

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#

470 - Knox County

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

Seay, Mollie

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

- 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.* *

1.06

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.* *

1.02

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.* *

1.05

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

1.06

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

0.95

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

0.97

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.* *

1.08

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.* *

1.08

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.* *

1.08

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

1.09

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

0.87

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

0.99

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.12

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.1

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.08

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.08

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.09

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

1.14

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**. *

21

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

15

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? *

District staff have been trained on the three criterion used to determine whether a student is appropriate to be considered for the alternate assessment. District support personnel utilized the state's training on Alternate Assessment: The Federal Cap of 1% Participation Cap and Implications of Participation, to develop a deeper understanding of the decision-making process and required considerations. This information was then disseminated by district staff to schools and the educators they support to ensure consistent implementation across the district. School Psychologists review the considerations for participation in Alternate Assessment yearly. Students that scored advanced on last year's Alternate Assessment were reviewed by district staff and information was disseminated to school teams for IEP review.

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

Teams review previous cognitive and adaptive scores, TN Ready or alternate assessment scores, present levels, progress reports, and evaluation reports using the Exclusionary Factors worksheet when appropriate. Teams also use district benchmark testing data to evaluate the impact of student's cognition and adaptive needs.

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

Adaptive behavior data is reviewed including standardized rating scales (parent and teacher), teacher observations, and present levels as part of the decision-making process.

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? *

Consideration is made using current data to determine if the student's skill deficits are related to their disability and not a lack of instruction. SWDs receive the same standards and amount of time in each content area equal to that of their non-disabled peers prior to an alternate assessment discussion. Supplementary aides and supports are used to provide access to grade level standards. Additionally, student attendance is reviewed along with their enrollment history to have holistic review of academic exposure.

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

Teams use a variety of data including: Iready, Benchmark, AimsWEB, IEP goal data collection, attendance records, teacher observations, parent input, QPA and QSA.

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion Three

In this section, describe the processes in place to ensure the IEP team is making informed, data-based decisions aligned to the alternate assessment participation criteria. Please note that completion of the Alternate Assessment Worksheet in TN PULSE alone is not sufficient evidence.

Criterion Three: The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

In the questions below, describe the process used to determine that the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports.

29. What data are used to support this determination? *

The IEP team reviews multiple data sources such as formal assessments, observations, progress monitoring, progress reports, current specialized services, and input from teachers and parents.

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? *

Previously described data sources are reviewed to identify significant academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and adaptive deficits. IEP teams review any additional accommodations, or supplemental aids and services that could be provided in the least restrictive environment to meet the students' required needs.

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? *

Based on a review of student's progress data, the IEP team determines the naturally occurring supports in the classroom are not sufficient for student progress on IEP goals.

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.

KCS' alternate assessment participation by race/ethnicity is proportionate with the overall student population distribution. Participation rates for students with Autism, Intellectual Disability, TBI and Multiple disability are consistent with state participation rates. The KCS rate for students with OHI was 2.47 times greater than the state rate in 2024-25. It is slightly lower in 2025-26. Economically disadvantaged students were over represented in 2024-25, with 25.57% participation compared to 19% enrollment. English Learners are underrepresented. The district will review alternate assessment students with OHI to determine if the alternate assessment decision was appropriate and that there is not a more appropriate disability category. The district will review alternate assessment eligibility for economically disadvantaged students. KCS will review assessment interpretation guidance for students with significant cognitive disabilities to ensure considerations are made related to adaptive behavior, cultural background and differences, and socioeconomic status.

*(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 at IEP meetings where the alternate assessment eligibility decision is made. IEP teams discuss the eligibility criteria, student data, and parent input. KCS informs parents of the impact of alternate assessment participation on graduation pathways and postsecondary opportunities.

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

Parents are invited to all IEP team meetings and provided with IEP drafts and any relevant evaluation reports at least 48-hours prior to the meeting. KCS makes all efforts to schedule, and reschedule if necessary, in order to ensure active parent participation.

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? *

Alternate assessment eligibility is reconsidered at each annual IEP meeting. All available student assessment and performance data is reviewed and updated. The team considers if the student continues to meet criteria for alternate assessment.

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.* District staff, administrators, and teachers receive training on IEP development that meets students' individual needs, which includes measurable ambitious goals and data based decision making. Teams collect current data to ensure that students make meaningful progress using system wide practices such as: PLCs, IPG walkthroughs, and IAIEP rubric scoring. District staff participates in cross-departmental collaboration data days to review current practices, trends, and needs. District support staff disseminates this information to individual schools and provides follow up that supports meaningful, measurable progress for 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. * KCS would welcome any additional training materials, guidance documents, or exemplars for training our school psychologists, teachers, district support personnel and administrators.