

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#

985 - Achievement School District

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

Yvonne Smith

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. **

2.6

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. **

2.32

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. **

2.91

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

2.03

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

1.21

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

0

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.* *

2.55

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.* *

2.27

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.* *

2.88

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

2.01

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

1.1

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

0

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

2.38

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

2.33

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

2.93

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

2.22

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.37

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

0

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**. *

4

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

4

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 are informed of the alternate assessment participation criteria through annual training, state guidance documents, and ongoing technical assistance provided by district special education staff. Teams review Tennessee's alternate assessment eligibility requirements, including the definition of a significant cognitive disability, and are reminded that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should participate in the alternate assessment. The district also reviews participation decisions for students scoring Advanced on alternate assessments to ensure continued eligibility is appropriate and supported by current data.

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

IEP teams use multiple sources of data to make alternate assessment eligibility determinations, including psychoeducational evaluations, cognitive assessment results, adaptive behavior assessments, academic achievement data, classroom performance, progress monitoring data, teacher observations, and information from parents and service providers. Teams also review the student's present levels of performance, level of instructional support required, and access to grade-level standards to ensure the decision is data-based and aligned to Tennessee's alternate assessment participation criteria.

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

Adaptive behavior data are reviewed as a critical component of the eligibility determination process to help identify the student's level of independence and functioning across conceptual, social, and practical skill areas. IEP teams analyze formal adaptive behavior assessment results, teacher and parent input, and functional performance data to determine the extent to which the student demonstrates significant limitations in daily living and adaptive functioning. This information is considered alongside cognitive and academic data to ensure the student meets the criteria for participation in the 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? *

The IEP team reviews multiple sources of information to ensure the student's academic performance is the result of a significant cognitive disability rather than limited access to instruction, excessive absences, language barriers, or other instructional disadvantages. Teams verify that the student has received consistent, standards-aligned instruction with appropriate interventions, accommodations, and specially designed instruction delivered with sufficient intensity and duration. The team also reviews progress monitoring data and instructional history to determine whether the student continues to demonstrate significant and persistent learning needs despite appropriate educational supports.

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

The IEP team uses a variety of data sources to make an informed determination, including classroom assessments, progress monitoring data, statewide and district assessment results, intervention data, attendance records, instructional history, teacher observations, work samples, and specially designed instruction documentation. Teams also review IEP goals, present levels of performance, accommodations, service delivery information, and evidence that the student has had meaningful access to grade-level standards and instruction comparable in rigor and duration to peers.

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 uses multiple data sources to determine whether the student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports, including present levels of academic and functional performance, progress monitoring data, classroom assessments, cognitive and adaptive behavior evaluations, related service reports, behavior data, teacher observations, and work samples. The team also reviews the student's response to interventions, specially designed instruction, and the level of prompting, repetition, and support required for the student to access and make progress in grade-level standards-aligned instruction.

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 determine the type and level of supports needed by reviewing evaluation data, progress monitoring information, classroom performance, behavioral needs, communication needs, and input from educators, related service providers, and parents. Teams consider the intensity, frequency, and duration of supports required for the student to access instruction and make measurable progress toward IEP goals and grade-level standards. For students in highly modified special education settings, the team ensures placement decisions are individualized and based on the student's unique needs rather than the setting itself.

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 team distinguishes disability-related supports by reviewing the individualized accommodations, modifications, and specially designed instruction the student requires consistently across settings to access and progress in the curriculum. Teams consider whether the supports are uniquely necessary due to the student's disability-related needs or whether they are universally available instructional supports provided to all students. The determination is based on data demonstrating that the student requires intensive, individualized supports beyond typical classroom differentiation in order to make meaningful educational progress.

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.

The ASD reviews alternate assessment participation data annually by disability category, race/ethnicity, grade level, and other demographic groups to identify any patterns of disproportionate participation. If disproportionality is identified, the ASD conducts a root cause analysis to determine whether participation decisions are being influenced by factors other than the state eligibility criteria. The LEA addresses identified concerns through targeted IEP team training, ongoing monitoring of eligibility determinations, review of assessment participation decisions for students scoring Advanced, and increased oversight to ensure decisions are individualized, data-based, and aligned to Tennessee alternate assessment participation requirements. We did not identify 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? * Parents are informed of the alternate assessment eligibility criteria and implications through participation in the IEP meeting, review of state guidance documents, and discussions with school staff regarding assessment options. The IEP team explains the requirements for participation, the nature of alternate academic achievement standards, and the potential impact participation may have on diploma pathways, postsecondary opportunities, and academic expectations to ensure parents can make informed decisions as members of the IEP team.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? *Parents are included as equal members of the IEP team and are actively involved in discussions regarding assessment participation decisions. The team reviews evaluation data, classroom performance, progress monitoring information, and the student's instructional needs with parents to ensure they understand the rationale for the decision. Parents are encouraged to ask questions, provide input regarding their child's strengths and needs, and participate collaboratively in determining the most appropriate assessment option.
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 LEA ensures alternate assessment participation decisions are reviewed at least annually during the student's IEP meeting as part of the required review of assessment accommodations and participation decisions. IEP teams examine updated evaluation data, academic progress, classroom performance, and assessment results, including any Advanced performance levels, to determine continued eligibility. Ongoing monitoring, documentation requirements, and district oversight help ensure decisions remain individualized, data-based, and aligned to Tennessee alternate assessment participation criteria.

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 ASD ensures students participating in alternate assessments receive access to rigorous, standards-aligned instruction through implementation of evidence-based instructional practices, specially designed instruction, progress monitoring, and ongoing review of student performance data. IEP teams develop individualized goals and services that are reasonably calculated to enable students to make appropriate progress in light of their unique circumstances, consistent with all requirements of ESEA and *Endrew F.* The ASD provides professional development, instructional support, and monitoring to ensure students receive meaningful access to grade-level standards, appropriate accommodations and supports, and instruction delivered with sufficient intensity, rigor, and duration to support academic growth and improved outcomes.

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. * No support is needed at this time.