

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#

100 - Carter County

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

Jenkins, Tiffany

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.* *

1.61

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.* *

1.73

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.* *

1.88

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

2.04

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

2.27

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

2.2

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.* *

1.61

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.* *

1.76

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.* *

1.89

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

2.06

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

2.16

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

2.1

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.82

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

2.06

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.77

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

2.25

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

2.36

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

2.3

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**. *

10

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

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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? *

Carter County members of the IEP Team are trained yearly on the Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria. Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in the alternate assessment. Carter County Schools training includes specific instruction of Federal Participation Guidelines Including: Criteria One: The student has a significant cognitive disability. Only students with the most significant cognitive disability should be considered for the alternate assessment. Criteria Two: The student is learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards. Criteria Three: The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age appropriate curriculum. Our Psychologist also enters all data in the IEP that informs the decision of the team to look at the Alternative Assessment, and procedurally she is required to be included in those team discussions. If a student scores advanced in any subject area the team also continually reviews present levels during the annual meeting and discusses implications on future testing. Carter County's goal across the board is to make sure all students have access to instruction aligned with rigorous and high expectations for success. Specifically focusing on Criteria 1 our teams are reminded that significant cognitive deficits along with significant adaptive deficits are what can be considered a significant cognitive disability.

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

Most importantly cognitive and adaptive data and information are reviewed for Criteria one, but all data included in the students re-evaluation and present levels of performance are used to guide the team's decision. This is regardless of the child's LRE or placement.

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

Adaptive Behavior is part of Criterion 1 and must be significantly impaired across school and home settings. ID alone is

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

not synonymous with significant cognitive disability. Teams must consider all of the following data: intellectual ability, systematic observations, adaptive behavior, exclusionary factors, developmental history in order to consider participation in the Alternative 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? *

All students within Carter County have access to HQIM's and high expectations through standards based instruction. In order to be eligible under Criteria 2 all student learning must be derived from state standards but require modifications across all subjects. We must also ensure cognitive scores are not a reflection of exposure and engagement or replace standards aligned instruction with functional or life skills instruction. The IEP Team must ensure the student had the opportunity to actively participate in grade level expectations within their LRE. If this occurs but still requires extensive modification and accommodation the child may meet criteria 2.

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

Teams should consider present levels, LRE, accommodations and modifications in a settings. Along with students ability to participate and make progress across all settings. The team needs to review standards based content based upon student learning not upon student mastery of short term objectives.

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? *

PLEPs, IEP illustrating substantial accommodations, modifications, services and supports. All cognitive and behavioral data. Review of LRE and all current comprehensive data (formative and summative assessments, observations, student work, grades). Separate setting alone should not be the sole circumstance necessary to meet Criterion three.

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? *

Teams review data and present levels to determine where and how the student will participate in instruction and if a separate setting with extensive supports are necessary across all areas. IEP must contain sufficient evidence and data that a student requires substantial accommodations, modifications, services, and supports.

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? *

Criteria Three must be met within all LRE settings. Setting alone is not sufficient information to make this suggestion. The team must determine if the necessary accommodations, modifications, services, and supports are extensive, repeated, individualized, and required across multiple settings not just for example in Math class. The student must also use substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of assessing information to acquire and demonstrate skills across multiple settings.

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.

Carter County schools shows a significantly higher male participation rate for the alternative assessment. Although it is similar to the statewide data, Carter County plans to continue reviews of both student data and those scoring advanced to better align our participation with state and federal standards.

*(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?

* Team Members are trained annually on the outcomes of Alt participation and information that necessitates a discussion with parents. It is Carter County procedure that the school psychologist or other district administrative staff member attends meetings where such discussions take place to make sure all diploma, classroom format and transition questions can be answered correctly. This offers both our teachers and parents support while taking this into consideration.

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

*Parents are front and center in the IEP team decision making progress. Parental participation is paramount and teachers consistently work to make sure they are present and informed. Parents participate by providing input on strengths, needs, annual goals, services, placement, and teams make sure all of their concerns are fully considered and addressed.

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? *Annual Alternative Assessment Training. Bi-monthly PD as annual meetings are being held with faculty and staff reminders. Yearly check list of general review information are sent out to all casemanagers to consider when scheduling and inviting parents to Annual IEP Meetings. This allows case managers to make sure all reasons for the meeting are on the IEP, and it gives parents a guide of what will be discussed.

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.*

To ensure students receive instruction that supports appropriate academic progress Carter County Schools requires all students and teachers maintain access to HQIM's, receive standards based instruction, and are included in the Tier 1 classroom as much as is appropriate.

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. *

Carter County Schools under the guidance of a seasoned school psychologist very strictly reviews and trains considering all data and criteria for participation in the alternate assessment. The population of high need students that we are receiving is, however, increasing. This year alone required the creation of another Self-Contained CDC classroom to support the increasing need and number of our students with the most severe needs. Any supports are appreciated, and the need for a second or individual psychologist pending retirement is extensive.