

## 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#

51 - Alcoa

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

Warwick, Mary Beth

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.* \*

1.32

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.* \*

0.81

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.* \*

1.44

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

1.61

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

1.58

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

1.45

## 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.* \*

1.36

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.* \*

1.36

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

1.45

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

1.22

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

1.28

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

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

1.33

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

1.33

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

1.38

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

1.41

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

1.47

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

1.47

## 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? \*

During the IEP process, students in tested grades are reviewed on the 3 criteria proposed by the TN Department of Education. The school psychologist and/or interpreter of results reviews academic (cognitive) and adaptive data with the IEP team to determine which comprehensive testing instrument/s is most appropriate for the individual student. The Special Education Director meets with the school administrators and teachers of low incidence students to review criteria for alternative assessment and review the decisions made to place students on the alternate assessment. The IEP team reviews all collected data pertaining to the Alt Assessment criteria to determine the most appropriate assessment pathway for each student.

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

Along with parent and teacher observations and input, benchmark data, and present levels, standardized assessment data is also reviewed for cognitive and adaptive scores. Cognitive assessments used include Test of Nonverbal Intelligence, Fourth Edition (TONI-4) and the WISC-IV (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Fourth Edition). Adaptive Assessments include: Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition, Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition (BASC-3), and The Adaptive Behavior Assessment System, Third Edition (ABAS-3).

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

Standardized adaptive behavior scores are reviewed by the IEP Team. The Team also considers observations and input about the student's ability to function in the classroom environment and what level of support is needed for the student to function in their least restrictive environment. If the student is able to function in the classroom with some support and accommodations, then the alternative assessment is not considered appropriate.

## 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? \*

Students receive their instruction in their least restrictive environment based on their individual needs. For students that are able to attend general education classes, they receive standards-based instruction in the general education setting. For students that are not able to access the general education setting (even with accommodations and modifications), they receive their standards based instruction in a small group setting tiered to their learning styles and academic competence. If a student is not able to access the general education setting, evidenced by progress monitoring and data review, the IEP team will determine the most appropriate setting for this to occur. Standards continue to drive instruction regardless of instructional placement.

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

Standardized tests, benchmark testing, progress reports, parent and teacher input and observations are used in determining the best placement for students to receive standards aligned instruction.

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility: Criterion Three

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

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

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

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

IEP teams review standardized test scores, benchmark data, progress reports, and input from teachers and parents. Modifications and accommodations are reviewed to determine if they can be utilized to increase a student's opportunity to participate in general education classes. Progress monitoring data is also used to determine progress in the student's current environment.

**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 review data and present levels to see what goals need to be targeted in the IEP. Once those goals are determined, the IEP team determines what supports are needed to support the acquisition of the skills necessary to achieve the IEP goals. If possible, the student receives support in the general education class. If the skill gap is too large, the student will receive targeted direct instruction in a more restrictive environment. Regardless of the location of services, goals are progress monitored and adjustments to program (including supports) are made to help the student reach their goals in the least restrictive environment.

**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 determines supports needed by observing students in the environment and input during the IEP process with special and general education teachers. If supports are available to all students then those would not be considered as necessary for the student to be able to participate in the general education class. Supports are considered necessary if the student requires it in order to participate in that environment.



## **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? \* In the annual IEP meeting, all testing options are discussed as well as implications of moving the student from the TNReady Assessment to the DLM Assessment. In lower grades, parents are informed of the possibility that their child may move from one assessment to another depending on factors influencing progress in their current programs of study. These conversations begin early in a child's educational career so the parents have a deep understanding of the process and all implications of decisions made on behalf of the student. Assessment data along with input from ALL IEP team members is reviewed at each annual IEP meeting to determine the most appropriate assessment path for the student.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? \*Parents are a required member of the IEP team and decisions of this magnitude are not made without the parents input.
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? \*Student progress towards IEP goals is reviewed at least quarterly through progress reports. This data along with any new assessment data, benchmark data, and observation data is reviewed annually at the IEP meeting to determine if the assessment path is still appropriate for the student. In the event that there is a significant change in progress, the team may change the assessment path that the student is currently on.

## 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.\*

At the classroom level, data is reviewed by the case manager. If adequate progress is not being made, the case manager may convene an IEP Team meeting to discuss the current IEP and adjust as needed. At the school level, administrators review data to look for progress and trends across subject areas. If adequate progress is not seen, the administrators will review instruction and curriculum to determine if improvements or adjustments need to be made. At the district level, administration and supervisors review data to determine if adequate progress is showing across subgroups, content areas, and schools. The district meets regularly with school level teams to discuss these findings and to determine if changes need to be made to address areas of insufficient academic progress in specific areas.

## 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. \*

I would like to see more training on implementation of the DLM assessment for this population. The Access Conference would be great opportunity for this to happen. I would also like to see how students that are on the cusp of eligibility for the alt assessment are supported in high school to work towards a regular education diploma.