

## 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#

380 - Haywood County

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

Shawn Young

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.* \*

0.75

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.* \*

0.75

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.* \*

0.8

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

1.05

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

0.89

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

0.89

## 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.* \*

0.78

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.* \*

0.74

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.* \*

0.81

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

0.97

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

0.79

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

0.97

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

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

1

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

0.83

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

0.75

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

0.64

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

1.01

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

1.01

## 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**. \*

2

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

2

## 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 participation criteria through state-mandated guidelines and formal documentation, which typically include specific checklists or rubrics designed to define what constitutes a significant cognitive disability. These frameworks ensure that decisions are based on a student's individual functional and academic needs rather than their disability label or English language proficiency. To maintain consistency, school districts provide ongoing professional development and training sessions for team members, including parents and administrators, to clarify the distinctions between general and alternate achievement standards.

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

A series of data is utilized to make the determination for an alternate assessment such as: multiple data points that reflect a student's unique learning profile. The team utilizes standardized cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments, which measure intellectual functioning alongside the student's ability to perform essential daily living skills. The team also uses the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), which provides documented evidence of how the disability significantly impacts the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. Furthermore, the team reviews longitudinal progress monitoring and historical evaluation data to confirm that the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports that go beyond standard accommodations. By analyzing this combination of psychological reports, classroom performance, and functional data, the IEP team can provide a clear adverse impact statement to justify why the general assessment is not appropriate.

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

Adaptive behavior data is utilized into the decision-making process by providing an objective measure of a student's ability to function independently across various environments, including home, school, and community settings. Understanding daily living as well as how they process cognitively. This data ensures that the decision to participate in

## **Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:**

### **Criterion One**

alternate assessments is not based solely on academic performance or IQ, but on an entire view of the student's need for support to navigate everyday tasks.

## 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 parental input, most recent data of receiving Tier 1 instruction, how they are improving with instruction, documentation of how the instruction is presented to the student, are they attending school daily to receive consistent instruction, how much intensive instruction are they receiving. While the team ruling out excessive absences, frequent school changes, or a lack of prior exposure to the general curriculum, documenting that the student's significant deficits persist across multiple settings and despite consistent instructional opportunities, the team confirms that the need for alternate assessment is rooted in the student's cognitive profile rather than external environmental or educational gaps.

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

Parental input, teacher observation, data records of student progress, comprehensive evaluation, attendance, staff input, and IEP team meetings. Additionally, the team reviews classroom-based evidence such as progress monitoring on IEP goals, samples of student work, and teacher observations recorded in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)



## 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? \*

Parental input, teacher observation, data records of student progress, comprehensive evaluation, attendance, staff input, and IEP team meetings. Additionally, the team reviews classroom-based evidence such as progress monitoring on IEP goals, samples of student work, and teacher observations recorded in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

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? \*

For students whose Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) involves highly modified settings, the team evaluates the gap between the student's current performance and the demands of the general education curriculum to identify specific barriers to learning. Reviewing the students present levels of performance, how they are improving when receiving instruction, benchmark testing, the EA support needed in the classroom, whole group vs 1:1 instruction, the team review the supports at least annually to ensure that the supports are still needed or if changes need to be made. This includes assessing the need for extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports, such as assistive technology, modified assignments, or specialized behavioral interventions, that are consistent across all environments. By aligning these supports with the student's long-term goals and ensuring they are necessary for the student to make meaningful progress, the team justifies the intensity of the modifications required for the student to access their education effectively.

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 must evaluate how a student accesses the curriculum versus how they learn specific skills. The team ensures that mandated accommodations are followed with fidelity by documenting their consistent implementation across all settings. Furthermore, the team must identify the Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) necessary to address the student's disability-related deficits. By clearly defining these supports, such as 1:1, small group, whole group, and if the team needs to meet to discuss other supports such as modifications. The overall goal is to ensure that the student has the necessary supports to be successful.

## **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.

In grades 2-12 we have 1,817 students 1% of that is 18.2 and we have 21 ALT testers If we take out grade two, we are under the threshold. 1,660 students 1% of that is 16.6 and we have 16 ALT testers in grades 3-12.

*(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 eligibility criteria and the implications of participation during the annual IEP meeting. The team presents state-mandated participation guidelines, explaining the specific data points such as cognitive and adaptive behavior scores that suggest the student meets the criteria for alternate assessment. This discussion also includes a detailed explanation of the long-term consequences, specifically how choosing an alternate assessment may impact the student's ability to earn a regular high school diploma or influence their post-secondary opportunities. This ensures that parents can provide informed consent, understanding both the immediate instructional benefits and the future academic trajectory associated with the team's recommendation

34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? \*The parents receive the 10-day notice and the parent procedural safeguards to ensure they understand their rights concerning their child and their participation in the IEP team 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? \*The IEP team is required to meet annually or if the team needs to meet to discuss progress. During this meeting, the team is required to re-evaluate the student's eligibility using the most recent data, ensuring that the decision to participate in alternate assessments is not a static designation but a yearly determination based on current performance. This review includes a formal comparison of the student's progress against their individualized goals and a look at any changes in cognitive or adaptive functioning that might allow for a transition back to general assessments.

## 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 IEP team begins with a comprehensive analysis of the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), which serves as the foundation for setting high expectations. Rather than merely documenting deficits, our procedures require IEP teams to craft goals that bridge the gap between a student's current abilities and grade-level state standards, ensuring that specialized instruction remains both individualized and aspirational. In practice, the LEA integrates the mandates of ESSA/ESEA by treating students with disabilities as general education students first, granting them full access to High-Quality Instructional. This is achieved through the implementation of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI), which allow educators to scaffold complex content without lowering academic rigor. To maintain accountability and ensure students are making substantive academic progress.

## 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. \* It is requested that the Department evaluate the 1% participation threshold within the context of our specific district demographics. Rather than applying uniform fiscal or compliance penalties, we recommend an approach that accounts for the actual prevalence of students with significant cognitive disabilities who require these specialized assessments to accurately demonstrate their learning.