

## 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#

410 - Hickman County

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

Totty, Loretta Ashley

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.* \*

1.65

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.* \*

1.54

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.* \*

1.85

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

2.16

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

1.11

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

1.6

## 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.* \*

1.61

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.* \*

1.55

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.* \*

1.88

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.* \*

1.02

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

1.4

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

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

1.78

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

1.34

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

1.74

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

1.75

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

1.35

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

1.35

## 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**. \*

6.5

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

6.5

## 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 teams are not relying solely on the TN PULSE worksheet, our district implements the following:  
Annual Professional Development: IEP teams are required to attend training led by the District SPED Coordinator on the TCAP-Alt/DLM Participation Decision-Making Flowchart to distinguish between "significant cognitive disabilities" and "learning gaps". Targeted Technical Assistance: We utilize the regional training materials provided by the department, specifically focusing on the 1.0 percent cap requirements and the federal definition of "most significant cognitive disabilities". Administrative Oversight: Before an IEP is finalized with an alternate assessment designation, the building-level lead teacher or principal must verify that the team reviewed the specific state criteria, not just the check-boxes in TN PULSE.

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

IEP teams must use a multi-source data approach to justify participation: Cognitive Assessments: Results from standardized intelligence tests (e.g., WISC-V, Woodcock-Johnson) showing performance typically two or more standard deviations below the mean. Adaptive Behavior Scales: Data from the Vineland-3 or ABAS-3 to confirm deficits in conceptual, social, and practical domains. Classroom Evidence: Progress monitoring data on IEP goals, samples of modified work, and evidence that the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction. Performance Trends: Review of previous years' participation rates and scores. For example, in 2024-25, our district saw a significant decrease in participation rates in ELA (1.11%) and Math (1.02%) compared to the 2023-24 rates (2.16% and 2.18% respectively), indicating more rigorous data-based decision-making.

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

Adaptive behavior data is critical in ensuring the "significant cognitive disability" label is accurate: Domain Analysis: The team must demonstrate that the student's disability impacts not just academic testing, but their ability to function independently across multiple settings (home, school, and community). Correlation with IQ: Teams look for a "flat

# Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

## Criterion One

profile" where adaptive skills are commensurate with cognitive scores; if a student has high adaptive scores but low academic scores, the team is directed to consider if the student's needs are better met through the general assessment with accommodations. Review of High Performers: Per state requirements, any student scoring Advanced (Level 4) on a previous alternate assessment must have their adaptive behavior data re-evaluated to determine if their functional skills have improved to a point where they should transition back to the general assessment. Process for Reviewing "Advanced" Performance Scores Required Disclosure: If a student scores "Advanced" on an alternate assessment, it may indicate their skills exceed the eligibility criteria. Hickman County Process: Upon receipt of annual DLM/TCAP-Alt scores, the Special Education Director's office flags all students who achieved a Level 4 (Advanced) in any subject. An IEP Team Review Meeting is then scheduled specifically to determine if the student's performance on the alternate standards suggests they are capable of participating in the general TCAP with or without accommodations. This review includes a comparison of current classroom performance against the general education standards to ensure the student is placed in the "Least Restrictive" assessment environment.

## 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 distinguishes between a disability and instructional factors by conducting a "longitudinal review" of the student's educational history: Instructional History Review: Teams examine the student's access to high-quality, research-based instruction in the general education setting prior to considering alternate assessment. Response to Intervention (RTI): The team reviews data from Tier II or Tier III interventions to see if the student made progress when provided with evidence-based instructional strategies; a lack of progress despite intensive, specialized instruction suggests the deficit is cognitive rather than instructional. Attendance and Stability: The team confirms that performance gaps are not primarily due to excessive absences, frequent school changes, or prolonged periods without specialized services. Communication and Language: For students identified as English Learners (EL), the team ensures that language proficiency is not the primary driver of low performance. Exclusionary Factors: The team explicitly documents that the student's inability to meet grade-level standards is not primarily the result of socio-economic status, medical absences, or poor instruction in the core curriculum.

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

The district requires a "triangulation" of data to ensure the 1.0 percent cap is not exceeded due to inappropriate identification. The following data points are used: Standardized Assessment Data: Review of previous TCAP or TCAP-Alt scores. For example, the district reviews the 2024-25 participation data which showed a 1.11% rate in ELA and a 1.02% rate in Math to identify if specific schools or grades are over-identifying students. Psychological and Educational Evaluations: Current (within 3 years) multi-disciplinary evaluations that include cognitive (IQ) and adaptive behavior scores (e.g., Vineland-3, ABAS-3). Progress Monitoring: Weekly or monthly data on IEP goals that are aligned to the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards. Classroom Observations: Qualitative data showing the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial modifications to the curriculum that are significantly different from those of their peers. Disability Category Analysis: Analysis of the student's primary disability. In Hickman County, the majority of alternate participants are identified with Intellectual Disabilities (45.83%) or Autism (33.33%), which aligns with the state's expectation for the most significant cognitive disabilities.



# 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? \***

For Criterion Three, the Tennessee Department of Education is looking for evidence that the student's need for the alternate assessment is rooted in their requirement for a high level of intensity in instruction that differs significantly from their peers. Here are the drafts for these sections based on the requirements and your district's data: To justify that a student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction, the IEP team must look beyond general disability labels and examine the following specific data points: Progress Monitoring Data: Frequent data collection (e.g., daily or weekly) on goals aligned to the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards that shows the student requires repetitive, scaffolded instruction to make measurable gains. Task Analysis: Evidence from classroom assessments showing the student requires tasks to be broken down into small, manageable steps that are not typical for students in a general education setting. Work Samples: Comparison of the student's work (which may include heavy use of manipulatives, pictures, or assistive technology) against the general curriculum to demonstrate the level of modification required. Instructional Fidelity Logs: Documentation showing that the student requires a high frequency of "prompting" (verbal, gestural, or physical) to complete academic tasks. Participation Rates: For the 2024-25 SY, Hickman County's rates in ELA (1.11%), Math (1.02%), and Science (1.35%) indicate that these data-based determinations are becoming more refined as participation continues to move closer to the 1.0% threshold.

#### **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 determination of supports and placement is a data-driven process centered on the student's functional and academic independence: LRE Continuum Review: The team first evaluates if the student can achieve measurable gains in a general education setting with supplementary aids and services before moving to a more restrictive, highly modified setting. Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Adaptive Data: Teams incorporate adaptive behavior data (such as the 45.83% of our alternate participants identified with Intellectual Disabilities) to determine if the student requires support for life skills alongside academics. Evaluation of Assistive Technology (AT): The team identifies if the student requires specialized equipment, such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, to participate in the curriculum. Analysis of "Substantial" vs. "Standard" Accommodations: The team documents that the supports needed are not merely "accommodations" (changing how a student learns) but "modifications" (changing what they are expected to learn) that are only available through the alternate standards. Trend Analysis: Teams review local participation trends; for example, observing that 91.67% of our current alternate participants are White and 66.67% are Male, teams are prompted to ensure that the "level of support" determined is based strictly on individual disability data rather than demographic trends.

#### **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? \***

Analysis of Instructional Intensity Baseline of Universal Design: The team first identifies supports already provided through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or Tier I instructional practices available to all students. Individualization vs. Generalization: The team documents if the student requires "extensive, direct individualized

# 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.

instruction" that is significantly more intense or frequent than the small-group support provided to peers who are not on the alternate assessment track. Evidence of "Substantial" Support: Data must show the student requires "substantial supports" to achieve measurable gains, which may include high-density prompting or constant use of assistive technology that is not a standard part of the classroom environment. Comparison of Performance and StandardsAlternate vs. General Standards: The team evaluates whether the student is working toward the general Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) standards with accommodations or if they require the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS) to access the curriculum. Data-Based Decision Making: Teams review specific cognitive and adaptive behavior data to ensure the need for support is rooted in a "significant cognitive disability" and not a lack of previous instructional exposure. Disability Category Correlation: The team reviews the student's primary disability category; for example, in Hickman County, the majority of students requiring these intensive supports are identified with Intellectual Disabilities (45.83%) or Autism (33.33%). Longitudinal Performance ReviewResponse to High-Quality Instruction: The team ensures that the student's performance level is due to their disability rather than an "instructional disadvantage" by reviewing the history of interventions provided. Performance Trends: For students who show high levels of success, such as those reaching "Advanced" levels, the team must re-evaluate if the current level of support is still necessitated by the disability or if the student has gained enough independence to transition to general assessments. Participation Data Oversight: The district reviews participation rates—which in 2024-25 were 1.11% for ELA, 1.02% for Math, and 1.35% for Science—to ensure that the teams are correctly identifying only those students who truly meet the federal criteria for alternate assessment.

## 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.

To address the disproportionality section of your justification form, you should use the 2024-25 SY data provided in the notification letter for Hickman County Schools. This data compares your local participation counts against statewide averages. **Identified Disproportionality and Action Plan** Identified Disproportionality Based on a review of the 2024-25 data, Hickman County Schools shows the following patterns of disproportionality compared to state averages: **Race and Ethnicity:** Your district's alternate assessment participants are predominantly White (91.67%), which is significantly higher than the state average of 49.30% for this group. Only 4.17% of participants are Black or African American and 4.17% are Hispanic. This likely reflects the overall demographic makeup of Hickman County, but still represents a concentrated participation group. **Gender:** There is a notable gender gap, with males representing 66.67% of alternate assessment participants compared to females at 33.33%. This aligns closely with the statewide trend (67.43% male). **Disability Category:** The highest concentration of participants is within the Intellectual Disability (45.83%) and Autism (33.33%) categories. However, there is a significant local spike in Other Health Impairments (OHI) at 16.67%, which is more than four times the state average of 3.69%. **Economic Status:** 66.67% of your alternate assessment participants are Not Economically Disadvantaged, which is higher than the state average of 62.57%. **Plan to Address and Reduce Disproportionality** Hickman County Schools will implement the following actions to ensure that participation in the alternate assessment is based strictly on cognitive and adaptive data rather than demographic factors: **Targeted File Reviews for OHI:** Because the district's participation rate for students with Other Health Impairments (16.67%) is significantly higher than the state average, the Special Education Director will conduct a targeted review of these students' files to ensure they meet the "significant cognitive disability" criteria and are not placed on the alternate track due to medical or behavioral needs alone. **Bias Training for IEP Teams:** We will provide professional development to IEP teams focused on avoiding "implicit bias" during the decision-making process, specifically addressing why our male and White student populations are identified for alternate assessments at higher rates. **Comparative Demographic Analysis:** The district will compare its total student population demographics to the alternate assessment population to ensure the 91.67% White participation rate is truly reflective of the district's overall enrollment and not an over-identification of one specific racial group. **Strengthening Tier 1 and 2 Interventions:** To reduce the number of students moving toward alternate assessments, the district will strengthen academic interventions for all students, ensuring that "instructional disadvantage" is ruled out before a student is considered for the 1.0 percent cap pool. **Monitoring High Performers:** Any student, regardless of demographic, who scores at the highest performance levels (scores 3 or 4) will have their eligibility reviewed to determine if they can transition back to the general TCAP assessment with appropriate accommodations.

*(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? \* Hickman County Schools ensures parents are fully informed through a multi-step communication process that begins well before the annual IEP meeting: Pre-Meeting Materials: Parents are provided with a copy of the TDOE Parent Guide to Alternate Assessment and the Participation Decision-Making Flowchart in advance of the meeting to ensure they have time to review the criteria for "significant cognitive disabilities". Discussion of Graduation Pathways: During the IEP meeting, the team provides a clear explanation that participating in alternate assessments (AA-AAAS) typically leads to an Alternate Academic Diploma rather than a traditional high school diploma, as the student is not being assessed on the general education standards. Performance Data Transparency: Teams share the student's previous performance data, including whether the student achieved a valid performance score (Level 1–4) on previous alternate assessments. If a student has scored in the "Advanced" range (Level 4), parents are specifically informed that the student may no longer meet the criteria for "significant cognitive disability" and a transition to general assessments is discussed. Formal Notice: All decisions are documented in the Prior Written Notice (PWN), which explicitly states that the parent was informed of the implications of the alternate assessment track.

34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? \* We ensure that parents are active, equal members of the IEP team through the following practices: Collaborative Data Review: Rather than presenting a finished plan, the team reviews the student's Adaptive Behavior Scales (e.g., Vineland-3) and Cognitive Assessments alongside the parent. Parents are asked to provide input on how the student's disability impacts their "practical and social" functioning at home, which is critical for determining if the student meets Criterion One (Significant Cognitive Disability). Criterion-by-Criterion Discussion: The IEP team walks through each of the state's three participation criteria with the parent. The team explicitly asks for parent input on Criterion Three: the student's need for "extensive direct individualized instruction" and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains. Addressing Disproportionality Awareness: As part of our district's commitment to equity, teams are trained to ensure that demographic factors—such as the high local participation rate for White students (91.67%) or those with Other Health Impairments (16.67%)—do not influence the recommendation for a student. Parents are encouraged to advocate for the least restrictive assessment environment. Consent and Dissent: If a parent disagrees with the team's recommendation for alternate assessment, the district utilizes the formal dispute resolution process, ensuring that the parent's voice is documented in the meeting minutes and that the student remains in the general assessment until a consensus or legal determination is reached.

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? \* Annual Review and Transition Processes To ensure that alternate assessment participation is reviewed rigorously and at least annually, the district implements the following processes: Mandatory Annual IEP Review: Every student's participation in the alternate assessment is a required agenda item for the annual IEP meeting, regardless of the severity of the disability. The team must re-verify that the student continues to meet all three state-defined criteria for "most significant cognitive disability". Data-Based Transition Triggers: The district has established specific "triggers" that require a more intensive review for a possible transition to general assessments. For example, if a student achieves a valid performance score of Level 4 (Advanced) in any subject, the IEP team must conduct an in-depth analysis of the student's adaptive and cognitive data to determine if their skills now exceed the eligibility criteria for the alternate assessment.

Longitudinal Participation Tracking: The district monitors participation trends over time to identify students who may be ready for transition. Between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, Hickman County successfully reduced its alternate assessment participation rates from 2.16% to 1.11% in ELA and from 2.18% to 1.02% in Math, demonstrating an active and effective annual review process. Assessment Provisioning Data Reviews: As part of the planning for the upcoming school year (e.g., 2025-26), the district uses assessment provisioning data to identify any student currently designated for alternate assessment. This allows for a pre-meeting "check" by the Special Education Director's office to ensure teams are prepared to discuss the possibility of transition. Professional Development on Least Restrictive Assessment: Special education teachers and lead teachers receive annual training on how to use the TCAP-Alt/DLM Participation Decision-Making Flowchart. This training emphasizes that the IEP team has the authority to transition a student to general assessments with accommodations at any time during the school year if data suggests the student is capable of accessing the general standards. Informed Parent Dialogue: During the annual review, the team is required to discuss the long-term implications of continued participation in the alternate assessment, including the impact on earning a traditional diploma versus an Alternate Academic Diploma. This ensures parents are full partners in the decision to either continue or discontinue the alternate assessment track.

## 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.\*

To fulfill the requirements of the ESEA and the *Endrew F.* standard for Hickman County Schools, your response should emphasize that "appropriate progress" is defined by ambitious, individualized goals and access to high-quality, standards-based instruction. Here is a draft for Question 36:36. 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. Hickman County Schools ensures that every student participating in the alternate assessment receives an education that is both ambitious and rigorous through the following framework: Standards-Based Instruction (AA-AAAS): Our policy requires that all students on the alternate track are provided with direct instruction aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards via the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards. This ensures that students are not merely "present" in a classroom but are actively engaged in grade-level content that has been modified for their specific cognitive needs. Ambitious Goal Setting (The *Endrew F.* Standard): In alignment with *Endrew F.*, our IEP teams are trained to move beyond "de minimis" (minimal) progress. Goals are "reasonably calculated" to ensure the student makes meaningful gains in light of their unique circumstances. This includes using baseline data from the 2024-25 DLM/TCAP-Alt results to set challenging growth targets for the following year. Data-Driven Progress Monitoring: Procedures are in place for teachers to collect weekly progress monitoring data on all IEP goals. This data is reviewed quarterly with parents to ensure that if a student is not making "appropriate progress," the IEP team reconvenes to adjust instructional strategies, assistive technology, or support levels. High-Quality Instructional Materials: The LEA provides specialized educators with research-based curricula specifically designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (e.g., Unique Learning System). This ensures that instruction is not just "modified" but is systematically designed to produce academic growth in core areas like ELA, Math, and Science. Continuous Professional Development: To address the state's concern regarding student academic achievement, our district participates in TDOE-led webinars and regional trainings. This professional development focuses on instructional "scaffolding"—fostering student independence so that the need for "extensive direct individualized instruction" leads to actual measurable gains rather than permanent stagnation. Rigorous Annual Reviews: We conduct a mandatory annual review of participation data. By identifying that our district rates improved significantly between 2023-24 (e.g., 2.16% ELA) and 2024-25 (1.11% ELA), we demonstrate a practice of ensuring that only students who truly require this highly specialized instruction are placed in this track, thereby protecting the integrity of the academic standards for all students.

## 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. \* Hickman County Schools requests targeted support from the department to reinforce the shift in decision-making practices that led to our significant participation rate reductions in the 2024–25 school year. To ensure long-term compliance with the 1.0 percent cap, we request the following: On-Site or Virtual "Train-the-Trainer" Sessions: We request reinforcement training for our district-level lead teachers and school-based IEP chairpersons. This training should focus on the technical application of the TCAP-Alt/DLM Participation Decision-Making Flowchart, specifically for complex cases involving students with Other Health Impairments (OHI), where our local participation rate (16.67%) significantly exceeds the state average (3.69%). Support with Adaptive Behavior Data Interpretation: We would benefit from specialized training on using adaptive behavior data (such as Vineland-3 or ABAS-3 results) to distinguish between a "significant cognitive disability" and "instructional disadvantage," ensuring teams feel confident in their data-based determinations. Guidance on High-Performance Reviews: We request technical assistance or a webinar focused specifically on the process for reviewing and transitioning students who score at Level 4 (Advanced) on alternate assessments back to the general assessment track. Regional Collaboration Opportunities: We request opportunities to participate in regional professional learning communities (PLCs) with other LEAs that have successfully reduced their participation rates. This would allow our teams to share best practices for parent communication and the implementation of Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS). Resource Alignment: We request any available parent-facing materials that explicitly outline the graduation pathways and the implications of the Alternate Academic Diploma to help our teams facilitate informed parent participation during IEP meetings.