Theory of Action

Beliefs

- Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SWSCD) can learn to integrate and build upon background knowledge
- SWSCD are a highly diverse group who learn through multiple pathways
- SWSCD need to be taught appropriately challenging content linked to college, career, and citizenship standards that will prepare them for postsecondary opportunities
- Assessment must be closely integrated with instruction in order to have positive instructional impacts
- Evidence-based research is the foundation to developing a dynamic alternate assessment system
- Assessments must be designed to promote accessibility for the diverse population of SWSCD
- Agile, interactive development approaches are efficient and effective
- Improved outcomes for SWSCD require educators to have deep knowledge and skills

Inputs

- College and Career Readiness Standards that describe knowledge, skills, and abilities in ELA and math
- Computer interoperability standards (APIP and QTI)
- Research on cognitive processes and academic domains
- Research on Evidence-Centered Design principles
- Research on accessibility
- Research on instruction for SWSCD
- Research on SWSCD including English learners
- Principles of universal design for learning and universal design for assessment
- Input from diverse stakeholder groups

Processes

- Maintain DLM Essential Elements (EEs) that link to College and Career Readiness Standards
- Develop large fine-grained learning map
- Develop Essential Element Concept Maps (EECMs) to support test development
- Create instructionally relevant testlets for use in instructionally embedded and end of year assessments
- Develop processes for evaluating and assuring technical quality
- Use computerized system to integrate map, testlets, test delivery, assessment management and professional development (PD)
- Develop and implement PD program
- Perform and document research in support of the assessment system
- Integrate evidence to support design choices

Outputs

- DLM Essential Elements
- Essential Element Concept Maps
- Blueprints
- Testlets for instructionally embedded and year-end assessment
- Personal Learning Profiles that provide the system with information to promote accessibility
- Computerized system that delivers an integrated assessment
- Useful on-demand reports with information about student status and growth for a variety of audiences and purposes
- Supports for instructional decision-making and implementation
- Focused and flexible PD program that addresses instruction and assessment implementation
- Technical documentation
- Resources for preservice education and parents

Short-term Outcomes 2017-2020

- Evidence supports the validity of score inferences
- Teachers have knowledge and skills to implement effective instruction for SWSCD
- Students have improved academic outcomes
- Computerized system that delivers an integrated assessment
- Useful on-demand reports with information about student status and growth for a variety of audiences and purposes
- Supports for instructional decision-making and implementation

Intermediate Outcomes

- SWSCD make growth throughout their academic career and are prepared for postsecondary options
- Parents, teachers, and others have higher expectations for students’ academic learning
- Students have improved academic outcomes
- Validity of inferences is supported by multiple categories of evidence
- The Community of Practice sustains and expands
- Teachers may use the DLM system as part of their routine practice

Long-term Outcomes

- Teachers understand how to build breadth and depth of conceptual understanding and make useful decisions from diagnostic information
- Teachers think differently about how to educate SWSCD in the context of learning maps
- The educational experiences of SWSCD are improved
- In DLM states, preserve education incorporates DLM consortium practices so the next generation of teachers is prepared to effectively teach SWSCD

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