

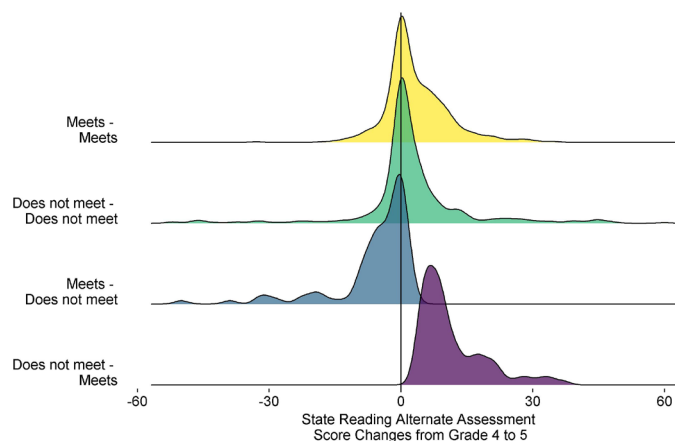
Research Note No. 8 – March 2018

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (SWMSCD) participating in state-wide testing systems often take an alternate assessment based on grade-level, modified, or alternate achievement standards. For about 60% of SWMSCDs in Oregon there was too little change in alternate assessment scores to be confident that the students had made meaningful gains, and about 6% showed gains of more than one standard deviation.¹

The good news: For over a decade, states have developed and stabilized alternate assessments to *achieve full inclusion of students with the most significant disabilities in state accountability systems.*

The challenge ahead: Measuring gains in scores as well as change in proficiency using state alternate assessments reading test scores for SWMSCD is important, *but it remains difficult to capture the yearly knowledge and skills gained by SWMSCD.*

Oregon SWMSCD State Reading Alternate Assessment Gain Scores between Grade 4 and Grade 5 by Proficiency Pattern Group



- The figure shows the distribution of alternate assessment gain scores (Grade 5 score minus Grade 4 score) for groups based on proficiency status across the two years.
- State Reading Alternate Assessment gain scores tended toward zero, meaning that, on average, there were very small gains from one year to the next.
- SWMSCD that moved from *Does not meet* to *Meets* proficiency gained about 9 points on average (about half a standard deviation), and those moving from *Meets* to *Does not meet* showed the largest average loss in scores, about -6 points (a third of a standard deviation).
- To document growth for SWMSCD, educators need to consider the students, the ways tests are constructed and developed (including a vertical scale), and what types of score reports are the most informative and useful to critical stakeholders.

¹ For more information, see:

Tindal, G., Nese, J. F. T., Farley, D., Saven, J. L., Elliott, S. N. (2016). Documenting reading achievement and growth for students taking alternate assessments. *Exceptional Children*, 82, 321-336. doi: 10.1177/0014402915585492 or visit our website: www.ncaase.com.

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