

## 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#

12 - Oak Ridge

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

Perry, Amy

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.* \*

1.24

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.* \*

1.4

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.* \*

1.86

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

1.31

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

0.99

## 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.* \*

1.29

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.* \*

1.5

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.* \*

1.97

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

1.88

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

1.21

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

0.91

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

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

1.18

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

1.31

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

1.87

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

1.7

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

1.35

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

1.19

## 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**. \*

6

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? \*

IEP teams are informed of the criteria and expectations for alternate assessment participation through a combination of ongoing training, structured guidance, and embedded decision-making supports. Oak Ridge Schools provides targeted professional development for special education staff, school psychologists, and administrators focused on identifying significant cognitive disabilities and understanding required eligibility criteria. State-aligned resources are shared and reinforced through collaborative team meetings, principal meetings, and individual case discussions. Special education supervisors and school psychologists actively support IEP teams during eligibility and placement decisions to ensure consistent application of criteria.

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

IEP teams use multiple sources of data to make informed determinations regarding alternate assessment participation. This includes standardized cognitive assessments and adaptive behavior measures to understand the student's overall functioning, with careful attention to ensuring that this data is current, valid, and reflective of the student's present levels. Teams also review ongoing progress monitoring data, benchmark assessments, and classroom performance on standards-based tasks to evaluate academic growth. Teacher observations and anecdotal records provide additional context regarding the student's ability to access and engage with grade-level instruction. Collectively, these data sources ensure that decisions are based on a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs and not on a single measure.

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

Adaptive behavior data is incorporated as a critical component in determining whether a student demonstrates the level of independence and functional skills consistent with a significant cognitive disability. IEP teams review standardized adaptive behavior assessments, along with input from teachers and families, to understand how the student performs in everyday environments across conceptual, social, and practical domains. Teams consider the

## **Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:**

### **Criterion One**

student's overall adaptive functioning rather than relying on a single domain or subscore, ensuring a comprehensive view of strengths and needs across settings. This data is reviewed alongside cognitive and academic information to confirm alignment with criteria for alternate assessment participation. Teams also ensure that adaptive behavior data is current and reflective of the student's present levels.

## 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 ensures that a student's performance is due to a significant cognitive disability—not an instructional disadvantage—by reviewing multiple sources of data over time. The team also looks closely at the student's access to instruction, including the level of rigor, consistency of supports, and whether appropriate instruction has been provided. Lesson plans, intervention records, and service delivery are reviewed to confirm the student has had meaningful opportunities to learn. Oak Ridge Schools has also maintained a strong focus on the least restrictive environment, ensuring students are given access to general education settings and supports whenever appropriate.

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

IEP teams use multiple sources of data to make an informed determination about alternate assessment participation. This includes current, valid cognitive assessments and adaptive behavior measures to understand the student's overall functioning. Teams also review progress monitoring data, benchmark assessments, and classroom performance on grade-level standards to evaluate academic growth. Additional data sources include teacher observations, anecdotal records, and behavioral data to understand how the student functions 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? \***

IEP teams use multiple sources of data to determine whether a student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports. This includes current, valid cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments to understand the student's overall level of functioning. Teams also review progress monitoring data, benchmark assessments, and classroom performance to evaluate the student's rate of growth, even when supports are in place. Teacher observations and anecdotal data provide insight into the student's independence, engagement, and ability to generalize skills across settings.

#### **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 determine the type and level of supports needed by reviewing multiple sources of data and considering how the student performs across settings. This includes current cognitive and adaptive behavior data, progress monitoring, classroom performance, and response to prior interventions. Teams also review information on the student's independence, engagement, and ability to generalize skills, using teacher input, service provider data, and observational information. Based on this data, the team identifies the specific supports needed for the student to access instruction and make progress, including the level of intensity, frequency, and setting in which those supports are delivered. For students whose least restrictive environment includes a highly modified special education setting for part or all of the day, the team carefully considers whether supports are required due to the student's disability and whether they enable meaningful access to the curriculum. At the same time, the team continues to evaluate opportunities for participation in less restrictive settings, ensuring alignment with LRE expectations. This process ensures supports are individualized, data-driven, and appropriately matched to the student's needs.

#### **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 distinguishes between supports required due to a student's disability and those available as part of the general instructional environment by closely reviewing data and the purpose of each support. Teams consider whether the support is uniquely needed for the student to access and make progress in the curriculum, or if it is a support that is available to all students as part of Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction. If a student continues to require additional, individualized supports beyond what is typically provided in the instructional environment, the team identifies those as disability-related needs and documents them as specially designed instruction or services in the IEP. This process ensures that IEP supports are individualized, necessary, and directly tied to the student's disability, rather than duplicating supports that are broadly available to all students.

## 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.

Review of Oak Ridge Schools' alternate assessment participation data indicates some variation across student groups when compared to state trends. Based on the 2024–25 data, Oak Ridge Schools shows slightly higher participation among White and Asian students, and lower participation among Black/African American students relative to the state. Additional patterns include differences in participation by gender, with a higher percentage of female students participating, as well as no current participation among English Learners. Participation among economically disadvantaged students is slightly lower than the state average. When reviewing disability category data, participation is most closely aligned with students identified with Intellectual Disability and Autism. Oak Ridge Schools continues to review these patterns to ensure that participation decisions are appropriate and based on student need. The district's plan to address and reduce disproportionality includes: \*Ongoing review of participation data across student groups \*Continued professional development for IEP teams on alternate assessment criteria \*Support from school psychologists and special education supervisors during decision-making \*Use of collaborative team structures and administrative meetings to monitor trends and provide guidance

*(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? \*

At Oak Ridge Schools, parents are informed of the eligibility criteria and implications of alternate assessment participation through ongoing communication and the IEP process. During IEP meetings, special education teachers, LEA representatives, and school psychologists clearly explain the criteria for participation, including the presence of a significant cognitive disability and the need for extensive, individualized supports. The team also explains how alternate assessment is aligned to modified academic content and what that means for the student's instruction. Parents are provided clear, understandable information about the implications of participation, including the impact on graduation pathways and diploma options. Time is intentionally built into meetings for questions, discussion, and clarification to support informed decision-making. Oak Ridge Schools begins these conversations early and continues them over time, with participation decisions reviewed at least annually using updated data. This ensures parents remain informed, engaged, and active partners in determining the most appropriate assessment pathway for their child.

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

At Oak Ridge Schools, parents are active and valued members of the IEP team and are included in all decision-making processes. Parents are invited to all IEP meetings and are provided opportunities to share input on their child's strengths, needs, and progress. During meetings, the team reviews relevant data together—including academic performance, progress monitoring, and evaluation results—and discusses options for instruction, supports, and assessment participation. The team ensures information is presented in a clear and understandable way, allowing parents time to ask questions and provide meaningful input before decisions are made. Parent perspectives are considered alongside data to guide team decisions. Decisions, including those related to alternate assessment participation, are made collaboratively, with documentation provided through the IEP and Prior Written Notice (PWN). This process ensures parents are informed, involved, and equal partners in determining the most appropriate supports and services for their child.

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 Oak Ridge Schools, participation in the alternate assessment is reviewed at least annually through the IEP process to ensure decisions remain appropriate and aligned to student needs. During each annual IEP meeting, the team reviews updated data, including cognitive and adaptive assessments, progress monitoring, classroom performance, and response to instruction and supports. Alternate assessment participation is a required component of the IEP discussion, and teams are guided to explicitly consider whether the student continues to meet criteria. The team also discusses the potential for participation in general assessment, ensuring that this option is considered each year and at any point when new data suggests a change may be appropriate. School psychologists, special education supervisors, and district guidance support teams in facilitating these discussions and ensuring consistent application of criteria.

## 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.\*

Oak Ridge Schools ensures that students participating in alternate assessment are provided access to standards-based instruction and make appropriate academic progress through aligned policies, procedures, and instructional practices. IEP teams develop individualized programs that are reasonably calculated to enable progress appropriate in light of the student's circumstances, consistent with the expectations outlined in *Endrew F.* Students receiving alternate assessment are provided instruction aligned to grade-level standards through the use of alternate achievement standards, ensuring continued access to the general education curriculum. The district emphasizes high-quality, specially designed instruction that includes clearly defined, measurable IEP goals aligned to academic standards. Progress toward these goals is monitored regularly using multiple data sources, including formative assessments, classroom performance, and DLM data. Progress reports are provided to parents in alignment with district expectations.

## 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. \* Oak Ridge Schools would benefit from continued guidance and support from the department to ensure ongoing alignment with expectations related to alternate assessment participation and the 1.0 percent cap. The district has placed a strong emphasis on building special education capacity among school administrators. Providing opportunities for principals to attend conferences, such as the Access for All Conference in Chattanooga, has been especially impactful, allowing them to hear directly from TDOE regarding requirements, expectations, and implications for practice.