

Alignment. Assessment. Accountability.

Get research-based support from
The Alignment Center at Edvantia

Alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards.

When implemented Under No Child Left Behind, these types of assessments must first be submitted to a reliable alignment study.

Edvantia offers one of the first reliable, fully developed models for conducting studies of alternate assessments, including those based on modified standards. We can also help states design and write extended and modified standards and performance descriptors. And, we provide alignment services related to general education standards and assessments.

In 2008, Edvantia partnered with state-level educators in Kentucky, Nevada, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and North Carolina to refine their general and alternate standards, performance descriptors, and/or assessments to achieve full alignment.

Choose Edvantia

• Examine our model.

Take special note of our “extra” dimensions for studying alternate assessments based on modified standards—these are key to ensuring that all students have equal access to learning.

• Talk with Anna Hardway.

Edvantia uses a unique model for studying both general and alternate assessments. Dr. Jan Sheinker of the Edvantia National Faculty assists with alternate assessments, and we have an exclusive partnership with Dr. Norman Webb of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research for alignment work that requires his specific methodology.

• Invite a proposal from Edvantia when you release an RFP.

You will find our plan to be thorough, competitive, and an excellent value.

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ACE | Alignment Center
at EDVANTIA®

The Edvantia Alignment Study Model

Phase One: Analyzing & Rating Standards

- Determine cognitive complexity levels of state standards.
- Determine cognitive complexity levels for each set of achievement descriptors: general, alternate, and modified.

Phase Two: Analyzing & Rating Items

- Determine cognitive complexity levels of assessment items or student work samples.
- Determine best match of content between items and standards.
- Determine source of challenge as a point on a range.
- **Determine performance consistency between items and standards.**

Phase Three: Analyzing Degree of Alignment

- Determine degree of alignment between items and standards on these dimensions:
 - **extent of challenge**
 - range of content coverage
 - content balance
 - **performance complexity**
 - vertical alignment

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An Alignment Glossary

Definitions of the dimensions analyzed by The Alignment Center at Edvantia

Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity refers to the level of cognitive demand a student should exhibit to master the content described in the standard. The Edvantia rubric outlines four levels of cognitive complexity:

- Level 1 (Knowledge) includes an ability to recall, recognize, or identify.
- Level 2 (Comprehension) includes sufficient understanding of information to determine relevant details, meaning of content vocabulary, and classifying and ordering.
- Level 3 (Application and Analysis) includes application of concepts and skills to original or complex situations and tasks.
- Level 4 (Synthesis and Evaluation) includes the highest order of thinking skills that students need to perform tasks, to solve problems that require application to relevant problems, and to produce their own solutions or evaluate specified solutions to a problem.

Extent of Challenge

The extent of challenge score reflects the degree to which assessment items and/or student work samples (a) provide a range of challenge across the four levels of cognitive complexity and (b) appropriately reflect the level of cognitive complexity required by the standard(s). Raters look to see if the combined items provide students with opportunities to perform the standard at all proficiency levels.

Source of Challenge

This criterion defines the degree to which other sources of challenge are likely to interfere with a student's ability to understand what is required in the test item or work sample. That is, a student may find an item difficult not because it is complex, but because it is set in a context that is not a part of the student's background knowledge or cultural experience. Similarly, the task may require a level of language comprehension that makes the meaning of the task incomprehensible to the student. Or, the organization of the content may create other barriers to performance of the content, skill, or process being assessed.

Performance Consistency

Performance consistency analyzes the performance required by an item. The performance required may be different in various items and samples to help students acquire the enabling skills and, ultimately, the content and skills required by the standards. At some point in the assessment, however, students must have an opportunity to perform content and skills as they are required by the standards.

Performance Complexity

Evaluating performance complexity involves looking holistically across a combination of assessment items or samples for the completeness of the performance and for subsequent levels of complexity solicited.

Range of Content Coverage

This dimension of alignment relates to coverage of the standards; that is, looking across the entire assessment, whether one can account for every standard in the assessment. This aspect of the rating looks at simple coverage and reflects the percentages of standards that are covered by aligned test items or student work samples.

Content Balance

Content balance concerns the match in emphasis between the standards and the items or student work samples. An assessment may cover the full range of content required by the standards, but with a different emphasis than that evident in the standards. If so, it would be considered partially, not fully, balanced.

Vertical Alignment

The vertical alignment analysis looks for a clear description of the expected progression in skills and knowledge across grades. An examination of item statistics is often used to determine the degree to which this happens. When rating vertical alignment of items, the study team may note such things as the repetition of a requirement for students to develop problem-solving strategies when the repetition does not demand a specific progression of skills.