the number of keystrokes necessary for typing words. The feature removes motor barriers to typing and reduces the gap between generating ideas and capturing ideas in writing.

Test administrators may also help students navigate across screens or enter responses on behalf of a student. On page 36 of this manual, additional allowable supports are described in the section Combining Accessibility Supports With Flexibility in Test Administration Procedures.

The following supports are **not** allowed:

- Selection of pictures\* or words from a word bank
- Speech-to-text software
- Whole word or sentence dictation

\*Picture-response cards that accompany science testlets at the Initial level are permitted and **must** be used.

The student is not allowed to dictate whole words or sentences to a human scribe or use speech-to-text software. Full administration of the writing testlets requires the student to engage in letter-by-letter spelling that would be bypassed through dictation of whole words or sentences.

Pictures, symbols, or words from a word bank are not allowed and may not be substituted for words in a sentence. This practice is forbidden because the meaning that an individual assigns to a picture or symbol depends upon the individual's motivation; neurological and

developmental status; sensory abilities; cognitive-, communication-, and language skills; and world experience (Mineo Mollica, 2003). Furthermore, the ability to learn the meaning of pictures or symbols is directly related to an individual's understanding of the word associated with the picture or symbol.

In other words, individuals who understand the meaning of the spoken word learn the associated picture or symbol rather easily, while individuals who do not understand the spoken word need more time to learn the meaning of the picture or symbol (Ronski & Sevcik, 1996; 2005). Because students who participate in the DLM alternate assessment have universally impaired cognitive and language skills, it is not possible to ensure that each student's understanding of pictures and symbols introduced in the assessment will match the intended meaning.

### **COMBINING ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS WITH ALLOWABLE PRACTICES IN TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES**

Effective use of the PNP Profile supports allows most students to have appropriate access to the assessment, making the assessment a meaningful indicator of students' knowledge and understanding of the Essential Elements. However, test administrators may need to combine the accessibility supports listed on the PNP Profile with allowable practices that are part of the flexibility in test administration procedures.

When customizing the assessment process with accessibility supports and allowable practices, keep in mind two general principles:

- The student is expected to respond independently.
- Supports are to be familiar to the student because they have been used during routine instruction.

Table 6 describes some common accessibility issues and potential solutions that are based on a combination of accessibility supports and allowable practices. The following example solutions are for both computer-delivered and teacher-administered testlets.

**Table 6***Common Accessibility Issues and Example Solutions*

<b>Accessibility Issue</b>	<b>Example Solutions</b>
The student has difficulty interacting directly with the computer due to limited experience, motor skills, or devices.	<p><b>Navigation in Student Portal:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may navigate the screens for the student.</p> <p>After the student indicates their responses to the test administrator, the test administrator enters the responses on behalf of the student.</p> <p>This table includes additional example solutions of how students may indicate response options.</p>
The student is blind and typically reads braille.	<p><b>Braille forms:</b></p> <p>Braille forms of the assessments are available for ELA, mathematics, and science at upper linkage levels, but only for some Essential Elements.</p> <p>Extensive information about braille forms is in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL section titled “Testlets for Students Who Are Blind or Have Visual Impairments”. This information includes a chart with grades, subjects, linkage levels, and windows where braille testlets are available.</p> <p>Steps on how to access and prepare for a braille testlet are in the EDUCATOR PORTAL USER GUIDE section titled “Retrieve Braille Ready Forms (BRF)”.</p> <p><b>Alternate form-visual impairment form:</b></p> <p>When a braille form is not available, an alternate form-visual impairment form <b>may</b> be available. These forms are only available for some Essential Elements at upper linkage levels.</p>

Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
	<p><b>Human read aloud:</b></p> <p>The test administrator is always allowed to read the testlet aloud to the student. For human read aloud guidelines, go to the following sections of the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternate Text for Teacher-Administered Reading Testlets</li> <li>• Retrieve Testlet Information Page and Gather Materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Familiar materials and tactile graphics:</b></p> <p>Objects, tactile graphics, or individual tactile representations of pictures or objects presented onscreen as a concrete representation may be used. Always access the TIP before administering the testlet since the TIP can provide more information.</p> <p>The test administrator should use the allowable supports, methods, and practices used during everyday instruction in the classroom to make the testlet accessible to the student.</p> <p><b>SHOW:</b></p> <p>When the Educator Directions in a testlet use words like SHOW, the test administrator should present the content of the testlet to the student using methods normally used during everyday instruction.</p>

Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
<p>The student has a severe visual impairment and needs the content to appear larger than the 5x magnification setting provides.</p>	<p><b>Magnification:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may use an interactive whiteboard, projector, or any magnification device that works with the computer screen.</p> <p><b>Human read aloud:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may always read the testlet aloud to the student. (Review the previous section about human read aloud.)</p> <p><b>Familiar texts:</b></p> <p>Teacher-administered reading testlets use texts that should have been used during instruction so the student can be familiar with them. If the student is accustomed to having the familiar text read from a paper copy, that copy may be used during assessment. Also, the test administrator may read the text aloud to the student. Go to Appendix D: Downloading or Printing DLM Familiar Texts and follow the instructions for printing familiar texts used in ELA testlets.</p>

Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
<p>The student is blind and does not communicate verbally.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The student is blind, does not read braille, and uses only a single-switch system to communicate.</p> <p>The student is blind and receives testlets with pictures or manipulatives.</p> <p>The TIP does not provide guidance on how the test administrator can deliver this assessment.</p>	<p><b>Human read aloud:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may always read the testlet aloud to the student. For human read aloud guidelines, go to the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL and refer to these sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternate Text for Teacher-Administered Reading Testlets</li> <li>• Retrieve Testlet Information Page and Gather Materials.</li> </ul> <p><b>Familiar materials and tactile graphics:</b></p> <p>Objects, tactile graphics, or individual tactile representations of pictures or objects presented onscreen as a concrete representation may be used. Always access the TIP before administering the testlet, since the TIP can provide more information.</p> <p>The test administrator should use the allowable supports, methods, and practices used during everyday instruction in the classroom to make the testlet accessible to the student.</p> <p>Refer to the section titled “Retrieve the Testlet Information Pages and Gather Materials” in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL.</p>
<p>The student uses sign language to communicate and has limited proficiency in reading text.</p>	<p><b>Sign language:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may sign the text, spell unfamiliar words, and adapt or interpret the language as needed. The test administrator may use signs that are familiar to the student.</p>



Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
<p>The student usually accesses text with pictures. During instruction, the educator provides supplemental pictures as necessary, specifically for the response options, so the student can access the text. However, that practice is not allowed during the DLM alternate assessment.</p>	<p><b>Spoken audio or human read aloud:</b></p> <p>Most Essential Elements that include a text focus on a student’s ability to make meaning from words. The text may be read aloud to the student by selecting synthetic Spoken Audio or Human Read Aloud in the PNP Profile. (Go to previous example solutions about human read aloud.)</p> <p>Using picture symbols to support word reading is <b>not</b> allowed.</p> <p>For more information about why picture symbols are not allowed, review the section in this manual titled “Supports: Allowed and Not Allowed”.</p>
<p>The student uses low-tech (not computerized) eye gaze to communicate.</p>	<p><b>Offline response options:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may present the response options offline in an alternate format in which the student is accustomed. The test administrator will then enter the student’s selected responses in the testlet in Student Portal.</p>
<p>The student uses eye gaze—or another means—and can only indicate yes or no responses.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The student always selects the same response option (e.g., the first or the last option when presented with the response options).</p> <p>OR</p>	<p><b>Alternate presentations of response options:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may present the item and response options as follows:</p> <p>First, read the item and response options that are presented onscreen.</p> <p>Then, repeat the item and present response option 1, asking the student something like, “Do you want this option? Answer yes or no.”</p> <p>The student provides their response.</p> <p>Repeat the process for response option 2.</p>

Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
<p>The student can be presented only two response options at a time.</p>	<p>Repeat the process for response option 3 until all response options have been presented to the student.</p> <p>If the student has indicated yes to all response options or to more than one response option, read the selected options again, following the above process until the student has selected only one response option.</p> <p>If the student has not narrowed the selection to one response option, the test administrator may try another approach.</p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may present two response options at a time until the student has eliminated all but one response option.</p> <p>To maintain validity, present the response options in the same order they are presented onscreen.</p> <p>Present response option 1 and response option 2, and then say something like this to the student, “Which of these options do you want to choose: option 1 or option 2?”</p> <p>Be patient to allow time for the student to respond.</p> <p>Once a response is selected, present that response along with option 3. Allow the student time to select a response.</p> <p>Then, repeat the above process until all options have been presented.</p> <p>When the responses have been narrowed to the final response, enter it in the testlet in Student Portal.</p>

Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
<p>The student uses one or two switches to access the computer but is not 100% consistent or accurate in their use.</p>	<p><b>Use of switches:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may use partner-assisted scanning to point to and read each response option.</p> <p>The student indicates when the desired response option is presented.</p> <p>The test administrator may navigate from screen to screen and allow the student to use scanning to select the desired response option on each item screen.</p>
<p>The student needs special equipment for the positioning of materials to respond to items (e.g., slant board) or noncomputerized materials (e.g., hook and loop materials on a board).</p>	<p><b>Special equipment:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may use the equipment and materials that are familiar to the student.</p> <p>The student continues to interact with the content on the screen.</p> <p>The test administrator may navigate and enter responses in Student Portal that the student has indicated outside of Student Portal.</p>
<p>The student uses graphic organizers, supports, or other materials to complete academic work.</p>	<p><b>Supports and materials:</b></p> <p>The test administrator may use allowable supports and materials that are familiar to the student.</p> <p>The student interacts with the content onscreen, but the test administrator may navigate and enter the student's responses into Student Portal. Access the TIP for each testlet for approved and unapproved materials.</p>

Accessibility Issue	Example Solutions
<p>The student has a physical disability that results in limited mobility. The testlet requires the student to manipulate materials.</p>	<p><b>Partner-assisted scanning:</b></p> <p>A student with limited mobility may use their current mode of communication to direct the test administrator to select a response option or manipulate materials on their behalf.</p> <p>The test administrator also may use the strategy of partner-assisted scanning for testing. The test administrator should select this support in the student’s PNP Profile.</p> <hr/> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Partner-assisted scanning is a strategy used outside of the system. Although this is a support in the PNP Profile, selecting it does not make a direct change to a testlet.</p> <hr/>
<p>The student requires technology to complete the writing assessment.</p>	<p><b>Writing testlets:</b></p> <p>The student may use the writing technologies or materials they use during everyday instruction to complete the DLM writing testlets if the technology supports the use of all 26 letters of the alphabet to generate text.</p> <p>Students may not use word banks, picture banks, or symbol- or icon-based communication systems for the portion of the testlet that requires writing with access to the full alphabet.</p> <p>Students may not use speech-to-text software to dictate whole words or sentences. This would not allow for assessment of the student’s knowledge of letter-by-letter spelling, which is a part of the construct being assessed in portions of the writing testlets.</p> <p>Thorough coverage of the writing testlet is found in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL.</p>

While allowed supports and practices offer a great deal of flexibility during assessment administration, some practices are not allowed.

### **PRACTICES NOT ALLOWED**

- Repeating the item after the student has selected a response; this action is considered prompting and may influence the student to choose a different response
- Using physical prompts or hand-over-hand guidance
- Reducing the number of response options or giving content hints
- Modifying the content of a performance task in a computer-delivered testlet to help the student arrive at the correct response
- Changing tone, inflection, or body language to cue the correct response when reading testlets to a student

Review the section Supports: Allowed and Not Allowed found previously in this manual for more information about supports that are prohibited.

### **OTHER ASSESSMENT RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS**

Students who take the DLM alternate assessment can indicate their response through any means allowed. Sometimes test administrators need to think creatively about how to support students with different means of expressive communication. The assessment coordinator or special education director may be able to provide help thinking through ideas for specific student situations and the methods that can be employed to provide access for a student with complex needs.

Using the general principles above and specific examples of supports that are allowed and not allowed, the test administrator should plan assessment sessions for students who need additional supports. If supports that are not listed in this guide are provided, test administrators may be asked to describe these supports, as determined by state policy. The assessment coordinator can provide more information about state guidelines on additional supports.

### **TESTLET INFORMATION PAGES (TIPS) AND ACCESSIBILITY**

TIPs are included with every testlet and provide test administrators with information specific to that testlet, including exceptions to allowable supports, alternate text to use with human read aloud, and whether a calculator can be used. While a test administrator normally may use all selected PNP Profile supports, the TIP indicates when a support or tool cannot be used for a specific testlet (e.g., that a calculator is not permitted for a particular mathematics testlet).

A TIP that is connected to a testlet with images (either in text, the engagement activity, items, or picture response cards) has alternate text for the test administrator to use for students who are blind or visually impaired. The only exception occurs when the alternate text provides a cue to the answer (e.g., if a student is asked to identify which shape is a triangle). The TIP would not include alternate text that named the shapes in the response options. In that instance, the alternate text page would instruct, “Do not describe.” The teacher would then rely on using objects, tactile graphics, or individual tactile representations of pictures or objects presented onscreen for those students who are unable to rely on the images on the screen.

The TIP becomes available in Educator Portal once the testlet is assigned to a student. Test administrators should access and review the TIP **before** beginning a student’s assessment and gather any necessary supports. The TIP can be downloaded and printed several hours or even days before the testlet is to be administered in order to have enough time to be prepared. With a science testlet at the Initial linkage level, the TIP usually includes picture-response cards that must be printed or objects that must be gathered.

---

**NOTE:** Best practice is to print the picture-response cards in color.

---

After the testlet is submitted, the TIP is no longer available in Educator Portal. The TIP is a secure testing document. When the TIP is downloaded and printed, it must be securely destroyed after the testlet is administered.

The Educator Portal User Guide and TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL provide more information about the TIP, including how to access a TIP and the content of a TIP. Sample TIPs are available on the [DLM website](#).

The following are helplet videos about TIPs and test tickets:

- [Test Tickets and TIPs in the Spring Assessment Window for YE States](#)
- [Science Test Tickets and TIPs in the Spring Window](#) (for IE states)

---

**NOTE:** TIPs for testlets at the lower linkage levels may contain much more information than TIPs for testlets at the higher linkage levels. For a testlet at the lower levels, the test administrator may need to gather objects to use during testing or to print science picture-response cards. Best practice is to print these in color.

For the majority of computer-delivered testlets at the higher linkage levels, almost everything a student needs is displayed on the computer screen within the testlet. However, the TIP will still have information about supports that may not be allowed for a particular testlet.

---

## STEP 4: SELECT AND VIEW SUPPORTS IN THE KITE® SYSTEM

### DEMONSTRATION OF PERSONAL NEEDS AND PREFERENCES (PNP) PROFILE SUPPORTS: WHAT STUDENTS WILL EXPERIENCE

This section elaborates on the PNP Profile accessibility supports introduced in Step 2: Learn About the Accessibility Supports and includes screenshots of how contrast color, invert color choice, magnification, spoken audio, and switch use could appear. Test administrators can determine the supports that will work best for each student by allowing them ample time to practice using the supports in Student Portal with released testlets. Go to the [Guide to Practice Activities and Released Testlets](#) found on your state's DLM website.

**HINT:** Do not combine contrast color, invert color choice, and overlay color because the combination results in a layering of the options, which is counterproductive and will not be helpful to the student.

#### *Contrast Color*

Contrast color allows the test administrator to change both the background and the font color. The background and font color options are

- a white background with green font as shown in Figure 8
- a white background with red font
- a black background with gray font
- a black background with yellow font

#### **Figure 8**

*Contrast Color With a White Background and Green Font*



### *Invert Color Choice*

The standard presentation in testlets is a white background with black font. If the test administrator selects invert color choice, the background is black, and the font is white, as shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9**

### *Invert Color Choice*

Val makes a table of the length of daylight in November.

Day	Daylight (hours)
November 1	8
November 8	7
November 15	6
November 22	5

What happens to the length of daylight from November 1 to November 22?

- goes up
- goes down
- stays the same

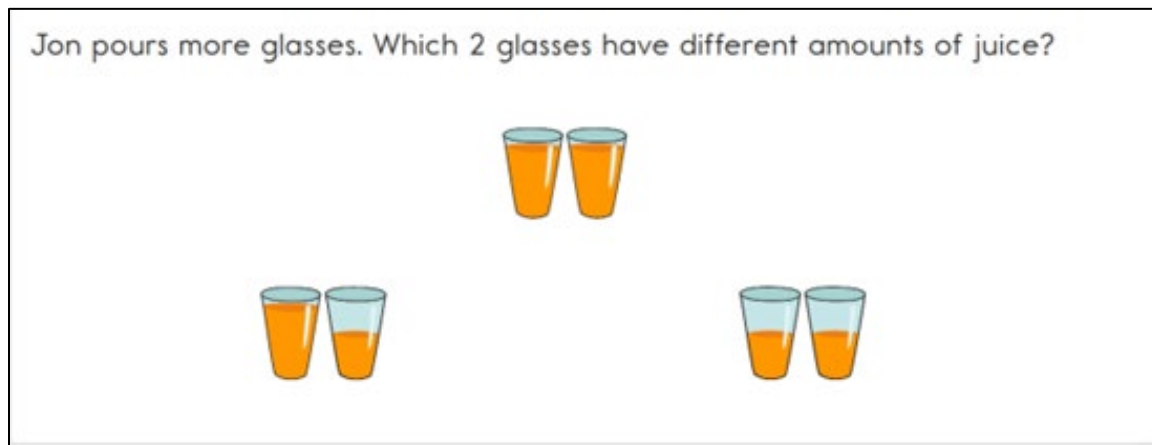
### *Magnification*

When test administrators choose magnification, the system zooms in on the whole screen, as shown in Figure 10 and Figure 11. The magnification options are 2×, 3×, 4×, and 5×. Depending on the amount of magnification that is selected, test administrators may need to scroll to the right and left or up and down to access the entire screen and to locate the **NEXT** button. Test administrators must keep in mind that scrolling may negatively affect the student's ability to access the assessment. Using an interactive whiteboard, a projector, or a magnification device may be a more appropriate option when a student needs a great deal of magnification.



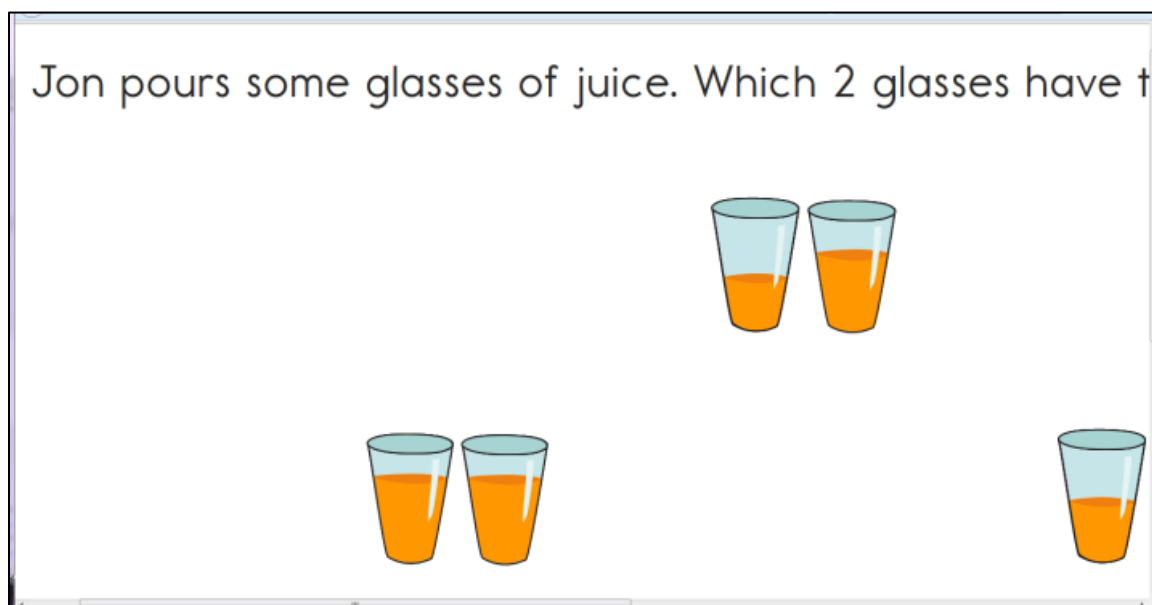
**Figure 10**

*2× Magnification*



**Figure 11**

*5× Magnification*



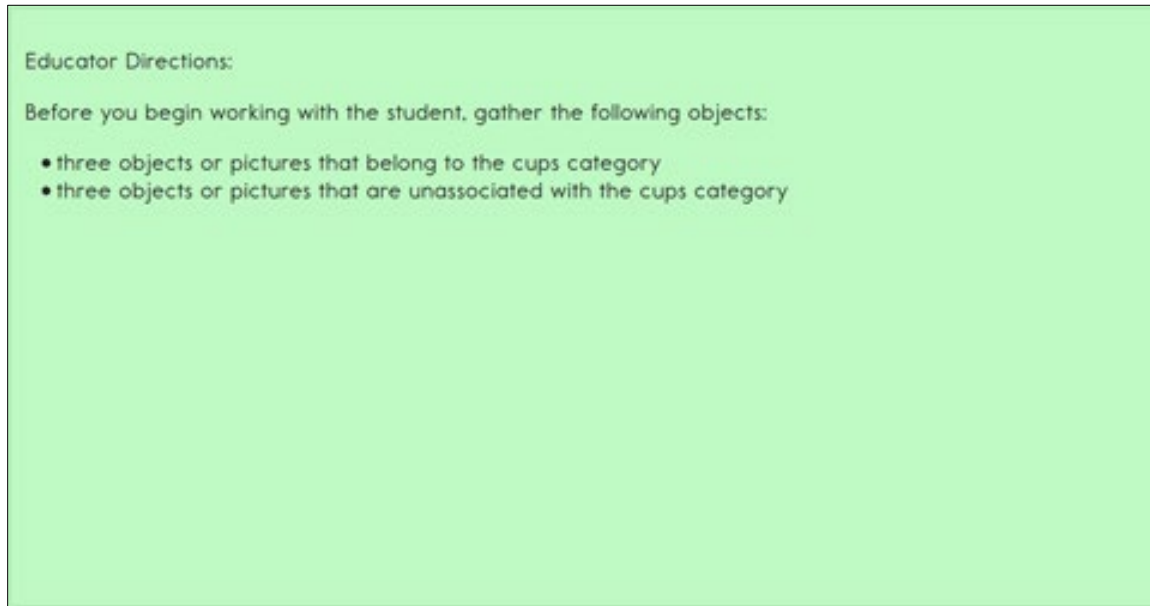
NOTE: Users must scroll both up and down and left and right because the size of the content exceeds the viewing area.

### *Overlay Color*

The background overlay color options are blue, yellow, gray, pink, and green. The default background is white. The font remains black, as shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 12**

*Overlay Color in Green*



### *Spoken Audio*

Spoken audio has three types of options:

- **Text Only** is appropriate when the student has some vision and does not require the physical layout and directional information to be read aloud.
- **Text and Graphics** provides audio for images and for reading onscreen text.
- **Nonvisual** provides audio for images in addition to reading the onscreen text. This is intended for students who are blind or have visual impairments and need the layout of the page described as well.

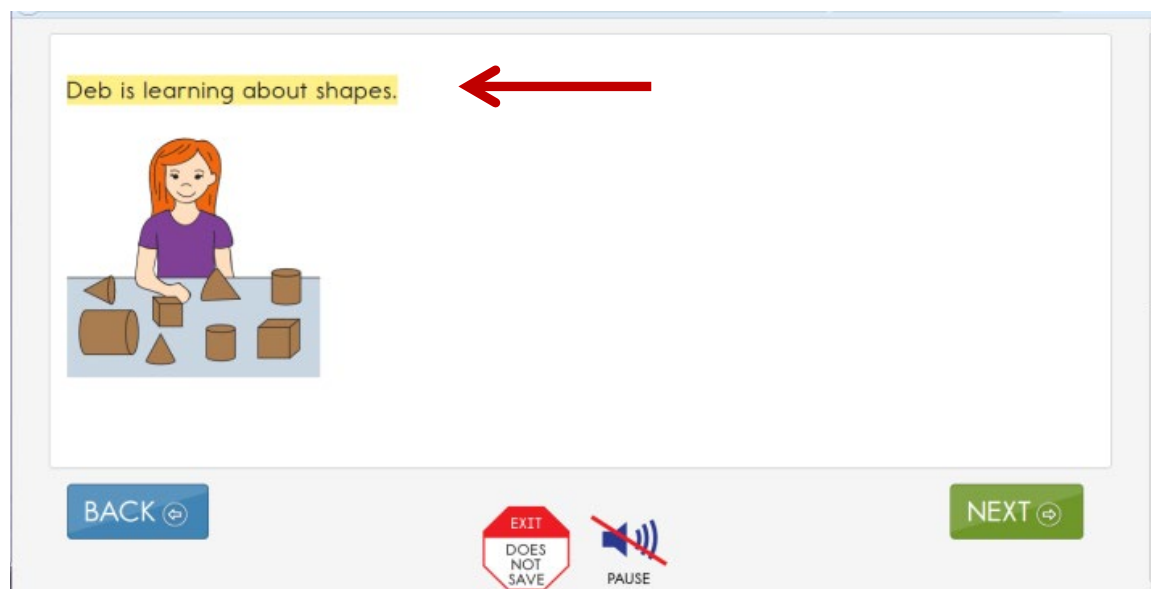
The **READ** button is visible at the bottom of the screen upon opening the assessment, as shown in Figure 13.

**Figure 13**  
*The READ Icon for Spoken Audio*



After selecting the **READ** button, the Spoken Audio feature reads the text aloud. The words are highlighted in yellow as they are being read, as shown in Figure 14. Different information is read aloud depending on which option was selected in the student's PNP Profile: text only, text and graphics, or nonvisual.

**Figure 14**  
*How Student Portal Highlights Text During Spoken Audio*



## Switch Use

Table 7 and Table 8 summarize the actions that occur when switches are used for switch-accessible items in Student Portal. In both cases, if switch access is selected in the PNP Profile, then a switch interface is also required for the student to interact with the testlets in Student Portal.

**Table 7**

*Single-Switch Use by Item Type*

Item Type	Single-Switch System
<b>Multiple choice:</b> Response options are a selection of text or pictures.	<p>When Single Switch is selected, Student Portal scans through each response option and navigation button on the page based upon settings selected in the student's PNP Profile. The following can be selected.</p> <p><b>Activate by Default:</b> This is automatically selected and cannot be changed.</p> <p><b>The Scan Speed (Seconds):</b> The number of seconds the response option is highlighted before the highlighting moves on to the next response option.</p> <p><b>The Automatic Scan—Initial Delay:</b> The length of the delay before scanning begins on each screen of a testlet.</p> <p><b>Value in Seconds:</b> The length of the delay in seconds.</p> <p><b>Manual Override:</b> The student initiates the scanning action on each screen of a testlet by pressing the switch.</p> <p><b>The Automatic Scan Repeat Frequency:</b> The number of times an item on each screen is scanned before the scanning cycle stops. The number can be one to five or infinity.</p>
<b>General information</b>	<p>In automatic scanning or manual override, the scanning stops after selecting a response option. The scanning cycle restarts from the beginning when the student presses the switch.</p>

**Table 8**

*Two-Switch Use by Item Type*

Item Type	Two-Switch System
<b>Multiple choice:</b>  Response options are a selection of text or pictures.	The student uses the switch set to emulate the Tab key to move from one response option to the next. As the Tab key switch is activated, Student Portal highlights each response option and the navigation button.  When a response option is highlighted, the student uses the switch set to emulate the Enter key to select the desired response option.
<b>General information</b>	After selecting a response option, selecting the Tab key restarts the cycle over from the beginning.

Activating the switch will highlight each option in yellow for the student. The **BACK** button is highlighted, as shown in Figure 15.

**Figure 15**

*A Single-Switch and Two-Switch Example With a Highlighted BACK Option*

Val makes a table of the length of daylight in November.

Day	Daylight (hours)
November 1	8
November 8	7
November 15	6
November 22	5

What happens to the length of daylight from November 1 to November 22?

goes up  
goes down  
stays the same




**BACK**   **NEXT** 

Figure 16 shows how the response options are also highlighted.

**Figure 16**

*A Highlighted Response Option*

Val makes a table of the length of daylight in November.

Day	Daylight (hours)
November 1	8
November 8	7
November 15	6
November 22	5

What happens to the length of daylight from November 1 to November 22?

goes up

goes down

stays the same

BACK ↩

EXIT  
DOES  
NOT  
SAVE

NEXT ➞

HINT: When using single-switch or two-switch scanning, as the response options are scanned, the text will be highlighted in yellow. Therefore, do not choose yellow for overlay color in the PNP Profile or the single- and two-switch scanning highlighting feature will be hidden to the student.

## **STEP 5: PREPARE FOR THE ASSESSMENT: USING THE CHOSEN ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS**

In addition to the supports listed in the Testlet Information Page (TIP), test administrators may need the following materials:

- Appropriate assistive devices for the student (e.g., switches)
- Additional supports familiar to the student for use during the assessment (e.g., unit cubes)
- Concentration aids used by the student (e.g., stress ball)

More information about preparing for teacher-administered and computer-delivered testlets is available in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL.

## PREPARE FOR THE ASSESSMENTS

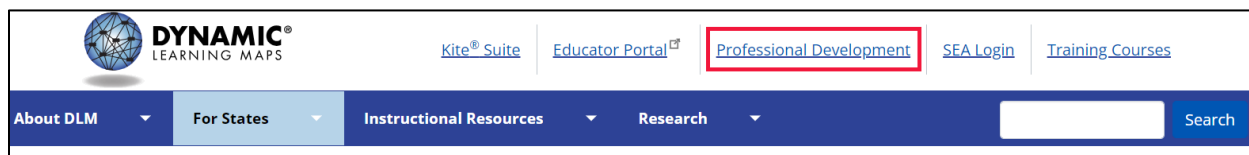
Help students prepare for the DLM alternate assessment by providing instruction aligned to the Essential Elements and reinforce the vocabulary found in the Essential Elements. Also, test administrators can help students develop comfort and confidence with the assessment format by using practice and released testlets. Resources for educators and district staff are available for each state on their DLM webpage. Review your state's DLM webpage for these topics: Essential Elements, Familiar Texts, Writing, Collections Lists, Released Testlets, and Sample Testlet Information Pages.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULES FOR INSTRUCTING STUDENTS WITH THE MOST COMPLEX NEEDS

In addition to the previously mentioned resources, online professional development learning modules were created to help test administrators understand the content standards (the Essential Elements) and their application to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Each of the interactive modules is short (30–45 minutes) and focuses on a single topic. These modules are available on the DLM website. Select the [Professional Development](#) hyperlink, as shown in Figure 17. Most modules are subject-specific and provide information and strategies to help test administrators instruct students.

**Figure 17**

*Professional Development Hyperlink on the DLM Website*



Some professional development modules are especially designed for instructing students with the most complex needs who complete the DLM assessments at the Initial and Distal Precursor linkage levels:

- [Beginning Communicators](#) describes symbolic and nonsymbolic forms of communication, the distinction between pre-intentional and presymbolic communicators, and additional sources of support for building communication skills.
- [DLM Core Vocabulary and Communication](#) focuses on the use of core vocabulary as a support for communication for students who cannot use speech to meet their face-to-face communication needs and require the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices.

- [Emergent Writing](#) describes alternate pencils, how to support emergent writers, what students learn during the emergent writing stage, and analyzed samples of emergent writing.
- [Forms of Number](#) focuses on three representational forms of number: concrete quantity, pictorial quantity, and symbol and numeral quantity. The module focuses on how all three of these forms support a student in developing number sense.
- [Predictable Chart Writing](#) focuses on what predictable chart writing is and why it is important for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Participants will examine student and teacher roles and how predictable chart writing can be adapted to meet the needs of students.
- [Shared Reading](#) describes shared reading, which is a reading approach that emphasizes interaction and engagement with books. In the DLM alternate assessment for ELA, students frequently engage in a shared reading of a text before rereading a text to respond to questions.
- [Speaking and Listening](#) addresses speaking and listening in the broader context of expressive and receptive communication for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The content in this module is important to understand the DLM Essential Elements in Speaking and Listening and across all the strands of Essential Elements in ELA.
- [Symbols](#) is an overview of symbols to support communication and interaction. The module also describes the use of symbols and photographs in text.
- [Unitizing](#) focuses on understanding units or groupings to help students develop a strategic use of units to deal with quantities and problem solving.
- [Writing with Alternate Pencils](#) describes ways to get students started with writing when they cannot use a traditional pencil, pen, or computer keyboard. The content of this module applies to students at all levels of literacy understanding, including students who do not yet know letter names or sounds.

Also, three other modules may be particularly useful:

- [Measuring and Comparing Lengths](#) focuses on understanding the attribute of length, how to compare and measure units, and the use of number lines and rulers in the measuring process.
- [Patterns and Sequence](#) discusses recognizing and creating patterns as a basic mathematics skill, upon which many mathematical concepts are established, and uses repetition with variety to support a student's understanding of patterns.
- [Perimeter, Volume, and Mass](#) focuses on the basic concepts of perimeter, volume, and mass.



## **STEP 6: EVALUATE THE ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS USED AFTER ASSESSMENTS**

After the student completes all testlets during the assessment window, test administrators and IEP teams should evaluate the overall use of accessibility supports. Test administrators should become better informed and can customize accessibility supports for future assessments. Test administrators and IEP teams can use the following list of questions to evaluate the accessibility supports used by students (Thompson et al., 2005).

### **QUESTIONS TO GUIDE EVALUATION OF THE ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS PROVIDED TO THE STUDENT**

This section addresses supports both within and outside of the Kite® system.

- What accessibility supports did the student use during instruction and assessment?
- What were the results of classroom assignments and assessments when students used accessibility supports compared to when they did not use them?
- If a student did not meet the expected level of performance, was the expectation not met because the student did not have access to necessary instruction, not receive the appropriate supports, or used inappropriate accessibility supports?
- As perceived by the student, how well did the accessibility supports work?
- What combinations of accessibility supports seemed to be effective?
- What difficulties, if any, did the student encounter using the accessibility supports?
- As perceived by test administrators and other observers, how well did the accessibility supports work?
- Did the student receive the accessibility supports documented in their IEP?
- Are the selected accessibility supports appropriate for the student to continue using, or should the student discontinue using some of them?

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015–2016).
- Higher Education Opportunity Act, Pub. L. 110-315, § 103(a)(24) (2008).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. 108–446, 118 Stat. 2647, (2004).
- Mineo Mollica, B. (2003). Representational competence. In J. C. Light, D. R. Beukelman, & J. Reichle (Eds.), *Communicative competence for individuals who use AAC: From research to effective practice* (pp. 107–146). Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Romski, M., & Sevcik, R. (1996). *Breaking the speech barrier: Language development through augmented means*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Romski, M., & Sevcik, R. (2005). Augmentative communication and early intervention: Myths and realities. *Infants & Young Children*, 18(3), 174–185.  
[https://journals.lww.com/iycjournal/Fulltext/2005/07000/Augmentative\\_Communication\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention\\_2.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/iycjournal/Fulltext/2005/07000/Augmentative_Communication_and_Early_Intervention_2.aspx)
- Sinharay, S., Wan, P., Whitaker, M., Kim, D., Zhang, L., & Choi, S. W. (2014). Determining the overall impact of interruptions during online testing. *Journal of Educational Measurement*. 51(4), 419–440. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jedm.12052>
- Thompson, S. J., Morse, A. B., Sharpe, M., & Hall, S. (2005). *Accommodations manual: How to select, administer, and evaluate use of accommodations for instruction and assessment of students with disabilities* (2nd ed.). Council of Chief State School Officers.  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210517132858/https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/AccommodationsManual.pdf>
- Thurlow, M., Ysseldyke, J., Erickson R., & Elliott, J. (1997). *Increasing the participation of students with disabilities in state and district assessments* (Policy Directions No. 6). University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.  
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED416627>

## GLOSSARY

Table 9 compiles relevant definitions and acronyms for the Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) alternate assessment.

**Table 9**

*DLM Alternate Assessment Glossary*

Term	Definition
<b>display enhancements</b>	Options that change the testlet appearance on the student's device screen, including magnification, overlay color, invert color choice, and contrast color.
<b>Educator Portal</b>	Educator Portal is a secure administrative application where educators manage student data and retrieve reports and extracts. Users can access Educator Portal using any supported browser via <a href="https://educator.kiteaai.org/">https://educator.kiteaai.org/</a> . For information on working within Educator Portal, access the DATA MANAGEMENT MANUAL and the EDUCATOR PORTAL USER GUIDE on the DLM website.
<b>engagement activity</b>	<b>ELA, mathematics, and science:</b> An activity at the beginning of a testlet that describes a scenario, taps prior knowledge or experience, or introduces the concept to be addressed. In English language arts (ELA) reading testlets, the first reading of the text often serves as the engagement activity. In mathematics and science, the engagement activity provides context for the items. A few science testlets at the upper linkage levels may include a short video without audio as the engagement activity.

Term	Definition
<b>Essential Elements</b>	<p>Essential Elements are the content standards used for the DLM alternate assessments. Essential Elements build a bridge from the grade-level standards to academic expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Essential Elements are at a reduced depth, breadth, and level of complexity. They are specific statements of knowledge and skills linked to the grade-level expectations identified in K–12 grade-level standards for English language arts and mathematics. Essential Elements in science are linked to the National Research Council’s Framework for K–12.</p>

<p><b>First Contact Survey</b></p>	<p><b>IE Model:</b></p> <p>A survey completed by the test administrator for each student. The survey is used to collect background information about students who are eligible for DLM alternate assessments. The survey goes beyond basic demographic information and includes questions on communication, assistive technology devices, motor and sensory impairments, and academic performance.</p> <p>In the fall window, data gathered from the survey’s core questions together with data gathered from the questions in ELA, mathematics, and science are used to <b>recommend</b> the linkage level for each Essential Element in each subject.</p> <p>The recommended linkage levels in the spring window for ELA and mathematics are based on performance on the Essential Elements that were tested in the fall window. If the test administrator selects an Essential Element that was not tested in the fall window, then the linkage level recommendations will be based on the First Contact Survey.</p> <p>For science in the spring window, data gathered from the survey’s core questions together with data gathered from the science questions are used to <b>assign</b> the linkage level for the first Essential Element. After the first tested Essential Element, the linkage level assignment of subsequent testlets is adaptive.</p> <p>For the writing testlet in each window, data gathered from the core questions together with data gathered from the writing questions are used to <b>recommend</b> the linkage level for the writing testlet.</p> <p><b>YE Model:</b></p> <p>A survey completed by the test administrator for each student. The survey is used to collect background information about students who are eligible for DLM</p>
------------------------------------	---

Term	Definition
	<p>alternate assessments. The survey goes beyond basic demographic information and includes questions on communication, assistive technology devices, motor and sensory impairments, and academic performance.</p> <p>In the optional instructionally embedded assessment window, data gathered from the survey's core questions together with data gathered from questions in ELA, mathematics, and science are used to <b>recommend</b> the linkage level for each Essential Element in each subject.</p> <p>Data gathered from the core questions plus data from the writing questions are used to <b>recommend</b> the linkage level for the writing testlet.</p> <p>In the spring assessment window, data gathered from the survey's core questions together with data gathered from questions in each subject are used to <b>assign</b> the linkage level for the first Essential Element in ELA, mathematics, and science. After the first tested Essential Element, the linkage level assignment of subsequent testlets is adaptive.</p> <p>In the spring assessment window, data gathered from the survey's core questions plus data from the writing questions are used to <b>assign</b> the linkage level for the writing testlet.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Instruction and Assessment Planner</b>	<p><b>IE Model:</b></p> <p>A section in Educator Portal where test administrators perform assessment functions for a student during both the required fall and spring windows for ELA and mathematics. Functions include selecting an Essential Element and linkage level for instruction and subsequent testing.</p> <p>Most data about the student can be accessed from the Instruction and Assessment Planner, including the results of an Essential Element at the tested linkage level and an indication of when the blueprint requirements are met for each subject tested. The combined scores from each window are summarized in the end-of-year Individual Student Score Reports.</p> <hr/> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Testing science is optional in the fall window, and score results from the testlets do not impact end-of-year Individual Student Score Reports. Science blueprints do not have to be met in the optional fall window.</p> <hr/> <p><b>YE Model:</b></p> <p>A section in Educator Portal where test administrators perform assessment functions for a student during the optional instructionally embedded assessment window. Test administrators select an Essential Element and linkage level for instruction and subsequent testing.</p> <p>Most assessment data about the student is provided in the Instruction and Assessment Planner during this window, including results of a tested Essential Element at a linkage level. Score results from these testlets are not used for the end-of-year Individual Student Score Reports. Blueprint requirements do not have to be met in this optional window.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>instructionally embedded assessment</b>	<p><b>IE Model:</b></p> <p><b>For ELA and mathematics:</b> A <b>required</b> assessment that is closely integrated with instruction throughout the fall and spring windows. Mastery results are indicated for each Essential Element at a linkage level that was tested, except the writing Essential Elements, which are not provided until the end-of-year individual student score reports are published. Instruction for the student can be adjusted before another testlet is administered.</p> <p><b>For science:</b> An optional assessment that is closely integrated with instruction throughout the fall window only. Mastery results are indicated for each Essential Element at a linkage level that was tested. Instruction for the student can be adjusted before another testlet is administered.</p> <p><b>YE Model:</b></p> <p><b>For ELA, mathematics, and science:</b> An optional assessment that is closely integrated with instruction throughout the optional instructionally embedded assessment window. Mastery results are indicated for each Essential Element at a linkage level that was tested, except the writing Essential Elements, which are not provided until the end-of-year individual student score reports are published. Instruction for the student can be adjusted before another testlet is administered.</p>



Term	Definition
<b>Kite® Student Portal</b>	<p>Kite Student Portal is the customized, secure interface that test administrators use to deliver the assessment to students. All students taking the DLM alternate assessment will have unique accounts in Kite Student Portal. Educators and staff do not have accounts in Student Portal.</p> <p>The most current version of Student Portal must be used and can be found on the <a href="#">Kite Suite webpage</a> on the DLM website. Once launched, Student Portal prevents students from accessing unauthorized webpages or applications during testing.</p> <p>In addition to operational testing in Student Portal, practice activities and released testlets can be administered using Student Portal.</p> <p><b>A browser version of Student Portal cannot be used to deliver operational testlets.</b></p>
<b>linkage level</b>	<p>An incremental level of cognitive complexity toward the learning target where an assessment was developed for the Essential Element. Linkage levels for an Essential Element are always related directly to grade-level content standards but at a reduced depth, breadth, and level of complexity.</p> <p>ELA and mathematics each have five linkage levels: Initial Precursor, Distal Precursor, Proximal Precursor, Target, and Successor. These linkage levels are a small section of the DLM learning map containing one or more nodes that represent critical concepts or skills needed to learn the Essential Element.</p> <p>Science has three linkage levels: Initial, Precursor, and Target.</p>
<b>materials</b>	<p>Any objects, manipulatives, and tools used during an assessment. Materials collection lists are specific to each window for each subject. The lists are found on each state's DLM website under Educator Resources.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>node</b>	<b>ELA and mathematics:</b> A representation in the DLM learning map of an individual skill or conceptual understanding identified in the research in ELA and mathematics.
<b>Personal Learning Profile</b>	A collective term used to describe a student's personal needs and preferences settings entered in the Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile in addition to information about the student entered in the First Contact Survey in Educator Portal.
<b>Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile</b>	<p>A section in Educator Portal where the test administrator selects settings to meet a student's personal accessibility needs and preferences for testing in Student Portal.</p> <p>The PNP Profile includes information about display enhancements, language and braille, and audio and environmental supports. Some settings selected in the PNP Profile are programmed in Student Portal (e.g., magnification). Other selections are provided by the test administrator outside Student Portal (e.g., calculator).</p>

Term	Definition
plan	<p><b>IE Model:</b></p> <p><b>ELA and mathematics:</b> A plan is an administrative function in the Instruction and Assessment Planner section of Educator Portal during the required fall and spring windows. The test administrator creates plans by selecting Essential Elements and linkage levels and assigning testlets.</p> <p><b>Science:</b> A plan is an administrative function in the Instruction and Assessment Planner section of Educator Portal during <b>only</b> the optional fall window. The test administrator creates plans by selecting Essential Elements, linkage levels, and assigning testlets.</p> <p><b>YE Model:</b></p> <p>A plan is an administrative function in the Instruction and Assessment Planner section of Educator Portal only during the optional instructionally embedded assessment windows. The test administrator creates plans for ELA, mathematics, and science by selecting Essential Elements and linkage levels and assigning testlets.</p>
released testlets	<p>A released testlet is a publicly available sample DLM assessment. Released testlets may be used by students and teachers as examples or opportunities for practice. Released testlets are developed using the same standards and methods used to develop testlets that are used in DLM operational assessments. New released testlets are added periodically.</p>
state education agency (SEA)	<p>A state department of education. The term SEA is sometimes used to refer to people who work at the state education agency.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>stem</b>	The beginning part of the item (question) that presents a problem to solve or a question to which a student responds. The stem may also include other relevant information in the item. A multiple-choice item is a common example in the DLM alternate assessment, consisting of a stem and a set of response options from which a student chooses.
<b>tactile graphic</b>	Tactile graphics are a means of conveying non-textual information to students who are blind or have visual impairments. Tactile graphics may include tactile representation of pictures, maps, graphs, diagrams, and other images. The DLM alternate assessment does not provide tactile graphics with the testlets.
<b>technology-enhanced items</b>	Computer-delivered test items that require a specialized interaction, such as matching and sorting. A technology-enhanced item is any item that is not answered using direct selection, such as multiple choice. This item type is only used for a few items at upper linkage levels in ELA and mathematics.
<b>testlet</b>	A short assessment that begins with an engagement activity followed by items. Most testlets have an average of five items. Together the items increase the instructional relevance of the assessment and provide a better estimate of a student's knowledge, skills, and understandings than can be achieved by a single assessment item. Each testlet assesses only one Essential Element except for the writing testlet, which assesses all writing Essential Elements together in one testlet. Testlets are either teacher-administered or computer-delivered. More specific information is found in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL.

Term	Definition
<b>Testlet Information Page (TIP)</b>	<p>A PDF that is unique to each testlet and provides specific information to guide the test administrator in delivering the assessment.</p> <p>The Testlet Information Page (TIP) for most testlets at the Initial and Distal Precursor linkage levels in ELA and mathematics lists the materials needed or describes the attributes of the materials needed specific to a testlet.</p> <p>The TIP at the Initial linkage level for science may list objects that must be gathered or picture-response cards that must be printed before testing. Best practice is to print them in color.</p> <p>Computer-delivered testlets usually require fewer materials than the teacher-administered testlets.</p>

## DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: OTHER SUPPORTS

Table 10 describes options available under the Other Supports tab in the Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile in Educator Portal.

**Table 10**

*Additional Supports in the Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) Profile*

Other Supports	Definition
<b>Alternate form-visual impairment</b>	Most testlets are designed for all students taking the Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) alternate assessment. For a limited number of Essential Elements and linkage levels, alternate forms are provided for students with visual impairments. These testlets are teacher-administered (not braille). When alternate forms are available, selecting this option will direct Student Portal to deliver that form. Alternate forms are not available for all Essential Elements at all linkage levels. When unavailable, a standard form will be delivered.
<b>Two-switch system</b>	Student Portal automatically supports two-switch step scanning with a switch interface in which one switch is set up to emulate the Tab key to move between choices and the other switch is set up to emulate the Enter key to select the choice when highlighted. Test administrators record two-switch scanning in PNP Profile settings.
<b>Individualized manipulatives</b>	Test administrators may use manipulatives that are familiar to students (e.g., abacus, counters, interlocking blocks, linking letters, unit cubes).
<b>Calculator</b>	Students may use a calculator unless the TIP indicates a calculator may not be used.

Other Supports	Definition
<b>Human read aloud</b>	Test administrators may always read the assessment aloud to students. When a student receives an alternate form-visual impairment form testlet, its TIP will include alternate text as additional pages after the main TIP for the test administrator to read aloud to the student. The alternate text includes descriptions of graphics and of images.
<b>Sign interpretation</b>	For students whose primary mode of receptive communication is sign language, test administrators may sign the assessment to the student using American Sign Language (ASL), Signed Exact English, or personalized sign systems. Sign language interpreters use the alternate text provided in the TIP for picture descriptions.
<b>Language translation</b>	For students who are English language learners and whose best expressive or receptive communication is a language other than English, test administrators may translate the assessment for the student. The Kite system does not provide language translations. State policy will determine whether translation can be used.
<b>Masking</b>	Masking is not an option in Student Portal, but it is an acceptable support for students with visual impairments. Test administrators may use a piece of paper to cover portions of the screen to reduce visual clutter without otherwise affecting the information or number of response options.
<b>Test administrator enters responses for student</b>	If students are unable to select response options themselves, they may indicate their responses through normal response types and forms of communication, such as eye gaze or gesture. Test administrators may then key in those responses. This option is to be used only when students are unable to record their responses independently and accurately in Student Portal.

Other Supports	Definition
<b>Partner-assisted scanning</b>	Partner-assisted scanning is a support in which test administrators assist students with scanning students' response options. Students indicate when their desired responses are presented. Test administrators record partner-assisted scanning in PNP Profile settings.



## **APPENDIX B: RELEVANT FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

### **EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT OF 2015**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaces the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and amends the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA). The ESSA removes federally mandated interventions and instead assigns accountability at the state level. ESSA continues to require fair assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. States will

...provide for the participation in assessments of all students; the appropriate accommodations, such as interoperability with, and ability to use, assistive technology, for children with disabilities (as defined in section 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401(3))), including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and students with a disability who are provided accommodations under an Act other than the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), necessary to measure the academic achievement of such children relative to the challenging state academic standards or alternate academic achievement standards described in paragraph (1)(E). [Sec. 1111 2 B vii I II]

### **INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2004**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) specifically governs services provided to students with disabilities. Accountability at the individual level is provided through IEPs developed for each student's unique needs. IDEA requires the participation of students with the most cognitive disabilities in state- and district-wide assessments. Specific IDEA requirements include:

Children with disabilities are included in general state- and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary [Sec. 612 (a)(16)(A)]. The term "individualized education program" or "IEP" means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section and that includes...a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of state- or district-wide assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in such assessment; and if the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular state- or district-wide assessment of student achievement (or part of such an assessment), a statement of why that assessment is not appropriate for the child; and how the child will be assessed. [Sec. 614 (d)(1)(A)(V) and (VI)]

## APPENDIX C: DLM ACCESSIBILITY WORKSHEETS FOR TEST ADMINISTRATORS AND IEP TEAMS

States may use these worksheets (Table 11, Table 12, and Table 13) to indicate which supports must be determined by IEP teams and to document the supports provided to each student. When updating supports during testing, note that Category 1 supports update in the Kite® system immediately, as do individualized manipulatives and calculator use from Category 2. However, four of the Category 2 supports require 24 hours to update: Alternate form-visual impairment, braille, single-switch, and two-switch systems.

**Table 11**

*Accessibility Worksheet: Category 1—Settings in the PNP Profile That Activate Supports Within Student Portal*

Accessibility Support	Setting Selected for STUDENT NAME	Notes and Evaluation
Contrast color		
Invert color choice		
Magnification		
Overlay color		
Spoken audio: Text only		
Spoken audio: Text and graphics		
Spoken audio: Nonvisual		

**Table 12**

*Accessibility Worksheet: Category 2—Settings in the PNP Profile That Require Supports or Materials in Addition to Those Within Student Portal*

<b>Accessibility Support</b>	<b>Setting Selected for STUDENT NAME</b>	<b>Notes and Evaluation</b>
Alternate form-visual impairment		
Calculator (refer to TIP)		
Individualized manipulatives		
Single-switch system (Access Profile enabled)		
Two-switch system		
Uncontracted braille: EBAE		
Uncontracted braille: UEB		

**Table 13**

*Accessibility Worksheet: Category 3—Settings in the PNP Profile That Require Supports Provided by the Test Administrator Outside of Student Portal*

<b>Accessibility Support</b>	<b>Setting Selected for STUDENT NAME</b>	<b>Notes and Evaluation</b>
Human read aloud		
Language translation of text		
Partner-assisted scanning		
Sign interpretation of text		
Test administrator enters student responses		

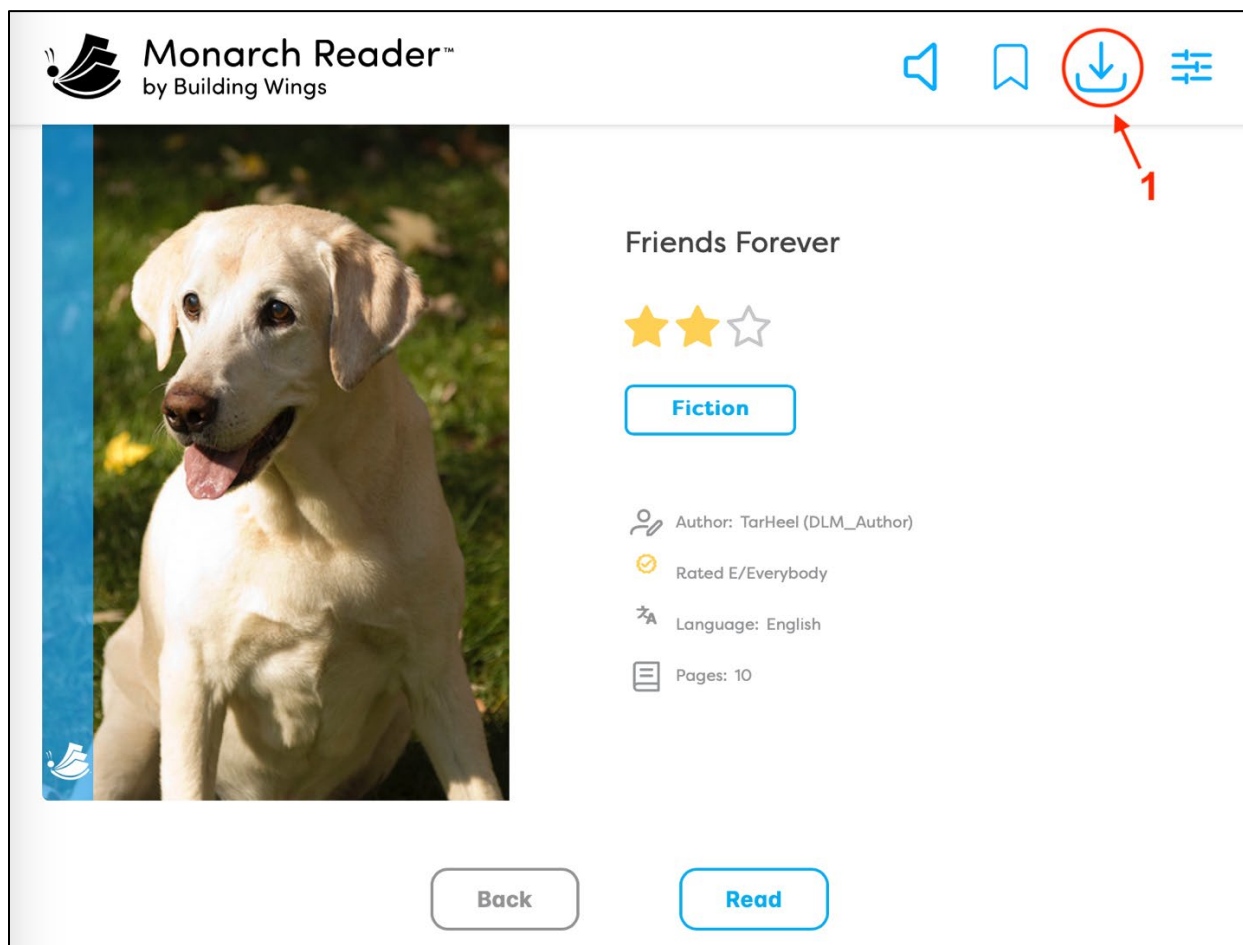
## APPENDIX D: DOWNLOADING OR PRINTING DLM FAMILIAR TEXTS

A link to the DLM Familiar Texts is provided on each state's page of the DLM website. DLM Familiar Texts can also be accessed under the Instructional Resources tab on the site's main menu. A button for each grade is provided at the bottom of the Familiar Texts page. Three source book titles are provided for each grade. Selecting a title reveals links to the DLM Familiar Texts associated with that title, both stories and informational texts.

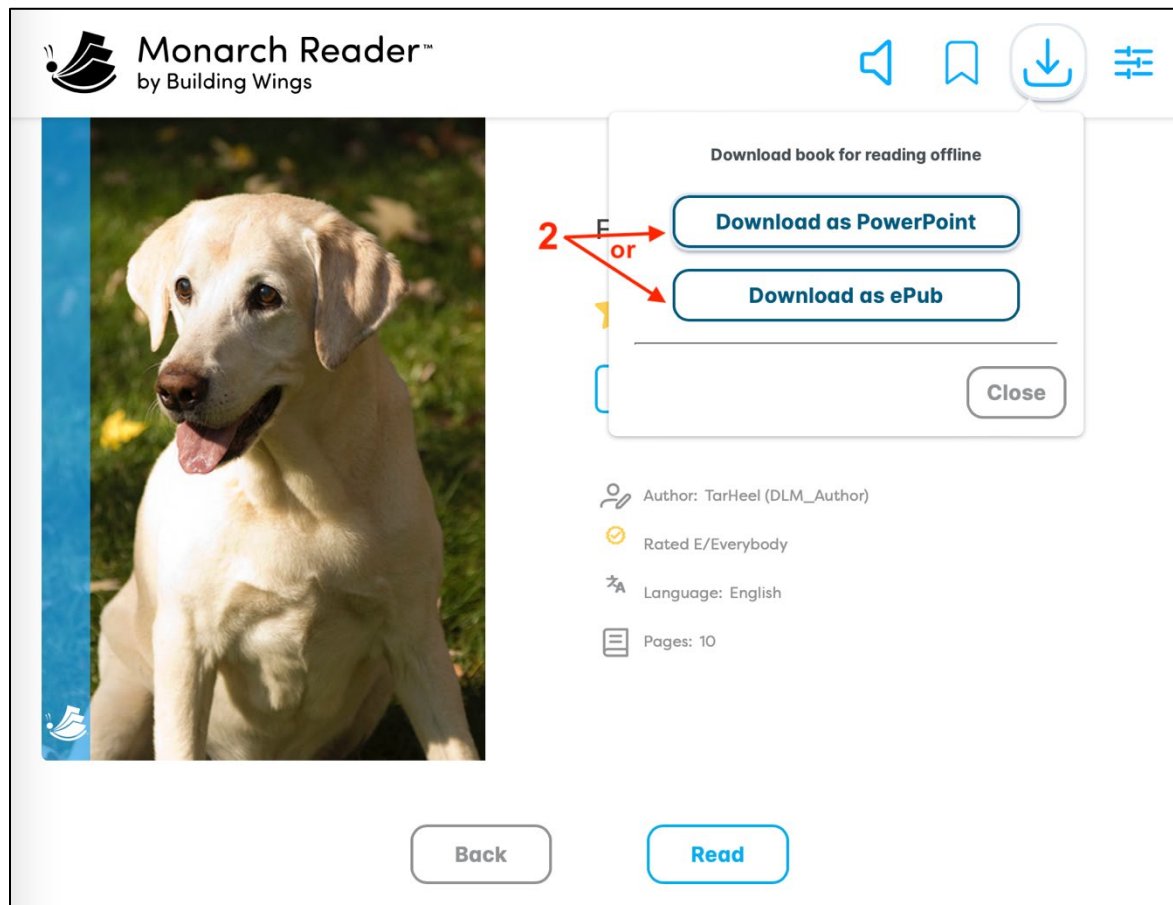
When selecting a DLM Familiar Text, it opens automatically in its browser version. However, the text can then be downloaded as an EPUB file for use on a tablet with an electronic book reader application, or it can be downloaded as a PowerPoint file that can be printed.

### ACCESS DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF A DLM FAMILIAR TEXT

- 1) Select the download icon in the top right corner of the screen. A menu will appear.



- 2) If downloaded as a PowerPoint file, the text can then be viewed as a slideshow in the PowerPoint application, or its slides can be printed. If downloaded as an ePub, the text will then be available in the device's ereader application.



---

## STATE APPENDICES

---

### DOCUMENT HISTORY

---

NOTE: Page numbers are valid ONLY for the date and version noted (Table 14). They may change in future versions.

---

**Table 14**  
*Document History of Changes*

Date	Section Name/ Summary of Changes	Starting Page
06/30/2025	Minor general edits throughout	N/A