

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#

320 - Hamblen County

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

Johnson, Denise

3. Identify your role within the LEA. Special Education Coordinator

- 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.* *

1.72

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.* *

1.58

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

1.75

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

1.56

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

1.59

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.* *

1.74

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.* *

1.24

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.* *

1.76

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

1.43

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

1.46

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.47

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.3

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.8

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.57

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.68

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

1.64

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**. *

9

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

4

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? *

As a district, we emphasize completing a comprehensive review of each student's current and past data. Knowing that the decision is individual and is to be made based on multiple data points, the team doesn't focus on just student scores, but also on present levels, IEP goals and objectives, accommodations and modifications as well the adaptive behavior data. The need for specific, direct instruction to achieve measurable gain and the extent to which the student's adaptive behavior deficits prevent them from participating in academic environments is discussed during the student's IEP meeting where the team will make a decision based on federal and state law. IEP teams are trained on the criteria and expectations through a variety of learning opportunities and by review of guidance documentation made available by TDOE. Team members must understand what constitutes a "significant cognitive disability", learn how to use the criteria to make an informed decision about eligibility for alt assessment, and understand that alt assessment should be used for students whose disabilities prevent them from participating in the general assessment with accommodations. The IEP Team reviews the student's Present Levels of Performance in all areas, Goals and progress. The IEP Team discusses the student's post-secondary goals (even for students in 1st and 2nd grade). All Tennessee graduation options are discussed with the Team. The implications of participating in the Alternate Academic Diploma courses versus the General Education curriculum are discussed. Parents are given a copy of the Tennessee "Diploma Decision Guide" and the "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet from TDOE. The IEP Team discusses the continuum of services available, accommodations, modifications, and strategies for inclusive practices. Data from formal and informal assessments, evaluation reports, medical reports, classroom performance, parent input, teacher input/observations, behavioral data (if appropriate), progress monitoring data, adaptive behavior information and if appropriate, vocational assessment results are discussed as an IEP Team. The IEP Team discusses and explains each of the criteria for participation in the Alternate Assessment. The IEP Team reviews the results of past and most recent Alternate Assessments (if appropriate). If the student has scored Advanced in one or more subjects, the IEP Team reviews the students current information and the options.

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

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

The IEP Team discusses data from formal and informal assessments, evaluation reports, medical reports, classroom performance, parent input, teacher input/observations, behavioral data (if appropriate), progress monitoring data, progress report data, adaptive behavior information and if appropriate, vocational assessment results are discussed as an IEP Team. The team reviews psychoeducational reports for cognitive data. The IEP Team discusses and explains each of the criteria for participation in the Alternate Assessment. The IEP Team reviews the results of past and most recent Alternate Assessments (if appropriate). If the student has scored Advanced in one or more subjects, the IEP Team reviews the students current information and the options.

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

The IEP Team discusses the student's adaptive behavior within the classroom, at home, and if appropriate on job sites. Students participating in the Alternate Assessment have a Present Level of Performance area of Adaptive Behavior. The Present Level is updated before every annual IEP meeting, including information from the parent(s) as appropriate. The IEP Team reviews the current information to assist in guiding their decision. The IEP Team discusses and reviews data about the current adaptive behavior accommodations, modifications and strategies that are currently implemented with the student and possible new accommodations, modifications and/or strategies that could be implemented.

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 process for determining eligibility for the Alternate Assessment is data-driven based on the student's individual goals, review of assessments, parent information, observations, and classroom performance. The data is reviewed often among the team of professionals in the classroom. Various accommodations, modifications, and strategies are implemented to ensure each student is instructed in their individualized mode(s) of learning. IEP teams are encouraged to determine services that include as much instructional time in the general education setting as possible for the student. Even when the student is receiving content instruction in the Special Education setting, they have access to curriculum aligned with grade level state standards. Consideration is taken with all of that data to determine if the student's skills are related to their disability and not a lack of instruction.

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

Formal and informal assessments, classroom performance data, behavioral data, adaptive information data, academic data such as basic reading skills, fluency, comprehension, math calculation, math problem solving, etc.

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? *

Data used includes: formal assessments, observations, progress monitoring data, progress monitoring data input from all members of the team (especially the parent and teacher), parent input, data based on a continuum of accommodations and supports, and student's behavioral data. The data is analyzed for academic deficits, social, emotional and behavioral challenges, and functional skills that require support. IEP teams make decisions about the individual need(s) for support by evaluating the level of support(s) that is needed in various academic and social areas. The IEP team must determine if environmental supports available to all students will be sufficient to allow the student to make progress or if a more restrictive modified setting is required.

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? *

IEP Teams thoroughly review data provided through teacher observation(s), parent input, formal and informal assessments, psychoeducational evaluations, student academic progress, behavioral data. The IEP team implements a process that ensures that the supports provided are based on the student's unique needs, strengths, and areas of challenge. The student must possess current adaptive skills requiring extensive direct instruction and practice in multiple school, work, home, and community environments. The IEP Team must agree that the student has a significant cognitive disability, requires substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to meaningfully access the subject area content and requires intensive individualized instruction in order to acquire and generalize knowledge.

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 individual student's strengths and weaknesses, learning style(s)/mode(s), modes of communication, and data regarding the implementation of various supports. The IEP Team discusses the student's individualized needs and how best to support them in the instructional environment. The IEP Team makes decisions based on the level of supports needed in various academic and social settings.

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 IEP Team makes decisions based on a holistic review of all available data and parent input. Post-secondary goals are discussed with parents beginning in early elementary grades. If a student is being considered for participation in the Alternate Assessment, the IEP Team discusses the implications associated with learning Alternate Academic Diploma standards and participating in the Alternate Assessment. The IEP Team, including parent(s), discusses the graduation exit options, reviews and provides a copy of the TDOE's "Tennessee Diploma Decision Guide" and the "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet. Hamblen County requires Case Managers to have these at every annual IEP Team meeting where Alternate Assessment is discussed as an option. The IEP Team, including the parent(s), discuss each eligibility criteria for the Alternate Assessment. The Case Manager is required to note these discussions, the information provided and the outcomes in the Prior Written Notice to be provided to the parent(s). The parents are an integral part of the IEP Team and provide important, essential information during the discussion of each of the criteria for Alternate Assessment and the decision-making process.

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

The parents are an integral part of the IEP Team and provide important, essential information during the discussion of each of the criteria for Alternate Assessment and the decision-making process. Parent(s) provide information regarding the student's adaptive skills in the home, post-secondary goals, etc. Parents are key to addressing the individual needs of their child.

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? *Hamblen County provides professional development to administrators, Special Education teachers and School Psychologists who attend IEP Team meetings regarding procedures for reviewing and documenting Alternate Assessment criteria consideration annually. Special Education Coordinators review IEPs and PWNs to ensure procedures have been followed and documented. Special Education Coordinators and Supervisor periodically attend Annual IEP Team meetings.

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.*

IEP Teams make decisions based on a holistic review of all available data, including parent input. IEP decisions are data driven. All teachers and administrators in Hamblen County attend professional development sessions on inclusive practices. Each school meets to review data as a team. Special Education teachers collaborate with general education teachers to include students in the general education setting with accommodations and modifications as deemed appropriate by the IEP Team. Students participating in the alternate assessment are included in the general education setting for all or a portion of the class, as appropriate based on the student's individual needs and abilities. Teachers and administrators review data to guide decisions for increasing student participation in general education curriculum based on appropriate academic progress and behavior. All schools are implementing a variety of co-taught courses to enable more students to participate in the general education curriculum with supports. Hamblen County is a proponent of "All means All" and "All students are general education students first". When a student performs at the Advanced level on the Alternate Assessment, an IEP Team meeting is held with the parent(s) to review their data and discuss options.

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. * Hamblen County would welcome training for our school psychologists and teachers, district support personnel and administrators.