

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#

250 - Fentress County

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

Norman, Tammy

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.* *

1.07

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.* *

1.36

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.* *

1.09

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

2.26

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

1.88

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

1.25

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.* *

1.05

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.* *

1.38

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.* *

2.18

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

1.79

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

1.25

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.06

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.48

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

0.95

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

2.19

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.73

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

1.5

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**. *

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

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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 IEP team uses the TN State Alternative Assessments Participation Decision Flowchart and the Determination of Eligibility for Alternative Assessment Participation forms during the meeting. All special education teachers are trained on the alternative assessment guidelines and criteria annually. In addition, all special education teachers are given the Alternative Assessment Participation Guide, FAQ Alternative Academic Diploma, Tennessee Diploma and Postsecondary Education Options, and Transition Tennessee Diploma Pathways.

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

The IEP team reviews data regarding cognitive and adaptive abilities using multiple sources of data. Data sources include IQ testing, systematic observations adaptive skills assessments, exclusionary factors, developmental history, previous assessment data and evaluations, teacher observations, checklists, progress monitoring data, summative and formative assessments, teacher made assessments and attendance.

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

When the IEP team is determining the type of assessment the student will take, the team looks at different assessments revolving around adaptive behavior. The IEP team also looks at the IEP and the adaptive goals in the current IEP. The student's daily life skills (conceptual, social and practical) are reviewed by the team looking at different data assessments. These assessments include adaptive behavior scales, adaptive ratings checklist, teacher, parent observations and progress toward current adaptive goals.

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? *

Each student's individual needs are considered when determining participation in the Alternate Assessment annually. The student's data is reviewed and the IEP team determines that there is sufficient data to indicate the student is learning content linked to state content standards, the student's disability impacts their active participation in instruction that is aligned to state standards instruction is designed to support the student's active participation, grade level standards are broken down into smaller skills, steps, or units to support student learning. The IEP team determines when, where and how the student will actively participate in instruction aligned to state standards, measurable annual goals and short-term objectives and within instruction aligned to state standards. The students also have cognitive processing deficits, which greatly impact their performance in the classroom due to deficits in processing complex information in a typical amount of time compared to peers, and have difficulty of processing information even with simple tasks.

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

The IEP team reviews data regarding cognitive and adaptive abilities using multiple sources of data. Data sources include IQ testing, systematic observations adaptive skills assessments, exclusionary factors, developmental history, previous assessment data and evaluations, teacher observations, checklists, progress monitoring data, summative and formative assessments, teacher made assessments and attendance.

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 student requires substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternate ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across multiple settings. The IEP team evaluates clear comprehensive data to make an individualized decision based on student strengths and needs, accommodations, modifications, supports and services. The IEP team must determine that the accommodations, modifications, services, and support are extensive, repeated, individualized and are required across multiple 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? *

In Fentress County Schools, all students are considered general education students first. IEP teams consider student participation in the general grade-level assessments, with or without accommodations, before considering student participation in an alternative assessment. Individual students' needs are used to determine which assessment student will participate in. IEP team members, including parents, must engage in a thoughtful process that determines the necessary accommodations to facilitate the students' access to grade-level instruction and full participation in state and district assessments. The purpose of this section is to guide team members in selecting appropriate accommodations and supports for the student to be successful academically. To make effective accommodations decisions, the IEP team should gather and review information about the student's present level of academic achievement, their functional performance in relation to the curriculum, and the supports the student requires during instruction and classroom assessment. Team meetings could include discussions about providing the student equal learning opportunities and identifying practices and approaches intended to help the student overcome learning obstacles during instruction and assessment. The following points are discussed for each student and the team makes a final decision. : • Student participation in daily standards based instruction • Student supports accommodations and/or modifications to engage the student in the learning • Students require support, scaffolds, or modifications to ask question for more information or to build understanding • Formal and informal evidence of student progress towards mastery of standards-based instruction • Formal and informal evidence of student progress towards mastery of IEP goals and objectives

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 reviews the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance when deciding what supports a student will need to access the general education curriculum. These are analyzed to determine whether a support is necessary to address the student's disability rather than being a universal support available to any student. Environmental supports are available to every student such as: seating, schedules, technology and other things. Students with disabilities may need additional supports such as: speech therapy, communication devices, and specifically designed instruction addressing the content, methodology or the delivery of the instruction that addresses the specific disability.

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.

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.

[REDACTED]

*(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 IEP team uses the TN State Alternative Assessments Participation Decision Flowchart and the Determination of Eligibility for Alternative Assessment Participation forms during the meeting. All special education teachers are trained on the alternative assessment guidelines and criteria annually. In addition, all special education teachers are given the Alternative Assessment Participation Guide, FAQ Alternative Academic Diploma, Tennessee Diploma and Postsecondary Education Options, and Transition Tennessee Diploma Pathways. All IEP team members, and all stakeholders should be aware of the implications of participating in the Alternate Assessment. The IEP team should be aware that participation in the Alternate Assessment means that a student is participating in a curriculum that does not lead to a high school diploma and may affect the student's postsecondary and career pathway. It is the duty as educators in Fentress County Schools to make sure all students are given the opportunity to meet their full potential and how this decision will impact our students.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? *After the IEP team has discussed the following, the parents and the team will decide what is the best pathway for their student with state testing. Every Comprehensive/special education teacher provides the parents with the above listed information to help them make an informed
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? *A student's participation in state assessments is discussed by the IEP team annually and parents are made aware that their student's data will be reviewed at each IEP team meeting and the student's state assessment may change based on their current and relevant data.

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.*

Fentress County Schools hold high academic standards for all students, including those with disabilities. The district looks at 3 main areas when reviewing student data: • Instructional Quality – High standards, state approved curriculum, evidence based interventions • Procedures for ensuring student gains – Statewide assessments, universal screeners, formative, summative, progress monitoring • Accountability – Subgroups are tracked, schools on de The district assessment team and school assessment teams are reviewing student data every 5 weeks during RTI meetings. The district team also reviews data for all schools and subgroups in the summer.

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. * None at this time