

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#

230 - Dyer County

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

Burroughs, Laura

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.* *

1.47

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.* *

1.84

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.* *

1.92

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

2.09

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

2.12

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

2.09

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.* *

1.52

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.* *

1.89

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.* *

1.94

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

2.05

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

1.92

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

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.41

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

2

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.83

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

2.28

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

2.29

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

2

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 provided with guidance through state-issued manuals, training sessions, and decision-making checklists or flowcharts. These resources outline required criteria, such as: The student has a significant cognitive disability, is learning content aligned to alternate achievement standards, requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to access the curriculum. Teams are also trained annually and decision are discussed using a state-provided participation form that ensures all criteria are reviewed and met before assigning a student to alternate assessment.

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

IEP teams rely on multiple sources of evidence. These include: Cognitive assessment data, adaptive behavior data, which assess how the student functions in daily life such as communication, social skills, self-care, academic performance data, including progress on IEP goals and classroom-based assessments as well as instructional supports and accommodations the student requires.

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

Adaptive behavior data is incorporated into the decision-making process by reviewing adaptive behavior scores along with cognitive data to verify deficit areas. IEP teams then look for consistency across settings such as school and home. The data then helps to determine whether the student requires substantial supports across all environments.

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 reviews documentation showing the student was taught grade-level standards material, even if accessed through adapted or scaffolded materials to determine if a student's performance and skills level are due to a significant cognitive disability rather than an instructional disadvantage. Teams may review lesson plans and pacing guides aligned to state standards, instructional materials that show how grade-level content was modified. Student Work Analysis is also completed which can show if a student was engaged with that grade-level content, and progress monitored data is also reviewed.

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

IEP teams use multiple sources of data to make informed determinations such as: progress monitoring data, classroom assessments and benchmark data aligned to grade-level standards, examples of student work, intervention data, attendance documentation, classroom observations, as well as cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments.

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 make informed determinations such as: progress monitoring data, classroom assessments and benchmark data aligned to grade-level standards, examples of student work, intervention data, attendance documentation, classroom observations, as well as cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments.

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 identifies supports by analyzing what the student needs to access, participate in, and make progress in the curriculum. This can include reviewing task analyses to see where breakdowns occur, identifying levels of prompting required, determining need for assistive technology, visual supports, or alternative communication systems, also considering environmental supports, such as reduced group size or specialized settings. For students whose least restrictive environment includes a highly modified special education setting for part or all of the day, the team ensures that placement decisions are driven by instructional need, that the student still has access to grade-level standards, and also ensures that opportunities for interaction with non-disabled peers are provided.

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 must distinguish between supports required due to the student's disability and supports that are available as part of the instructional environment by comparing the student's needs to what peers receive in the same environment, by reviewing whether the student continues to require additional, individualized supports and also by analyzing consistency of need across multiple settings, which indicates a disability-related need rather than a situational or environmental factor.

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.

Dyer County Schools has 81.63% white students taking the alternate assessment compared to the state participation rate of 49.30%. Our current student population is made up of mostly white students. Dyer County Schools has 69.39% male students taking the alternate assessment compared to the state participation rate of 67.43%. Our current student population has more male students than female students. Dyer County Schools will continue to follow the State Department of Education guidelines for assessment and identification of special education students. This practice helps to decrease the number of students participating and reduce any disproportionality. IEP teams will continue to make decisions for alternative participation on an individual basis and consider only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and adaptive needs.

*(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 through guidance that outlines the eligibility criteria in easy to understand language, also explaining the differences between general and alternate assessments, how participation affects academic expectations and the connection between alternate assessments and diploma pathways.

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

Parents are always invited to IEP meeting and part of the IEP team. Parents are informed of the meeting purpose in advance. Dyer County Schools always offers meeting alternatives if parents are unable to meet in person and accommodates parent requests such as phone conferences, zoom meetings, home visits, alternative meeting locations. Parents are always offered and provided a copy of the Procedural Safeguards during each IEP meeting. When discussing the alternative assessment requirements and implication, the IEP team will review the continuum of special education services available and possible academic achievement measures. The IEP team then discusses the alternative high school diploma path that will be associated/linked to students taking the alternative assessment. Parents are always informed that this decision will result in not obtaining/earning a regular education high school diploma.

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? *To ensure decisions about alternate assessment participation are fully discussed and reviewed at least annually, IEP teams build these conversations into IEP procedures rather than treating them as optional or informal check-ins. The student's assessment participation is a required part of every annual IEP review. During this meeting, the IEP team revisits the original eligibility criteria and asks whether the student still meets them based on current data. This includes reviewing updated evaluations, classroom performance, progress toward IEP goals, and the level of supports the student requires to access grade-level content.

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 policies, procedures, and practices that Dyer County Schools uses to ensure that students are provided instruction that meets the requirements set forth by ESEA and *Endrew F.*, and also ensuring that student make appropriate academic progress are ensuring that multiple data sources are used to establish present levels of performance, writing measurable annual goals aligned to standards-based instruction, Clearly identifying supports, services, and accommodations that enable engagement in rigorous instruction. Instructionally, teachers are supported in delivering standards-based instruction adapted for diverse learners. This often includes the use of evidence-based practices, participating in professional development focused on teaching grade-level content to students with significant cognitive disabilities, and the collaboration between general and special educators to ensure inclusion and access whenever appropriate. In terms of progress monitoring, Dyer County Schools has established clear expectations that student progress is frequently measured using aligned assessment tools and formative data, reviewed regularly by IEP teams to determine whether the student is on track to meet annual goals and also is used to make instructional changes when progress is not made. IEP teams are expected to respond when a student is not making adequate progress by revising instruction, supports, or goals as needed. Case managers, Special Education Consulting Teachers, School Psychologists and Special Education Director provide reviews that help to verifying that students participating in alternate assessments meet eligibility criteria, ensuring IEPs reflect standards-based goals and instruction, and also review student progress data to confirm appropriate academic growth. Families are also kept informed through ongoing communication about their child's progress toward IEP goals and access to grade-level standards, reinforcing transparency and shared responsibility.

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. * Training for building level administration is needed to better understand the guidance provided regarding the 1% alternate assessment cap.