

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#

94 - McKenzie

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

Horne, Leighann

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. **

1.31

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. **

1.41

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. **

1.37

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

1.38

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

1.49

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

1.3

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.* *

1.28

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.* *

1.42

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.* *

1.38

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

1.39

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

1.34

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

1.3

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.19

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.4

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.53

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.83

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.26

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

1.2

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? *

Parents are an active part of the IEP team and all meetings. The alternate assessment is discussed annually or as needed with a multidisciplinary team, which includes the parents. Parents or guardians must indicate through signatures their agreement with this decision. During the meeting, it is communicated to parents their child participating in the alternate assessment will not qualify for a regular education high school diploma. All decisions are also documented in prior written notices, and a copy is provided to parents.

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

All students who participate in the alternate assessment are tested by our school psychologist and have a full comprehensive evaluation, which includes a cognitive assessment, adaptive testing including the home and school setting, achievement testing, observations, parent information, medical and developmental history, and other pertinent information needed on a case by case basis. Our school psychologist attends trainings sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education to remain current and in compliance with the eligibility determination for the alternate assessment. In our district, the Supervisor of Special Education is notified anytime the team is considering the alternate assessment for a student. The district supervisor provides annual training for all members of the special education department including making decisions regarding the alternate assessment. The district supervisor stays in compliance by referencing the disability evaluations and eligibility at tn.gov, attending TN DOE professional development sessions throughout the year, and through monthly collaborations with our school psychologist. Teachers also attend professional development sessions provided by the TN DOE when they are available. All students at MSSD participating in the alternate assessment meet the participation guidelines, and each decision to participate was carefully considered and determined through a plethora of data and observation review by a multidisciplinary IEP team. This is a decision we do not take lightly. When the team comes together to make a testing decision, we use data from intellectual abilities, achievement abilities, adaptive skills data, medical information, observations from multiple stakeholders in the school as well as the family and any other data we deem relevant.

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

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

process? *

Adaptive data is critical for our team. We administer a comprehensive, norm-referenced assessment for our students. This test allows us to measure the student's skills in 11 areas within three main domains: conceptual, practical, and social. We have at least one teacher, often two fill out a test based on their knowledge of the child in the school setting, and we require one parent to fill out a form. We don't rely solely on this test; we also consider previous adaptive skills testing, and we include observation from multiple stakeholders in the school community and home.

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? *

ALL students at MSSD are placed in a fully-inclusive preschool if they begin in PreK with us. All students at our elementary campus start off in a general education classroom and may move to having inclusive supports in place. We may then move to minimal pull-out services before considering receiving their instruction in a pull-out setting. We practice full inclusion to the fullest extent possible. We do not make informed decisions regarding LRE without a full psychological examination, where we consider IQ testing, academic achievement testing, adaptive and social-emotional testing, teacher input, family input, grades, attendance, discipline, medical information, etc. We review the whole gamut of information available before making LRE decisions as a multidisciplinary team. We follow this protocol because we have a flow chart we often use and discuss with families. We let them know up front, we want their child in an inclusive environment to the fullest extent possible. We provide annual training to our teachers on LRE as well as alternate assessment participation. Supports, specialized instruction, and service hours are decided on a case-by-case basis at the IEP team using a multi-disciplinary team. We consider the needs of the particular student as well as review a plethora of data, including current and come historical. We use benchmarking data and progress monitoring, teacher-collected data, grades, psychological – academic, medical, intellectual, adaptive, and social/emotional if needed. Despite the needs of the student, ALL students in our district are in the general education setting during the day. This looks different for each child and is dependent upon their individualized needs, but we are a district that practices inclusion to the fullest extent possible, whether it be 2 hours a day or 30 minutes a day. We're also able to use multiple sources of data we've collected over a lengthy time period. Before a decision is made, we typically have 3 to 4 years of educational data to guide us in making informed decisions.

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

We use multiple sources of data as previously mentioned: full psychological testing, and we also review previous psychological reports that include but are not limited to: IQ testing, achievement testing, adaptive skills testing, emotional/behavioral testing, observational data, medical information, etc. We also use grades, classroom functioning, teacher and family input, etc.

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility: Criterion Three

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

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

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

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

We use multiple sources of data including all data from the psychological report as well as current grades, participation level, teacher observations, etc.

30. How do IEP teams determine the type and level of supports needed, including for students whose least restrictive environment (LRE) is a highly modified special education setting for all or part of the day? *

Despite the needs of the student, ALL students in our district are in the general education setting during the day. This looks different for each child and is dependent upon their individualized needs, but we are a district that practices inclusion to the fullest extent possible, whether it be 2 hours a day or 30 minutes a 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? *

Decisions are made on an individual basis at the IEP team. We have multiple stakeholders at all IEP meetings to share insight and relevant data in helping us make these decisions such as OT, PT, SLP, behavior interventionists, etc. We invite all stakeholders that are pertinent in helping us make the most appropriate decisions for the student.

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 do not exhibit a disproportionality among our group of students taking the alternate assessment. All students in our district that are taking the alternate assessment have extremely limited academic achievement, limited adaptive skills, and very low intellectual abilities.

[REDACTED]

We work diligently toward meeting the needs of each individual student and try not to exceed the 1% participation rate goal, but, unfortunately, it is sometimes inevitable.

*(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 an active part of the IEP team and all meetings. The alternate assessment is discussed annually or as needed with a multidisciplinary team, which includes the parents. Parents or guardians must indicate through signatures their agreement with this decision. During the meeting, it is communicated to parents their child participating in the alternate assessment will not qualify for a regular education high school diploma. All decisions are also documented in prior written notices, and a copy is provided to parents.

34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? *Parents are an active part of the IEP team and all meetings. We call them to schedule meeting, send invitations, and typically use a parent text app to send meeting reminders. We make every effort to include parents and encourage their 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? *Our district uses a district-created meeting form for staying on track and ensuring all required information is shared at meetings.

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.* Our board policy requires we use a standards-aligned curriculum, HQIM, qualified educators, family and stakeholder engagement, etc. for ALL students, and this includes our most vulnerable population. We monitor this process through IPG walk-thrus, TEAM evaluations, CLASS evaluations, walk-thrus, and being an active part of IEP meetings.

Support Requested

37. Please describe any support needed from the department to assist in meeting the requirements outlined in this form. All reasonable requests will be considered. * none