

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#

521 - Fayetteville

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

Tricia Jean

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.* *

0.65

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.* *

0.68

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.* *

1.06

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

2.02

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

1.07

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

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.* *

0.66

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.* *

0.66

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.* *

1.11

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

2.07

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

0.96

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

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

0.88

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

0.35

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.07

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.85

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.21

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

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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**. *

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

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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 IEP teams are informed of the criteria and expectations for determining student participation through district guidance, annual staff training, and required use of the Tennessee Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Worksheet. District procedures for determining student eligibility and annual review are explained to all special education staff annually to ensure understanding of state and federal expectations. Case managers are trained to complete this worksheet annually as part of the continued eligibility review process. The team uses this form as a structured guide for the collection of data based on the individual student to examine three criteria, with particular focus on Criterion 1, cognitive and adaptive data, and evidence of progress. Multiple data sources are considered, including recent cognitive/adaptive assessments, classroom performance, benchmark data and prior years alternate assessments scores. If the data no longer support the most significant level of disability and need for extensive support, the team documents a change to the general assessment. This yearly review prevents over-identification and allows an annual review of the most appropriate assessment for the student. The worksheet requires a Summary of Evidence section and the IEP team provides thorough justification of the team's decision. This process is reviewed annually or once a student receives advanced scores to ensure ongoing appropriateness. The school psychologist is a required team member in this review process and supports data entry and interpretation to guide the team discussion and ensure alignment with state and federal guidelines.

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

The IEP team utilizes a combination of data to determine students assessment needs. The ALT worksheet itself guides teams by structuring the process of documentation, requiring test names, dates, scores (cognitive and adaptive) and Summary of Evidence. This tool reinforces that all three criteria must be met and that the alternate assessment must be the most appropriate for the student. Annual training on the three criteria and the 1% cap to emphasize evidence based decisions and the need to consider the general assessment first with allowable, appropriate accommodations. Participation decisions are recorded in the IEP, with parent notification and team assurances. This multi-layered approach ensures teams understand the strict expectations and avoid over-

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

participation.

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

Adaptive behavior data is a critical and required component of Criterion 1 on the Tennessee Alternate Assessment Eligibility worksheet and is required and incorporated into the IEP team's decision making process. The worksheet requires a standardized adaptive behavior assessment with specific scores such as Total Battery, Composites scores and domain areas. This ensures a review of adaptive behavioral data is considered in combination with cognitive data to determine if the student demonstrates significant limitations. The team evaluates whether the student shows substantial limitations in adaptive skills, combined with cognitive data, indicative of the most significant level of disability. Low adaptive scores across multiple domains (e.g., communication, daily living, socialization) strengthen the case for extensive support. The combination prevents decisions based only on cognitive scores and ensures a comprehensive view of the student's ability. Adaptive behavioral data also informs Criterion 3 by linking to the need for extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports that are not temporary. Overall, the process uses the worksheet to create a defensible and documented record. IEP teams must ensure the alternate assessment is justified only when data clearly show the student data reflects the need for an alternative assessment

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 ensures the student's performance reflects a most significant cognitive disability by confirming the student has been provided the opportunity to participate in the general education classroom receiving instruction aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards to the maximum extent possible. When not in the general education classroom, students are still receiving an education from qualified special educators with the proper endorsement code teaching content linked to the state standards appropriate for each student. They explicitly rule out factors such as insufficient instructional time, limited access to general curriculum, excessive absences, or inadequate scaffolds by examining data during IEP meetings. This determination is documented in the worksheet's Summary of Evidence for Criterion 2, with training provided to teams on Criterion 2 Considerations to differentiate disability impact from lack of appropriate instruction.

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

The IEP team uses multiple sources of data to inform the decisions of Alternative assessment determination: Intellectual Achievement Scores Adaptive Behavior Scores Past Alternative Assessment Scores Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) IEP goals and objectives Progress monitoring data Student work samples and adapted instructional materials demonstrating engagement with grade-level content. Classroom observation data and teacher reports on instructional ability Historical IEP reviews and prior written notices documenting consistent standards-based access over time. Parent and Student Input The data are analyzed and summarized in the worksheet's Summary of Evidence section to confirm the student is learning content linked to grade appropriate state standards and that low performance stems from the disability, not insufficient instruction.

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? *

IEP Teams use multiple sources of data to support this determination: Intellectual Achievement Scores Adaptive Behavior Scores Past Alternative Assessment Scores Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) IEP goals and objectives Progress monitoring data Student work samples and adapted instructional materials demonstrating engagement with grade-level content. Classroom observation data and teacher reports on instructional ability Historical IEP reviews and prior written notices documenting consistent standards-based access over time. Documentation of accommodations, modifications, assistive technology, 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? *

IEP team determines the type of support by reviewing all data that was collected to determine the need for the student to participate in alternative assessment vs. the general education assessment. Additionally, the team examines data collected through classroom observation, teacher reports, along with documentation on the need for accommodations, modifications, use of assistive technology, and needed individualized support throughout the day in general education and special education settings.

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 needed supports from general instructional environment supports by determining whether the needed accommodations, modifications, services, and aids are extensive, repeated, and individualized going beyond what is typically provided in the general education and highly modified special education classrooms. The team documents the support needed to enable the student to access, participate in, and make gains in all environments. Evidence from PLAAFP, progress data, observations, and fidelity of implementation helps confirm that the supports are driven by the most significant cognitive disability and are required across multiple settings, not merely available as part of standard instruction or the LRE.

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.

There is no disproportionately identified base on system enrollment. Currently, 4 White students and 2 Black students participate in the alternate assessment. The total system enrollment for these two ethnic categories is 498 white students and 325 black students, with approximately total enrollment being 1058 students.

*(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 alternate assessment eligibility criteria and the implications of participation at the IEP meeting. The team explains that the alternative assessment is attended only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Additionally, it is explained that participation in the ALT assessment means the student will not take the general education statewide TCAP assessment. All data reviewed to make this decision is shared and discussed with the parent. A Prior Written Notice is provided that clearly outlines the IEP team's decision, the data used, and the implications for instruction, graduation pathway, and post secondary outcomes. This information is shared and reviewed during the annual IEP meeting to determine if alternative assessment is still the best assessment for the student.

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

are full and equal members of the IEP team and are actively included in all decision-making regarding all aspects of the students' IEP including the decision for alternate assessment participation as opposed to participation in the statewide TCAP. A draft copy of the IEP is sent home to parents prior to the meeting. This gives parents the opportunity to review the document and come prepared to share their observations, concerns, and input about their child's cognitive functioning, adaptive skills, instructional needs, and progress. The team discusses the three criteria from the Tennessee Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination Worksheet together with the parent. Parent input and concerns are documented in the IEP. All decisions, including whether the alternate assessment is the most appropriate, require parent participation and agreement as part of the IEP team consensus. If the parent disagrees, the team notes the disagreement, ensures the parent's concerns are heard and taken into consideration as the team determines the best course of action for the student.

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? *Participation in the alternate assessment is reviewed at least annually as a required part of the IEP meeting. The following procedures are in place to ensure decisions are thoroughly reviewed leading to the best decision for the student: Alternative Assessment Eligibility Determination Worksheet is completed annually prior to the IEP meeting and address the three eligibility criteria. The IEP team, including the parent, reviews the student's current cognitive ability and adaptive behavior data, progress on IEP goals and the intensity of and type of support needed. The possibility of moving to the general statewide TCAP assessment is explicitly discussed each year at the annual IEP meeting. This process ensures the alternate assessment participation is never automatic and that students can transition to the general education assessment at any time the IEP team determines it is i

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.*

All students receive rigorous, Tier 1, grade level instruction aligned with state standards in the general education setting to the maximum extent possible. Special education services and support are provided in addition to, not in place of, core instruction to ensure access to the general education curriculum. IEPs are developed to meet individual needs for each student and designed to make meaningful and appropriate progress. The IEP teams base PLAAFP on current and comprehensive data, develop measurable annual goals that address the student's needs while promoting involvement and progress in the general education curriculum, and identify specifically designated instruction, as well as accommodation, modifications, and support necessary for academic and meaningful progress. Monthly data meetings are held to discuss all students' progress with and without IEPs, ensuring ongoing progress monitoring and data based instructional decisions are made. IEPs are reviewed annually to revise goals that support student growth to ensure continued alignment with grade level standards and individual student needs. LRE to the greatest extent possible is a priority for students to ensure the student is with their nondisabled peers and receiving grade level academic instruction in the general education classroom, with all placement decisions based on the individual student's needs. All special education staff has been trained and receive ongoing professional development on High Quality IEPs that are student centered and appropriate for the individual students needs for academic success. All IEPs are reviewed by the Special Education Coordinator and or Special Education Supervisor for appropriateness of components of the IEP (goals, LRE, accommodations, testing, etc)

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. * Targeted general education and special education teacher, and administration training on the state's expectations for who qualifies for the alternate assessment, including the criterion and the importance of maintaining the 1% cap. Clear guidance on how alternate assessment participation and scores affect school, district, and teacher accountability measures. Training on best practices for students with significant cognitive disabilities who do not meet alternate assessment eligibility criteria but function several grade levels below their peers. Specifically, how to provide these students with meaningful exposure to grade-level standards-based instruction in the general education setting, along with appropriate accommodations and modified grading practices that accurately reflect their progress. Training to explain how the decision for alternate assessment participation can be an individualized team decision, and the school district still be held accountable for a 1% cap.