



# Links for Academic Learning

Presented by-

**University of North Carolina  
at Charlotte** Partners in the  
National Alternate Assessment Center

# [ OSEP Subcontract of NAAC ]

- Based on UNCC partnership in National Alternate Assessment Center [www.naacpartners.org](http://www.naacpartners.org) (#H324U040001) at UKY.
- Investigators for UNCC
  - Claudia Flowers
  - Diane Browder
  - Meagan Karvonen (WCU)
  - Shawnee Wakeman

# Issues that Complicate Alignment of AA-AAS

- Unique formats of the assessments
  - Checklists, performance-based, portfolios
  - Varying degree of standardization of items and administration
- Teachers may not have had preservice training in teaching state standards
- Extending state standards for access is complex
  - Can produce items not even academic

# [ Current Models of Alignment ]

- Achieve
  - <http://www.cresst.org/>
- Survey Enacted Curriculum
  - <http://cep.terc.edu/dec/research/alignPaper.pdf>
- Webb's Model
  - <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/WEBBMonograph6criteria.pdf>

# Why a New Alignment Method is Needed

- Unique characteristics of population
  - How students show what they know
- Need to consider instructional alignment
  - Recent history of under emphasis on academic learning for this population
- Additional variable of translated standards
  - Do extended standards align?
- Consideration of alternate achievement standards
  - What “counts” in determining proficiency?

# [ Links for Academic Learning ]

- Flowers, C., Wakeman, S., Browder, D., & Karvonen, M. (2007). *Links for academic learning: An alignment protocol for alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards*. Charlotte, NC: National Alternate Assessment Center at University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

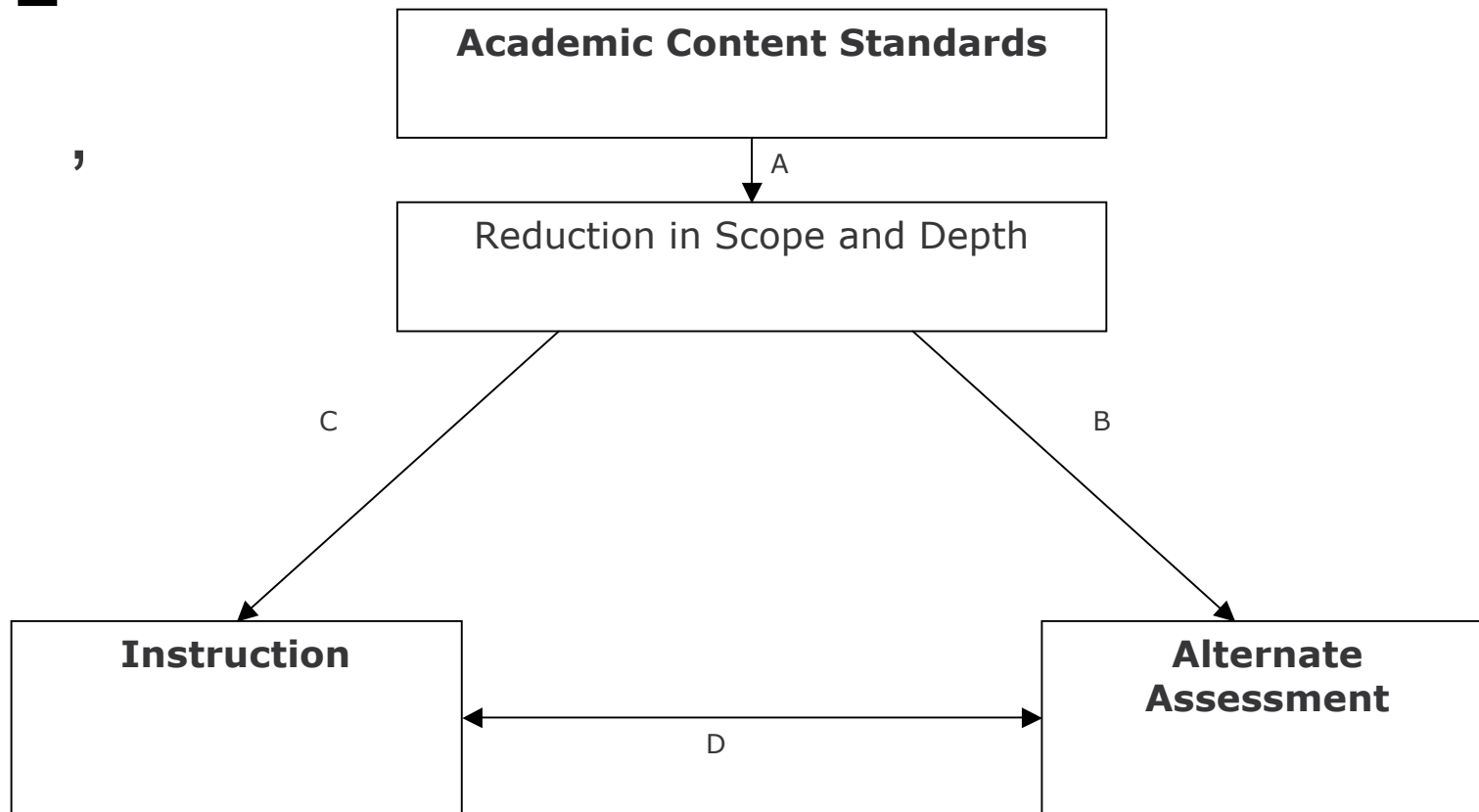
# [ How Method Developed ]

- Review of literature on alignment
  - General assessments
  - Alternate assessments
- Consideration of current methods
  - Achieve
  - Webb
  - Survey Enacted Curriculum
- Convened panel of experts in alignment
  - Alignment researchers
  - Measurement company reps
- Development of a conceptual framework for what it means to “link” to grade level standards
- Validation of criteria for this framework
  - States
  - Measurement experts
  - Experts in severe disabilities
- NC group currently evaluating application with states with various formats of AA
  - Also available to vendors via training by NC team

# What Is Access to General Curriculum Content?

- Browder, D., Wakeman, S.Y., Flowers, C., Rickelman, R.J., Pugalee, D., & Karvonen, D. (2007). Creating access to the general curriculum with links to grade level content for students with significant cognitive disabilities: an explication of the concept. *Journal of Special Education, 41, 2-16.*
- Seven Criteria for Access to the General Curriculum
  - Four derived from federal policy
  - Three based on needs of population

# [ What is aligned in LAL.... ]



# What is alternate achievement that links to grade level standards?

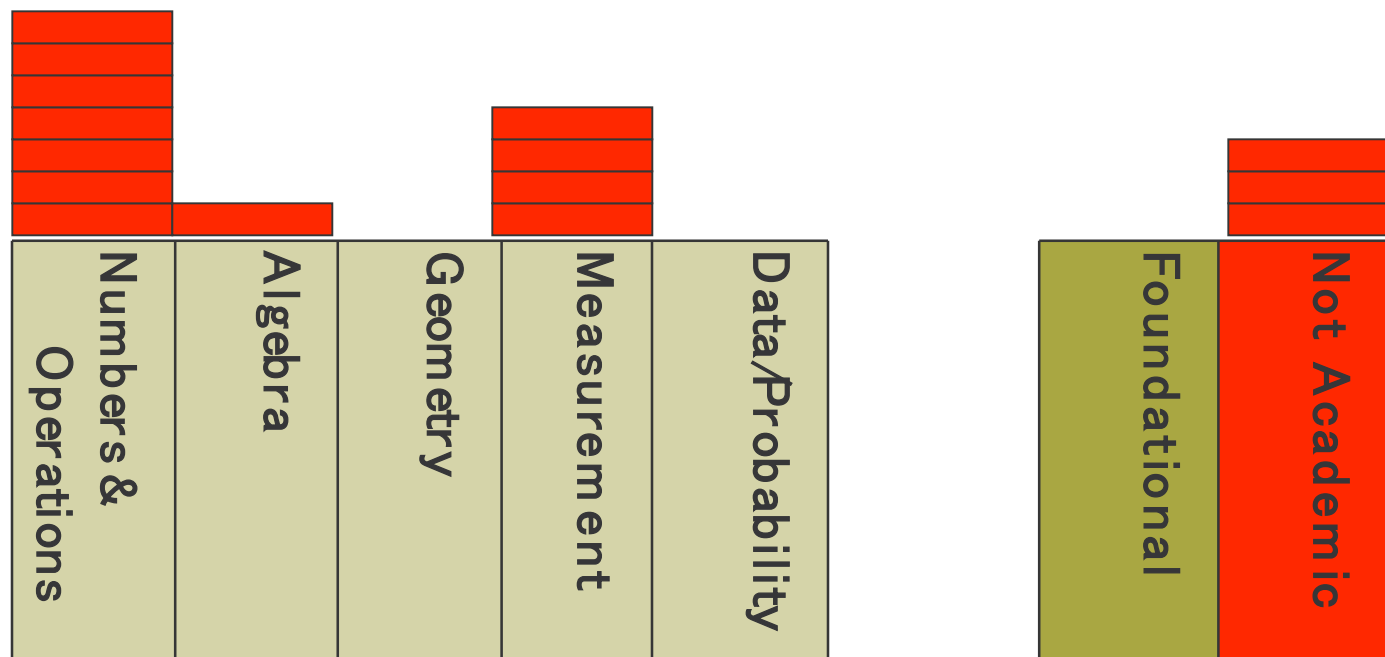
- To be linked to grade level standards, the target for achievement must be academic content (e.g., reading, math, science) that is referenced to the student's assigned grade based on chronological age. Functional activities and materials may be used to promote understanding, but the target skills for student achievement are academically-focused. Some prioritization of the content will occur in setting this expectation, but it should reflect the major domains of the curricular area (e.g., strands of math) and have fidelity with this content and how it is typically taught in general education. The content will differ from grade level in range, balance, and depth of knowledge, but the expected achievement is for student to demonstrate some learning of grade referenced academic content.

# Criterion 1 asks: “*Is it Academic?*”

- Can it be located within one of the domains of the major content areas for LA, math, science as defined by national content experts?
  - National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
  - Strands of Science from National Science Foundation
  - National Council for Teachers of English
    - Also National Reading Panel components of reading
- How much emphasis in each domain?

# Criterion 1

15 Items/Task



NCTM Strands

September 18, 2007

## Criterion 2: Grade Referenced

- The content is referenced to the student's assigned grade level (based on CA)
  - Are extended standards and AA referenced to the state's standards by grade or by grade band?
  - State's blueprint for % intended by strand of academic content by grade level

## Criterion 2- The student's assigned grade level is the point of reference

- Source- USDOE, 2005, p. 26
  - AA should be “clearly related to grade-level content, although it may be restricted in scope or complexity or take the form of introductory or prerequisite skills”
- *Although alignment studies of general assessment can focus on assessments by grade level, how “grade level” links are established in AA needs to be tracked due to historical practice of ungraded classes*

## Criterion 3: Content and Performance Centrality

- The focus of achievement maintains fidelity with the content of the original grade level (content centrality) and when possible, with the specified performance in the original state standards (category of knowledge)
  - Content match is near, far, none for AA items and extended standards
  - Performance match is all, some, or none

Criterion 3 asks,  
*“Is it plumb? Is it square?”*

- Alternate assessment items
  - Match on content
    - Doable since professional typically presents the content
      - E.g., if the standard addresses fiction, are the materials fiction vs. survival words
  - Match on performance
    - Requires more creativity; more difficult for students with more significant disabilities
      - E.g., if standard says “evaluate” does the task have the student evaluate or simply identify

## Criterion 4: Range, Balance, and DOK

- The content differs from grade level in range, balance, and depth of knowledge (DOK) but sets high expectations for Ss with SCD (including full range of DOK)
  - Using items that: a) are academic and b) have at least far content centrality, compute range, balance, and DOK
    - Does it match state's priorities?
  - Depth of Knowledge
    - AA should match extended standards
    - And be skewed lower than grade level expectation overall (alternate not grade level achievement)
    - But have the full range of DOK to minimize ceiling effect

# Criterion 5: Differentiation Across Grade Levels/ Bands

- There is some differentiation in **CONTENT** across grade levels or grade bands
  - When different AAs used for different grade levels or students (e.g., portfolios; different tests for different grade bands)
    - Content is not redundant across all grades
  - When one assessment used across grades
    - Includes items with increasing difficulty that link to upper grade standards as well as some linking to lower grades

## Criterion 5- Differentiation in achievement across grade levels/bands

- Source- USDOE, 2005, p. 21
  - Achievement may focus on grade bands or grade levels
- *Defining outcomes for growth across grades is typical for academic content, but different than the “catalog” approach often used in functional life skills curricula*

# [ Differentiation Across Grades ]

## ■ Differentiation

- Broader
- Deeper
- Prerequisite at lower grades
- New

## ■ Not Differentiation

- Identical items across all grades/ grade bands
- Webb, N. L. (2005, November). *Alignment, depth of knowledge, and change*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Florida Educational Research Association, Miami, FL.

# Criterion 6: Alternate Achievement Standards

- The expected achievement is for the student to show learning of grade referenced academic content
  - What inferences can be made about student learning in how AA items are scored?
    - Independent student response or teacher prompted?
    - More than one item per concept ?
    - Other considerations
      - Demonstration of new learning with pre/post
      - Difficulty level considered
      - Program quality indicators separated from student score

# Criterion 6: Student Achievement vs “Something Else”

- Student achievement
  - Select picture for main idea
    - Full credit- eye gaze, point
  - Find main idea across stories
  - More credit for more complex text
- “Something Else”
  - Select picture with model prompt-point where I point
  - Student works with peer who selects the picture
  - Student did not select picture, but could check “not my best work”

# Criterion 7: Barriers to Responding

- The potential barriers to students demonstrating what they can do are minimized in the assessment
  - Can students with various sensory, physical, communication challenges show what they know?
  - Are modifications and supports specified?
  - Are there ways for students who use nonsymbolic communication or who have limited intentional communication to show what they know?

# Criterion 8: Instructional Alignment

- The instructional program promotes learning in the general curriculum
  - Curriculum indicator survey: what are the teachers teaching?
  - What quality indicators are reflected in professional development materials?
  - Does professional development show teachers how to align instruction to state standards?