

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#

40 - Bledsoe County

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

Garrett, Corey

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.* *

1.36

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.* *

1.46

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.* *

1.47

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

0.87

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

1.16

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

0.87

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.* *

1.36

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.* *

1.43

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.* *

1.46

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

0.87

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

1.01

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

0.87

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.45

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.25

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.36

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.01

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. *

0.87

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**. *

0

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? *

To ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (approximately 1.0% of the student population) are considered for participation in the alternate assessment, the IEP team follows a structured, data-driven decision-making process. This process includes a comprehensive review of multiple sources of evidence, such as cognitive assessments, adaptive behavior evaluations, academic screening, and IEP goal results. The team verifies that the student demonstrates pervasive and significant deficits in intellectual functioning and adaptive skills that substantially impact daily functioning and access to the general education curriculum, even with appropriate supports and accommodations. The IEP team also ensures that the student requires extensive, direct, and individualized instruction and is learning content aligned with alternate academic achievement standards rather than grade-level standards. Decisions are not based on a single factor such as disability category, placement, behavior, or English language proficiency, but instead reflect the student's overall educational profile. As part of the eligibility review process, the team utilizes state-provided participation guidelines and decision-making tools to maintain consistency and compliance. Documentation of the decision, including the rationale and supporting data, is maintained within the IEP. For any student who scores at the Advanced level in at least one subject on the alternate assessment, the IEP team is required to reconvene to review the student's continued eligibility. This review includes analyzing assessment performance trends, current classroom data, and instructional supports to determine whether the student's academic skills exceed the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment. If the data suggest that the student may be able to access grade-level standards with appropriate accommodations, the team will consider transitioning the student to the general assessment with supports. All decisions are documented, and any changes are reflected in the student's updated IEP to ensure appropriate alignment with their current instructional needs.

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

Cognitive, Adaptive Behavior Rating Scales, Observation data, IEP goal results, and academic screening data

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

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

Adaptive behavior data is a critical component in determining whether a student has a significant cognitive disability and is appropriate for the alternate assessment. The IEP team systematically incorporates this data alongside cognitive and academic information to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the student's overall functioning. Specifically, the team reviews results from standardized adaptive behavior assessments (e.g., rating scales completed by teachers and parents) as well as real-world observational data across settings such as the classroom, school environment, and home (when available). These data focus on the student's functioning in key domains, including: 1. Conceptual skills (e.g., communication, early literacy, understanding of time and money) 2. Social skills (e.g., interactions with peers, understanding social norms, self-regulation) 3. Practical/daily living skills (e.g., personal care, following routines, safety awareness). The IEP team looks for significant, pervasive deficits across multiple adaptive domains that impact the student's ability to function independently and access the general education curriculum, even with supports and accommodations. The presence of these deficits, in combination with cognitive data, helps confirm that the student requires extensive, individualized instruction aligned to alternate academic achievement standards. Importantly, adaptive behavior data are not considered in isolation. The team compares adaptive functioning results with cognitive scores and academic performance to ensure consistency across data sources. If adaptive skills are relatively stronger than expected, this may prompt further review of whether the student truly meets criteria for the alternate assessment. All findings and interpretations of adaptive behavior data are clearly documented in the IEP, including how they support (or do not support) the decision for alternate assessment participation.

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 ensures that a student's performance and skill level are the result of a significant cognitive disability rather than an instructional disadvantage through a systematic review of instruction, intervention, and student response data over time. First, the team verifies that the student has had consistent access to grade-level, standards-aligned instruction, including instruction linked to state standards (with appropriate supports such as scaffolding, accommodations, and/or modified materials). This includes reviewing lesson plans, service logs, and instructional schedules to confirm that special education services are provided in addition to—not in place of—core instruction, and that the student has received instruction of sufficient rigor, intensity, and duration comparable to peers. Next, the IEP team examines progress monitoring data and response to intervention. The team looks for evidence that the student has received targeted, research-based interventions implemented with fidelity. If the student demonstrates minimal or no progress despite sustained, intensive interventions and supports, this suggests that the learning challenges are not primarily due to gaps in instruction or opportunity. Additionally, the IEP team compares the student's academic performance with cognitive and adaptive behavior data. When all data sources consistently indicate significant and pervasive delays across settings and domains, the team can determine that the student's needs are characteristic of a significant cognitive disability rather than an instructional deficit. Finally, all decisions are collaboratively made and documented, including evidence that appropriate instruction and interventions were provided and that the student's limited progress is not due to lack of opportunity to learn. This ensures that eligibility for the alternate assessment is based on the student's true learning profile and not external factors.

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

* Academic achievement data * IEP goal monitoring data * Intervention data * Instructional access documentation (lesson plans, service logs, schedules) * Classroom observations * Student work samples * Related service provider reports (e.g., speech, OT, 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? *

* Academic achievement data * IEP goal monitoring data * Intervention data * Instructional access documentation (lesson plans, service logs, schedules) * Classroom observations * Student work samples * Related service provider reports (e.g., speech, OT, etc.)

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? *

First, the IEP team reviews present levels of performance (PLAAPF) across academic and functional domains using multiple data sources, including standardized assessments, curriculum-based measures, progress monitoring data, classroom work samples, observational data, therapy reports, and adaptive behavior rating scales. Teams examine whether the student demonstrates meaningful progress toward grade-level expectations with typical accommodations or instead requires instruction that is substantially modified in depth, breadth, and complexity. Second, teams analyze instructional intensity and delivery requirements across settings. This includes documenting whether the student requires repeated instruction across multiple sessions, explicit modeling with systematic prompting, task analysis, errorless learning approaches, or continuous adult facilitation to acquire and generalize skills. Evidence is gathered from service providers, intervention records, and classroom implementation data showing the frequency, duration, and structure of supports necessary for measurable progress. Third, the team evaluates the type and level of supports required for curriculum access, including specialized materials, assistive technology, communication systems, adapted pacing, sensory supports, and individualized reinforcement systems. Teams determine whether these supports represent routine accommodations or instead reflect substantial instructional modifications consistent with alternate achievement standards. Fourth, for students whose least restrictive environment (LRE) includes a highly modified special education setting for all or part of the day, the team reviews documentation explaining why general education instruction with supplementary aids and services is insufficient. This includes examining intervention fidelity data, prior inclusion attempts, progress monitoring trends, and service intensity needs. Placement decisions alone are not used to justify alternate assessment participation; instead, teams confirm that instructional access requires individualized instruction aligned to alternate academic achievement standards. Finally, the team reviews longitudinal progress data to determine whether the student consistently requires extensive supports across time and settings rather than temporarily due to gaps in instruction, attendance, language acquisition, or other exclusionary factors. This ensures that alternate assessment participation reflects a persistent instructional need rather than short-term performance differences.

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 distinguishes between supports required due to the student's disability and supports that are available as part of the general instructional environment by reviewing whether the supports are universally available to all

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.

students or uniquely necessary for the student to access instruction and demonstrate measurable progress. Teams begin by examining classroom practices such as flexible grouping, teacher re-teaching, visual supports used classwide, and differentiated instruction to determine whether these strategies are typical components of core instruction. If the student continues to demonstrate limited progress despite access to these universal supports, the team then reviews whether additional accommodations, modifications, assistive technology, or related services documented in the IEP are required to support participation and learning. This comparison helps ensure that decisions are based on individualized need rather than routine classroom practice. The team also reviews progress monitoring data, observational information across settings, and service provider input to determine whether the student requires supports that are more intensive, frequent, or specialized than those provided to same-age peers without disabilities. Evidence such as the need for systematic prompting, task analysis, individualized pacing, repeated instruction across multiple sessions, or substantially modified curriculum expectations indicates that supports are disability-related rather than environmental. By examining longitudinal performance data and documenting the student's response to both general education interventions and specialized instruction, the IEP team ensures that the identified supports reflect the impact of the student's disability and are aligned with the level of instructional intensity required for meaningful progress.

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.

N/A

*(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 and implications of participation in the alternate assessment through the IEP meeting process, where the team reviews Tennessee's alternate assessment participation requirements, explains the criteria in family-friendly language, and discusses the data used to support the determination. The team ensures parents understand how participation aligns with alternate academic achievement standards rather than general grade-level standards, as well as the potential long-term implications for diploma pathways, postsecondary opportunities, and transition planning. Parents are also provided opportunities to ask questions, review supporting documentation, and receive prior written notice summarizing the decision and the reasons it was made, ensuring they are active, informed participants in the decision-making process.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? * Parents are included as active members of the IEP team throughout the decision-making process and are provided advance notice of meetings and opportunities to share concerns, outside information, and insights about their child's strengths and needs across settings. During the meeting, the team reviews eligibility criteria, instructional data, and support needs in clear, family-friendly language and encourages parents to ask questions and participate in decisions regarding services, placement, and assessment participation. Following the meeting, parents receive documentation through the IEP and prior written notice summarizing the data reviewed, options considered, and reasons for decisions, along with procedural safeguards information outlining their rights to request additional meetings or disagree with the team's determination.
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? * Participation in the alternate assessment is reviewed at least annually during the student's IEP meeting as part of the required review of present levels of performance, progress monitoring data, instructional supports, and access to grade-level standards. During this review, the IEP team—including parents—reexamines the alternate assessment participation criteria, considers updated evaluation information, classroom performance trends, and the student's response to instruction, and determines whether the student continues to require instruction aligned to alternate academic achievement standards. The team documents this discussion within the IEP and Alternate Assessment Worksheet in TN PULSE, ensuring that participation decisions remain data-based and individualized, and confirms that students may transition to the general assessment at any time if evidence indicates they can access grade-level expectations with appropriate accommodations.

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 students with disabilities receive instruction consistent with the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the standard established in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* by implementing structured procedures that require IEP teams to develop individualized programs reasonably calculated to enable progress appropriate in light of each student's circumstances. Teams use multiple sources of data—including evaluation results, progress monitoring, classroom performance, and intervention outcomes—to develop measurable goals aligned to grade-level standards or alternate academic achievement standards when appropriate. Instructional decisions are guided by evidence-based practices, ongoing progress monitoring, and regular review of student response to interventions to ensure supports are adjusted as needed to promote meaningful progress. The LEA also maintains procedures for reviewing least restrictive environment placement, documenting supplementary aids and services, monitoring fidelity of service delivery, and conducting annual IEP reviews to ensure continued alignment with federal expectations for access to rigorous curriculum and individualized supports that enable students to make measurable academic 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. * None