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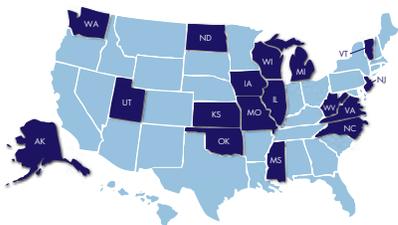
The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium is composed of 17 states and additional partner agencies. The DLM Consortium is committed to developing a computer-based assessment for K–12 public school students with significant cognitive disabilities. General state assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate for these students, who compose approximately 1% of students in this grade range.

The DLM Consortium is led by the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas, and is funded through a five-year grant awarded 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 the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts for the 1% population. DLM member states are involved during every phase of assessment development.

DLM Consortium States

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



EVERY STUDENT CAN LEARN AND DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE WITH DLM

Special education teacher Stephanie Hart was initially skeptical when she heard that the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment System would be able to reach the variety of students with significant cognitive disabilities that she serves. Hart said that after working as a



Two educators work together on content for DLM testlets during the summer item writing workshop.

DLM item writer this summer, she was now convinced that her students would be able to learn and be assessed through DLM. Hart said she predicts that “DLM will change the way that people think” about her students, and prove that “Yes, they can learn!”

The DLM, an online tool designed to simultaneously support teacher instruction and student learning, is composed of more than 6,500 testlets, each of which includes an engagement activity and three to five assessment items that collectively reveal what students know and can do as well as misunderstandings that can inform teacher instruction.

Melinda Kaifes, a functional specialist who works with students with significant cognitive disabilities, said she is pleased that DLM uses cognitively appropriate versions of many of the same texts and materials used with the general student population. These stories include *Henry & Mudge* for younger students and *To Kill a Mockingbird* for older students. Kaifes said she envisions her students learning side by side with other students, who will become future employers and co-workers who view people with significant cognitive disabilities as capable contributors in the workforce.



Educators from Kansas gather to write items for Dynamic Learning Maps. They were joined by educators from Mississippi, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

CREATING INSTRUCTIONALLY RELEVANT ASSESSMENT ITEMS FOR DLM

More than 100 educators from four DLM consortium states—Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Oklahoma—met for two months to create the instructionally relevant activities and tasks that will compose the DLM testlets in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The item writers were educators with in-depth knowledge of academic content, classroom instruction practices, or the special education population with significant cognitive disabilities. The instructional experiences of item writers ranged from early childhood through high school.

Meagan Karvonen, DLM associate director for test development and research, said she believed the quality of testlets written this summer was significantly enhanced by the item writers' authentic experiences in schools. Item writers created thousands of engagement activities and more than 27,000 assessment items required for the DLM testlets.

Every testlet focuses on one ELA or mathematics learning target that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. However, DLM learning targets go beyond the Common Core's learning progressions by using a node and web-like connection structure. Additionally, DLM learning targets

include specific representations of knowledge and skills that allow students to be assessed in the targeted content at varying levels of complexity. This structure allows multiple pathways for students to learn and demonstrate knowledge and skills.

After her item writing experience, classroom teacher Kendra Tumberlin-Adcock observed that the DLM approach to instructionally relevant assessment enables teachers to see even small increments of growth in students' abilities, including students who previously would not have been assessed.

In addition to working within the unique DLM structure, item writers also applied universal design principles to create testlet items that are accessible to a majority of students. When appropriate for the content, DLM includes specially designed testlets for use by students with limited mobility (when the general testlet cannot be accessed through the student's assistive technology devices), with significant to total vision loss, and with significant to total hearing loss.

Beth Maloun, a special education teacher, hopes that DLM can reach not only the children with the most severe disabilities, but also "that next layer above them, maybe not for testing but for guiding their instruction."

The present publication was developed under grant 84.373X100001 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The views expressed herein are solely those of the author(s), and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department should be inferred. The University of Kansas prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, age, ancestry, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, gender identity, gender expression and genetic information in the University's programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Director of the Office of Institutional Opportunity and Access, IOA@ku.edu, 1246 W. Campus Road, Room 153A, Lawrence, KS, 66045, (785) 864-6414, 711 TTY.