Educator Toolkit: Maryland DLM Resources

This section provides Maryland educators with a curated collection of resources from the Maryland DLM website to support instruction, assessment, and data use for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Whether you're preparing for the Year-End assessment, using Instructionally Embedded assessments, or planning daily instruction aligned to Essential Elements, this guide organizes key tools to support your work.

Resources are grouped into four main categories:

- Assessment
- Instructional Planning
- Data Use & Decision-Making
- Program Supports

Each listing includes a brief description and a clickable link for quick access. Use this guide throughout the year to locate helpful materials, deepen your understanding of DLM, and strengthen connections between instruction and assessment.

ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

1. Accessibility Manual – This manual outlines the accessibility supports available within the DLM assessment system, including both embedded and non-embedded features. It helps educators determine appropriate supports for individual students based on their needs and instructional contexts. Use this document during IEP planning and before test administration to ensure equitable access to assessments.

2. Blueprint: English Language Arts for Year-End Model States – This blueprint outlines the structure and content coverage of the DLM Year-End English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. It details the Essential Elements assessed, frequency of testlets, and expectations across grade levels. Educators can use this guide for instructional alignment and to prepare students for what will be assessed during the spring testing window.

3. Blueprint: Mathematics for Year-End Model States – This document provides an overview of the math Essential Elements included in the Year-End DLM assessment. It includes tested content and linkage level expectations by grade, helping teachers plan instruction and understand the scope of math assessments. It's a helpful tool when pacing curriculum and aligning learning goals with tested content.

4. Blueprint: Science Phase I with Biology for Year-End Model States – This blueprint describes the high school biology content assessed in Phase I of the DLM Science assessment. It identifies key science Essential Elements and how they connect to grade-level expectations. Teachers can use it to understand the structure of the science test and guide instructional planning in life sciences.

5. DLM Writing Testlets Overview - This page provides writing-focused resources aligned with the DLM ELA Essential Elements. Materials support students in developing writing skills using prompts and structured

supports. Teachers can use these resources to plan writing instruction tailored to individual student needs and assessment targets.

6. Materials Collections for English Language Arts for Year-End States – This page provides a library of instructional resources aligned to ELA Essential Elements, including anchor texts and activities. Teachers can download and use these materials to plan instruction and reinforce skills that support assessment targets. Materials are organized by grade band and topic.

7. Materials Collections for Mathematics for Year-End States - This collection includes grade-band-specific math resources designed to support instruction aligned with DLM Essential Elements. Materials include sample problems, activities, and manipulatives. Educators use these to plan lessons and provide differentiated support for diverse learners.

8. Materials Collections for Science for Year-End States - This page includes science instructional resources aligned with the DLM Science Essential Elements. Materials cover physical, life, and earth/space science topics and support multi-modal engagement. Ideal for teachers planning accessible and standards-aligned science instruction.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING TOOLS

1. Complete List of Essential Elements for English Language Arts – This document lists all English Language Arts Essential Elements for grades K–12, aligned with college- and career-readiness standards. It serves as a foundational guide for planning instruction, developing IEP goals, and selecting appropriate testlets. Use it to ensure instructional targets are appropriate for individual student needs and aligned with DLM expectations.

2. Complete List of Essential Elements for Mathematics – This document outlines the full set of mathematics Essential Elements for grades K–12. It provides alternate achievement standards aligned to grade-level content, serving as a planning tool for instruction and assessment. Educators can use this to build IEP goals, select assessment targets, and ensure instructional alignment to DLM standards.

3. Essential Elements for Science - This document outlines the alternate science standards (Essential Elements) for grades K–12. It offers simplified versions of grade-level standards designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Educators use it for IEP alignment, instructional planning, and selecting assessment content.

4. Currently Tested Essential Elements for English Language Arts – This webpage offers access to the ELA Essential Elements by grade band, along with related instructional and professional resources. Teachers can explore standards, linkage levels, and guidance to support instructional planning. It's a helpful reference for choosing meaningful content and connecting it to student learning goals.

5. Currently Tested Essential Elements for Mathematics – This page contains all math Essential Elements across grade levels, with supporting materials to assist in instructional planning. It includes tools for identifying appropriate content, understanding student progressions, and aligning instruction with DLM expectations. Teachers can use it to navigate grade-specific standards and organize instructional focus.

6. DLM Essential Elements Unpacking - This page provides unpacked versions of the DLM Essential Elements for both ELA and mathematics, broken down by grade level and available in downloadable PDF formats. Educators can use these documents to clarify learning targets, understand progression across linkage levels, and guide instruction aligned to DLM standards.

7. DLM Familiar Texts for English Language Arts – This page includes a library of familiar texts used in DLM ELA instruction and assessments. Educators can preview or download text passages aligned to Essential Elements and use them to reinforce learning before and during instruction. It's especially useful for scaffolding reading instruction and preparing students for DLM testlets.

8. Instructionally Embedded Assessments Infographic – This visual guide explains how and when Instructionally Embedded assessments can be used within the Year-End model. It highlights benefits for students and teachers, including flexibility in assessment timing and alignment with instruction. A useful tool for communicating IE options to staff and families.

9. Science Instructional Activities – A library of instructional activities designed to support science learning aligned with DLM Essential Elements. These hands-on, scaffolded resources are useful for engaging students in inquiry and supporting assessment preparation. Teachers can filter by domain or grade band.

10. Using Mini-Maps to Plan Instruction - This guide explains how to use Mini-Maps—visual tools showing skill progression—for instructional planning. It demonstrates how educators can identify entry points and plan for targeted skill development. Teachers use Mini-Maps to better understand linkage levels and support individualized instruction.

DATA USE & DECISION-MAKING

1. DLM Performance Level Descriptors – This page offers access to publicly reported DLM assessment data, including state-level participation and performance summaries. Educators and administrators can use this information to understand broader outcomes, inform program decisions, and support continuous improvement. It's useful for data reviews and contextualizing local results.

2. DLM Score Report Videos for Year-End States – This page provides tools and guides to help educators and families understand DLM Year-End score reports. Resources include templates, explanations of report components, and communication tips for discussing results with parents. These materials support clear interpretation of data and informed next steps for instruction and planning.

3. Talking with Parents/Guardians about Score Reports - A helpful resource for educators explaining DLM Year-End assessment results to families. It provides tips and sample language for communicating results clearly and supportively. Useful during IEP meetings, conferences, or follow-up discussions about student progress.

PROGRAM SUPPORTS

1. District Staff Video Resources for Year-End Model States – This collection of short videos is designed to support district- and school-level staff implementing the DLM Year-End model. Topics include accessibility, test administration, and preparing for assessments. These videos are ideal for staff training and reviewing key components of Year-End testing procedures.

2. Educator Resource Videos for Year-End Model States – A curated set of short, focused videos explaining various aspects of instruction and assessment within the Year-End model. Topics include linkage levels, planning instruction, and using instructional resources. These videos serve as quick, practical PD tools for teachers using the DLM system.

Educator Toolkit: DLM Professional Development Resources

This guide organizes key professional development tools from the DLM Professional Development website to help Maryland educators build confidence and expertise in delivering instruction and assessments aligned with the Dynamic Learning Maps system. The site offers a wide range of self-directed modules, videos, and materials to support high-quality instruction for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Resources are grouped into the following categories for easy access:

- Instructional Resources
- Professional Development Modules

All resources includes a direct link and a brief summary to help educators quickly find and use the tools they need.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

Exemplar Text Supports – This resource offers accessible, grade-aligned companion texts for classic literature and informational pieces, designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Teachers can easily locate texts arranged by grade band, enhancing student engagement and preparation for Anchor-Read-Apply instructional practices. Use these exemplar texts to build pre-teaching strategies or reinforce comprehension in inclusive classrooms.

Text Resources - This page offers educators a rich collection of evidence-based text-based supports designed to enhance reading comprehension and engagement for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It includes strategies like Shared Reading and Anchor-Read-Apply, scaffolded lesson examples by grade, and access to familiar or companion texts, making it easy to plan meaningful English Language Arts instruction aligned with core standards. It includes the following topics:

- Shared Reading & Shared Reading Vignettes
- Anchor-Read-Apply Modules & Lesson Supports by Grade Level
- Directed Reading-Thinking Activities (DR-TA) & Other Approaches to Comprehension

Communication Supports - This resource offers a comprehensive set of core vocabulary tools aligned with DLM Essential Elements to support students who use augmentative and alternative communication. It includes downloadable communication displays, a ranked word list (including an initial “First 40”), and guidance for using tactile symbols—making it easy to integrate purposeful vocabulary instruction into daily routines. It includes the following topics:

- Project Core Modules & Implementation Supports
- Core Vocabulary Overview & Resources
- Tactile Symbols for Core Vocabulary

Writing Resources - This page offers a curated collection of writing supports aligned to DLM Essential Elements, covering all grade bands. Resources include structured lesson plans, anchor charts, and writing prompts tailored to different linkage levels. Teachers can use these tools to scaffold writing instruction, support student planning, and implement effective writing routines. It includes the following topics:

- Eye Gaze Frames
- Flip Charts
- Alternate Pencils

Lesson Supports - This page provides self-reflection and observation tools for teachers to examine and improve their instructional practice within the DLM framework. The downloadable forms focus on key instructional shifts across literacy and writing at different linkage levels, and are ideal for use during coaching, peer review, or professional learning sessions. Downloadable forms include the following:

- Shared Reading Self-Reflection and Observation (Initial/Distal Precursor)
- Emergent Writing Self-Reflection and Observation (Initial/Distal Precursor)
- Reading Comprehension Self-Reflection and Observation (Proximal Precursor/Target)
- Conventional Writing Self-Reflection and Observation (Proximal Precursor/Target)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULES

This comprehensive index lists all professional development modules provided by the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies for DLM. It includes self-directed and facilitated versions across content areas and practices—covering topics from Essential Elements and core vocabulary to math operations, reading strategies, and science frameworks. Teachers and leaders can quickly identify training aligned with their instructional focus and choose modules tailored to their delivery preferences. Some of the modules are organized into professional development packages that highlight professional development options for DLM implementation, offer customizable, scalable support such as workshops, coaching, and train-the-trainer models. The links to the self-directed modules are sorted below by content area/topic:

Mathematics

- Algebraic Thinking - Focuses on developing students' understanding of patterns, relationships, and functions to build foundational algebra skills.
- Basic Geometric Shapes and Their Attributes - Provides information on developing an understanding of basic geometric shapes and their attributes, essential for lesson planning.
- Calculating Accurately with Addition - Focuses on supporting students' understanding of addition facts, properties, and the use of manipulatives for those with physical barriers.
- Calculating Accurately with Division - Explores the role of other mathematical operations in learning division, emphasizing receptive and expressive language, and distinguishes between sharing and grouping division.
- Calculating Accurately with Multiplication - Addresses how repeated addition and arrays support multiplication understanding, utilizing multiple representations and highlighting multiplication properties.
- Calculating Accurately with Subtraction - Helps participants make connections between addition and subtraction, learning strategies, structures, and properties of subtraction.
- Composing, Decomposing, and Comparing Numbers - Focuses on how composing, decomposing, and comparing numbers support students' understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

- Composing and Decomposing Shapes and Area - Describes how composing and decomposing shapes support mathematical concepts, including area calculation through tiling and partitioning.
- Counting and Cardinality - Provides an introduction to counting and cardinality, emphasizing research-based instructional approaches for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Effective Instruction in Mathematics - Offers an overview of effective instructional practices in mathematics, specifically tailored for students with significant cognitive disabilities completing alternate assessments.
- Exponents and Probability - Introduces concepts of exponents and probability, focusing on instructional strategies for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Forms of Number - Explores different forms of numbers, such as whole numbers, fractions, and decimals, and their representations.
- Fractions Concepts and Models Part I - Covers foundational concepts of fractions, including part-whole relationships and fraction equivalence.
- Fraction Concepts and Models Part II - Delves into advanced fraction concepts, focusing on models and operations involving fractions.
- Functions and Rates - Discusses the understanding of functions and rates, emphasizing their application in real-world contexts.
- Measuring and Comparing Lengths – Covers strategies for teaching students to measure and compare lengths using accessible tools and real-world contexts.
- Organizing and Using Data to Answer Questions – Explores instructional strategies for helping students collect, organize, and analyze data to make informed decisions.
- Patterns and Sequence – Introduces ways to teach students to recognize, extend, and describe patterns as foundational concepts in math.
- Perimeter, Volume, and Mass – Provides guidance for instructing students in measuring and understanding perimeter, volume, and mass using concrete examples.
- Place Value – Focuses on building students' understanding of place value concepts to support number sense and calculation.
- The Power of Ten-Frames – Demonstrates how ten-frames can be used to build foundational numeracy and support conceptual understanding of number.
- Properties of Lines and Angles – Introduces methods to teach students the basic geometric properties of lines and angles through accessible instruction.
- Time and Money - Presents methods to teach concepts of time and money using real-life examples and concrete supports.
- Unitizing - Explains how to teach the concept of grouping items into units (like tens or dozens) to support counting and place value.
- Units and Operations - Focuses on how students can use units to understand and perform mathematical operations more effectively.

Reading & ELA

- Comprehension: Anchor-Read-Apply Strategy - Provides a structured approach to teaching reading that scaffolds comprehension through focused instructional steps.
- DR-TA and Other Text Comprehension Approaches - Introduces Direct Reading-Thinking Activity and similar strategies to actively engage students in understanding and analyzing texts.
- Generating Purposes for Reading - Helps teachers guide students in setting intentional goals to increase motivation and comprehension during reading.
- Principles of Instruction in English Language Arts - Outlines key principles for delivering effective ELA instruction aligned with DLM Essential Elements.
- Shared Reading - Focuses on interactive group reading experiences that build vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Writing

- Emergent Writing - Supports early writing development through strategies tailored for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Getting Started with Narrative Writing - Introduces foundational strategies for teaching students to write personal and fictional narratives.
- Getting Started in Writing Arguments - Covers beginning steps for helping students express opinions and build arguments through writing.
- Predictable Chart Writing – Highlights a collaborative writing strategy to support early literacy, communication, and engagement with print.
- Production and Distribution - Explores how students can plan, revise, and distribute writing using accessible tools and supports.
- Research and Range of Writing - Discusses how to guide students in conducting research and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Text Types and Purposes - Outlines different writing types—narrative, informative, and argumentative—and how to support student success in each.
- Writing with Alternate Pencils - Demonstrates how to use alternate pencils to support writing development in students with limited motor or verbal skills.
- Writing Information and Explanation Texts - Guides teachers in supporting students to write informative and explanatory texts with clarity and structure.

Science

- DLM Science Standards Framework Part 1 - Introduces foundational science concepts and inquiry practices aligned with DLM Essential Elements for early learners.
- DLM Science Standards Framework Part 2 - Builds on Part 1 with advanced science content and strategies for supporting student engagement in scientific practices.
- Instructional Strategies for Teaching DLM Science Part 1 - Introduces foundational instructional strategies for teaching science to students with significant cognitive disabilities using the DLM science framework.

- Instructional Strategies for Teaching DLM Science Part 2 – Focuses on applying science and engineering practices in classroom instruction, with examples aligned to the DLM science standards.
- Instructional Strategies for Teaching DLM Science Part 3 - Expands on parts 1 and 2 by exploring ways to support students' sensemaking and inquiry using accessible materials and real-world connections.
- Science and Engineering Practices Part 1 – Explores the first set of science and engineering practices, emphasizing student engagement with scientific inquiry.
- Science and Engineering Practices Part 2 – Builds on Part 1 with more advanced practices, reinforcing hands-on exploration and scientific reasoning.
- Science and Engineering Practices #2: Developing and Using Models – Focuses specifically on strategies for helping students create and use models to represent scientific concepts.
- Science and Engineering Practices #3: Planning and Carrying Out Investigations – Guides educators in supporting students to design and conduct investigations in science learning.
- Science and Engineering Practices #4: Analyzing and Interpreting Data – Provides approaches for teaching students to analyze and make sense of data collected during investigations.
- Science and Engineering Practices #5: Using Mathematics and Computational Thinking – Explains how to integrate math skills into science instruction to support modeling, measurement, and analysis.
- Science and Engineering Practices #6: Constructing Explanations – Covers instructional strategies to help students build and communicate scientific explanations based on evidence.

Communication

- Beginning Communicators - Provides instructional approaches for supporting students at the earliest stages of communication development.
- DLM Core Vocabulary and Communication - Offers resources and strategies to support communication skills using core vocabulary aligned with DLM Essential Elements.
- Speaking and Listening - Covers strategies to support students in developing speaking and listening skills aligned with academic standards.
- Symbols - Introduces the use of symbols to support communication, comprehension, and participation for students with complex needs.

Cross-Cutting & Program Foundations

- College and Career Readiness Standards - Explores how DLM Essential Elements align with college and career readiness goals to prepare students for post-school success.
- DLM Claims and Conceptual Areas - Explains the overarching claims and conceptual areas that structure the DLM assessment system and guide instructional focus.
- DLM Essential Elements - Breaks down the alternate achievement standards that guide instruction and assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- IEPs Linked to DLM Essential Elements - Guides educators on aligning Individualized Education Program goals with DLM Essential Elements to support instruction and assessment.

- Strategies and Formats for Presenting Ideas - Explores ways students can present their ideas through varied formats to demonstrate understanding and communication.
- Supporting Participation in Discussion - Provides guidance on promoting student engagement in classroom discussions using accessible tools and scaffolds.
- Universal Design for Learning - Highlights the UDL framework for designing accessible, flexible instruction that meets the diverse needs of all learners.
- Who are Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities? - Provides an overview of the characteristics, strengths, and needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities.