

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#

161 - Manchester

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

Patton, Wendi

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.* *

0.59

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.* *

1.44

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.* *

0.96

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

1.21

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

1.25

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

0.98

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.* *

0.59

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.* *

1.52

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.* *

0.96

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

1.21

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

1.25

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

0.98

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

0.69

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.38

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

0.96

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.21

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.25

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

0.96

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**. *

0

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? *

Manchester City Schools follows federal guidelines that require the student to meet specific significant cognitive disability benchmarks. IEP teams are briefed on three main objectives: 1. Significant Cognitive Ability: The student has a disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. 2. Curricular Impact: The student requires specialized instruction and substantial modifications that are aligned with alternate achievement standards. 3. Adaptive Skills- The student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and support to transfer skills across different settings including home, school, and community.

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

Manchester City Schools uses current (within the last 3 years) data gathered from multiple sources to ensure validity. Cognitive data is reviewed through standardized intelligence tests from assessments like the WISC-V and/or Woodcock-Johnson. To determine if alternate assessment is necessary, these scores should fall significantly below the IQ of 70. Non-verbal cognitive measures, like the Leiter-3, is used if the student has limited expressive language. We want to ensure the cognitive disability is not being confused with a communication disorder. The student must show a consistent deficit in reasoning skills and working memory. Adaptive behavior data is also taken into consideration for alternate assessment. Results from the ABAS-3 provide a clear comparison of the student's skills vs. same aged peers in the following areas: conceptual, social, and practical. We also look at the student's level of independence in the classroom and community setting. The team also considers the student's use of assistive technology to communicate and whether they can do this independently.

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

The IEP team looks for significant deficits in the conceptual, social, and practical areas of every day life. The team considers if the student requires constant verbal or physical prompting to complete routine tasks, is unable to transfer knowledge from the classroom to real life scenarios, the inability to communicate basic needs, and the lack of

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

awareness to environmental hazards. These students are not just behind, they require a completely different approach that includes extensive, direct, individualized instruction.

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 determines for the student has a life long disability where deficits are present across all subject areas and daily life. The student struggles with basic life skills and cognitive deficits were noted in early childhood. The team ensures that attendance, placement history, and/or instructional infidelity is not the reason for significant gaps.

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

Standardized IQ scores, non-verbal cognitive measures, executive functioning profiles, present levels of achievement, progress monitoring.

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? *

The following data are used to support the determination that the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial support: Standardized IQ Scores: Usually falling <70. Adaptive Behavior Scales (ABAS-3): Evidence shows there are significant deficits in conceptual, social, and practical life skills. Progress Monitoring: data shows a flat line or extremely slow growth

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? *

The IEP team determines the type of support the student needs to be successful. These supports include instructional, physical/environmental, assistive technology, and/or social/behavioral supports. The team will also look at the level of support the student needs. Can the student work independently for a short amount of time? Does the student need consistent support when during assignments? Does the student need daily support in most settings? Does the student need constant, high intensity support or a 1:1. The team documents reasons why the student cannot be educated in the general education classroom.

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 team will determine if a support is designed for all students or specifically designed to support the specific disability. Does the support increase general engagement or compensate for a specific disability? Is the support noted in a lesson plan or is it mandated in the IEP?

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.

1. Disability Category: Students with Intellectual Disabilities (61.54%) and Autism (38.46%) are disproportionately represented in alternate assessments compared to other disabilities. No other disability categories are represented. 2. Economic Disadvantage Status: Our economically disadvantaged students are underrepresented in ALT assessments, with only 23.08% participation compared to 37.4% statewide. Our non-economically disadvantaged students are overrepresented with 76.92% participation compared to 62.57% statewide. Families from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face barriers in understanding or navigating the ALT assessment process. These students may not always have a parent who is knowledgeable or willing to advocate for them. 3. EL Status: No EL students participated in ALT assessments, while 100% of participants were non EL. Like economically disadvantaged students, EL students may not have the family support or knowledge to advocate for ALT assessment. Teams also want to validate that language barriers are not the reason for student progress. 4. Gender: Male students were overrepresented in ALT assessments, accounting for 61.54% of participants compared to 67.43% statewide. Female students make up 38.46% of participants which is slightly above the state average of 32.57%. 5. Race/Ethnicity: White students are significantly overrepresented in ALT assessments, accounting for 84.62% of participants compared to 49.30% statewide. Hispanic students are slightly overrepresented at 15.38% compared to 12.37% statewide. No students from other racial or ethnic groups participated in ALT Assessments. Specific Actions to Address Disproportionate Participation: Review and Refine Eligibility Criteria: The Director of Exceptional Education will conduct a thorough review of the alternate assessment participation criteria to ensure they are being applied consistently and appropriately across all student groups. The Director of Exceptional Education will provide training to teachers and staff on the criteria for alternate assessments, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that only students who meet the criteria are included. Provide targeted training for teachers and staff on strategies to support students with disabilities in accessing the general education curriculum and assessments. This training will include cultural competency to address potential biases in the identification of students for alternate assessments. Offer Parent and Family Engagement opportunities to educate families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Provide translated materials and interpreters to EL families to help them understand the process so they can advocate for their children. Engage with families and community leaders to ensure equitable access to community resources and support. Targeted interventions: Develop individualized plans for students who are on the borderline of alternate assessment eligibility to provide additional support and accommodations in general assessments. Regularly communicate progress and updates to families and classroom teachers.

*(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? *

Teams will communicate that the child's academic achievement will be measured against alternate standards. These standards are less complex than grade-level standards. Participation in this assessment may affect the student from completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma. Teams will discuss intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior, instructional need, and any other factors that may contribute to this decision.

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

*Teachers are encouraged to provide a copy of the draft IEP and a participation criteria list a few days before the meeting. This gives parents time to review and prepare any questions or concerns they may have. Parent surveys are used to ask about the child's strengths and struggles at home.

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? *ALT assessment decisions are discussed at the annual IEP meeting. The Director of Exceptional Education will perform audits to review files and ensure we are below the 1% cap.

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.* Annual IEP reviews provide opportunities for teams to determine if the student will qualify for the ALT assessment. IEP goals should be ambitious and challenging. Goals are standards based, ensuring the student is learning the same core concepts even if modified. Using the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards, we ensure students are challenged at their own level of need. Progress monitoring using task analysis data is used to monitor appropriate progress. Parents receive 4.5 week progress reports and 9 week report cards.

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. *
- I would like to attend a session regarding ALT assessment and the 1% cap at the ACCESS Conference. There may have been a session last year, but I was unable to attend. If a session is provided, I will make a plan to attend.