



New York State Education Department  
Office of Special Education  
**Educational Partnership**



# New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)

## Phase I: Foundational Content



Produced by the Technical Assistance Partnership (TAP) for Data and Transition at Cornell University.

*Last updated on 7/11/2025*

# Disclaimer

The resources shown are designed to provide helpful information. Resources are provided for instructional use purposes only and do not constitute NYSED endorsement of any vendor, author, or other sources. To the best of our knowledge, the resources provided are true and complete.

# Meeting Norms

- Take care of your needs (water, food, restroom, etc.)
- Speak your truth—Use “I” statements
- Ask what you need to understand and contribute
- Listen with respect
- Push your growing edge
- Participate and struggle together
- Expect a lack of closure
- Respect each others’ needs

# Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities



## Self-Advocacy

Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.



## Family Partnership

Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.



## Specially-Designed Instruction

Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.



## Research-Based Instruction

Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.



## Multi-Tiered Support

Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.



## Inclusive Activities

Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.



## Transition Support

Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.

# Agenda

- Training objectives
- New York State (NYS) assessments
- What is the NYSAA?
- Federal requirements
- NYSAA eligibility

# Materials

- NYSAA Policy Brief
- NYS Diploma Requirements
- Skills & Achievement Exit Summary
- How NYSAA One Percent is Calculated
- District Justification Summary Based on 2022-2023 Data
- NYSAA Participation Decision Making Tool
- FAQ NYSAA Eligibility
- Parent Notification Sample Letter for NYSAA Participation
- Start with the End in Mind
- NYSAA Parent Guide
- Case Studies

# Training Objectives

**The purpose of this presentation is to:**

- Ensure districts receive appropriate guidance on who should be participating in the NYSAA consistent with NYS's guidelines
- Define students with the most significant disabilities
- Understand how to utilize the NYSAA decision-making tool

# Slide Marker Icons

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# New York State Assessments

# State Assessments Overview

- Assessments are used to identify students' strengths and needs that will inform instructional priorities and to measure progress from year to year
- Students are assessed in the following areas:
  - English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics: grades 3–8, and one time at the high school level
  - Science: grades 5 and 8, and one time at the high school level

# All Students With Disabilities Must Be Included in Assessments

## Options for participation:

- The State's general assessment with or without accommodations
- Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) with or without accommodations
- A combination of the State's general assessment for some content areas and NYSAA for other content areas

# NYSAA

# NYSAA Overview

- Measures student achievement of NYS learning standards at a reduced level of depth, breadth, and complexity
- For students with the **most severe disabilities** who cannot participate in the State's general assessment even with accommodations
- Eligibility decided by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) team
- Decision must be reconsidered every year

# NYSAA Policy Brief

“NYSAA is part of the New York State (NYS) testing program that measures attainment of the State’s learning standards for students with the most severe disabilities.”



# How is the NYSAA administered?

NYSAA eligible students are assessed using the [Dynamic Learning Maps \(DLM\)](#), a computer-delivered adaptive assessment system.

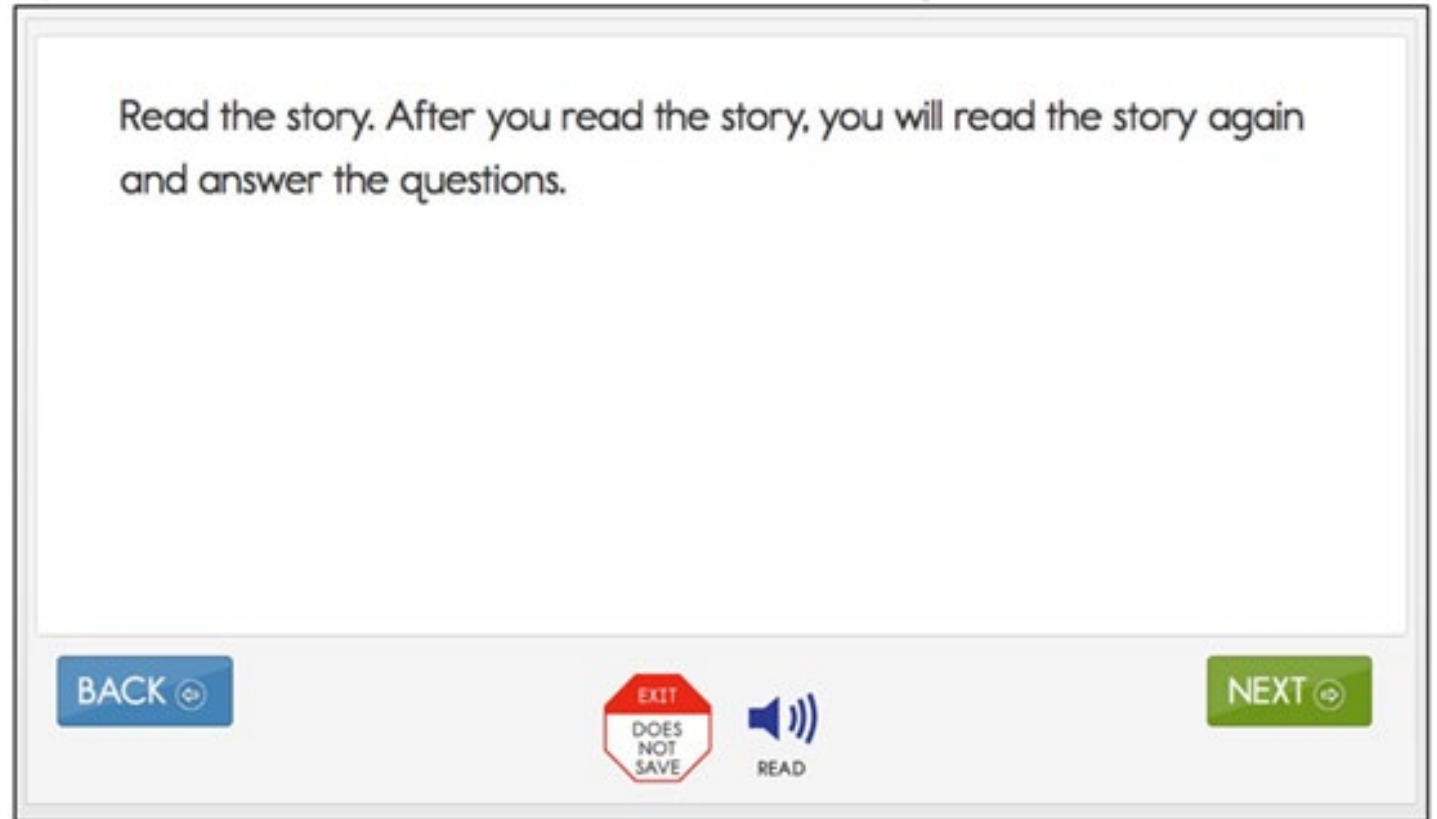


Figure 7. Screenshot of the instructions for an ELA reading testlet in Kite Student Portal.

# How is the NYSAA Structured?

The DLM alternate assessment is delivered in testlets.

Each testlet contains an engagement activity and three to nine test items.

This provides the opportunity to customize the assessment to the individualized abilities and needs of the student.

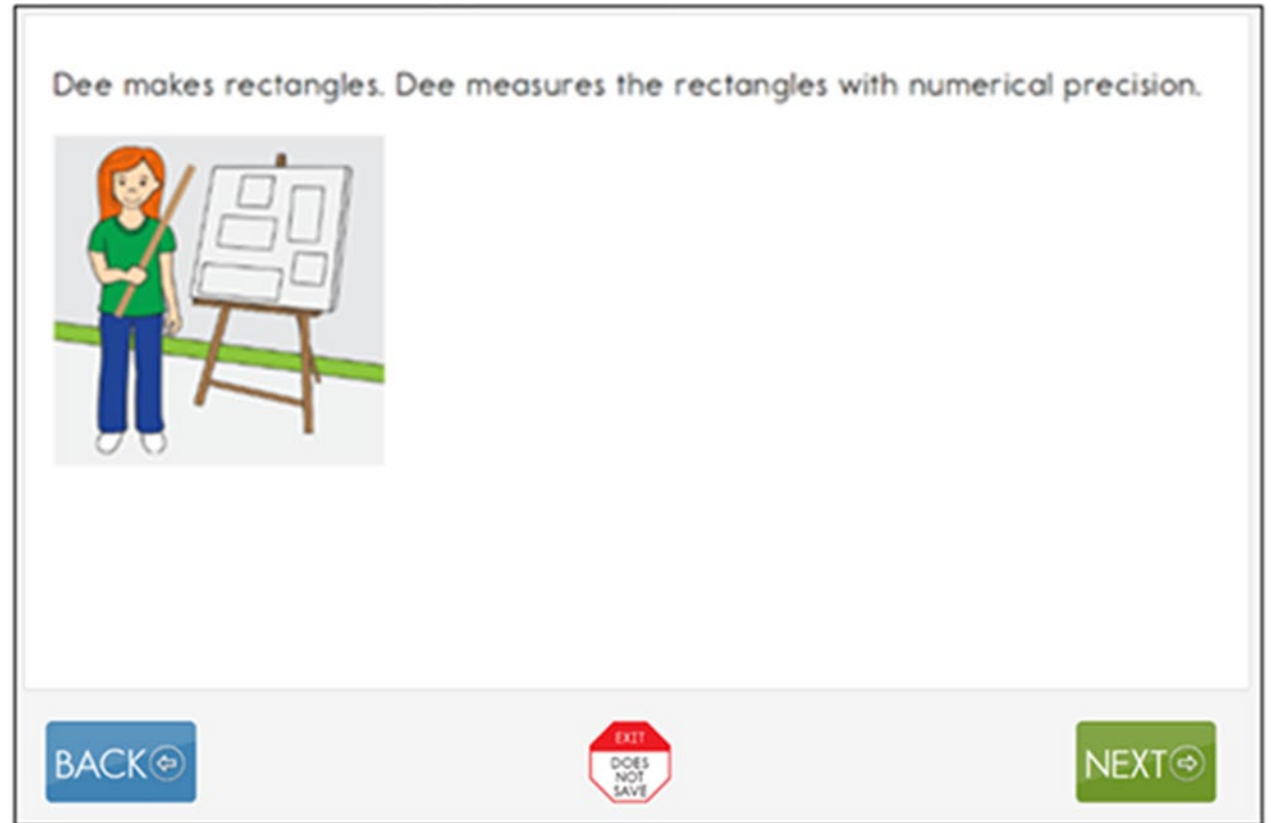


Figure 9. Screenshot of an engagement activity in a mathematics testlet on Kite Student Portal.

**Why is it important for NYSAA to be reserved for only the students with the most severe disabilities?**



# What is the Impact of Student Participation in the NYSAA?

# The Power of Expectations



# Reflection and Discussion



1. What was your reaction to hearing the outcomes of this study?
2. How do you think educators' and school staff's expectations of students affects them?

# Important Considerations

NYSAA participation impacts the student's:

- Participation and progress in the general curriculum
- Opportunity to earn a diploma



# Transition, Diploma, and Exiting Credential Options

- Consideration of diploma type relative to a student's post-secondary goals for education and employment is essential
- Diploma options:
  - Regents diploma with advanced designation
  - Regents diploma
  - Local high school diploma (based on safety net/appeal)
- Exiting credential options:
  - Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential for Students with Severe Disabilities
  - Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential

# Types of Diplomas



## Local

### 22 units of credit

Used appeals, safety nets to meet assessment requirements

or Superintendent determination of a local diploma

## Regents

### 22 units of credit

Earned passing scores (65+ for Regents examinations)\* on all required assessments (4 + 1)

## Regents with Advanced Designation

### 22 units of credit

Earned passing score on all required assessments (7 + 1)

- Additional exams required:
  - +2 math
  - +1 science
    - 1 life, 1 physical

Completed a sequence

\* A student can use one traditional appeal (60–64) and still receive a Regents diploma. Special appeals and exemptions can be applied to any diploma type.

# Exiting Credential Options

## Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential

- Available to students who are assessed using the NYSAA
- Must document student's skills and strengths and levels of independence in academic, career development, and foundational skills
- Additional instruction in the CDOS Learning Standards
- Provides learning experiences both in school and in the community
- Not a high school diploma by State and federal standards

## CDOS Commencement Credential

- Cannot be earned by students who participate in the NYSAA testing program in all subject areas
- Can help a student earn a diploma, supplement a diploma, **or** serve as a standalone credential for students who attempt but do not earn a Regents or local diploma
- Is a Board of Regents endorsed credential that recognizes the student's readiness for entry-level employment

# Skills and Achievement Exit Summary



**Students exiting with the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential must receive a student exit summary that documents the following:**

- Academic skills, as measured by the NYSAA
- Student's independent living and interpersonal skills
- Work-based learning (WBL) experiences
- CDOS learning standard skill attainment level
- Student strengths, preferences, and interests
- Measurable post-secondary goals
- Recommendations for supports needed
- State/community agency referrals

# Post-Secondary Impact of NYSAA

Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential is **not** a NYS high school diploma, and therefore does not meet criteria for:

- College admittance
- Many post-secondary training programs
- United States (US) military branches
- Jobs where a high school diploma is required



# Federal Requirements

**Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

# IDEA and ESSA Assessment Requirements (1 of 4)

- All students with disabilities must be included in general State and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations
  - Alternate assessments for students with most significant cognitive disabilities as necessary and as indicated on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- States must have guidelines for CSEs in determining on a case-by-case basis whether a student is most appropriately assessed with an alternate assessment
  - CSEs must determine a student's participation is consistent with NYS guidelines

# IDEA and ESSA Assessment Requirements (2 of 4)

- Guidelines must include State definition of “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities”
- Definition should address factors related to cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, such that:
  - Identification as having a particular disability or being an English language learner (ELL) does not determine whether a student is a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities

# IDEA and ESSA Assessment Requirements (3 of 4)

Definition should also address:

- A student with the most significant cognitive disabilities is **not** identified solely on the basis of a student's previous:
  - low academic achievement; or
  - need for accommodations to participate in general State or districtwide assessments; and
- A student is identified as having the most significant cognitive disabilities because the student requires **extensive, direct individualized instruction, and substantial supports** to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled

# IDEA and ESSA Assessment Requirements (4 of 4)

- IEPs of alternately assessed students must include a statement of why:
  - The student cannot participate in regular assessments; and
  - The particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate

# ESSA 1.0 Percent Cap Requirements

- ESSA limits the percentage of students that a state may assess with an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards to no more than 1.0 percent of all assessed students in the grades assessed in a state for each subject assessed (ELA, math, and science)
- This is to ensure that the vast majority of students take a state's general assessments and only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards

# ESSA 1.0 Percent Cap

- States may **not** prohibit districts from assessing more than 1.0 percent of students with an alternate assessment
- 1.0 percent cap requirement from ESSA at State level
  - Districts must submit information justifying the need to exceed 1.0 percent
  - States must provide appropriate oversight of districts submitting justifications and make justifications publicly available
- Parents (as part of the IEP process) must be clearly informed
  - That child's academic achievement will be measured based on alternate achievement standards
  - How participation in alternate assessment may delay or otherwise affect completing requirements for a regular high school diploma

*For more information on the 1% calculation, see Handout 7: How the NYSA 1% is Calculated*

# Justification and Assurances

- NYSED requires districts exceeding the 1.0 percent cap in one or more subject areas to submit an online justification of the need to assess more than 1.0 percent of their students who are alternately assessed
- As part of the justification, districts are also required to provide certain assurances consistent with ESSA and IDEA
- As required by ESSA, NYSED will make all submitted justifications publicly available

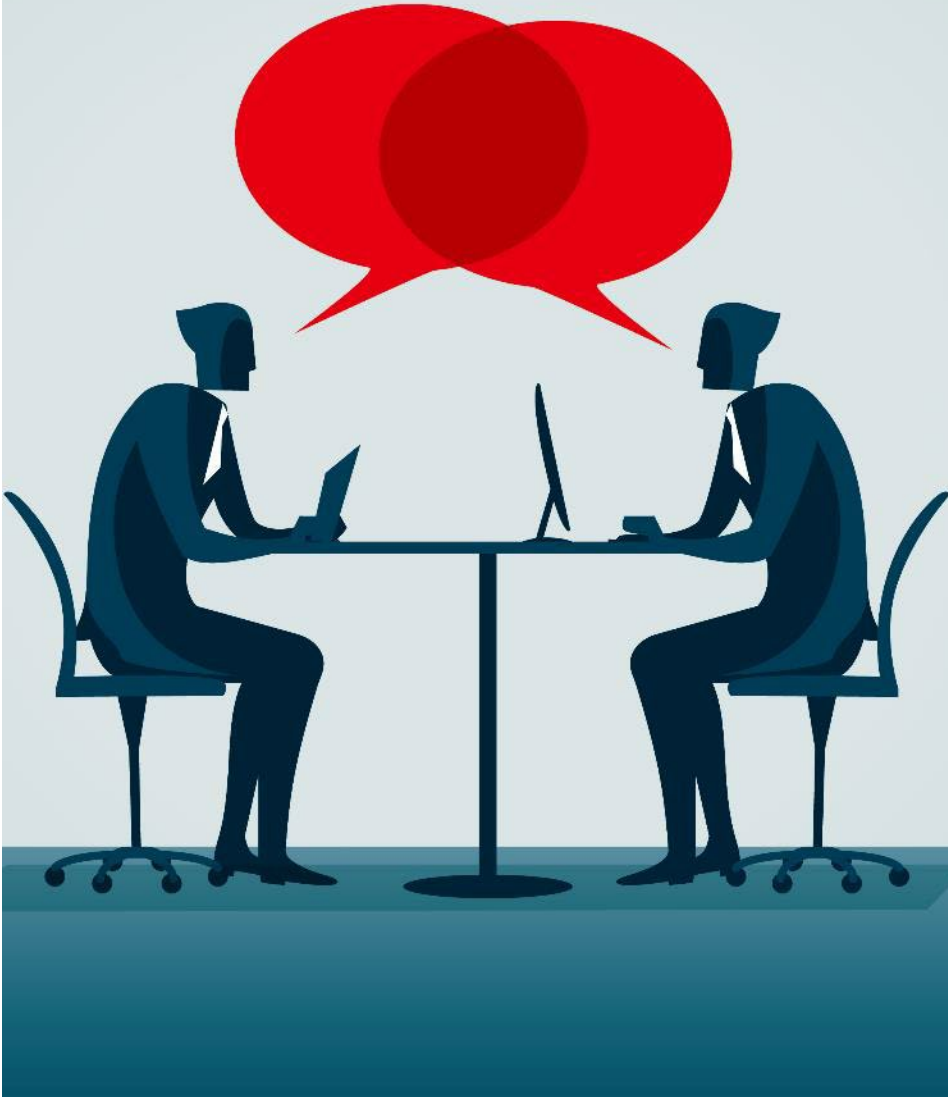
# Comparison of Data Results

2023–24 School Year State Average\*

|                 | ELA   | Math  | Science |
|-----------------|-------|-------|---------|
| State Target    | 1.0%  | 1.0%  | 1.0%    |
| State Average   | 1.39% | 1.40% | 1.35%   |
| Your Percentage |       |       |         |

\*excludes Charter schools and division for youth entities

# Discussion



Discuss the comparison between the State average, your percentage, and the implications on appropriate assessment considerations.

# NYSAA Eligibility

# Who are Students with Severe Disabilities?



## §100.1(t)(2)(iv)

*“Students with severe disabilities means students who have limited cognitive abilities combined with behavioral and/or physical limitations and who require highly specialized education, social, psychological, and medical services in order to maximize their full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment. Students with severe disabilities may experience severe speech, language, and/or perceptual-cognitive impairments, and evidence challenging behaviors that interfere with learning and socialization opportunities. These students may also have extremely fragile physiological conditions and may require personal care, physical/verbal supports, and/or prompts and assistive technology devices.”*

-New York State Regulations of the Commissioner of Education 8 CRR-NY § 100.1

# NYSAA Decision-Making Tool



## The student has a severe disability

- Significantly limited cognitive abilities
- Significant deficits in communication/language
- Significant deficits in adaptive behavior

## The student requires a highly specialized educational program

- The student's program facilitates the acquisition, application, and transfer of skills across natural environments
- Requires assistive technology
- Requires support systems to address personal care services, health/medical services, speech/language or behavioral needs

# What is a Severe Disability?

Significant challenges in all three areas:

## Cognitive abilities

- Most likely identified with developmental delays as an infant or toddler
- Disability is so severe that it will impact post-school outcomes (e.g., supported housing or employment)

## Communication/ language

- Severely limited expressive and receptive language skills

## Adaptive behavior

- Requires significant support and direct instruction with daily living skills
- Dependent on others for physical care, health, and/or safety
- Requires intensive supervision

# What is Highly Specialized Education?

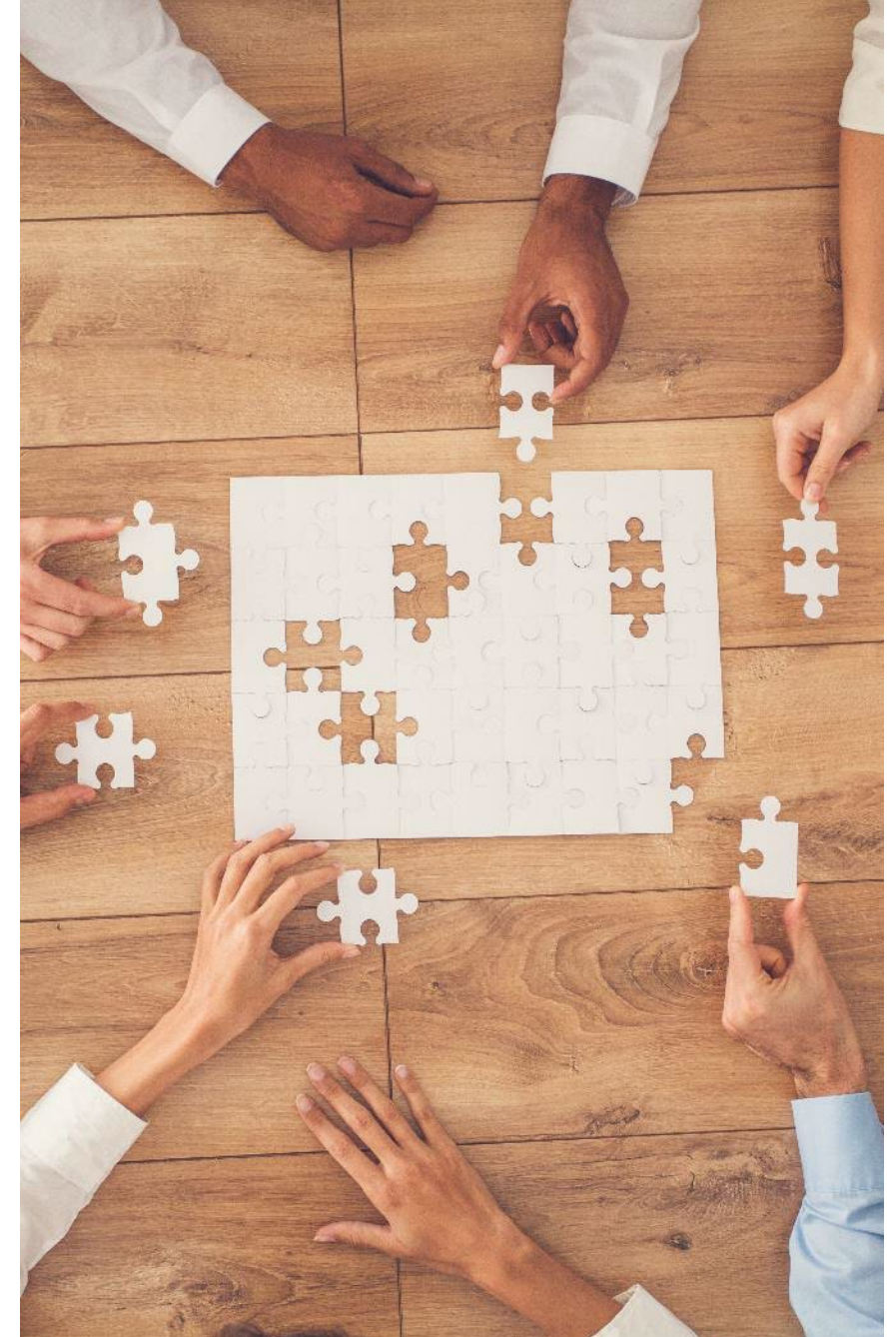
The student requires:

- High level of assistance and substantially modified learning materials to apply skills in different life settings (home, school, community, and/or workplace)
- Multiple sources of assistive technology
- Support systems to address personal care, health/medical, speech/language, or behavioral needs

# Decision-Making Process

CSEs must:

- Review and determine **annually** a student's eligibility to participate in NYSAA based on NYSED's *Eligibility and Participation Criteria*
- Thoughtfully consider how participation in NYSAA will impact the student's:
  - Participation and progress in general curriculum; and
  - Opportunity to earn a NYS local or Regents diploma



# **NYSAA Decisions Should not be Based Exclusively on:**

- Category of disability
- Educational environment
- Excessive or extended absences
- Language differences
- Cultural or environmental factors
- Previous low academic achievement
- Previous need for accommodations

# CSE Decision-Making Process Resources



[NYSAA FAQ](#)



[NYSAA Participation  
Decision-Making Tool](#)

# What do Parents Need to Know About Their Child Taking the NYSAA?



As a part of the process for developing an IEP, if the CSE determines that a student will participate in the NYSAA, the student's parents must be clearly informed that their child's performance will be measured based on alternate achievement standards that are:

- Reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity; and
- Do not meet the expectations necessary to earn a NYS local or Regents high school diploma in NYS



# Case Studies

Let's practice using the NYSAA decision-making tool.



# Reflection on Case Studies



- Which questions on the decision-making tool were most difficult to answer? Why?
- What additional information might be helpful?
- How did you work through disagreements?

# Wrap Up



# Exit Ticket

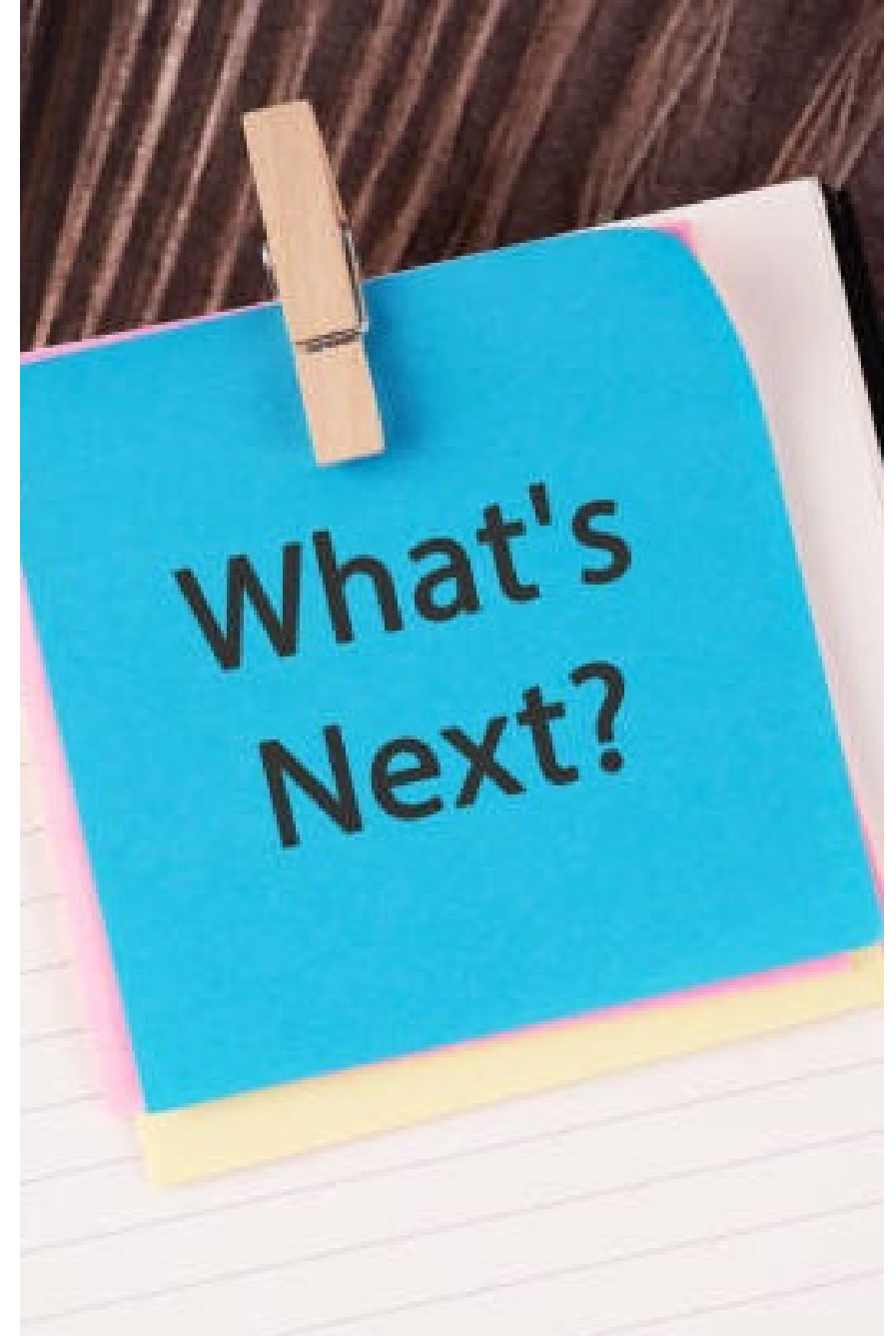


What is one key take-away from today's session?

# Looking Ahead

## What to expect

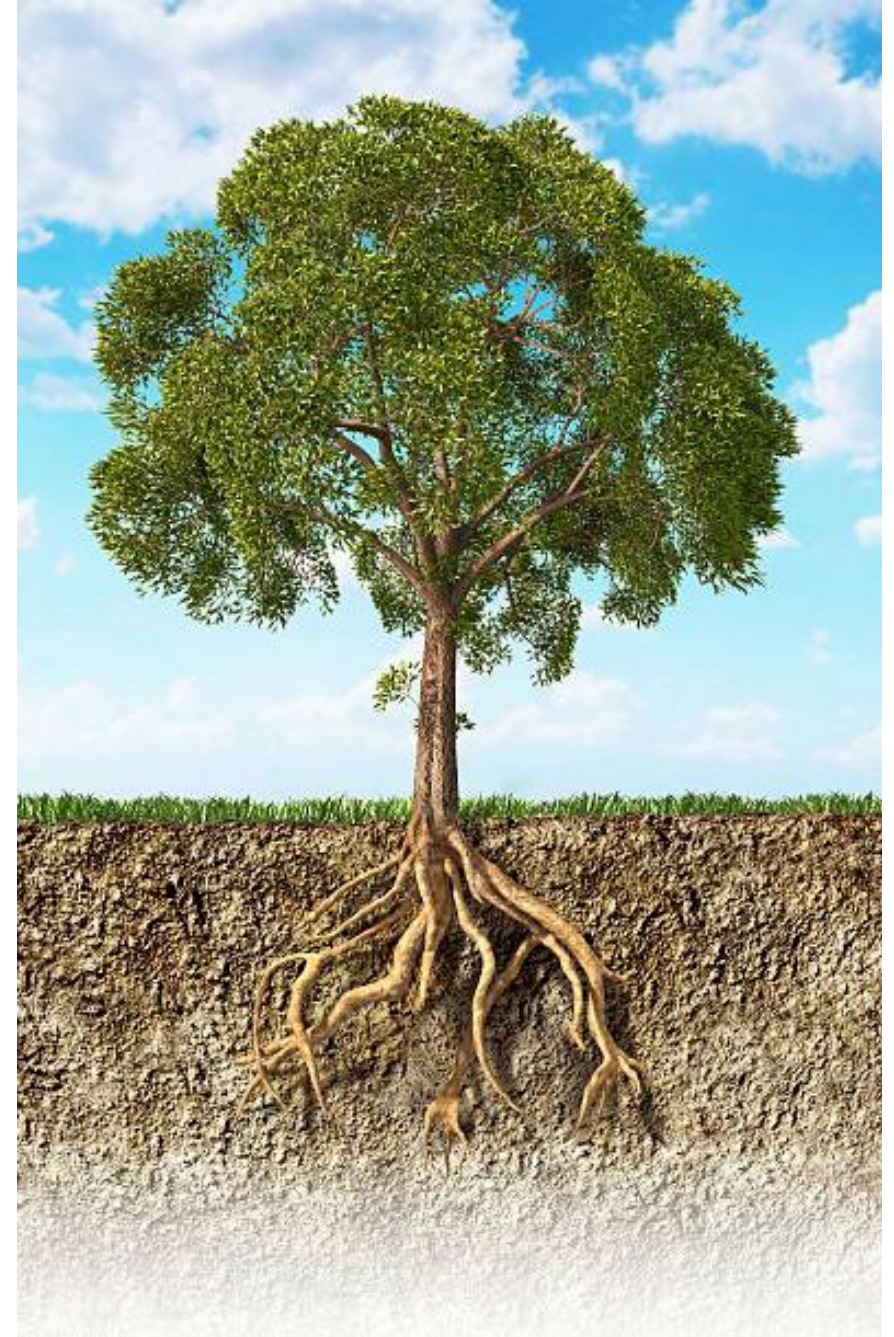
- Phase II: Root Cause Analysis
- Session III: Implementation Planning—Theory of Action/Theory of Change
- Session IV: Progress Monitoring



# Next Steps

Root Cause Analysis of  
the Data:

Why are we getting  
these results?



# Considerations for Root Cause Analysis

- Is there a specific grade level in which CSEs begin to recommend NYSAA eligibility?
  - What trends do you see within your District?
- Are all staff, K–12, trained in understanding the eligibility criteria for NYSAA?
  - If not, which staff members are trained?
- Are all staff, K–12, aware of the definition and implication of NYSAA?
- Is NYSAA eligibility an annual discussion at CSE?
- How are CSEs documenting NYSAA participation in the IEP?

# Resources

- [A Parent's Quick Guide to NYSAA](#)
- [Eligibility Criteria for Participation in NYSAA](#)
- [Justification for School Districts Exceeding the 1.0 Percent on Students Participating in NYSAA](#)
- [Information related to the NYSAA](#)
- [Office of State Assessment](#)

# Questions and Answers



# Contact Us

## TAP for Data

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This training was provided by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Data and Transition at Cornell University. The OSE Educational Partnership is funded by the New York State Education Department Office of Special Education.