



# Tennessee 1% Waiver Request: ELA, Math, and Science

20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)(D) and 34 C.F.R. §  
200.6(c) and (d)

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Table of Contents

Introduction ..... 3

    Table 1: Historical Alternate Assessment Participation Rates ..... 3

One Percent Cap Waiver Request Requirements for States Denied a Waiver in SY 2024-25..... 6

    Requirement 1 ..... 6

    Requirement 2 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(4)(i) ..... 7

    Requirement 3 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(4)(ii) ..... 7

        Table 2: SY 2025-26Alternate Assessment Participation Rate by Student Group: ELA Grades 3-8 and High School..... 7

        Table 3: SY 2025-26 Alternate Assessment Participation Rate by Student Group: Mathematics Grades 3-8 and High School\* ..... 8

        Table 4: Science 2025-26 Alternate Assessment Participation Rate by Student Group: Science Grades 3-8 and High School\* ..... 9

        Table 5: Participation Rates for ELA Assessment, Grades 3-8 and High School\* ..... 10

        Table 6: Participation Rates for Mathematics Assessment, Grades 3-8 and High School\* ..... 10

        Table 7: Participation Rates for Science Assessment, Grades 3-8 and High School\* ..... 10

        Table 8: AA-AAAS Participation Numbers and Rates for School Years 2017-18 Through 2025-26 in ELA, Mathematics, and Science ..... 10

    Requirement 4 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(4)(iii) ..... 11

    Requirement 5..... 12

    Requirement 6..... 13

        Table 9: Tennessee Reducing Alternate Assessment Participation to 1% State Plan SY 2026-27 ..... 13

    Requirement 7..... 18

        Table 10: Summary of Alternate Assessment Participation Reduction..... 18

Requirement For States Denied a Waiver ..... 18

Closing ..... 19

Appendix A..... 20

# Introduction

Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, includes requirements related to alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities. ESSA requires State Education Agencies (SEAs) that anticipate exceeding the 1.0 percent participation cap on alternative assessments in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, or science to submit a 1.0 percent cap waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The following information is presented in accordance with the USDOE September 25, 2025, memorandum, *Requirements to Request a Waiver or Waiver Extension for the 2025-26 School Year for the 1.0 Percent Cap on the Percentage of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities Who May Be Assessed with an Alternate Assessment Aligned with Alternate Academic Achievement Standards*.

A review of longitudinal participation data shows the percentage of students participating in the alternative assessment by content area in grades 3–8 and high school (SY) 2017-18 through 2025-26. Based on the state-level data, participation for 2025-26 in English Language Arts (ELA) increased by 0.03 percent, mathematics increased by 0.03 percent, and science alternative assessment participation increased by 0.09 percent.

**Table 1: Historical Alternate Assessment Participation Rates**

Subject	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26*	Change this year
ELA	1.42	1.45	1.35	1.35	1.36	1.44	1.35	1.38	+0.03
Math	1.43	1.47	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.45	1.22	1.25	+0.03
Science	1.36	*Field test	1.33	1.33	1.38	1.41	1.47	1.56	+0.09

*\*Estimated. Final data will be sent to USDOE when assessment is complete and data is verified. The 2024-25 Participation Rates were calculated using new business rules aligned to the changes in ED Facts reporting and in accordance with feedback from USDOE on the Tennessee Waiver Request submitted in September 2024*

Tennessee was denied the most recent waiver request for two reasons. First, a lack of sufficient progress in reducing the rates for participation in ELA, mathematics, and science alternative assessments statewide to meet the 1.0 percent cap. Second, the USDOE review did “not find that approving the waiver will advance student academic achievement, as required in ESEA section 8401(b)(1)(C). “Tennessee has continued to work on the state plan

from the previously submitted waiver, with a focus on reducing participation in alternate assessments and increasing academic achievement for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Analysis of current individual education program (IEP) data specific to eligibility for alternative assessment and state enrollment data was conducted to project the 2026-27 statewide participation rate. Based on this internal analysis, Tennessee anticipates a participation rate of 1.38 percent overall for the 2026-27 school year using current enrollment data. Thus, Tennessee requests a waiver for the 2026-27 school year.

The Tennessee Department of Education (department) has engaged in ongoing collaboration with national technical assistance partners as we seek innovative approaches to ensure only students with the most significant disabilities participate in the alternative assessments. Under the direction of the Assistant Commissioner of Special Education and Student Supports, the Senior Manager of Professional Learning and Low Incidence Disabilities leads the strategy to reduce participation in alternate assessments by addressing professional learning needs, providing targeted technical assistance, conducting reviews of Local Education Agency (LEA) plans, analyzing data from the statewide data and monitoring system, TN PULSE, and offering guidance to cross-department teams including the assessment and accountability team.

Department leadership actively participates in professional learning activities and statewide networking opportunities to strengthen the provision of universal and targeted LEA support, guidance, and technical assistance to LEAs. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the department expanded support to LEAs related to alternate assessment eligibility decision-making and least restrictive environment (LRE) considerations, in collaboration with the department's IDEA Data team. This coordinated effort has strengthened implementation of the state's plan to reduce alternate assessment participation to 1.0 percent.

The state has continued to engage in collaborative partnerships to inform its work with LEAs and implementation of the state plan to reduce participation in alternate assessments. These partnerships include:

- Participation in the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) 1.0 percent Collaborative;
- Participation in the State Collaborative for Assessment, Standards, and Education of Students with Disabilities (ASES);
- Participation in the ASES Steering Committee;
- Membership in the Dynamic Learning Maps working group;
- Participation in the Dynamic Learning Maps Governance activities;

- Implementation of the statewide Acceleration for All (A4A) initiative to increase access to general education; and
- Coordination of the contracted Assistive Technology Project designed to expand LEA access to assistive technology evaluation guidance and tools.

While the department remains committed to and continues work to reduce the percentage of students who participate in the alternative assessment, it also prioritizes ensuring that all students are educated in their least restrictive environment (LRE) and are administered the most appropriate assessment based on their individualized needs. To support this, the department provides ongoing professional learning and technical assistance to ensure that IEP teams make instructional and assessment decisions grounded in individual student data, provide students with appropriate, allowable accommodations to support meaningful access to grade-level content and opportunities to demonstrate learning, and accurately apply criteria to determine which students should participate in alternative assessments.

The department's Acceleration for All (A4A) strategy focuses on increasing access to Tier I instruction. A4A applies cycles of continuous improvement and the use of student work analysis to strengthen lesson preparation and the use of high-quality instructional materials, to increase the quality of instruction for students with disabilities. In addition to the activities described above, the department has engaged in the following ongoing activities to reduce the percentage of students participating in the alternative assessments:

- 1) Providing district special education leadership with guidance on Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) performance data reports;
- 2) Revised functionality and issuing updated guidance for the statewide IEP data management and monitoring system, TN PULSE;
- 3) Delivering focused professional development on developing appropriate measurable annual goals, transition plans, and IEP services;
- 4) Delivering focused professional development on progress monitoring, including data collection and analysis using teacher-created tools, online open access resources, and tools embedded within the statewide IEP platform, TN PULSE;
- 5) Updated and disseminated universal and targeted professional development resources and guidance documents, including:
  - a. Instructionally Appropriate IEP;
  - b. Alternate Assessment Participation: Eligibility and Instructional Considerations;
  - c. Alternate Assessment: The Federal Cap of 1.0 Percent and Implications of Participation;
  - d. Alternate Assessment: Criterion 1, 2, and 3 Considerations Guides;
  - e. Alternate Assessment IEP File Review Rubric;
  - f. Simplifying the Complexities of Course Codes, Endorsements, and Diplomas;

- g. Diploma Options (Family Engagement); and
  - h. Integration of content addressing the impact of modifications, including alternate assessment participation in IEP professional development; and
- 6) Planning statewide expansion of the former State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), Teaching All Students (TAS), to increase access to general education and Tier I instruction for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

As specified in ESSA, LEAs that contribute to the state exceeding the 1.0 percent participation cap must complete and submit a justification and assurances. The department communicated this expectation to all 149 LEAs through multiple avenues, including the annual special education director planner, monthly Special Education and Student Supports Newsletter, monthly Special Education supervisor calls, regional in-person leadership summits, the Federal Programs and Oversight (FPO) newsletter, and ongoing communication from Special Education Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) consultants during monthly SPED supervisor study councils. Additionally, the Special Education program subject matter experts provide universal, targeted, and intensive supports to LEAs based on identified need or upon request.

## One Percent Cap Waiver Request Requirements for States Denied a Waiver in SY 2024-25

### Requirement 1

Demonstrate that it provided the public and any interested local educational agency (LEA) in the State with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment. The State must make available for public comment the entire waiver request (including the plan and timeline described below), in the manner in which the State customarily provides similar notice and opportunity to comment to the public.

- a. Submit the comments and input to the Department with a description of how the State addressed the comments and input it received.

The draft waiver was posted on (insert link of the webpage) for public comment on May 1, 2026 until June 15, 2026. The public was notified of the opportunity to comment through

- Outline all avenues—
- SPED director update, etc.
- Arc TN—family engagement
- TN STEP
- Council on Developmental Disabilities

The comments, found in Appendix A, were considered and informed the revisions to the final waiver.

### **Requirement 2 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(4)(i)**

Submit the waiver request at least 90 days before the testing window starts for the relevant subject.

The Tennessee alternate assessments are the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Instructionally Embedded (IE) model for ELA and math. The administration windows are:

- Fall administration window: September 8–December 19, 2025
- Spring administration window: February 2–May 15, 2026

The Tennessee alternate assessments for science are administered once a year. The administration window is March 15–April 30, 2027.

The deadline for submission 90 days prior to administration is June 16, 2026. The department did not meet this request due to delays in receiving the assessment data needed to calculate participation rates.

### **Requirement 3 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(4)(ii)**

- A. Provide the number and percentage of students in each required student group (race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage status, English learner status) who took the AA-AAAS during SY 2024-25 in each subject for which the State is seeking a waiver.

**Table 2: SY 2025-26 Alternate Assessment Participation Rate by Student Group: ELA Grades 3-8 and High School**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Total Number in Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Number Taking AA-AAAS in Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Percent Taking AA-AAAS in Grades 3-8 and HS</b>
<b>All Students</b>	605,709	8,345	1.38%
<b>Hispanic</b>	97,332	1,116	1.15%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	1,029	15	1.46%
<b>Asian</b>	13,588	220	1.62%

<b>Black</b>	122,037	2,594	2.13%
<b>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	740	14	1.89%
<b>White</b>	341,132	4,031	1.18%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	29,846	355	1.19%
<b>Unknown Races</b>	5	0	0.00%
<b>Male</b>	310,340	5,655	1.82%
<b>Female</b>	295,251	2,687	0.91%
<b>Unknown Gender</b>	118	3	2.54%
<b>English Learner</b>	65,687	697	1.06%
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	143,082	2,713	1.90%

*\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.*

**Table 3: SY 2025-26 Alternate Assessment Participation Rate by Student Group: Mathematics Grades 3-8 and High School\***

<b>Group</b>	<b>Total Number in Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Number Taking AA-AAAS in Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Percent Taking AA-AAAS in Grades 3-8 and HS</b>
<b>All Students</b>	667,426	8,357	1.25%
<b>Hispanic</b>	109,275	1,118	1.02%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	1,124	15	1.33%
<b>Asian</b>	14,401	221	1.53%
<b>Black</b>	136,288	2,595	1.90%
<b>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	823	14	1.70%
<b>White</b>	373,107	4,040	1.08%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	32,403	354	1.09%
<b>Unknown Races</b>	5	0	0.00%
<b>Male</b>	341,477	5,662	1.66%
<b>Female</b>	325,824	2,692	0.83%
<b>Unknown Gender</b>	125	3	2.40%
<b>English Learner</b>	72,817	701	0.96%
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	155,542	2,716	1.75%

\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.

**Table 4: Science 2025-26 Alternate Assessment Participation Rate by Student Group: Science Grades 3-8 and High School\***

Group	Total Number in Grades 3-8 and HS	Number Taking AA-AAAS in Grades 3-8 and HS	Percent Taking AA-AAAS in Grades 3-8 and HS
<b>All Students</b>	530,934	8,280	1.56%
<b>Hispanic</b>	86,128	1,101	1.28%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	910	17	1.87%
<b>Asian</b>	11,963	222	1.86%
<b>Black</b>	106,739	2,592	2.43%
<b>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	657	14	2.13%
<b>White</b>	298,121	3,978	1.33%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	26,411	356	1.35%
<b>Unknown Races</b>	5	0	0.00%
<b>Male</b>	272,110	5,628	2.07%
<b>Female</b>	258,721	2,649	1.02%
<b>Unknown Gender</b>	103	3	2.91%
<b>English Learner</b>	60,484	698	1.15%
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	127,369	2,702	2.12%

\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.

- B. Provide Overall assessment participation rates for all students and students with disabilities during SY 2024-25.

Tennessee aligns with the federal assessment participation requirements and requires all students enrolled in public K-12 schools to participate in statewide assessments, with or without accommodations, or the alternative assessment. The only allowable exception to this participation requirement is to receive a medical exemption due to medical necessity. Medical exemption requests are reviewed by the department and approved or denied in accordance with established state policy to ensure appropriate and consistent application.

**Table 5: Participation Rates for ELA Assessment, Grades 3-8 and High School\***

	<b>All Students Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and HS</b>
Students Assessed	605,709	92,965
Students Enrolled	605,709	92,965
Assessment Participation Rate	100.00	100.00

*\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.*

**Table 6: Participation Rates for Mathematics Assessment, Grades 3-8 and High School\***

<b>Participation for Mathematics Assessments – Grades 3 – 8; High School</b>		
	<b>All Students Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and HS</b>
Students Assessed	667,426	99,137
Students Enrolled	667,426	99,137
Assessment Participation Rate	100.00	100.00

*\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.*

**Table 7: Participation Rates for Science Assessment, Grades 3-8 and High School\***

	<b>All Students Grades 3-8 and HS</b>	<b>Students with Disabilities Grades 3-8 and HS</b>
Students Assessed	530,934	84,853
Students Enrolled	530,934	84,853
Assessment Participation Rate	100.00	100.00

*\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.*

C. AA-AAAS participation numbers and rates for SYs 2017-18 through 2024-25, including estimates for SY 2025-26, in each subject for which the State is seeking a waiver.

**Table 8: AA-AAAS Participation Numbers and Rates for School Years 2017-18 Through 2025-26 in ELA, Mathematics, and Science**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>ELA</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
2017-18	1.42	1.43	1.36
2018-19	1.45	1.47	*Field test

2019-20	COVID-no testing	COVID-no testing	COVID-no testing
2020-21	1.35	1.36	1.33
2021-22	1.35	1.36	1.33
2022-23	1.36	1.36	1.38
2023-24	1.44	1.45	1.41
2024-25	1.35	1.22	1.47
2025-26*	1.38	1.25	1.56

*\*The data reported for school year 2025-26 is an estimate.*

*New business rules for calculating participation rate were used beginning in 2024-25 to align with the changes in ED Facts reporting and in accordance with the feedback from the USDOE on the Tennessee Waiver Request submitted in September 2024.*

Please note that the department is in the final stages of ED Facts data preparation; therefore, the data reported for the 2026-27 school year are estimates. Once the ED Facts data is fully verified, the department will submit a revised waiver to USDOE, with all updates clearly noted.

#### **Requirement 4 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(4)(iii)**

Provide assurances that LEAs over 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessments followed the state’s participation guidelines. (A) Followed each State’s guidelines; and (B) will address disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup taking alternative assessment.

Annually, every LEA that contributed to the state exceeding one percent was sent a notice (Attachment 1) informing them that their participation rate exceeded 1 percent and a justification is required to assure the state that the district would adhere to the state guidelines for participation.

Data was provided to each notified LEA. The data provided the state counts and rates, and the LEA counts and rates in each of the following areas:

- longitudinal participation rates from the 2020-21 school year through 2023-24,
- disability of the participants,
- economic disadvantage status,
- English learner status,
- gender, and
- race/ethnicity.

## Requirement 5

Require that each LEA that the State anticipates will assess more than 1.0 percent of all students assessed with an AA-AAAS in each subject for which the State is seeking a waiver have submitted information to the State justifying the need to exceed the 1.0 percent cap. States must show where these justifications are made publicly available, and that this information is easily accessible (see 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(3)(iv)). For example, the State could include a URL link to these justifications (or a URL link to a summary of these justifications) in the waiver request.

The LEAs that received a notification of contributing to the State exceeding one percent were required to submit a justification within the state system, ePlan. For the justification process, LEAs were asked to:

- analyze the data and project participation rates for the next school year,
- analyze DLM data to identify students performing above the target level,
- provide information on the policies and practices that inform IEP team decision-making related to alternate assessment participation,
- describe current disproportionality and a plan for reducing/eliminating this by the next year,
- describe the process for ensuring parents are adequately informed of the implications of participation,
- address academic progress, and
- provide a signature.

LEAs were asked to return the justifications by May 1, 2026. Each justification was reviewed by the Senior Manager of Professional Development and Low Incidence Disabilities. Any LEA practices not aligned with the state criteria and guidance were addressed with the special education director. The LEAs were required to revise their justification to clarify their response, add more information, and/or describe their plan to adjust LEA practices and fully align with state guidance. The final justifications were returned to the state for [public posting](#). Completed justifications are posted on the Alternate Assessment webpage, <https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/lea-operations/assessment/alternate-assessment.html>.

Analysis of the LEA data and their justification related to disproportionality was used to identify LEAs that will receive intensive professional development. Specifically, the use of the LEA demographic data and participation rates of each subgroup universally participating at rates

above the state rate in Tennessee: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, male, unknown gender, and economically disadvantaged (Tables 2, 3, and 4).

The department has expanded the IDEA D Team to strengthen oversight and support for LEAs in the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA Data Team focuses on increasing LEAs' understanding and use of state and local Annual Performance Report (APR) data to inform decision-making and continuous improvement. Through ongoing analysis of statewide, regional, and LEA-level data trends, the IDEA Data Team leads the communication of APR local determinations and required corrective actions, including those associated with participation in alternate assessments under APR Indicator 3. The team supports the state's efforts to reduce participation in alternate assessments by monitoring data related to the 1.0 percent cap. Additionally, the IDEA Data Team provides professional learning, guidance, and resources to LEAs through a tiered system of technical assistance aligned to identified needs.

**Requirement 6**

Provide a current plan and timeline by which the State will do the following: a. Improve the implementation of the State's guidelines for participation in the AA-AAAS, including by reviewing and, if necessary, revising its definition of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (see 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)(iv)(A)) so that less than 1.0 percent of all students assessed take an AA-AAAS. b. Take additional steps to support and provide appropriate oversight to each LEA that the State anticipates will assess more than 1.0 percent of all students assessed with an AA-AAAS in each subject for which the State is seeking a waiver. This should include describing how the State will monitor and regularly evaluate each such LEA to ensure that the LEA provides sufficient training such that school staff who participate as members of an IEP Team or other placement team understand and implement the guidelines established by the State for participation in an AA-AAAS so that all students are appropriately assessed (see 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)(iv)(B)). c. Address any disproportionality in the percentage of students taking an AA-AAAS as identified through the State's data (see 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)(iv)(C)).

**Table 9: Tennessee Reducing Alternate Assessment Participation to 1% State Plan SY 2026-27**

Timeframe	Tasks for 2026-27	Targeted Root Cause
May 2026	Public posting of the 1% Waiver Request	Waiver requirements

<p>May 2026- June 2026</p>	<p>Public Comment Period (30 days)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The state will inform stakeholders of the public comment period through multiple communication methods, including departmental newsletters and direct correspondence with LEA leadership, advisory councils, parent information centers, and technical assistance partners.</li> <li>- The state will review all public comments following the 30-day public comment period to incorporate feedback into the final waiver, as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>Waiver requirements</p>
<p>June 2026</p>	<p>Submit Finalized Waiver to USDOE</p>	<p>Waiver requirements</p>
<p>June 2026</p>	<p>Release a Progress Monitoring Guide to Support Instructional Decision-Making and Instructional Coherence</p>	<p>Root Cause 1: Progress Monitoring</p>
<p>July 2026</p>	<p>Release Online Learning Modules for APR Indicators to increase data literacy among LEA leadership, special education directors, principals, and educators.</p>	<p>Root Cause 2: Data Literacy</p>
<p>July 2026</p>	<p>Convening of new LEA special education directors, including professional development on using LEA data to inform practices.</p>	<p>Root Cause 2: Data Literacy</p>
<p>July 2026</p>	<p>Release School Year 2026-27 IEP Monitoring Protocol to LEAs. The release will include regional professional development to highlight the changes and address questions. The new protocol emphasizes alignment of staff endorsements with course codes and student placement.</p>	<p>Root Cause 4: Alignment of Staffing Expertise</p>

<p>July 2026- December 2026</p>	<p>Engage the Special Education Director Advisory Council to review and recommend revisions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the state alternate assessment guidance documents,</li> <li>• the definition of “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities” (Criterion 1), and</li> <li>• supporting IEP team decision-making tools.</li> </ul>	<p>Waiver requirements Root Cause 2: Data Literacy</p>
<p>July 2026- May 2027</p>	<p>Acceleration for All (A4A) LEA leadership convenings with professional development and coaching focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing fidelity and rigor of Tier I instruction provided to all learners,</li> <li>• Using scaffolds and access points to support learner engagement and progress,</li> <li>• Implementation of high-leverage practices within Tier I instruction, and</li> <li>• Instructional leadership roles within the district and building skills within the leaders.</li> </ul>	<p>Root Cause 3: Access to Tier I Instruction</p>
<p>July 2026- May 2027</p>	<p>A4A Principal convenings with professional development and coaching focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using walk-through data to inform instructional decision-making,</li> <li>• Coaching teachers to increase fidelity and rigor of Tier I instruction provided to all learners,</li> <li>• Collaborative planning facilitation to support the use of scaffolds, access points, and high-leverage practices in instructional design, and</li> </ul>	<p>Root Cause 3: Access to Tier I Instruction</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a systemic model for continuous improvement.</li> </ul>	
August 2027	Release online module: Using KITE Data to Inform IEP Team Decision Making Within Your LEA. (KITE is the online platform for the Dynamic Learning Maps alternate assessment.)	Root Cause 2: Data Literacy
August 2026- May 2027	<p>Online A4A professional development for educators focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative planning,</li> <li>• Ensuring all students are engaged in rigorous, meaningful Tier I instruction,</li> <li>• Integrating SDI, scaffolds, access points, high leverage practices, accommodations, and modifications within Tier I instruction, and</li> <li>• Analysis of student performance data to drive instructional planning.</li> </ul>	Root Causes 2 and 3: Data Literacy and Access to Tier I Instruction
August 2026- May 2027	<p>Monthly Special Education Director calls will regularly include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional development related to data literacy,</li> <li>• resources and guidance for collecting, analyzing, and using data to drive decision-making, and</li> <li>• examples/models for using data to communicate and inform decisions.</li> </ul>	Root Causes 2: Data Literacy
August 2026- May 2027	IDEA Monitoring of LEAs with feedback for correction, improvement, and increased student outcomes. Monitoring will include a check to ensure teachers in self-contained special education settings (classrooms providing highly modified instruction in	Root Cause 4: Alignment of Staffing Expertise

	ELA, math, science, and social studies) are properly endorsed.	
September 1-3, 2026	<p>Statewide Access Conference for educators and educator leadership. The conference will include sessions to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• data collection, analysis, and use,</li> <li>• progress monitoring,</li> <li>• specially designed instruction, and</li> <li>• monitoring of IDEA compliance.</li> </ul>	Root Causes 1 and 2: Progress monitoring and Data Literacy
September 2026	New webpage launched with a comprehensive collection of all special education resources to ease access for LEA reference and use. The newly designed webpage will include policy/legal documents, guidance, and implementation resources for each step of the IEP process, including the collection and use of progress monitoring data	Root Cause 1: Progress Monitoring
September 2026	Launch a new online learning module to educate IEP team members on the alternate assessment criteria.	Waiver Requirement and Root Cause 2: Data Literacy
January 2027-March 2027	Edits to alternate assessment guidance documents based on all stakeholder feedback are complete and documents are re-released with appropriate information/training to inform educators, school leaders, and parents on how to implement any changes. This will also include updates to the online learning system to ensure alignment.	Waiver Requirement
March 2027	LEAs contributing to the state exceeding 1% participation are notified and asked to complete a justification.	Waiver Requirement

May 2027	Waiver (if needed) posted for public comment.	Waiver Requirement
June 2027	Waiver submitted to USDOE (if needed).	Waiver Requirement

## Requirement 7

The state demonstrates that it reduced the alternate assessment participation rate in each subject.

Below is a summary of the current participation rate and amount reduced from the prior year. Tennessee met the requirement of reduction in all three subjects.

**Table 10: Summary of Alternate Assessment Participation Reduction**

Subject	2024-25 AA-AAS Participation Rate	2025-26 AA-AAAS Participation Rate	Reduction
ELA			
Math			
Science			

## Requirement For States Denied a Waiver

Address each reason for the denial.

In the letter to Commissioner Reynolds dated March 11, 2025, Tennessee received a denial “because I do not find that approving the waiver will advance student academic achievement, as required in ESEA section 8401(b)(1)(C). According to data submitted by TDOE to the *EDFacts* reporting system, AA-AAAS participation rates in 2023-2024 school year increased when compared to the 2022-2023 school year and remain above 1.0 percent.” Thus, there are two reasons to address: reducing participation statewide and advancing academic achievement.

The data in Table 10 demonstrate Tennessee’s statewide reduced participation in alternate assessment in ELA, mathematics, and science.

To ensure academic achievement, the state plan includes targeted efforts designed to increase LEA data literacy, strengthen progress monitoring practices, and expand access to and engagement in Tier I instruction for students with disabilities. Collectively, these efforts establish a coherent model for continuous improvement. Through this work, educators will strengthen their ability to analyze and use data to inform instructional planning. Ongoing progress monitoring data will be collected to inform future instructional decisions and adjust supports. Instructional planning and progress monitoring will be focused on Tier I, grade-level, standards-based instruction, ensuring that all students have meaningful access to content that promotes academic growth and progress.

## **Closing**

Tennessee has demonstrated a reduction in participation rates, established a comprehensive plan to improve academic outcomes, and met the statewide assessment participation requirement of 95 percent. Therefore, the state respectfully requests a waiver in accordance with the USDOE September 25, 2025, memorandum from USDOE, *Requirements to Request a Waiver of Waiver Extension for the 2025-26 School Year for the 1.0 Percent Cap on the Percentage of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities Who May Be Assessed with an Alternate Assessment Aligned with Alternate Academic Achievement Standards*.

## Appendix A

### Public Comments

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