

## 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#

101 - Elizabethton

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

Boatman, Joshua

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.* \*

0.73

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.* \*

0.8

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.* \*

0.91

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

0.92

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

1.06

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

1.1

## 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.* \*

0.74

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.* \*

0.8

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.* \*

0.95

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

0.92

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

0.97

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

0.73

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

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

0.76

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

0.71

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

0.99

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

0.77

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

1.5

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

0.95

## 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**. \*

2

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

0

## 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? \*

ECS ensures IEP teams are informed of the criteria and expectations for determining a student's participation in statewide assessments through the following procedures: 1. Annual TDOE and district training for special education staff and administrators on TNReady participation requirements and the eligibility criteria for alternate assessment. 2. Distribution and use of TDOE guidance, including the TNReady Participation Guidelines and the TN-Alternate Assessment Participation Decision Tree/Flowchart. 3. Use of IEP forms within TN Pulse that include the required decision statements and criteria. 4. Review and discussion of the criteria during the IEP meeting, led by the case manager or assessment coordinator, ensuring each team member understands the expectations before making participation decisions.

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

When determining a student's eligibility for alternate assessment, the IEP team reviews a comprehensive body of data to ensure the student meets all three required participation criteria. The data used include: 1. Cognitive Assessment Data - Results from a recent cognitive assessment. - Documentation that the student has a significant cognitive disability. - Evidence that the disability impacts reasoning, problem solving, and information processing. 2. Adaptive Behavior Data - Adaptive behavior rating scales from at least two sources (e.g., parent and teacher). - Documentation showing significant deficits in adaptive functioning in multiple environments. - Data confirming that adaptive needs are long-term and pervasive. 3. Academic Performance and Instructional Data - Evidence that the student is provided instruction aligned to the TAAS. - Documentation that the student requires substantial supports to access academic content. - Progress monitoring showing functioning substantially below grade-level expectations, even with high-quality instruction and accommodations. 4. Functional and Daily Living Skills Data - Information on communication, self-care, social skills, and independence. - Classroom observations that support the presence of a significant cognitive disability impacting daily functioning. 5. IEP and Team Documentation - Input from parents, special educators, general educators, and related service providers. - Confirmation that the student meets all criteria.

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

### Criterion One

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

Adaptive behavior data are used to document evidence of significant cognitive disability as required by TDOE's participation guidelines. Adaptive behavior data help the IEP team determine whether the student demonstrates substantial and pervasive adaptive deficits across conceptual, social, and practical domains. These data are incorporated in the following ways: 1. Confirming the presence of significant adaptive behavior limitations. 2. Supporting the determination of "most significant cognitive disability", ensuring that the student's functioning is well below age expectations and affects daily living and school participation. 3. Providing evidence that the student requires extensive, repeated, and individualized supports across all environments. 4. Ensuring decisions are based on multiple data sources, not a single score. 5. Documenting how adaptive behavior needs affect instructional access.

## 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 IEP team confirms that the student's performance is due to a significant cognitive disability by reviewing valid cognitive and adaptive assessments, verifying that the student has had consistent access to high-quality, evidence-based instruction, and analyzing long-term data showing that even with appropriate supports, the student's performance remains significantly below grade-level expectations. The team rules out instructional disadvantages—such as lack of opportunity to learn, inconsistent instruction, or environmental factors—as reasons for the student's low achievement.

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

The IEP team uses multiple sources of data, including cognitive assessments, adaptive behavior evaluations, academic achievement results, progress monitoring data, classroom-based evidence, and longitudinal information collected across settings.



## 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? \*

Multiple data sources are used, including cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments, academic achievement data, progress monitoring, classroom performance, work samples, and teacher observations. These data are reviewed collectively over time and across settings to determine whether the student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability and meets criteria for alternate assessment participation.

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 teams use evaluation data, present levels, and progress monitoring to determine individualized supports across academic, functional, behavioral, and communication areas. Placement, including highly specialized settings, is determined after needs are identified and follows the LRE continuum. Supports are designed to ensure access to instruction, participation in appropriate environments, and ongoing progress toward IEP goals.

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? \*

The IEP team uses multiple data sources to determine whether a support is required due to the student's disability or is part of general instruction provided to all students. Disability-related supports are individualized, documented in the IEP, and necessary for access and progress, while instructional environment supports are universal or classroom-based strategies available to all learners.

## **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.

We conduct annual reviews of alternate assessment participation data disaggregated by subgroup. Based on current data, no significant disproportionality has been identified in alternate assessment participation. ECS will continue to monitor participation trends annually to ensure equitable access and appropriate use of the alternate assessment. In addition, the LEA maintains ongoing safeguards to prevent disproportionality.

*(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? \*

Parents are informed of the eligibility criteria and implications of participation in the alternate assessment through the IEP team process. At the initial consideration and during annual IEP meetings, the team explains, using clear, family-friendly language, the criteria for determining eligibility, including the requirement that the student have a significant cognitive disability and meet the state-defined participation guidelines. Parents are provided with information about what participation in the alternate assessment means for their child's instruction and assessment pathway, including how it aligns with alternate academic standards and how it may impact diploma options and postsecondary outcomes. The IEP team reviews data supporting the recommendation (such as cognitive, adaptive, and academic performance data) and ensures parents understand why the alternate assessment is being considered in relation to their child's educational needs. Parents are also informed of their rights under IDEA, including that participation in the alternate assessment is an IEP team decision, not a default placement, and that they may ask questions, request additional information, or disagree with the recommendation. This discussion is documented in the IEP, and parents receive copies of all procedural safeguards and relevant documentation.

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

Parents are included as full and equal members of the IEP team in all special education decision-making, including decisions related to evaluation, eligibility, placement, services, and participation in state assessments. The LEA ensures parent participation by scheduling IEP meetings at mutually agreeable times, providing advance notice, and offering accommodations such as interpreters or virtual participation as needed. During the IEP process, parents are actively engaged in reviewing and interpreting student data, including academic performance, cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments, progress monitoring, and classroom performance. Their input regarding the student's strengths, needs, and performance in the home and community setting is also a key component of decision-making. For determinations such as participation in the alternate assessment, the IEP team, including the parent, collaboratively reviews eligibility criteria and considers how the student's disability impacts access to grade-level content. Parents are provided opportunities to ask questions, express concerns, and share their perspectives before any final decisions are made. All decisions are made by the IEP team collectively, and parent input is documented in the IEP. Parents are also informed of their procedural safeguards, including their right to disagree with decisions and seek resolution through established due process procedures.

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? \*At each annual IEP review, the IEP team examines current student data to determine continued eligibility for alternate assessment. This examination is documented each year along with the team's decision.

## 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.\* ECS ensures students, including those participating in the alternate assessment, receive instruction designed to be reasonably calculated to enable appropriate progress based on each student's individual needs. Instruction is based on alternate academic achievement standards and includes specially designed instruction, accommodations, and functional skill development aligned to grade-level content. Progress is monitored regularly using multiple data sources, and IEPs are revised as needed when students are not making sufficient progress. Annual IEP reviews ensure continued alignment of services, goals, and instruction to support meaningful academic and functional growth.

## 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. \* N/A