

## 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#

273 - Trenton

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

Allen, Amy

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. \**

1.46

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. \**

1.22

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. \**

1.6

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

1.81

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

2.16

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

1.7

## 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.* \*

1.49

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.* \*

1.16

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.* \*

1.6

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

1.83

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

1.89

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

1.7

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

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

1.31

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

1.07

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

1.32

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

1.98

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

1.82

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

1.8

## 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**.

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? \*

All guidance that is shared by the Tennessee Department of Education is redelivered to our special education teachers and our building administration teams in each school in our district. We continue to have discussions focused on identifying the correct students to participate in the alternate assessment. We also continue to provide professional development to our general education teachers as we believe it is important for them to understand who should participate in the alternate assessment and what it will mean for that student's future.

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

IEP teams study ALL data for each child to ensure they are identifying the correct students for participation in the alternate assessment. While cognitive and academic data are crucial for all decisions, emphasis is also placed on adaptive data. If a student has scored Advanced in at least one subject on the alternate assessment during the previous school year, the team discusses their growth and how that impacts their assessment path. Student work samples are also a part of the conversation as they show concrete evidence of a student's abilities.

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

We place the same emphasis on adaptive data as we do on cognitive and academic data. A student's conceptual skills and social skills must be considered when determining the correct assessment path.

## 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? \*

Our IEP teams strive to keep students in the general education setting with their grade-level peers for Tier I instruction. Proposals for a more restrictive placement are never made until all data shows that a student is no longer showing any type of growth - academic and/or social-emotional - in the general education setting. If a student does receive their instruction in the special education setting, the special education teacher and the general education teacher collaborate to ensure instruction is aligned to grade-level, standards-based instruction.

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

In order to ensure students have had access to quality Tier I instruction, our IEP teams review multiple data sources including the student's placements for Tier I instruction throughout their school career, attendance records, student work samples, number of moves throughout the student's school years, and number of schools attended.

## 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 data sources to make the determination that students require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports. These include benchmark testing, summative assessments, formative assessments, student work samples, teacher observations and data collection, and a review of special education services provided and accommodations and/or modifications that have been implemented.

#### 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? \*

We work very hard to avoid "over supporting" or "over accommodating" for our students with disabilities. We try to find a balance between student success and support. When teachers have data that a student requires greater support or diminishing support, they propose these changes to the student's IEP team. All decisions are grounded in data.

#### 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? \*

When a student begins to experience issues in the classroom, we begin by offering supports that are available to all students. However, any support that is required that would not be offered to any student in the classroom is documented in the IEP. These supports vary depending on the grade level of the student and the subject matter being taught.



## **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 only disproportionality in our data is the percentage of male (75%) versus female (25%) students participating in the alternate assessment. We are, however, more proportionate than we were last school year. Data from the state also shows great disproportionality in male versus female participation.

*(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 eligibility criteria for alternate assessment and the implications of participation during IEP meetings. These conversations begin at a very early age once data is collected that suggests there might be a possibility of alternate assessment participation. All data is shared with parents, and we try to explain it as clearly as possible. If we can not get the parent to an IEP meeting, we share data with them electronically and try to schedule a phone call to discuss it. We try to never make a decision about alternate assessment without a parent present in the IEP team meeting.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? \*We work very hard to get parents to attend all IEP team meetings in person, and we try to never make decisions such as participation in the alternate assessment without a parent present in the IEP team meeting. We want our parents to be active, engaged members of their child's IEP team, and we want to be certain they fully understand what participating in the alternate assessment means for their child's future - specifically the type of diploma they will earn. Parents receive a copy of all reports and data that are used to make decisions about alternate assessment participation, and we strive to explain it in a manner they can understand.
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? \*We review participation in the alternate assessment at a student's annual IEP team meeting. The conversations around participation must be grounded in data that can be shared with parents. We have had students who were transitioned to the general assessment path.

## 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.\* Our IEP teams write goals and objectives for our students that are appropriately ambitious for each individual student, and our teachers provide instruction that is standards-based. Goals for our students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are based on each student's individual potential and aim for advancement and growth. We progress monitor using multiple sources of data to ensure our students are making progress, and we strive to actively involve parents in their child's educational journey. If a child is not making progress, an IEP team is scheduled and members work to find the root cause of the student's lack of progress.

## 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. \* We will continue to redeliver all information and training from the TDOE to our teachers and building administrative teams.