

## 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#

97 - West Carroll Sp Dist

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

Polinski, Crystal

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.* \*

1.42

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.* \*

1.53

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

1.07

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

1.61

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

1.92

## 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.* \*

1.47

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.* \*

1.04

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.* \*

1.49

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

1.08

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

1.45

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

1.94

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

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

1.21

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

1.52

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

1.76

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

1.34

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

1.81

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

2.25

## 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**. \*

1

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

1

## 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? \*

IEP teams receive ongoing professional development and guidance on the eligibility criteria for alternate assessments. This includes state and federal requirements, as well as specific district policies that outline the characteristics of students who qualify. Teams review documentation that emphasizes that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should be considered. The IEP team engages in collaborative review of all collected data, ensuring decisions are based on a holistic understanding of the student's abilities and needs. The team documents the rationale for determining that the student meets the criteria, ensuring alignment with state and federal regulations.

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

The decision-making process relies on a comprehensive review of multiple sources of data, including: \* Cognitive Assessments: Standardized intelligence measures, as well as functional cognitive assessments, to determine the extent of the student's cognitive disability. \* Academic performance data: The student's performance on standardized assessments, progress monitoring tools, and classroom-based evaluations. \* Adaptive behavior assessments: Standardized tools such as the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales or the Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS) are used to assess the student's ability to perform daily life skills across multiple environments. \* Teacher and caregiver input: Observations and qualitative data from educators, parents, and related service providers to determine the student's level of independence and functional skills in various settings.

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

Adaptive behavior assessments are a critical component in the eligibility determination. The IEP team reviews the student's ability to function independently across domains such as communication, socialization, daily living, and motor skills. The assessment results must indicate that the student has significant deficits in adaptive functioning that align with their cognitive disability, further supporting the need for alternate assessment.

**Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:**  
**Criterion One**

## 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? \*

To ensure that a student with a significant cognitive disability has been provided access to grade-level, standards-aligned instruction, multiple sources of data are used. This includes documentation of instructional planning, implementation, and student progress monitoring. The following evidence and processes help demonstrate that the student has received appropriate, rigorous, and standards-based instruction: 1. Standards-Based Individualized Education Program (IEP)- The student's IEP includes goals that are aligned with state standards, adapted to the unique needs. Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) ensures that the student has access to the general education curriculum with appropriate accommodations and modifications. 2. Lesson Plans and Instructional Materials: General and Special education teachers collaborate to adapt grade-level curriculum to be accessible for the student. Lesson plans reflect evidence-based instructional strategies tailored to the student's learning needs. 3. Teacher and Staff Collaboration: Documentation of co-planning and consultation between general and special education teachers. Professional development records showing that teachers receive training on differentiated instruction and inclusive practices. 4. Classroom Observations and Walkthroughs: Observations ensure the student is engaged in grade level content at an appropriate level of rigor, intensity, and duration. Evidence scaffolding, assistive technology, or alternative assessments being used effectively. 5. Progress Monitoring Data and Assessments: Formative and Summative assessments aligned with grade-level standards to measure progress. Work samples, portfolios, and performance-based assessments demonstrating access to grade-level content.

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

The IEP team analyzes multiple data sources: 1. Comprehensive Evaluations and Assessments: Cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments to confirm the presence of a significant cognitive disability. Academic achievement assessments to determine learning needs and response to instruction. 2. Response to Intervention: Records showing that the student has received high-quality, evidence based instruction and interventions. 3. Attendance and Participation Data: Ensuring the student has had consistent access to instruction and was not limited by absenteeism or lack of appropriate support. 4. Parental input and student interviews: Gathering insights from families on the student's learning history, engagement, and access to instruction outside of assessments. 5. Comparative Peer Data: Comparing progress with similarly placed students receiving appropriate instruction to determine if progress aligns with expectations for students with 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? \*

1. Formal Evaluations: Standardized assessments, cognitive testing, adaptive behavior assessments, and functional behavior assessments (FBA) help determine the student's academic and functional abilities. 2. Informal Data: Observations, work samples, teacher reports, progress monitoring, and parent input provide a broader understanding of the student's needs. 3. Response to Intervention: Reviewing past interventions and accommodations used in less restrictive settings helps assess their effectiveness.

#### 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? \*

Determination of Student Needs: The IEP team analyzes the data to identify the student's specific strengths and deficits in academics, social skills, communication, behavior, and independence. If a student demonstrates significant difficulty accessing the general education curriculum despite extensive accommodations, modifications, and supports, the team considers a more restrictive environment. Determining Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Supports: The IEP team evaluates where the student can make meaningful progress with the appropriate supports. If a highly modified special education setting is required, the team ensures that: 1) The setting provides necessary individualized instruction, 2) The supports are based on student-specific needs rather than being environment-dependent.

#### 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? \*

Needed Supports: These are specific, individualized supports required for the student to access the curriculum, such as: 1) 1:1 paraprofessional support 2) Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices 3) Intensive behavioral interventions, 4) Specialized instruction aligned with the student's needs. Environmental Supports: These are resources available to all student's in a particular setting, such as: small class sizes, general classroom accommodations (e.g., extended time, preferential seating), Universal behavior management strategies. The team ensures that the supports provided are based on the student's needs rather than what is available in the 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.

West Carroll Special School District does not have any disproportionality.

*(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? \*

Parent Notification and Discussion: During the student's IEP meeting, the team discusses the criteria for alternate assessment participation. The eligibility criteria, as defined by the state and federal guidelines, are reviewed with parents to ensure they understand whether their child qualifies. The potential impact on the student's diploma options, future education, and career pathways are clearly explained.

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

Parents are considered equal partners in the IEP team's decision-making process. The team provides data-driven insights, such as the student's academic performance, progress, and instructional needs. The school provides written documentation outlining the reasons for participation in alternate assessments. Parents have the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, and provide input before the final decision is made.

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? \*The IEP team reviews the decision annually to determine if alternate assessments remain appropriate or if the student should transition to general assessments. If the student shows progress that may allow participation in the general assessment, the team discusses available supports and accommodations for a successful transition. Parents are provided with clear documentation and updates on their child's progress and potential changes in assessment participation.

## 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.\*

West Carroll SSD has established comprehensive policies, procedures, and practices to ensure all students—particularly those participating in alternate assessments—receive instruction aligned with the requirements of ESEA and the expectations outlined in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*. Policies: West Carroll SSD requires that all IEPs are written with aligned goals to grade-level academic content standards or alternate academic achievement standards. Clear criteria are in place for determining eligibility for alternate assessments, ensuring only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are assessed using alternate standards. West Carroll SSD strategizes to maintain compliance with the 1.0% participation cap through internal monitoring and justification procedures. Procedures: IEP teams follow a structured process that includes reviewing multiple sources of data (e.g., evaluations, progress monitoring, classroom performance) to develop individualized, measurable goals. Each IEP must demonstrate that it is reasonably calculated to enable progress appropriate to the student's unique circumstances. Progress toward goals is monitored frequently, documented, and reported to parents at regular intervals. If a student is not making adequate progress, the IEP team reconvenes to revise instruction, supports, or services. Practices: Instruction is delivered using evidence-based strategies, differentiated to meet individual learning needs, and aligned to state standards. Students participating in alternate assessments are provided access to grade-level content through adapted materials, scaffolded instruction, and appropriate accommodations. Teachers receive ongoing professional development on standards-based instruction, alternate standards, and progress monitoring. Collaborative planning between general and special education staff ensures alignment and access to the general curriculum. Additionally, West Carroll SSD conducts regular data reviews at the school and district levels to monitor student outcomes, ensuring that students are engaged in rigorous instruction and demonstrating meaningful academic progress. Administrators and instructional supervisors provide oversight and support to ensure fidelity of implementation.

## 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. \*
- As always, West Carroll SSD welcomes any and all support from TDOE that is available.