



Department of Education

# 2025-26 Federal Accountability Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ | May 2026



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# Introduction

This FAQ is a reference and supporting document for district and school leaders to understand the Tennessee Department of Education's (department) 2025-26 federal accountability system. For detailed business rules and methodologies, please consult the [2025-26 Federal Accountability Protocol](#) (the protocol). For quick reference, relevant sections from the protocol are cited accordingly throughout this FAQ.

## Achievement, Growth, and Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

### **Q1. Are science and social studies included in federal accountability?**

Science and social studies are excluded from the evaluation of the Achievement indicator per [ESEA section 1111\(b\)](#) (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)). Therefore, only math and English language arts (ELA) subjects are included in the calculations of the following:

- Success rates,
- TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) participation rates,
- Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) targets for the Achievement indicator for school accountability, and
- AMO targets for the Grade Band Success Rate indicators for district accountability.

### **Q2. What assessments are included in the evaluation of the Achievement indicator (i.e., accountable assessments)?**

As discussed in [Q1](#), only ELA and math tests shall be included in the evaluation of the Achievement indicator and annual meaningful differentiation. The U.S. Department of Education (USED) also requires the accountable ELA and math tests to be a single, standards-aligned test administered to all students within the same cohort. Hence, the accountable assessments following federal guidelines include: TCAP 3-8 ELA and math, Algebra I/Integrated Math I, English II, and alternate

assessments for ELA and math (i.e., Dynamic Learning Maps [DLM] ELA and math) with few exceptions (see [Q3](#) for more information).

### **Q3. Which End-of-Course (EOC) tests are included in federal accountability?**

Under ESEA section 1111 (b)(2) (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)) and ESEA section 1111(c) (20 U.S.C. § 6311(c)), the department implements a 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort model using Algebra I or Integrated Math I and English II as the accountable assessments for high school students for school and district accountability purposes. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort will include 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are actively enrolled<sup>1</sup> at the end of the spring testing window in 2025-26. These students' ***first Algebra I or Integrated Math I test and English II test*** obtained by the end of the spring testing window in 2025-26 will be included for accountability purposes. Exceptions may apply for accelerated students, students taking comprehensive courses, and students taking the alternative assessments or those working toward the alternate academic diploma; they are:

- For accelerated students who took English I in middle school, their ***first English II test*** taken by 10<sup>th</sup> grade will be used for accountability.
- For accelerated students who took Algebra I or Integrated math I in middle school, their ***first math EOC test*** taken by 10<sup>th</sup> grade will be used for accountability.
- For English learner students who took ELD 10 in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and took English II in 11<sup>th</sup> grade will have their tests used during their 11<sup>th</sup> grade year.

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<sup>1</sup> With the cohort method, the enrollment is based on the school enrollment rather than course enrollment.

- For students enrolled in comprehensive courses<sup>2</sup> and took their **first Algebra I or Integrated Math I** and **first English II** in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-26, their tests are used for accountability.<sup>3</sup>
- For students who are on the Alternate Academic Diploma (AAD) track and took DLM ELA and DLM math tests in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-26, their tests are used for accountability.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Q4. How is the 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort defined? How does the 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort model affect the TCAP participation rate and success rate calculation?**

The 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort includes 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are actively enrolled in a Tennessee public school on the last day of the spring testing window in the current school year. There are several scenarios that schools may remove students from or add students to the cohort:

- 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are medically exempted during the spring testing window (*remove from the cohort*)
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are in an out-of-state residential facility during the spring testing window (*remove from the cohort; appeals required*)

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<sup>2</sup> Students enrolled in both comprehensive courses and AAD courses will be considered comprehensive course students for accountability purposes.

<sup>3</sup> The department uses course enrollment data to identify students who are enrolled in the comprehensive courses. For students who are in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, are enrolled in the comprehensive courses, **AND** do not have any prior EOC testing history by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, they are removed from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade accountable cohort. These students are banked and added back to the cohort when they are in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. If they did not take the accountable assessments in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, they are counted against the participation rate.

<sup>4</sup> The department uses course enrollment data to identify students who are enrolled in the AAD courses. 10<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in the AAD courses **AND** do not have any prior EOC testing history by the end of 10 grade are removed from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade accountable cohort. Instead, students who are enrolled in the AAD courses in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-26, they are included in the accountable cohort.

- 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who completed appropriate accountable assessments prior to enrolling in a TN public high school by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade (*remove from the cohort; appeals required*)
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are enrolled in comprehensive or AAD courses and have no prior EOC testing history (remove from the cohort)<sup>5</sup>
- Students who are enrolled in comprehensive or AAD courses in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and have no prior EOC testing history prior to 11<sup>th</sup> grade (*add to the cohort*)
- EL students who were enrolled in ELD 10 in 10<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2025-26 testing window and enrolled in English II in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2026-27 (*remove from the cohort; ELA only appeals required*)
- EL students who were enrolled in ELD 10 in 10<sup>th</sup> grade during the 23-24 testing window **and enrolled in English II in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-26** (*add to the cohort; ELA only appeals required*)
- Students who repeated 10<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-26 (*remove from the cohort*)
- International students who are not enrolled in the accountable courses (*remove from the cohort; appeals required*)

Districts can review and submit appeals for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort data files during the accountability appeals process (more guidance on the 2025-26 accountability data appeals will be released in the summer of 2026).

When calculating the participation rate, students' accountable assessments are assigned to schools in which they are tested and are accounted for when students are in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The table below are the examples of use cases for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are actively enrolled in School A on the last day of the testing window.

School in which the accountable ELA is taken	School in which the accountable math is taken	What will be included in the participation rate for School A	What will be excluded from the participation rate for either school
School A	School A	Math & ELA	None
School A	School B	ELA	Math
School B	School A	Math	ELA
School B	School B	None	Math & ELA

<sup>5</sup> The department uses course enrollment data to identify students who are enrolled in the AAD courses.

When calculating success rate, students' testing records are assigned to schools in which students spent at least 50% of the school year in the year they took the test. The table below are the examples of use cases for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are actively enrolled in School A on the last day of the testing window.

School in which the student spent at least 50% of the school year in the year they took ELA	School in which the student spent at least 50% of the school year in the year they took math	What will be included in the success rate for School A	What will be excluded from the success rate for either school
School A	School A	Math & ELA	None
School A	School B	ELA	Math
School B	School A	Math	ELA
School B	School B	None	Math & ELA

### **Q5. What are the off-grade testing opportunities for students and families in Tennessee?**

Per the amendment to the [State's ESSA plan](#), the department has identified the following off-grade testing opportunities for students and families in Tennessee:

- Middle school students as early as 7<sup>th</sup> grade may be enrolled and assessed in either of the two high school math course progressions offered in Tennessee (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II; or Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, and Integrated Math III).
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade students may be enrolled and assessed in the high school English I course or its equivalent.
- Middle school students in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade may be eligible to be administered to have more advanced middle school assessments.

### **Q6. How are residential facility records treated in federal accountability?**

Records of students tested in residential facilities that have a valid test score are assigned to the sending schools and districts for accountability purposes, including the calculation of the participation rate and success rates. Per ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(i)(II) (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)(B)(i)(II)), all residential facility records are counted as enrolled, and the records that do not have a valid score, which is

identified by the SNT (Student Not Tested) code of 5, are reported as non-tested with one exception—students who are enrolled in an out-of-state residential facility are excluded from the participation rate calculation through district appeals. Districts shall submit appeals with appropriate documentation during the accountability appeals process to remove these out-of-state residential facility records from the participation rate calculation. More guidance on out-of-state residential facility record appeals is provided prior to the appeals window opening.

### **Q7. Which Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) composites are used in school and district accountability?**

Three TVAAS composites are generated for school accountability, and one TVAAS composite is generated for district accountability:

- TVAAS school-level composites (i.e., TVAAS Numeracy Composite, TVAAS Literacy Composite, and TVAAS Combined Numeracy and Literacy Composite)
- TVAAS district-level composites (i.e., 3-5, 6-8, 9-12 TVAAS Combined Numeracy and Literacy Composites)

The TVAAS Combined Numeracy and Literacy composites are used for evaluating the Growth indicator for schools and districts and the Safe Harbor provision while identifying CSI/Priority schools. The TVAAS Numeracy and TVAAS Literacy composites are used when evaluating CSI/Priority and ATSI exit every year.

TVAAS composites include all available TCAP ELA and math tests and EOC ELA and math tests, including TCAP 3-8 ELA, TCAP 3-8 math, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, English I, and English II. Consult the TVAAS [Technical Report](#) for more information regarding TVAAS data preparations and business rules.

### **Q8. What are the components of school accountability? How are weights applied to various components?**

School accountability for K-8 schools consists of four accountability indicators. The weights for these indicators are listed below:

- Achievement (i.e., success rate) (45%)
- Growth (i.e., TVAAS Composite) (35%)
- Chronically Out of School (10%)
- English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) (10%)

School accountability for high schools consists of six accountability indicators.<sup>6</sup> The weights for these indicators are listed below:

- Achievement (i.e., success rate) (30%)
- Growth (i.e., TVAAS Composite) (25%)
- Chronically Out of School (10%)
- English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) (10%)
- Graduation Rate (5%)
- College and Career Readiness (CCR) Rate (20%)

Any indicator that does not meet minimum number counts<sup>7</sup> will not be evaluated, and the indicator weight will be redistributed in different ways depending on the missing indicator(s). More information on how the indicator weight(s) are redistributed is in Section 4.4 of the [protocol](#).

## **Q9. Where are AMOs used in the school accountability system?**

K-8 schools are evaluated on four indicators, and high schools are evaluated on six indicators (see [Q8](#)). Schools earn between 0 and 4 points for each indicator for which they are eligible. The Achievement, Chronically Out of School, Graduation Rate, and CCR Rate indicators are evaluated by two types of performance goals:

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<sup>6</sup> Based on the feedback received from a series of statewide engagement efforts in 2024-2025, the department will replace the RG indicator with the CCR indicator for federal accountability starting 2025-26. With this transition, the department will no longer use lagged data for federal accountability. The department will use 2025-26 graduating cohort's federal graduation rate and CCR rate in the 2025-26 federal accountability calculation.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 219 of Public Acts of 2025 modifies Tennessee's school letter grade framework by lowering the minimum n-count from 30 to 20. This law has no impact on federal accountability. The department maintains a minimum n-count of 30 for federal accountability.

- Absolute: Percent of students that meet the defined criteria
- AMO targets: Yearly targets for improving performance based on prior year results

These indicators receive a rating based on the better score between their absolute performance and AMO targets. The Growth and ELPA indicators do not have AMO targets. Instead, the Growth indicator is measured by TVAAS performance level, and the ELPA indicator is measured by the percentage of students meeting the growth standards. The table below provides an overview of when AMOs are used in school accountability.

School Pool	Weight	Absolute Pathway Only	Best of AMO and Absolute Pathway
<b>K-8 schools</b>			
<b>Achievement</b>	45%		√
<b>Growth</b>	35%	√	
<b>ELPA</b>	10%	√	
<b>Chronically Out of School</b>	10%		√
<b>High Schools</b>			
<b>Achievement</b>	30%		√
<b>Growth</b>	25%	√	
<b>ELPA</b>	10%	√	
<b>Chronically Out of School</b>	10%		√
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	5%		√
<b>CCR Rate</b>	20%		√

**Q10. What are the components of district accountability? How are weights applied to various components?**

District accountability evaluates six indicators, and each indicator is weighed equally:

- 3-5 Success Rate
- 6-8 Success Rate
- 9-12 Success Rate
- Graduation Rate

- K-12 Chronically Out of School
- K-12 English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)

Any indicator that does not meet minimum number counts<sup>8</sup> will not be evaluated, and the weights of the indicator will be redistributed *equally* across all remaining indicators. Districts' scores on these indicators are comprised of the average of their value-added performance pathway with the higher score of their absolute performance and their performance relative to annual measurable objective targets. Please reference Section 5 of the [protocol](#) for more information about each pathway for the given indicators.

### **Q11. Where are AMO targets used in the district accountability system?**

Districts are evaluated on six indicators<sup>9</sup> (see [Q10](#)). Districts earn between 0 and 4 points for each indicator for which they are eligible. Each indicator is evaluated by three types of performance goals:

- Absolute: Percent of students that meet the defined criteria
- AMO targets: Yearly targets for improving performance based on prior year results
- Value-added: Value a district adds and how that compares to the performance of other districts in the state

The overall score for each indicator is the average of the better score between their absolute performance and AMO targets and the number of points a district receives for the value-added performance goal (i.e., relative to others).

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<sup>8</sup> Chapter 219 of Public Acts of 2025 modifies Tennessee's school letter grade framework by lowering the minimum n-count from 30 to 20. This law has no impact on federal accountability. The department maintains a minimum n-count of 30 for federal accountability.

<sup>9</sup> Based on the feedback received from a series of statewide engagement efforts in 2024-2025, the department will replace the RG indicator with the CCR indicator for federal accountability starting 2025-26. With this transition, the department will no longer use lagged data for federal accountability. The department will use 2025-26 graduating cohort's federal graduation rate and CCR rate in the 2025-26 federal accountability calculation.

## **Q12. How will the TCAP participation rate impact the success rate calculation?**

When computing success rates, the department adjusts the number of valid tests when schools and districts do not meet the 95% participation rate. That is, per [ESSA § 1111\(c\)\(4\)\(E\)](#) (20 U.S.C. § 6311(c)(4)(E)), if the number of valid tests represents less than the minimum participation rate of 95%, the denominator becomes the number of expected valid tests at the minimum participation rate. For instance, if a school has a participation rate of 85%, the school has 100 students and 85 of them had test scores. The number of valid tests used to compute percent *met expectations* or *exceeded expectations* is 95 (enrollment number X 0.95), not 85.

## **Q13. How are middle school students who take high school EOCs factored into school and district accountability results?**

Students from grades 6-8 who take an EOC exam in the courses below are included in the middle school counts that correspond to that subject.

- Middle school Algebra I, Geometry, Integrated Math I, and Integrated Math II records count as Math for school and district accountability calculations.
- Middle school English I records count as ELA for school and district accountability calculations.

If a student from grades 3-8 takes both TCAP grade-level exams and EOC exams for the same subject, the TCAP grade-level record is dropped from accountability calculations and replaced with the EOC record. Consult Section 2.4.1 of the [protocol](#) for more detailed information on data preparations.

## **Q14. How are historically underserved student groups counted in school and district accountability?**

All students are included in the *All Students* group. For school and district accountability, students are also assigned to the following historically underserved student groups as applicable:

- Black, Hispanic, and Native American students (BHN)

- English learners (transitional T1-T4 students are included for accountability) (EL)
- Economically disadvantaged students (ED)
- Students with disabilities (SWD)<sup>10</sup>

Data from the underserved student groups above is used to create an overall score for school accountability (see Section 4 of the [protocol](#)) and for district accountability (Section 5 of the [protocol](#)).

For school accountability, in addition to calculating an overall rating for each of the four historically underserved student groups, the department also calculates an overall rating for each of the six racial/ethnic groups, which are:

- Hispanic/Latino
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Asian
- White

The overall ratings from these six student groups are utilized to identify TSI and ATSI schools (see Section 4.6 of the [protocol](#) for more information on TSI and ATSI identification).

### **Q15. When and how will the Super Subgroup be used in accountability?**

The Super Subgroup consists of all students identified with one or more of the historically underserved student groups (i.e., BHN, EL, ED, SWD) counting each student only once regardless of how many student groups they identify with. Super Subgroup is only used for school accountability calculations. The department will only consider using Super Subgroup for school accountability when schools do not have sufficient numbers of students for any of the historically underserved student groups *for any of the indicators* but do have a sufficient number of students in the

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<sup>10</sup> Students identified with a primary disability of Functionally Delayed or Gifted are not included in the SWD student group.

Super Subgroup (see Section 2.2.2 of the [protocol](#) for more information about Super Subgroup).

## **Q16. How are performance level percentages calculated?**

The formulas for each performance level percentage are presented below:

$$\text{Percent } \textit{exceeded expectations} = \frac{\# \textit{exceeded expectations}}{\# \textit{valid tests}} * 100$$

$$\text{Percent } \textit{met expectations} = \frac{\# \textit{met expectations}}{\# \textit{valid tests}} * 100$$

$$\text{Percent } \textit{approaching} = \frac{\# \textit{approaching}}{\# \textit{valid tests}} * 100$$

The “percent below” performance level is calculated during the rounding process to ensure that all percentages sum to 100. Values are rounded to tenth place only after all calculations and comparisons have been performed.

$$\text{Percent below} = 100 - (\text{percent } \textit{exceeded expectation} + \text{percent } \textit{met expectation} + \text{percent } \textit{approaching})$$

## **Q17. When will a new school receive a designation?**

New schools that have a start date between May 31 and August 31, 2025, are not eligible to earn overall accountability scores or designations since they do not have data to evaluate improvement. New schools that have a begin date between May 31 and August 31, 2026, are eligible to receive CSI/Priority designation under specific conditions as described below:

- If the school has less than 50% of the enrollment coming from a school with a CSI/Priority designation, the school will be treated as a new school for the 2026-27 school year and will not be eligible for CSI/Priority designation for the 2025-26 school year.
- If the school has at least 50% of the enrollment in 2026-27 coming from one or more schools with a CSI/Priority designation in 2025-26, the school will receive the CSI/Priority status for the 2026-27 school

year to ensure services are allocated to schools that need them. For example,

- A new school opens between May 31 and August 31, 2026. Based on the 2026-27 fall enrollment data, it shows that 55% of the students enrolled in the new school were served by two previously identified CSI/Priority schools that were closed in the 2025-26 school year. In this case, the new school will receive the CSI/Priority designation. The school can exit CSI/Priority status when it meets the CSI/Priority exit criteria.
- Two separate schools merged into one school, and the district decided to create a brand-new school ID for the merged school with a start date between May 31 and August 31, 2026. The new school ID has a begin date between May 31 and August 31, 2026. Based on the 2025-26 fall enrollment data, it shows that 51% of the students enrolled were served by a previously identified CSI/Priority school that was closed in the 2025-26 school year. In this case, the merged school with a new school ID will carry the CSI/Priority designation in 2025-26 and receive CSI services in 2026-27. The school can exit CSI/Priority status when it meets the CSI/Priority exit criteria or during the next identification cycle if not being identified.  
**Note:** If the district used an existing school ID for the merged school, the designation, if any, will follow the school ID.

These rules are applied so that appropriate funds can be provided to ensure new schools receive the support needed to serve students. The department will examine enrollment data per the specified criteria to determine appropriate school designations and letter grades for new schools and merged schools.

### **Q18. How will school reconfiguration affect the AMO calculation?**

Schools that continue using an existing school ID after the reconfiguration will use the AMOs calculated for the existing school ID. Schools with a new school ID will not have AMOs in Year 1.

### **Q19. What are the accountable assessments for students who are enrolled in both AAD and comprehensive course code?**

Based on the Scheduling for [Assessment Provisioning](#), students shall be enrolled in either AAD course codes or comprehensive course codes, not both. In an event that a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision has changed in the middle of the school year and the student is enrolled in a different course code (i.e., changed from comprehensive to AAD course or vice versa), the student shall be withdrawn from the prior course in EIS prior to the spring testing window. This is to ensure that the student takes the appropriate accountable test during the spring testing window.

Any student who is enrolled in both comprehensive courses and AAD courses in the same subject will be considered as a comprehensive course student and shall take TCAP tests for accountability purposes.<sup>11</sup> If the student did not take TCAP, the student will be counted against the participation rate. The department will not accept these students' alternate assessment results for federal accountability or school letter grade calculation. It is very important that districts ensure student course enrollment records are up to date in EIS so that appropriate accountable assessments are accounted accurately in school and district accountability.

## **English Learners and English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) Data**

### **Q20. Are ELPA21 and ELPA21-Alt tests included in the participation rate calculation?**

No. ELPA21 and ELPA21-Alt testing data are not included in the participation rate calculation.

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<sup>11</sup> A student can be moved from the AAD course to comprehensive course at any time whenever the IEP team determines it is appropriate for the given student.

## **Q21. How are English learners (ELs) included in accountability?**

English learners (ELs), including transitional T1-T4 students, is one of the historically underserved student groups evaluated in school and district accountability. In addition to taking TCAP tests, many ELs<sup>12</sup> take the ELPA21 exam, which assesses student progress toward English proficiency. ELs with significant cognitive disabilities may take the ELPA21 Alternate (ELPA21-Alt) assessment, as decided by the IEP (Individualized Education Programs) team. ELs' TCAP data are included in the participation rate and success rate calculations that are ultimately used to evaluate the Achievement indicator for school accountability. ELs' TCAP data are also used to generate TVAAS composites; however, ELs' ELPA21 and ELPA21-Alt data are excluded from TVAAS composites calculations.

Furthermore, ELs' English proficiency assessment data are used to evaluate the ELPA indicator for school and district accountability. Schools are eligible for the ELPA indicator if at least ten (10) students have valid assessment performance levels in both the current and prior year(s). Districts are eligible for the ELPA indicators if at least 30 students have valid assessment performance levels in both the current and prior year(s). **Important update:** In the 2024-25 school year, Tennessee transitioned its English language proficiency assessment (ELPA) system from WIDA ACCESS to ELPA21. During the first year of transition, the department, in consultation with ELPA21, implemented a simple, technically sound approach that allows the department to preserve the existing ELPA evaluation methodology. This approach is called domain-level equipercentile-based conversion that involves converting ELPA21 domain scores to WIDA domain scores using equipercentile concordance table. The same methodology will be implemented in 2025-26 and 2026-27 to maintain the stability of the ELPA indicator. The department will then have sufficient time to monitor the data trend, evaluate the current methodology, and update the methodology as necessary for the 2027-28 school year. Please consult Section 2.4.5 of the [protocol](#) for more information.

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<sup>12</sup> T1-T4 ELs do not take WIDA tests.

## **Q22. How are the recently arrived ELs (RAELs) included in accountability?**

When an EL who has been enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 731 days has a valid test score or performance level from a TCAP exam, the test record is included in the participation rate calculation (counted as 1 for both the numerator and denominator). If the student does not have a valid score or performance level, the record is counted as not tested in the participation rate calculation (counted as 1 in the denominator and 0 for the numerator).

RAELs' test records are not used in the success rate calculation (excluded from both numerator and denominator); their performance levels are modified to null in the student-level assessment files. See [Q21](#) for more information about how RAELs' performance levels are presented in the accountability data files.

RAELs' also take ELPA21 and ELPA21-Alt tests, and their ELPA21 data will be included in the evaluation of the ELPA indicator for school and district accountability. Please consult Section 2.4.5 of the [protocol](#) for more information.

## **Q23. When examining the student-level assessment file, why are there two different fields for performance level?**

There are two fields for the performance level in the student-level assessment file—"original performance level" and "performance level." The "original performance level" is the raw performance level from the comprehensive data file (CDF). The "performance level" field is the one used for accountability calculations (i.e., success rate). The difference between the two fields is the "original performance level" field will show a performance level for RAELs, while the "performance level" field will have RAELs' performance level set to null. See [Q22](#) for more information on how RAELs are included in accountability.

## **Q24. How are various English learner groups included in accountability?**

For accountability purposes, English learners can often be grouped into two major categories:

- **Active English learners**, including ELs and RAELs.
- **Transitional English learners**, including students in T1 to T4.

The table below provides a quick reference regarding which EL groups are included across all indicators.

Indicator	All Students Group	EL Group
ELPA	Active ELs	Active ELs
Achievement	All enrolled students (RAELs excluded in Y1 and Y2)	Active ELs + T1-T4 (RAELs excluded in Y1 and Y2)
Growth	All enrolled students (RAELs excluded in Y1; RAELs included in Y2)	Active ELs + T1-T4 (RAELs excluded in Y1; RAELs included in Y2)
Other indicators	All enrolled students	Active ELs + T1-T4

## Chronically Out of School

### Q25. What attendance codes are used in the Chronically Out of School calculation?

The department uses attendance data to evaluate the Chronically Out of School indicator. The following attendance codes are considered absent for accountability purposes:

- A (Excused Absence);
- U (Unexcused Absence);
- X (Unexcused Absence, but Present for Transportation);
- T (Excused Absence, but Present for Transportation);
- I (Homebound Absent); or
- M (Medically Excused)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In 2024-25, M (Medically Excused) code was added to the attendance codes in response to the passage of Chapter 1005 of the Public Acts of 2024 (PC 1005). Districts may use the code to document excused absences due to medical or health related reasons. However, per USED requirements<sup>2</sup>, the M code is counted as absence for the calculation of the COS rate.

## **Q26. Why is the denominator of total days not 180 on the Chronically Out of School files?**

Instructional days are calculated based on the district calendar in EIS, which may vary from district to district. Additionally, stockpiled days are not included in total instructional days. The exclusion of stockpiled days is a business rule that maintains proportionality with present days and total days.

## **Q27. When examining the student-level chronic absenteeism file, why is there a discrepancy in the students included when compared to the district-level file?**

All students are included in the student-level file, whereas district- and school-level files only include students enrolled for at least 50% of a given school year. Also, a district-level file considers students who may re-enroll in the district or change schools within it, creating a sum of their enrolled days.

## **Graduation and College and Career Readiness (CCR) Rate**

### **Q28. How does the department calculate the graduation rates for federal accountability?**

For federal reporting, the four-year graduation rate counts a student who completes ***all required coursework in all subject areas*** and graduates with a regular diploma or an alternate academic diploma (AAD) within four years and a summer as a high school graduate in his or her original cohort. The department calculates, reports, and publishes two graduation rates for accountability purposes. First, the *federal graduation rate* is calculated following federal guidelines<sup>14</sup> as described above. Second, the *Tennessee graduation rate* is calculated following [SBE's graduation policy](#). Specifically,

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<sup>14</sup> [ESSA § 8101\(25\)](#)

- When calculating the federal graduation rate, only students who complete all required coursework in all subject areas per federal guidelines are included in the numerator of the federal graduation rate calculation. It is essential to note that the federal requirement on graduation rate calculation only affects federal reporting; it does not supersede [SBE's graduation policy](#) governing the awarding of regular diplomas to students with disabilities. This adjustment shall not change what students experience in the classroom.
- When calculating the Tennessee graduation rate, students with disabilities who complete course requirements per [SBE's graduation policy](#) will continue to receive a regular diploma and be included in the numerator of the Tennessee graduation rate calculation.

Starting in 2025-26, the department will no longer use lagged data for federal accountability. The department will use 2025-26 graduating cohort's graduation rate data in the 2025-26 federal accountability calculation.

## **Q29. How is the federal graduation rate used in school and district accountability?**

The federal graduation rate is used to evaluate the Graduation Rate indicator for school accountability (see [protocol](#) Section 4.4.4) and is used to evaluate the absolute performance and AMO target of the district Graduation Rate indicator for district accountability (see section 5.3.4 of the [protocol](#)). It is also used to identify CSI/Priority and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools. That is,

- Any school with a federal graduation rate less than 67% receives the CSI/Priority status during the identification year.
- Any school with a federal graduation rate less than 67% for a given student group receives the ATSI designation during the identification year.

More information on school designations is available in the [protocol](#) Section 4.5 (CSI/Priority identification) and Section 4.6.2 (ATSI identification).

### **Q30. How is the Tennessee graduation rate used in school and district accountability?**

The Tennessee graduation rate is used to calculate the CCR rate (see [protocol](#) Section 3.5) and the ACT/SAT participation rate (see [protocol](#) Section 3.6) for schools and districts. The school CCR rate is used to evaluate the CCR indicator for schools (section 4.4.5 of [protocol](#)), and the district CCR rate is used to evaluate the value-added pathway of the district Graduation Rate indicator (section 5.3.4 of [protocol](#)).

### **Q31. How are students who received a regular diploma per the Tennessee State Board of Education graduation policy but did not receive credit for Algebra II/Integrated Math III and/or Chemistry/Physics reported in accountability?**

As stated in [Q28](#), when calculating the federal graduation rate, only students who completed all required coursework in all subject areas are included in the numerator of the federal graduation rate calculation. The State Board of Education [Graduation Requirements Rules \(SBE Rule 0520-01-03-.06\)](#) provides an alternative pathway for students with disabilities to earn a traditional high school diploma without completing Algebra II (or integrated Math III) and/or Chemistry or Physics. Per federal guidelines, students taking the alternative pathway shall not be counted as graduates in the federal graduation rate calculation. The federal requirement on graduation rate calculation only affects federal reporting; it does not supersede SBE's graduation policy governing the awarding of regular diplomas to students with disabilities. This adjustment shall not change what students experience in the classroom. [Q29](#) and [Q30](#) provide more information regarding how the federal and Tennessee graduation rates are used in school and district accountability.

### **Q32. What year's graduation rate and CCR rate is used in 2025-26 accountability?**

Based on the feedback received from a series of statewide engagement efforts in 2024-2025, the department will replace the RG indicator with the CCR indicator for federal accountability starting 2025-26. With this transition, the department will no

longer use lagged data for federal accountability. The department will use 2025-26 graduating cohort's federal graduation rate and CCR rate in the 2025-26 federal accountability calculation.

### **Q33. How does the 60-day enrollment rule affect graduation rate calculation?**

When calculating graduation rates, students in general count in the district and school in which they were most recently enrolled. However, [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-601\(a\)](#) allows students to be assigned to the school in which the student was enrolled for the greatest proportion of days if that student did not attend the same high school for at least 60 days of the most recent school year. Each year, the department offers the opportunity for schools and districts to appeal their graduation cohort calculations, and this scenario is specified in the annual cohort process. The 2025-26 Cohort process guide will be published on the [Accountability webpage](#) in spring 2026.

### **Q34. How is student group membership change managed when calculating graduation and CCR rates?**

The department recognizes that student membership in certain student groups may change over time (e.g., economically disadvantaged [ED], English learner [EL]). When reporting on school and district accountability by student group, students' most current membership in student groups during the reporting year is used. For graduation and CCR rate, once a student is identified in the historically underserved student group (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and Native American students [BHN], EL, ED, Students with Disabilities [SWD]) during any of the high school years, the student will be assigned to that underserved student group for graduation and CCR rates reporting. For instance, say a student is assigned to ED in grade 10 but not in grades 9, 11, or 12. The student's graduation and CCR data are included in the calculation for the *All Students* group and the ED group.

**Q35. Does the department use ACT superscores?**

No. The department does not use “superscores.” The department uses the highest ACT/SAT composite scores from a single test administration for accountability.<sup>15</sup>

**Q36. Will the WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) count in 2025-26 CCR reporting?**

No. The department continues to explore options with Tennessee postsecondary institutions to develop a statewide articulation policy for workforce readiness exams.

**Q37. How will ACT/SAT participation rates be applied in school and district accountability?**

Schools that do not meet the 95% ACT/SAT participation rate will automatically receive a 0 for the CCR indicator. Districts that do not meet the 95% ACT/SAT participation rate will automatically receive a 0 for the Graduation Rate indicator.

**Q38. May students enrolled in Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, or International Baccalaureate (IB) take the end-of-course test?**

No. Consistent with Tennessee State Board of Education’s [SBE's graduation policy](#), only students enrolled in a course with an associated end-of-course examination may take the end-of-course examination.

**Q39. Will students receiving an alternate academic diploma (AAD) be included in the ACT/SAT participation rate calculation?**

No. Students who earned an alternate academic diploma on time are excluded from the ACT/SAT participation rate calculation since 2023. The ACT/SAT participation rate is the percentage of on-time regular diploma graduates with a

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<sup>15</sup> A student’s highest ACT composite score includes all records in the three years including and up to June of the student’s self-reported graduation year.

valid ACT/SAT score. Additionally, the graduates defined by the Tennessee graduation rate are used to calculate the ACT/SAT participation rate. The updated ACT/SAT participation rate formula is below:

$$\text{ACT/SAT Participation Rate} = \frac{\text{\# Regular diploma graduates with a valid ACT/SAT score}}{\text{\# Regular diploma graduates}} * 100$$

Additionally, SBE updated its [Graduation](#) Requirements Rule in October 2022, indicating that ACT or SAT participation is not a graduation requirement among medically exempted students. With that, medically exempted students are excluded from the ACT/SAT participation rate calculation since 2022-23.

## School and District Designations

### **Q40. What accountability designations can a school receive?**

Schools can receive one of the following designations based on their performance:

- Reward School
- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)/Priority School
- Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) School
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) School

More information regarding CSI/Priority identification and exit criteria is in Section 4.5 of the [protocol](#), TSI, and ATSI identification and exit criteria are in Section 4.6 of the [protocol](#). School accountability determinations are made public in the fall and posted on the State Report Card every year.

### **Q41. How are Reward schools identified?**

Schools earn Reward status based on the most recent year of data. Schools earn Reward status if they earn an overall school rating of 3.1 or higher and are not identified as Priority or Focus schools. A school with an overall rating of 3.1 or higher identified as a Focus school will be removed from the Reward designation. More information about Reward School identification is in Section 4.7 of the [protocol](#).

## **Q42. How are CSI/Priority schools identified?**

Schools can be identified as CSI/Priority schools through one of the three identification criteria. The first criteria include schools that are the lowest-performing five percent of schools based on multi-year success rates (up to three years) in each school pool. The Safe Harbor provision will be applied to remove schools from CSI/Priority designation. That is, schools with a TVAAS Composite Level of a 4 or 5 in the two most recent years for all accountability subjects<sup>16</sup> **OR** have a score of 3 or 4 on all other non-Achievement, non-growth accountability indicators (i.e., chronically out of school, graduation rate, CCR, ELPA) will not receive CSI/Priority status (i.e., Safe Harbor provision). Additional schools will be identified to replace schools that are removed due to Safe Harbor to ensure at least five percent of schools are identified for CSI/Priority designation.

The second identification criterion is based on federal graduation rate—high schools with a federal graduation rate less than 67 percent will receive the CSI/Priority designation. The third criterion is the ATSI to CSI pathway. Per USED requirements, ESEA section 1111(d)(3)(A)(i)(II) (20 U.S.C. § 6311(d)(3)(A)(i)(II)), an ATSI school that fails to exit and is identified as ATSI again for the same student group in the next identification cycle will receive the CSI/Priority designation (i.e., CSI-Not Exiting). ATSI schools are not eligible for ATSI to CSI/Priority pathway if they exited the status between the identification cycles. The timeline for the ATSI to Priority pathway started in 2022-23, and the following identification cycle was 2024-25. In 2024-25, the department identified the first cohort of schools via the ATSI to CSI pathway. These schools are eligible for exit evaluation annually (see [Q45](#) for the exit criterion).

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<sup>16</sup> Per USED guideline, the accountable subjects include ELA and math. Therefore, to be removed from the CSI identification under the Safe Harbor provision, schools must have a TVAAS Combined Literacy and Numeracy Composite level of 4 or 5 in the most two recent years. The single-year TVAAS Combined Literacy and Numeracy composite will be used for this purpose.

### **Q43. How are TSI schools identified?**

The department identifies TSI schools each year. Schools are eligible<sup>17</sup> for TSI identification if they have one or more student groups whose overall accountability score includes data from all indicators. Schools whose overall accountability scores for a given student group are in the bottom five percent for that student group will be identified as TSI schools. Federal law and Tennessee’s approved ESSA plan require the department to identify TSI schools for 10 student groups as listed in [Q14](#).

### **Q44. How are ATSI schools identified?**

The last ATSI identification was in 2024-25, and the next ATSI identification will be in 2027-28. ESSA defines ATSI schools as those in which any student group on its own would lead to identification as a CSI school. Only schools identified as TSI based on the most recent TSI list will be eligible for ATSI identification. TSI schools whose student group success rates<sup>18</sup> are less than or equal to the maximum success rate of any CSI school in their pool<sup>19</sup> will be identified as ATSI. TSI schools that have a score of 3 or 4 on **all other** non-Achievement, non-Growth accountability indicators (i.e., chronically out of school, graduation rate, CCR, ELPA) for a given student group will not receive ATSI status. Additionally, TSI schools whose student group federal graduation rates are less than 67% will be identified as ATSI. Federal law and Tennessee’s approved ESSA plan require the department to identify ATSI schools for ten student groups as listed in [Q14](#).

### **Q45. What are the exit criteria for CSI/Priority?**

CSI/Priority schools are eligible to be evaluated for exit in the following years as long as they meet the minimum n count of 10 for the specified exit criteria as

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<sup>17</sup> A school that is identified for CSI may not also be identified as Targeted Support and Improvement

<sup>18</sup> These success rates will include the same subjects and multiple years of data that are included in the CSI school success rates to which they are compared.

<sup>19</sup> Based on the CSI list identified that same year (i.e., 2023-24).

described below. For a school to exit CSI/Priority status, it must satisfy at least one corresponding exit criterion as discussed below to exit.

- CSI/Priority schools identified based on multi-year success rates may exit if they meet one of the exit criteria below:
  - The school's one-year success rate (i.e., cohort success rate) for the *All Students* group exceeds the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state in both of the two most recent years with success rate data;
  - The school's one-year success rate (i.e., cohort success rate) for the *All Students* group exceeds the 15<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state in the most recent year;
  - The school earns a TVAAS composite level of 4 or 5 in TVAAS Numeracy composite **AND** TVAAS Literacy composite for both of the two most recent years with TVAAS data;<sup>20</sup>
- CSI/Priority schools identified based on low federal graduation rates may exit if they meet the exit criterion below:
  - If the school was identified for graduating less than 67% of its students per the federal graduation rate, the school can exit by graduating at least 67% of its students in both of the two most recent years;
- CSI/Priority schools identified as a result of ATSI to CSI pathway may exit if they meet the exit criterion below:
  - If the school was identified for consistently underperforming student groups (i.e., ATSI to CSI pathway), the school can exit by meeting **or** exceeding success rate AMO targets for **each** student group for which the school was identified. A school identified for multiple student groups may exit for individual student groups by meeting AMO targets for that given group. A school need not meet AMO targets for all student groups in all years to exit. However, a school must meet targets for all identified student groups in at least one of the years between identification.

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<sup>20</sup> The single-year TVAAS Literacy and TVAAS Numeracy composites will be used for exit evaluation.

## Q46. What are the exit criteria for TSI and ATSI?

TSI schools are identified annually and may only exit if they are not identified as TSI schools in the following year. If no new TSI school list is generated for a given year, schools will retain the TSI designation from the previous year until a new TSI list is generated.

ATSI schools are eligible to be evaluated for exit in the following years as long as they meet the minimum count of 10 for the specified exit criteria as described below. For a school to exit ATSI status, it must satisfy at least one corresponding exit criterion as discussed below to exit.

- ATSI schools identified based on multi-year success rates may exit if they meet one of the exit criteria below:
  - The school's one-year success rate (i.e., cohort success rate) for each student group for which it was identified exceeds the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state for each student group in both of the two most recent years;
  - The school's one-year success rate (i.e., cohort success rate) for each student group for which it was identified exceeds the 15th percentile in the state for each student group in the most recent year;
  - The school earns a TVAAS composite level of 4 or 5 in TVAAS Numeracy composite **AND** TVAAS Literacy composite for both of the two most recent years with TVAAS data for each student group for which they were identified.<sup>21</sup>
- ATSI schools identified based on low federal graduation rates may exit if they meet the exit criterion below:
  - If it was identified for graduating less than 67% of its students per the federal graduation rate, the school can exit by graduating at least 67% of its students for each student group for which it was identified in both of the two most recent years.

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<sup>21</sup> The single-year TVAAS Literacy and TVAAS Numeracy composites will be used for exit evaluation.

**Q47. When an ATSI school no longer meets the minimum required number of students for the given student group after the identification year, how will that impact the school’s ATSI status?**

ATSI schools that meet the minimum required number of students (minimum n count of 30) for the given student group in the year of identification but not in subsequent years (minimum n count of 10) will retain their ATSI status. For a school to exit ATSI status, it must satisfy a qualifying exit criterion (see Section 4.6.3 of the [protocol](#)).

**Q48. What accountability designations can a district receive?**

Districts can obtain one of five accountability determinations: Exemplary, Advancing, Satisfactory, Marginal, or In Need of Improvement (see Section 5 of the [protocol](#) for more information about district designations). The table below is a summary of district designations and designation frequency. District accountability determinations are made public on the State Report Card every year.

Designation	Frequency
District Ratings: Exemplary, Advancing, Satisfactory, Marginal, & In Need of Improvement	Each year
In Need of Improvement: Districts in the bottom 5% for overall ratings earn this rating	Each year

**Q49. What are other key differences between school and district designations?**

The table below is a summary of the key differences between school and district designations.

Components	Schools	Districts
How are the weights applied?	Various weights applied	Weights equally distributed

Components	Schools	Districts
How are the ratings from the <i>All Students</i> group and historically underserved student groups combined to generate the overall score?	Each indicator score <sup>22</sup>	Overall score <sup>23</sup>
Are additional racial/ethnic student groups used for designations?	Yes, for TSI & ATSI	No
How often are designations assigned?	Priority/CSI, ATSI: at least every 3 years <sup>24</sup> ; TSI: Annual Reward: Annual	Annual

**Q50. What business rules may affect school and district accountability calculation and designations?**

The table below shows a list of business rules that may affect school and district accountability calculations and designations.

Scenario	Effect on Overall Score and Designation
Not enough ELPA students for schools	The 10% weight would be equally distributed between Achievement and Growth
Not enough students for any other non-ELPA school indicator	Missing indicator weight would go proportionately to other indicators
Not enough students for any district indicator	Missing indicator weight would be equally distributed to the remaining indicators

Please reach out to [TNED.Accountability@tn.gov](mailto:TNED.Accountability@tn.gov) for questions not covered in this document.

<sup>22</sup> See Section 4.3 of the [protocol](#).

<sup>23</sup> See Section 5.3.1 of the [protocol](#).

<sup>24</sup> The first CSI/Priority identification was in 2017-18 when the state ESSA plan was first implemented, followed by the second identification cycle in 2021-22, the third identification cycle in 2022-23 (CSI identification only), and the fourth identification cycle in 2024-25. The next identification year is 2027-28.

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