



About Us:

The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium is made up of 13 states and additional partner agencies developing the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System, a computer-based assessment for the 1% of the K-12 public school student population with significant cognitive disabilities for whom, even with accommodations, general state assessments are not appropriate.

Led by the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas, DLM is funded through a five-year-grant awarded in late 2010 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The assessment will be implemented during the 2014-2015 school year.

The DLM Consortium is one of two multistate consortia to receive federal grants to create a next-generation alternate assessment linked to Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts for the 1% population. DLM member states are involved during every phase of DLM-AAS development.

DLM Consortium States

Iowa • Kansas • Michigan
Mississippi • Missouri
New Jersey • North Carolina
Oklahoma • Utah • Virginia
Washington • West Virginia
Wisconsin



Teacher Involvement During Development

Without significant teacher involvement, can you design and implement an assessment system that helps students learn? Neal Kingston, director of the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation that leads the Dynamic Learning Maps Consortium, doesn't think so.

"Learning and assessment occur in the classroom and without teacher involvement, even good ideas well supported by research can be implemented in ways that do not lead to the intended results," Kingston said.

With this in mind, teachers have played an integral role in creating the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System (DLM-AAS) collaborating with DLM staff during every stage of development.

Since the project began in February 2011, more than 300 teachers have been involved.

Students taking the alternate assessment represent a wide range of academic, communication, and social needs. The unique nature of the project, combined with the diversity of the alternate assessment student population, call for constant reflection and feedback from individuals who know both assessment and special education.

"We need feedback from educators on whether our assessment ideas, processes, and procedures are going to work in the real-world environment, and we will continue to seek their input throughout the life of the project," Kingston said.

Assessment Item Development:

Items will be built on models of effective classroom instruction



Teachers participate in the latest formal review of the Dynamic Learning Map in June 2012. More than 170 teachers have been involved in developing and refining the map since the DLM project began.

Teacher Input

Hundreds of teachers have been essential in creating the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System. DLM project staff members have continually sought input from master teachers on DLM project activities, including the following:

- Assessment Item Development
- Essential Elements
- Dynamic Learning Map
- Student Data Collection
- Professional Development

and assessment practices. DLM took master teachers' ideas to create prototype items, known as instructionally relevant testlets, that present short activities designed to gather information on students' achievement.

Beginning in October 2012, DLM project staff began traveling to DLM Consortium states to gather teacher

Teacher Comments

Teachers participated in multiple reviews of the Dynamic Learning Map. Their reactions were captured on video and can be found online at dynamiclearningmaps.org. Below are a few of their comments.

"The learning map acknowledges the cognitive development of students [with significant cognitive disabilities] and understands that development for some students is learning. So many educators struggle with understanding what learning is at that level and this will be a great tool to really propel them and keep them motivated."

~ Stacey Elster, Missouri

"I like that the learning map captures and incorporates so many different learning styles and different ways to get to a final goal."

~ Jessica Ward, Virginia

COMING UP

The next edition of the newsletter features Dynamic Learning Maps professional development activities currently available and in development.

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input on the testlets' content, format, and accessibility. A trip to Utah marked the first of several opportunities to share testlets with DLM stakeholders. Following each trip, DLM staff will review the stakeholders' feedback and make any necessary revisions.

"This iterative process will inform the design of the DLM assessment and hopefully impact in a positive way classroom instruction because the assessment items will model activities that are going to be good for teachers to be doing," Kingston said.

Common Core Essential

Elements: 132 educators from DLM Consortium states participated in two working meetings to develop the Essential Elements, which are specific statements of the content and skills that are linked to the Common Core State Standards grade-level specific expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Dynamic Learning Map: The map (which covers mathematics and English language arts) is made up of networks of sequenced learning targets (nodes) based on research on how students learn critical concepts and skills. Intensive reviews by expert educators in DLM Consortium states were necessary to ensure that the map also reflected key instructional milestones and the diversity of the alternate assessment population.

In all, 177 teachers, including 90 special education teachers, have contributed to map development and refinement.

Content experts and educators in mathematics and English language arts provided feedback on the content and inclusiveness of the map during formal map review meetings in fall 2011 and winter 2012.

Summer of 2012 brought special educators to Kansas City for a map review for accessibility. Teacher leaders and experts in the fields of intellectual disability, deafness/

blindness, blind/vision impairment, autism, motor impairment, and other sensory needs assembled to review nodes and pathways (connections between the nodes) that might be inaccessible to students. Some students cannot learn through typical pathways to gain access to content if they have sensory or motor disabilities.

Several days of working with the map resulted in alternate pathways to capture the ways students with significant cognitive disabilities learn academic content.

Student Data Collection: Between November 2012 and May 2013 educators from the DLM Consortium will complete the First Contact Student Characteristics Census Survey to collect accurate data on students who will take the alternate assessment.

Information will inform DLM's understanding of student needs and DLM assessment system design.

The survey will capture student characteristics at a fine-grain level: student demographics, sensory skills, motor skills, expressive and receptive language, computer access, use of alternate communication devices, academic skills, and engagement with attention to instruction.

Educators from seven DLM Consortium states also assisted in the survey's development via an inter-rater reliability study in the spring and summer of 2012.

Professional Development: Based on the feedback of DLM Consortium states, professional development materials have been crafted in a number of formats in order to offer school administrators and teachers flexibility and choice.

Professional development materials are already available on the DLM Consortium member-only portion of the DLM website. DLM professional development activities will be featured in the next edition of the newsletter.

For more information, visit us online at
www.dynamiclearningmaps.org

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