



New Hampshire

Department of Education

Determining Eligibility for Alternate Assessment (DLM)

What Is Most Significant Cognitive Disability?

A student may meet Most Significant Cognitive Disability (MSCD) criteria when they show:

- Significant challenges with **thinking and learning (cognitive skills)**
- Significant challenges with **everyday life skills (adaptive skills)**
- **Both** cognitive **and** adaptive scores that are very low (typically ≤ 60 or ≥ 2.5 SD below average)
- Performance **far below grade level**, even with accommodations and supports
- A need for **extensive, direct, individualized instruction** and **intensive daily supports**

These characteristics appear **across subjects** and in **multiple settings**.

Understanding Standard Scores

Most standardized tests use:

- **100** = average
- **15** = standard deviation

Typical range: **85–115**

MSCD range: **60 or below** ($\leq$ 2nd percentile)

Cognitive Assessments

Measure how a student: solves problems, understands and uses information, and reasons, remembers, and organizes ideas.

Examples of Valid Cognitive Assessments

General: WISC-5, Woodcock-Johnson IV Cognitive, Stanford-Binet 5, RIAS-2, KABC-2

Younger students: WPPSI, DAY-2

Use non-verbal tests when students have:

- Communication/language scores ≤ 80
- Extensive speech/language services
- Expressive/receptive language delays
- Are non-verbal
- Disabilities affecting communication

Examples of Valid Non-Verbal Cognitive Assessments

Non-verbal: CTONI-2, TONI-4, UNIT

Adaptive Skills Assessments

Measure communication, understanding, social interactions, behavior, self-care, safety, and routines.

Adaptive Functional Skills should come from **multiple sources** including assessments and input from caregivers, teachers, and observations.

Examples of Valid Adaptive Assessments

Adaptive: Vineland-III, ABAS-II/III, SIB-R, ABS-II, ICAP

*Guidance aligns with **NCEO, ESSA, DSM-5**, and several state partners.