

## 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#

210 - DeKalb County

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

Natasha Vaughn

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.* \*

1.26

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.* \*

0.92

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.* \*

0.67

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

1.03

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

0.83

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

0.84

## 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.* \*

1.26

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.* \*

0.95

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.* \*

0.67

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

1.05

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

0.76

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

0.84

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

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

0.96

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

0.59

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

0.59

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

0.65

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

1.19

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

0.9

## 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**. \*

1

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 through state guidance, district training, and ongoing support systems to ensure consistent and compliant decision-making.

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

Standardized measures of intellectual functioning (e.g., IQ scores) demonstrating significantly below-average cognitive ability  
Standardized assessments of conceptual, social, and practical skills (e.g., Vineland, ABAS) showing deficits across settings  
Formal and informal assessments, classroom performance, and work samples reflecting the student's instructional level  
Progress Monitoring Data showing the student's rate of progress over time  
Documentation of interventions, frequency, duration, and fidelity, along with the student's response  
Observations across settings documenting independence, need for prompting, and ability to generalize skills  
Information on the intensity, frequency, and type of supports required (e.g., task analysis, visuals, repeated instruction)  
Records confirming the student has had adequate opportunity to learn, helping rule out exclusionary factors under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

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

Adaptive behavior data is a required component in determining whether a student meets criteria for participation in the alternate assessment. The IEP team reviews standardized adaptive behavior measures (e.g., conceptual, social, and practical domains) alongside cognitive data to determine whether the student demonstrates significant deficits in everyday functioning. The team uses adaptive behavior data to:

- Confirm that the student's needs are pervasive across settings (school, home, community)
- Determine the student's level of independence and need for prompting and support
- Support the determination that the student requires extensive, direct, and individualized instruction (Criterion 2)
- Differentiate a significant cognitive disability from low achievement due to instructional or environmental factors

Adaptive behavior data must reflect consistent and significant deficits across multiple domains and raters, not isolated

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

### **Criterion One**

skill gaps. This data, in combination with cognitive and instructional data, provides evidence that the student's learning characteristics align with the expectations for participation in the alternate 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? \*

The team distinguishes this from instructional disadvantage by confirming that: The student has had access to appropriate instruction and interventions, and The need for intensive supports is persistent and consistent across environments, not the result of missed instruction or limited opportunity

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

Work samples, benchmark testing, progress monitoring, psych report, any medical information that has been provided, outside assessments, Attendance and Instructional Access Data



## 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? \*

Goals aligned to reduced depth, breadth, and complexity of grade-level standards Functional and academic goals that reflect access to content at a significantly modified level Use of alternate curriculum, adapted texts, or functional academic materials Evidence of instruction focused on essential elements/extended standards Lesson plans and teacher documentation Level of content complexity presented during instruction Pacing and instructional methods (e.g., task analysis, repeated trials) Student work demonstrating engagement with alternate-level content Tasks showing reduced complexity (e.g., identifying vs. analyzing, matching vs. generating) Data tied to IEP goals aligned with alternate standards Evidence of progress within a highly modified curriculum Teacher and Service Provider Input Documentation of how content is adapted Description of instructional strategies and supports used

#### 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? \*

In alignment with IDEA's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirement, the team first considers: Whether the student can be educated in the general education setting with appropriate supports The use of evidence-based interventions, assistive technology, behavior supports, and accommodations If the student cannot make appropriate progress in the general education setting, even with supports, the team considers more intensive options along the continuum: Resource or pull-out services Special education classes (e.g., CDC, PBS classrooms) Highly structured or self-contained settings

#### 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? \*

Available to all + not individualized → General education support (not in IEP) Needed due to disability + individualized + required for progress → IEP support IEP teams are not deciding what supports exist—they are determining what the student requires to access, participate in, and make meaningful progress in the curriculum, consistent with FAPE expectations under IDEA and clarified by *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*.

## **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.

The majority of students in Dekalb County identify as White. Student participating in the Alt assessment are predominantly white. All other races are limited to 5.26% and below which is proportionate to our student population.

*(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? \*

During the IEP meeting, the team: Reviews each alternate assessment criterion in parent-friendly language Explains the data used to support the decision (cognitive, adaptive, instructional) Provides opportunities for parents to ask questions and participate in the decision Following the decision, parents receive Prior Written Notice that: Documents the team's decision regarding alternate assessment participation Explains the basis for the decision, including data reviewed Describes options considered and reasons accepted or rejected This ensures transparency and compliance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requirements. Parents are provided a copy of their procedural safeguards, which: Explain their rights related to identification, evaluation, and placement Outline dispute resolution options if they disagree with the decision The IEP team clearly explains that participation in the alternate assessment may: Result in instruction aligned to alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS) Impact the student's course of study and diploma pathway (e.g., alternate or occupational diploma options in Tennessee) Reflect the student's need for significant supports and modified expectations The decision and justification are documented within the IEP, including: The specific criteria met Evidence supporting participation Assurance that the decision is not based on disability category or placement alone

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

\*Invitation and Participation in Meetings Parents are: Provided timely written notice of IEP meetings Offered flexible scheduling options to ensure attendance Allowed to participate in person, by phone, or virtually During the IEP meeting, parents: Share input regarding their child's strengths, needs, and concerns Participate in discussions of evaluation results, progress data, and proposed supports Contribute to decisions regarding goals, services, placement, and assessment participation The IEP team: Documents parent concerns within the IEP Considers parent input when developing goals and determining services Ensures decisions are made collaboratively, not unilaterally Parents are: Provided explanations of data, criteria, and options in clear, understandable language Given opportunities to ask questions and request clarification Offered copies of relevant documents (evaluation reports, draft IEPs, etc.) Parents receive: Prior Written Notice (PWN) explaining decisions made and the reasons A copy of procedural safeguards, outlining their rights and dispute resolution options Parent involvement continues through: Regular progress updates on IEP goals Communication with teachers and service providers Opportunities to request additional meetings if concerns arise

### 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? \*1. Annual IEP Review Requirement, 2. Required IEP Documentation and Assurances, 3. PWN, 4. Use of data to drive the review, 5. District oversight and monitoring, 6. Ongoing communication with parents, 7. Flexibility to change at any time.

## 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.\*The LEA ensures that each student's educational program is reasonably calculated to enable progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances, consistent with *Endrew F.*, while maintaining access to standards-based instruction and accountability under ESEA.

## 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 have requested training this summer for my staff to support them making educated decisions regarding placement and assessment for students with disabilities.