

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#

20 - Bedford County

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

Haynes, Julie

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.* *

0.67

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.* *

0.74

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.* *

1.1

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

1.31

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

1.23

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

1.3

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.* *

0.67

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.* *

0.74

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.* *

1.1

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

1.3

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

1.08

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

1.16

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 *

0.7

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.25

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.34

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.4

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

1.306

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**. *

11

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

1

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 initial step in the consideration process for Alternate Assessment eligibility is the completion of a file review by a certifying specialist. The TN Pulse Alternate Assessment form is completed with the historical information. Included in this is the student's most recent cognitive ability scores and the most recent adaptive behavior scores. While the most recent scores are put into the TN Pulse document, the certifying specialist reviews the student record in its entirety to ensure that both significant cognitive and adaptive disabilities are historically documented and are not transient in nature. It is recognized that significant cognitive disabilities and significant adaptive disabilities do not always occur concurrently. While the file review is conducted prior to the IEP meeting, when eligibility for Alternate Assessment is in question, the IEP team discusses the information utilizing the IEP File Review Rubric. Criterion One of the IEP File Review Rubric is completed by reviewing evaluation results in both the cognitive and adaptive areas per intellectual disability evaluation procedures. The IEP team considers the Exclusionary Factors Worksheet and that efforts have been made to ensure that the cognitive score reflects true ability. Adaptive scores are considered across settings from parent and teacher ratings. If adaptive scores are inconsistent, systematic observations have been completed to ensure the veracity of the adaptive scores. The Alternate Assessment eligibility determination is made by the IEP team during the IEP meeting and the certifying specialist then completes the rest of the TN Pulse document with the input from the IEP team. All three eligibility criteria are considered in the decision-making process.

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

The TN Pulse Alternate Assessment form is completed with the historical information. Included in this is the student's most recent cognitive ability scores and the most recent adaptive behavior scores. While the most recent scores are put into the TN Pulse document, the certifying specialist reviews the student record in its entirety to ensure that both significant cognitive and adaptive disabilities are historically documented and are not transient in nature. It is recognized that significant cognitive disabilities and significant adaptive disabilities do not always occur concurrently.

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

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

While the file review is conducted prior to the IEP meeting, when eligibility for Alternate Assessment is in question, the IEP team discusses the information utilizing the IEP File Review Rubric. Criterion One of the IEP File Review Rubric is completed by reviewing evaluation results in both the cognitive and adaptive areas per intellectual disability evaluation procedures. The IEP team considers the Exclusionary Factors Worksheet and that efforts have been made to ensure that the cognitive score reflects true ability. Adaptive scores are considered across settings from parent and teacher ratings. If adaptive scores are inconsistent, systematic observations have been completed to ensure the veracity of the adaptive scores. The Alternate Assessment eligibility determination is made by the IEP team during the IEP meeting and the certifying specialist then completes the rest of the TN Pulse document with the input from the IEP team. All three eligibility criteria are considered in the decision-making process.

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 initial step in the consideration process for Alternate Assessment eligibility is the completion of a file review by a certifying specialist. During the file review, which includes documenting information in the TN Pulse Alternate Assessment Worksheet for IEP team consideration, the certifying specialist reviews current and past IEPs to determine the extent to which a student participates in daily standards-based instruction in the areas of ELA, math, science, and social studies. The IEPs are reviewed for where, when, and how a student actively participates in state-aligned instruction. The extent to which significant supports, accommodations, and/or modifications to engage the student are considered. The IEP team will utilize the File Review Rubric to consider the extent to which instruction is designed to facilitate and support active engagement, including how grade-level state standards are broken into smaller skills or units to support learning. The IEP team considers multiple sources of data for Criterion Two including, input from general education teachers and special education teachers from across the curriculum, work samples, universal benchmarking results in ELA and math, and progress reports. Specific consideration is given to measurable annual goals in the IEP and the extent to which support is provided for increased opportunities for learning within the grade-level standards. These efforts provide a process to determine that the skills are due to a significant cognitive disability and not to an instructional disadvantage.

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

The IEP team considers multiple sources of data for Criterion Two including, input from general education teachers and special education teachers from across the curriculum, work samples, universal benchmarking results in ELA and math, and progress reports.

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? *

Following a file review and determining if Criterion One and Two are met, the IEP team determines if a student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial support by reviewing where and how a student will participate in instruction, evidence of accommodations and modifications attempted in the general education setting along with commensurate evidence of little to no progress made, and data that support the use of selected accommodations and/or modifications to support or increase meaningful participation. The IEP team considers that the individual student's strengths have been considered in the selection of interventions, accommodations, modifications or supports. The IEP team will consider the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance documented in the current IEP and previous IEPs. The IEP team will consider the identified strengths of the student in the present and past IEPs. The IEP team will review accommodations and modifications that are subject- and setting-specific. This review will be completed longitudinally in order to determine changes in accommodations and modifications over time as the student learns new skills. In addition to reviewing PLAAPFs and accommodations and modifications, the IEP team will also review measurable annual goals and short-term objectives, as well as any changes in communication skill/needs. The IEP team will review data collected for measurable annual goals in the current and previous IEPs. When considering a student in the HMI setting, the team will consider the supports required during times of inclusion during the day including in specific subjects in the general education classroom, as well as the supports required to navigate the physical school setting, keep a schedule, tend to daily life activities, and to generalize information across the curriculum by multiple, repeated exposures to the information on grade level and on instructional level.

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? *

Following a file review and determining if Criterion One and Two are met, the IEP team determines if a student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial support by reviewing where and how a student will participate in instruction, evidence of accommodations and modifications attempted in the general education setting along with commensurate evidence of little to no progress made, and data that support the use of selected accommodations and/or modifications to support or increase meaningful participation. The IEP team considers that the individual student's strengths have been considered in the selection of interventions, accommodations, modifications or supports. The IEP team will consider the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance documented in the current IEP and previous IEPs. The IEP team will consider the identified strengths of the student in the present and past IEPs. The IEP team will review accommodations and modifications that are subject- and setting-specific. This review will be completed longitudinally in order to determine changes in accommodations and modifications over time as the student learns new skills. In addition to reviewing PLAAPFs and accommodations and modifications, the IEP team will also review measurable annual goals and short-term objectives, as well as any changes in communication skill/needs. The IEP team will review data collected for measurable annual goals in the current and previous IEPs. When considering a student in the HMI setting, the team will consider the supports required during times of inclusion during the day including in specific subjects in the general education classroom, as well as the supports required to navigate the physical school setting, keep a schedule, tend to daily life activities, and to generalize information across the curriculum by multiple, repeated exposures to the information on grade level and on instructional level.

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.

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? *

Following a file review and determining if Criterion One and Two are met, the IEP team determines if a student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial support by reviewing where and how a student will participate in instruction, evidence of accommodations and modifications attempted in the general education setting along with commensurate evidence of little to no progress made, and data that support the use of selected accommodations and/or modifications to support or increase meaningful participation. The IEP team considers that the individual student's strengths have been considered in the selection of interventions, accommodations, modifications or supports. The IEP team will consider the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance documented in the current IEP and previous IEPs. The IEP team will consider the identified strengths of the student in the present and past IEPs. The IEP team will review accommodations and modifications that are subject- and setting-specific. This review will be completed longitudinally in order to determine changes in accommodations and modifications over time as the student learns new skills. In addition to reviewing PLAAPFs and accommodations and modifications, the IEP team will also review measurable annual goals and short-term objectives, as well as any changes in communication skill/needs. The IEP team will review data collected for measurable annual goals in the current and previous IEPs. When considering a student in the HMI setting, the team will consider the supports required during times of inclusion during the day including in specific subjects in the general education classroom, as well as the supports required to navigate the physical school setting, keep a schedule, tend to daily life activities, and to generalize information across the curriculum by multiple, repeated exposures to the information on grade level and on instructional level.

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.



*(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? *

The parents/guardians participate in the IEP team's determination of their child's participation in the alternate assessment. They are informed of the guidance from the TN Department of Education relative to this determination, so they can actively participate in the decisions making process. When discussing the diploma options with the parents/guardians they receive a copy of the "Diploma Pathways" document from Transition Tennessee. Using this document, the IEP team discusses the possible longitudinal impacts that the alt assessment may have on the type of diploma the student earns. The parents are also informed that this is an annual decision, and their child may transition to the general assessment at any time as determined by the IEP team. All documentation of eligibility participation in the alternate assessment will be completed by the IEP team and the parents'/guardians' signatures will indicate the understanding that participation in the alternate assessment means the student is participating in a curriculum that will not lead to earning a regular education diploma. All decisions will be heavily documented in the prior written notice.

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

The parents/guardians participate in the IEP team's determination of their child's participation in the alternate assessment. They are informed of the guidance from the TN Department of Education relative to this determination, so they can actively participate in the decisions making process. When discussing the diploma options with the parents/guardians they receive a copy of the "Diploma Pathways" document from Transition Tennessee. Using this document, the IEP team discusses the possible longitudinal impacts that the alt assessment may have on the type of diploma the student earns. The parents are also informed that this is an annual decision, and their child may transition to the general assessment at any time as determined by the IEP team. All documentation of eligibility participation in the alternate assessment will be completed by the IEP team and the parents'/guardians' signatures will indicate the understanding that participation in the alternate assessment means the student is participating in a curriculum that will not lead to earning a regular education diploma. All decisions will be heavily documented in the prior written notice.

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 IEP team discusses the possible longitudinal impacts that the alt assessment may have on the type of diploma the student earns. The parents are also informed that this is an annual decision, and their child may transition to the general assessment at any time as determined by the IEP team. All documentation of eligibility participation in the alternate assessment will be completed by the IEP team and the parents'/guardians' signatures will indicate the understanding that participation in the alternate assessment means the student is participating in a curriculum that will not lead to earning a regular education diploma. All decisions will be heavily documented in the prior written notice.

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.*

Bedford County Schools has completed training with special education teachers, assessment specialists and school counselors to share the process for consideration of the Alternate Assessment for students. TDOE document, Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines: Decision Making Tools for IEP Teams, is also available for school staff to have as a resource. Procedures for steps in considering the Alternate Assessment in IEP meetings have also been established and shared with staff.

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. *

BCS feels the following support is needed from the department; training for all school leaders on proper identification of students that could be eligible for the alternate assessment. This training was provided to Special Educators, Assessment Specialists, and School Counselors by Dr. Alison Gauld January 2026.