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STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Internal Communique • Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled

Dynamic Learning Maps

By Bonnie Aaron, Central Office

What is Dynamic Learning Maps?

The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System (DLM) is designed to “map” students’ skills. This includes both the kinds of skills tested on traditional multiple-choice tests and also all the related skills that help students master those tested skills. Think of a learning map like a common road map. Although students may share the same destination, they all begin their journeys from different starting points on the map.

For parents and educators who hope to guide students to their destination, that road map provides a wealth of information. First, it shows where a student is starting. It also shows the main route, which is the shortest, most direct way to get there. However, a good road map does more than show a single route. It also shows several alternate routes in case the main route cannot be travelled. Finally, the map shows all the places students must travel through to get to their destination. Put simply, dynamic learning maps help us see beyond where students are today to show us how they can get to where they need to go.

How does Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment work?

The system uses items and tasks embedded in day-to-day instruction. This helps map a student’s learning throughout the year. Under this system, a student may be given 50 – 150 individual items or tasks during the year. These small tests are given as part of instruction, rather than separate from it, giving teachers the chance to change their instruction to better support student learning throughout the year. A summative test will be given as an end-of-year test for the embedded model, and will also serve to fulfill federal accountability requirements.

The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium is a 17-state consortium funded by a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop an alternate assessment system for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The system will align to the new Common Core State Standards. DLM also includes external partners and experts from a wide range of fields.

Key components of the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment

- Dynamic assessment selects items and tasks for a student based on that student’s previous responses.
- Instructionally-embedded assessment brings teaching and testing together so tests give teachers valuable information about student learning when they most need it—during instruction.
- Instructionally-relevant items do more than test concepts; they also model good instruction.
- Administration options give states both instructionally-embedded testing as well as a standalone summative test.
- Universal design and accessibility features ensure that the system is designed for the students who actually use it.
- Professional development programs help teachers and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams understand learning maps and choose appropriate tasks for students.

Dynamic Learning Maps

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What can MSSD teachers look forward to in 2014?

The purpose of pilot testing is to test the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment system. The purposes of the field tests in 2014 are to collect information on:

- design dynamic routing function (student progression across testlets)
- opportunity to learn content on testlets
- new accessibility features

Student Performance Reports are not available for the field tests.

Field test overview & questions

Why participate?

Participation in all three tests is of immense value to individual students, educators and the DLM Consortium. Students and teachers who participate this year will be more familiar with DLM and the computer-based test delivery system when the assessment becomes operational in 2014-15. Teachers who participate have an opportunity to give feedback after every field test. This feedback helps improve the system before it becomes operational.

When are the field tests?

The three field test windows are:

- January 15 – 31, 2014
- March 17, 2014 – April 11, 2014
- May 1, 2014 – end of school year

What content will be tested?

Field tests will include English language arts and math components. During each field test, a student will answer approximately 15 items in each subject area.

Which students will participate?

Criteria for field test participants are students with significant cognitive disabilities. Students in grades 3-8 or high school (9-10 and 11-12) participate in the Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards.

Field Test Overview

Students will be administered three testlets (approximately 12-15 items) per content area during each field test. The system will still allow for exiting and returning to the assessment. All testlets will include a teacher survey for feedback on features.

Field Test 1

January 15th - 31st

2 Essential Elements (EEs) assessed per grade and content area

All students assessed on both EEs

Focus: Initialization into the map using data from the pilot

Field Test 2

March 17th - April 11th

5-10 EEs assessed per grade and content area

Each student assessed on 2 EEs per content area

Focus: First version of dynamic routing for teachers. Teachers are able to select testlets.

Field Test 3

May 1st - End of academic year

5-10 EEs assessed per grade and content area

Each student assessed on 2 EEs per content area

Focus: Usage reporting and recommendation functions for teachers

Transition Planning: It's a Team Effort

By Bev Luetkemeyer, Central Office

Whether it's the first transition plan or the last one before a child graduates it is important to have the right people at the table at the IEP meeting. Because Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) students often cannot speak for themselves, their parents are key players in the transition planning process. Teachers depend on parents to learn about the family's future plans so that the student's transition plan will fit in with the needs of the family and the student. Parents also provide valuable information about the family's involvement with other state and community agencies. Sometimes those other agencies may be able to provide or pay for transition services so they become very important team members for transition planning. But it is often not easy to find and connect with representatives of other agencies that can provide transition services that are vitally important to MSSD students.

What can parents and teachers do to establish linkages with agencies that can help? The first step is to learn about agencies in your own community and region. While family, friends and neighbors are great ways to learn about things and should not be counted out, there are some resources on the Worldwide Web that may be helpful. The Governor's Council on Disabilities has a Web site that links to information from many resources. It also has a Web-based resource directory that can be searched by region, county, type of service offered and type of disability served. Enter as many parameters as you like to narrow the search or search by one or two parameters to broaden the search. Search results generally include the address, phone number, contact person, Web site and email address for the agencies listed. You can find the Resource Directory at http://disability.mo.gov/resource_search/.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced recently the Missouri Inter-agency Transition Team (MITT) has a Web page listing information about all of the team member agencies. The MITT and its members have been at the forefront of statewide efforts to improve transition planning and post-school outcomes for children with disabilities. The MITT home page is also housed on the State of Missouri Disability Portal. To learn more about state-level agencies go to <http://disability.mo.gov/MITT.htm>.

Missouri's parent training agency, MPACT, has some terrific transition planning resources and learning opportunities that are geared more towards families of children with disabilities. MPACT offers a parent mentor program and training in the area of transition planning and many other topics. Trainings are offered online and in person at locations across the state. MPACT also sponsors an annual transition summit. MPACT offers a monthly e-newsletter to help parents and educators keep up with changes in special education and related laws and trends. To find out more about MPACT, register for training or request their newsletter visit their Web site at <http://ptimpact.org/index.aspx>.

The next step after learning about agencies is to take action to get the agencies involved in transition planning. Parents and educators should work together to decide when it is appropriate to bring outside agency representatives to the table. Parents can invite and bring to an IEP meeting anyone they determine has knowledge or expertise regarding their child. It is courteous for parents to tell the other members of the IEP team about those who have been invited to an IEP meeting. When it is determined that MSSD staff members should invite someone who represents an outside agency MSSD staff and parents must be aware that there are some confidentiality requirements that must be met before MSSD can extend the invitation. Because the IEP meeting invitation identifies the student as a person with a disability, MSSD staff must obtain signed written consent to disclose specific personally identifiable information. There is an MSSD form to help MSSD staff obtain consent.



After consent is obtained the road is clear to extend the invitation and work to get the outside agencies to the table. This may be where the real work begins but don't be discouraged. Involving other agencies well before graduation day will help students achieve better post-school outcomes in the long run. Outside agency involvement could be the link that helps a student be engaged in the community or helps a parent find respite care for their adult child after they graduate.

Missouri Declares October Disability History and Awareness Month

By Merv Blunt and Bev Luetkemeyer, Central Office

In May 2011, the Missouri Legislature passed House Bill 555. One provision of House Bill 555 authorizes school boards to require the provision of disability history and awareness instruction in public schools during the month of October of each year. House Bill 555 also designates the month of October to be Disability History and Awareness Month.

House Bill 555, sponsored by Representative Jeff Grisamore of Lee's Summit, was actively supported by disability advocates across Missouri. Many Missouri disability organizations advocated with legislative leaders, provided testimony on behalf of the bill, and worked diligently to see the bill move successfully through the legislative process.

The goals of disability history and awareness instruction in House Bill 555 are:

1. Instilling in students sensitivity for fellow students with disabilities and encouraging educational cultures that nurture safe and inclusive environments for students with disabilities in which bullying is discouraged and respect and appreciation for students with disabilities is encouraged;
2. An understanding that disability is a natural part of the human experience; we are all more alike than different; and regardless of disability, every citizen is afforded the same rights and responsibilities as that of any other;
3. The creation of a more inclusive school community, where students with disabilities are included in every aspect of society, and every student is acknowledged for their unique gifts, talents, and contributions; and
4. Reaffirmation of the local, state, and federal commitment to the full inclusion in society of, and the equal opportunity for, all individuals with disabilities.

The following are some other resources to help observe Disability History and Awareness Month.

Disability History and Awareness: A Resource Guide for Missouri is available on the Web through the State of Missouri Disability Portal at <http://dese.mo.gov/se/documents/se-admin-modishistresguide.pdf>.

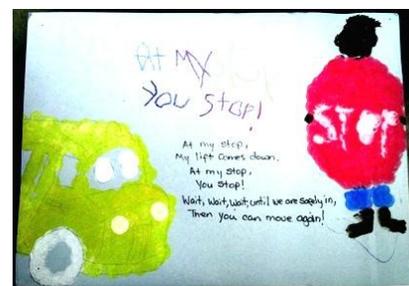
The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) is a clearinghouse for materials on disability awareness. People across the nation request information from the clearinghouse for the purposes of promoting disability awareness in their community organizations including schools. Please explore the resources available through NICHCY by visiting their Web site at <http://nichcy.org/families-community/awareness>.

Mountain State Centers for Independent Living has made available through their Web site a Disability History Development Class. The class consists of eight modules designed to help children learn about disabilities, disability etiquette, service animals, independent living centers and the Americans with Disabilities Act. This resource can be found at <http://mtstcil.org/skills/DisabilityHistory.html>.

Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled encourages all family members, students and staff to explore these resources and share them with friends, neighbors and members of your communities.

2013 MAPT Safety Poster Contest Winners

The Missouri Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) holds an annual poster contest promoting school bus safety. The posters were judged at the Annual MAPT Conference and Trade Show this past July in Columbia. Jordan, Scarlet, and Chelsea from Trails West School in Grandview submitted the winning poster in the Division 4 (Special Education) Category. Their teacher is Suzette Davie. Their poster, along with the winning posters in the other divisions will be forwarded to the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT). NAPT will select the national winning poster to be used during National School Bus Safety Week, October 21 - 25, 2013.



MISSOURI SCHOOLS FOR THE SEVERELY DISABLED

Website: dese.mo.gov/se/msssd/

NOTE: If you have items of interest for Staff Highlights, please call 573-751-0706, 800-735-2966 (Missouri Relay) or forward them to Debbie Downing, Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; or send an email to debbie.downing@dese.mo.gov.