

## 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#

542 - Etowah

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

Jamie Bain

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

- a. Special Education Director
- b. Special Education Coordinator
- c. Other

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

4. **ELA Participation Rates 2020-21** *Note: Prior to the 2023-24 SY, Tennessee participated in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning in the 2023-24 SY, the Dynamic Learning Maps (OLM) embedded alternate assessment replaced the MSAA.* \*

0.77

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.* \*

2.38

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.* \*

1.78

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

1.9

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

1.93

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

0.93

## 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.* \*

0.77

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.* \*

2.38

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.* \*

1.9

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

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

0.93

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

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

0

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

2.37

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

1.77

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

1.9

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

1.93

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

0.93

## 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? \*

The Tennessee Department of Education provides detailed eligibility criteria with TCAP-Alt participation guidelines. These documents outline that students must have a significant cognitive disability, require extensive supports, and receive instruction aligned to alternate academic achievement standards. Teams use these criteria during IEP meetings to guide decisions. We complete a state-required participation justification form during the IEP meeting, in which we answer each question below: Does the student have a significant cognitive disability? Is the student working on alternate standards? Does the student require extensive, direct individualized instruction?

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

\*Cognitive Functioning \*Adaptive Behavior Academic Achievement Data IEP Goals and Instructional Level \* The student may qualify for participation in TCAP Alt, if both Cognitive Functioning and Adaptive Behavior scores fall below 70. Specifically, eligibility is considered when the student demonstrates an IQ score below 70 and corresponding deficits in adaptive behavior, as evidenced by a composite score below 70 in that area as well.

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

Adaptive behavior data plays an important role in determining whether a student should participate in TCAP Alt, but it is not used in isolation. Instead, it is considered as part of a comprehensive decision-making process by the team. Adaptive behavior data, which is gathered from the standardized ABAS, along with teacher and parent input, helps the team understand how the student functions in everyday life- particularly in areas of communication, social skills, and daily living skills. For TCAP Alt eligibility, this data is used to determine whether the student demonstrates significant deficits in adaptive functioning that are consistent with a student who has a most significant cognitive disability.

## 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? \*

Review comprehensive evaluation data    Significant cognitive disability is generally indicated when there are significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior , not just low academic scores. Rule out instructional or environmental factors    Inconsistent or inadequate instruction    Attendance issues or high absenteeism    Limited English proficiency or language acquisition needs    Lack of access to appropriate interventions    or accommodations    Cultural or socioeconomic factors affecting learning    opportunities  
Examine response to evidence-based instruction    Progress monitoring data (RTI/MTSS)    Response to intensive, targeted interventions    Rate of skill acquisition over time Assess adaptive functioning in real-world contexts    Independence in routines    Communication across settings    Social and safety skills  
Need for ongoing, extensive support across environments Ensure consistency across settings and raters  
We compare performance:    Across school settings (classroom, small group, testing)    Across multiple informants (teachers, parents, specialists) Use professional judgment aligned with eligibility criteria    The deficits are significant, global, and persistent, consistent with    significant cognitive disability or The needs are better explained by instructional gaps that can be remediated with appropriate general or targeted instruction

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

Cognitive and Adaptive Behavior Data IEP Team Documentation Academic Performance Data Instructional Level and Supports Needed Communication Data Functional Independence Data Teacher and Related Service Provider Input State Participation Guidelines

# 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? \*

Cognitive and Adaptive Behavior Data IEP Team Documentation Academic Performance Data Instructional Level and Supports Needed Communication Data Functional Independence Data Teacher and Related Service Provider Input

#### 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? \*

We start with Present Levels of Performance (PLAAPF)- We determine: What barriers the student experiences (academic, behavioral, social, functional) Whether the student can access grade-level instruction with accommodations alone Whether modified instruction is needed (different expectations, materials, or pacing) We then determine what supports are required: Direct instruction in specialized settings Related services (OT, speech, counseling) Behavioral supports (FBA/BIP, reinforcement systems) Assistive technology or communication supports We consider: How often instruction/support is needed (daily, weekly) How long sessions should be Are supports needed in: General education Small group/resource setting Separate specialized classroom Combination Consider LRE After Needs Are Identified Can the student make progress in general education with supports? If not, what level of removal is necessary for meaningful progress? How can interaction with nondisabled peers still be maximized? In our highly modified setting, we consider: Opportunities for inclusion (specials, lunch, recess) We consider all options: General education with supports General education + intervention services Self-contained classroom for a partial day Self-contained classroom for majority of the day

#### 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? \*

Again, we look at Present Levels (PLAAPF) We look at evaluation data, classroom performance, and progress monitoring to determine: What skills are impacted by the disability? Where does the student struggle compared to peers? What barriers exist to accessing and making progress in the general curriculum? Does the student need support because of the disability? A support is considered IEP-required when: Without it, the student cannot access instruction, make meaningful progress, or participate appropriately. The need is directly tied to disability-related deficits (academic, communication, behavior, sensory, motor) It is individualized and would not typically be needed by most students. Would this support still be needed without the disability? This is a key distinction: If yes -> more than likely general instructional support If no -> more than likely IEP support Look closely into the LRE Can this need be met in general education with supports? Or does it require specialized instruction or services? Supports move into the IEP when general education interventions alone are insufficient.



## **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.

We have no identified disproportionality at this time.

*(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 during the IEP Meeting.

34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? \*Parents are invited to all meetings and are a vital part of the IEP team and the decision-making process.

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? \*Our process is the annual review of the student IEP.

## 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 implements a comprehensive system of policies, procedures, and instructional practices designed to ensure all students receive instruction that is aligned with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) and the standards established in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*. The overarching goal is to provide students with access to high-quality, standards-based instruction and to ensure they make appropriately ambitious academic progress in light of their individual circumstances. Standards-Based Instruction and Curriculum Alignment The LEA ensures that all instructional programs are aligned to state academic standards. Curriculum materials are selected and implemented based on their alignment to grade-level expectations, rigor, and evidence-based effectiveness. Teachers are provided with pacing guides, instructional frameworks, and professional learning to support consistent implementation of standards-based instruction across classrooms. Multi-Tiered System of Supports The LEA utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Tier I instruction is high-quality, evidence based, and delivered to all students. Students who require additional support receive Tier II targeted interventions and Tier III intensive interventions based on data-driven decision-making. Progress is regularly monitored to ensure interventions are effective and adjusted as needed. Special Education and *Endrew F.* Compliance In accordance with *Endrew F.*, the LEA ensures that students with disabilities are provided Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that are reasonably created to enable progress appropriate in light of their circumstances. Our IEP teams use a variety of data sources—including classroom performance, progress monitoring data, and formal assessments—to develop measurable annual goals and determine appropriate services, accommodations, and supports. Student progress toward IEP goals is reviewed at least quarterly, and adjustments are made when students are not demonstrating adequate progress. Progress Monitoring and Data-Based Decision Making The LEA implements ongoing progress monitoring systems for both general education and special education students. Common formative assessments, curriculum based measures, and benchmark assessments are used to track student growth. Data teams and biweekly PLCs meet regularly to analyze student performance, identify trends, and make instructional adjustments to improve outcomes. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Access to Instruction The LEA is committed to educating students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment to the maximum extent appropriate. Students are provided access to grade-level instruction with accommodations, modifications, and supports as determined by the IEP team to ensure meaningful participation and progress in the general curriculum.

## 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. \* Additional financial resources are necessary to provide timely and effective supports for the diverse and evolving needs of students as they arise during the school year, ensuring consistent access to appropriate services and interventions.