

## 2025-26 Alternative Assessment Justification

### *Local Educational Agency (LEA) Justification and Assurances for Exceeding the 1.0 Percent Cap*

#### **Purpose**

In accordance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c), local educational agencies (LEAs) contributing to the state exceeding the 1.0 percent cap must submit a justification and assurances.

1. Select LEA Name and ID#

10 - Anderson County

2. Enter the Last Name, First Name of the individual submitting this form.

Towe, Kim

3. Identify your role within the LEA. Special Education Director

- a. Special Education Director
- b. Special Education Coordinator
- c. Other

## ELA Participation Rates for School Years 2020-21 through 2025-26

4. **ELA Participation Rates 2020-21** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA. \**

1.49

5. **ELA Participation Rates 2021-22** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA. \**

1.38

6. **ELA Participation Rates 2022-23** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA. \**

1.45

7. **ELA Participation Rates 2023-24** *Note: Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA. \**

1.51

8. **ELA Participation Rates 2024-25** *Note: Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA. \**

1.18

9. **ELA Participation Rates 2025-26** *\*2025-26 is an estimated participation rate using LEA assessment provisioning data. \**

1.2

## Math Participation Rates for School Years 2020-21 through

10. **Math Participation Rates 2020-21** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA.* \*

1.51

11. **Math Participation Rates 2021-22** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA.* \*

1.45

12. **Math Participation Rates 2022-23** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA.* \*

1.46

13. **Math Participation Rates 2023-24** *Note: Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA.* \*

1.48

14. **Math Participation Rates 2024-25** *Note: Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA.* \*

1.04

15. **Math Participation Rates 2025-26** *\*2025-26 is an estimated participation rate using LEA assessment provisioning data.* \*

1.2

## Science Participation Rates for School Years 2020-21 through 2025-26

### 16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 \*

1.44

### 17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 \*

1.42

### 18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 \*

1.56

### 19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 \*

1.46

### 20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 \*

1.32

### 21. Science Participation Rates 2025-26 \*2025-26 is an estimated participation rate using LEA assessment provisioning data. \*

1.2

## Number of Students Scoring

To calculate: Log into KITE - Reports - Alternate Assessment Reports - Year 2025 - LEA Name and select the .PDF file. The first table in the report provides the number of students scoring Advanced by grade and subject. Calculate the total number of students scoring Advanced for each subject.

22. In school year 2024-25, list the total number of students scoring **"Advanced"** for **ELA**. \*

12

23. In school year 2024-25, list the total number of students scoring **"Advanced"** for **Math**.

3

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

### Criterion One

In this section, describe the processes in place to ensure the IEP team is making informed, data-based decisions aligned to the alternate assessment participation criteria. Please note that completion of the Alternate Assessment Worksheet in TN PULSE alone is not sufficient evidence.

**Criterion One: The student has a significant cognitive disability. Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should be considered for the alternate assessment.**

You must also describe the process for reviewing alternate assessment eligibility for any student scoring Advanced in at least one subject. Advanced performance scores may indicate that the student's skills exceed the eligibility criteria and should prompt a review of the student's continued participation in the alternate assessment.

In the questions below, describe the process used to ensure the IEP team considers only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (approximately 1.0 percent of the student population).

#### 24. How are IEP teams informed of the criterion and expectations for determining if the student meets expectations for participation? \*

The IEP, including Special Education teachers, school psychologists, and administrators teams have been given the alternate assessment decision guideline provided by the department of education. It has been reviewed and continues to be referenced when making a decision to place a student on alternate assessment. The school psychologists have been trained as well. School psychologists are trained on multiple assessment tools including tools non-verbal and adaptive. School psychologists are now a part of the IEP team decision meeting annually due to scores being reviewed annually. Annually, parents, as well as, other IEP participants, review the criteria set by the decision making guide for alternative assessment, including multiple sources of evidence for each area (psychological evaluation reports, results of individual cognitive ability tests, adaptive behavior skills data, results of individual or group- administered achievement assessment, district-wide alternative assessments, individual reading assessments, findings of communication or language proficiency assessments, teacher-collected data from classroom observations, progress monitoring data, and IEPs), in order to make the decision of alternative assessment participation. If the decision is made for an alternative assessment participation, it is explained to parents/ guardians that their child is on an alternative high school diploma path, not resulting in a general education high school diploma; however, that their student is eligible to continue to work toward a general education diploma through their 22nd birthday. The parent is an equal participant of the IEP team and is an equal participant of the decision process in determining if the child qualifies for the alternate assessment(s). When it is determined that a student is appropriate for an alternative assessment, all IEP team participants including parents sign the IEP acknowledging that the student meets the criteria, what evidence was used to support the decision, and the assurance of specific considerations that were not used to make the decision.

#### 25. What data are used to make the determination (e.g., cognitive and adaptive behavior data)? \*

Our procedure is to consider multiple sources of information and not to only focus on IQ. Some data sources are from the psychological, benchmark testing, and teacher data collection. Adaptive data is also considered when considering

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

### Criterion One

looking at this criterion. Adaptive data sources may include but are not limited to the psychological and teacher data collection. The team always looks at multiple sources of data to fully understand the impact of the student's cognitive and adaptive delays. Training and support through PLCs and district-wide training will continue in order to fully understand those students who meet criterion one of being the most significant cognitive delayed students.

#### 26. How is adaptive behavior data incorporated into the decision-making process? \*

Data related to adaptive behavior are considered through the following steps: Gathering results from standardized assessments (such as adaptive behavior scales scored by teachers and/or parents) to have an understanding of the student's level of functioning. Looking at various sources of information about the student (including observations, class work, and feedback from parents, etc.) to evaluate how he/she would apply skills in actual situations. Comparing the student's adaptive functioning to typical development at the same age and detecting major and persistent problems in applying skills across various settings (at school, at home, or elsewhere in the community). Interpreting results in relation to the results of the student's cognitive assessment.

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility: Criterion Two

In this section, describe the processes in place to ensure the IEP team is making informed, data-based decisions aligned to the alternate assessment participation criteria. Please note that completion of the Alternate Assessment Worksheet in TN PULSE alone is not sufficient evidence.

**Criterion Two: The student is learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards. All students, regardless of the assessment or the least restrictive environment (LRE) should receive standards-aligned instruction that is rigorous, meaningful, and sufficient in duration to increase student outcomes. Special education services are provided in addition to, not in place of, standards-based instruction.**

In the questions below, describe the evidence used to ensure the student was provided access to grade-level, standards-aligned instruction. This should include an explanation of the process used to ensure the student received instruction aligned to grade-level standards at an appropriate level of rigor, intensity, and duration comparable to their peers.

27. How does the IEP team ensure the student's performance and skill level are due to a significant cognitive disability rather than an instructional disadvantage? \*

The team looks at multiple sources of data including formal and informal assessments. These assessments look at cognitive and adaptive functioning. Cognitively, the team would consider deficits across all domains. Adaptively, the team will look at data to support (or not support) substantial limitations in everyday adaptive skills. The team considers access to high-quality, standards based instruction, as well as, interventions and accommodations with supports. Data as to how the student has responded to instruction over time is considered. The team will consider and rule out exclusionary factors.

28. What data are used to make an informed determination? \*

The team will use multiple sources of data. The team will review the psychological report that includes cognitive, adaptive, and achievement data. The team will also consider classroom work samples, curriculum-based assessments, benchmark assessments, as well as any state testing that may have been taken. The team will look at the progress monitoring of the IEP goals as well. They will also consider the types of supports and progress that may have been made.



## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

### Criterion Three

In this section, describe the processes in place to ensure the IEP team is making informed, data-based decisions aligned to the alternate assessment participation criteria. Please note that completion of the Alternate Assessment Worksheet in TN PULSE alone is not sufficient evidence.

### **Criterion Three: The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.**

In the questions below, describe the process used to determine that the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports.

29. What data are used to support this determination? \*

Student benchmark data, teacher instructional assessment data ( grade level standard data), present levels, data collected from IEP goals

30. How do IEP teams determine the type and level of supports needed, including for students whose least restrictive environment (LRE) is a highly modified special education setting for all or part of the day? \*

IEP determines level of supports based off of data collected and supports provided by staff for student such as behavior incentive charts, assistive technology, read aloud, modified work, scripted writing or speak to write, communication board etc. Team members look at the level of supports needed to determine amount of time student may need support in a special education setting vs. regular education.

31. How does the IEP team distinguish between supports required due to the student's disability and supports that are available as part of the instructional environment? \*

Supports given to the student would be distinguished based on supports given to all and what is allowed on testing accommodations vs. what additional adult assistance might be required for the student to be supported in the general education environment

## **Disproportionality**

Using data by primary eligibility (disability) category and demographic groups, describe LEA patterns of participation in the alternate assessment, including any disproportionate participation and a plan for reducing or eliminating disproportionality. Include a description of the LEA population demographics as compared to statewide demographics.

32. Describe any identified disproportionality in alternate assessment participation and the LEA's plan to address and reduce disproportionate participation, as applicable.

Anderson County Alternate Assessment participation by race and ethnicity is not evenly distributed with the number of white students taking the Alt Assessment are 87.76% compared to Black or African American and Hispanic both showing a rate of 6.12%. This is proportionate to the overall population of white students in the district for the 24-25 school year was 89% compared to 4 % Black or African American and 5 % of the districts' students are Hispanic. This would be indicative of why there is a disproportionate number of white students taking the alternative assessment when compared to other race/ethnicity groups.

*(For example, if the LEA student population is evenly distributed among White, Black, and Hispanic students, the alternate assessment participation data should reflect a similar distribution across those groups.) \**

## Informed Parent Participation

Students who participate in alternate assessments are significantly less likely to earn a traditional diploma due to the highly modified content and potential for lower expectations.

In the questions below, describe the processes and practices used to ensure parents are fully informed of the eligibility requirements and implications of alternate assessment participation.

33. How are parents informed of the eligibility criteria and implications of participation?

\* Annually, parents, as well as, other IEP participants, review the criteria set by the decision making guide for alternative assessment, including multiple sources of evidence for each area (psychological evaluation reports, results of individual cognitive ability tests, adaptive behavior skills data, results of individual or group-administered achievement assessment, district-wide alternative assessments, individual reading assessments, findings of communication or language proficiency assessments, teacher-collected data from classroom observations, progress monitoring data, and IEPs), in order to make the decision of alternative assessment participation. If the decision is made for an alternative assessment participation, it is explained to parents/guardians that their child is on an alternative high school diploma path not resulting in a general education high school diploma; however, that their student is eligible to continue to work toward a general education diploma through their 22nd birthday.

34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process?

\*The parent is an equal participant of the IEP team and is an equal participant of the decision process in determining if the child qualifies for the alternate assessment(s). When it is determined that a student is appropriate for an alternative assessment, all IEP team participants including parents, review the Tennessee Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Worksheet that is part of the IEP acknowledging that the student meets the criteria, what evidence was used to support the decision, and the assurance of specific considerations that were not used to make the decision. The parents also indicate their acknowledgement and agreement by signing "yes" on the Informed Consent.

35. Participation in the alternate assessment must be reviewed at least annually. Students may transition to the general assessments at any time, as determined by the IEP team.

What processes are in place to ensure these decisions are fully discussed and reviewed at least annually? \*The school psychologist must review and enter scores on the Tennessee Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Worksheet as part of the annual IEP review process. The IEP team then signs their understanding and agreement in the informed consent.

## Ensuring Students Are Making Academic Progress

In *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, the U.S. Supreme Court clarified that an IEP must be "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances." Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education denied the state's 2024-25 waiver request, noting that it did "not find that approving the waiver will advance student academic achievement, as required in section 8401(b)(1)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)."

Thus, LEAs that contribute to the state exceeding the 1.0 percent cap must provide assurances that students participating in alternate assessments are provided access to and engagement in standards-based instruction and are making appropriate academic progress.

36. Describe the policies, procedures, and practices used in your LEA to ensure students are provided instruction that meets the requirements set forth by ESEA and *Endrew F.*, and that students make appropriate academic progress.\*

Students of Anderson County have the right to be educated in their Least Restrictive Environment based on what the data supports. They can access standard-aligned instruction, support and services that are designed to provide meaningful academic progress. Teachers are appropriately placed in their field of expertise in order for students to receive high quality instruction. Teachers take and gather data from multiple sources in order to make educated decisions about the student's progress and needs.

## Support Requested

37. Please describe any support needed from the department to assist in meeting the requirements outlined in this form. All reasonable requests will be considered. \*

As always we appreciate all the support the department has given us through my years here in Anderson County. I feel I can reach out to all at the department and get an email response usually on the same day. Thank you for your continued support.