

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#

580 - Marion County

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

Bigelow, Becky

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.* *

1.24

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.* *

0.96

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.* *

1.22

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

1.04

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

1.13

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

1.25

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.* *

1.23

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.* *

0.95

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.* *

1.22

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

1.05

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

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

1.25

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.06

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.06

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.22

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

0.99

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.13

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

1.22

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**.

3

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? *

Principals and assistant principals receive annual training on alternate assessment participation requirements. Special education staff receives annual training on alternate assessment participation requirements. School psychologists attend IEP meetings where alternate assessments are a consideration to explain requirements to the IEP team. Diploma options are discussed when the alternate assessment is considered.

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

Data used to determine alternate assessment eligibility include standardized measures of cognition (verbal and/or nonverbal) and adaptive behavior through the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales using both the parent and teacher forms. Adaptive behavior is typically updated every three years.

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

The school psychologist analyzes adaptive behavior domains and presents data to the IEP team. The IEP team uses the adaptive behavior information as part of the decision-making process for the alternative assessment. Adaptive behavior is typically updated every three years.

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 is not due to instructional disadvantage by starting with a student's least restrictive environment in the regular classroom with supports in place. The IEP team only considers pulling students for additional sped services when accommodations are not sufficiently meeting student needs. Special education teachers are trained on grade level standards and attend PLCs with regular education counterparts to ensure they know grade level expectations. Teachers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities use modified grade level standards to ensure students are exposed to grade level content.

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

IEP Present Levels and Goals, state standards, observations, formative assessments

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 Present Levels and Goals, state standards, past performance on state assessments, formative assessments, observations by teachers and parent, and most recent cognitive and adaptive behavior results

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 review all current data available such as present levels of academic and adaptive performance, IEP goals, most current cognitive and adaptive behavior results, and observations of the student. The team uses the data along with input from regular educator, special educator, LEA, and parent to determine the level of accommodations needed for the student. Based on the level of accommodations, the team determines if special education services are best implemented in the general education classroom, resource/pull-out class, self-contained class, or a combination.

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? *

Upon considering student data, the team first considers if necessary supports can be provided within the general education environment and, if not, more restrict environments are considered.

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.

Marion County's 2024-2025 alternate assessment participation rate is slightly lower than the state participation rate in ELA, Math, and Science. Our participation rate by disability is 5.8% lower for Autism than the state rate of 35.88%. Our participation rate in the area of Intellectual Disability is 13% higher than the state percentage of 47.17%, suggesting this is an area for the district to review. We are comparable with the state participation for students identified with Multiple Disabilities with our district rate of 10%. We have no English Learners participating in the alt assessment which is lower than the state. Marion County is 6% higher than the state for economically disadvantaged students participating in the alt. assessment; however, our district has a majority of ED students. By gender, Marion County is comparable to the state. By race, Marion County is 11% lower with Black or African American participation, 9% lower for Hispanic participation; however, our White population is 21% higher than the state for alt. assessment participation. Based on the above data, Marion County will look at alt. assessment participation in the disability category of Intellectual Disabilities and the White race to determine if any students in these categories are more appropriate for regular TCAP testing. We will look at these two areas as Marion County is higher than the state average in these two areas for student participation in the alt. assessment. Our district will continue to participate in professional development to make better informed decisions on appropriate students for participation in the alt. assessment. School psychologists will continue to participate in IEP meetings when alt. assessment is considered and the Director of Exceptional Education will continue to review participants.

*(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? *

Special education teachers receive annual training on alt. assessment participation guidelines. Participation in the alt. assessment is thoroughly discussed with parents of student who may qualify by reviewing each of the three criteria. The conversation begins with discussion of Criteria 3 before moving to Criteria 1 and 2. If alt. assessment is discussed, discussion of diploma options is also included to inform parent their student will not receive a regular diploma if taking the alt. assessment. Rather, their student will receive either a special education diploma, AAD diploma, or an occupational diploma. Requirements for each diploma are explained along with the requirements for a regular diploma. The parent is also informed that a student can be removed from the alt. assessment in subsequent years as data is reviewed annually to determine eligibility for the alt. assessment.

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

Parents play a key role in the IEP team decision making process. Alt. assessment decisions are a consensual decision. Decisions to place a student on the alt. assessment is not made without the parent attending the IEP meeting either in person, by telephone, or virtually. However, if a parent does not agree with alt. assessment participation, the student will not be placed on the alt. assessment. IEP team decisions regarding the alt. assessment are provided in the Prior Written Notice following the meeting where the parent has 10 days to agree/disagree with the decision in the PWN.

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 alt. assessment is discussed with parents at annual IEP meetings. The IEP team, including the parent, works through the three criteria for the alt. assessment, discuss diploma options if the student remains on the alt. assessment through high school, and the parent is informed a student may return the regular TCAP assessments upon team consensus at annual IEP 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. *All students are considered general education students first. Child find procedures allow for identification of students with disabilities which then qualify those students for special education services. IEP teams meet annually, at a minimum, to determine a student's LRE and the delivery of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The district offers a continuum of services with the general education classroom being considered every student's LRE until an IEP team determines otherwise. The IEP team includes the parent in all placement decisions. When a student is determined by the IEP team progress in the general education classroom with supports/accommodations is not being made, the IEP team then considers removing the student from the general classroom in order to receive more appropriate accommodations that may range from pull-out services for a period of time during the school day to as much as a self-contained classroom for students with needs that cannot be met with supports and accommodations in the general education classroom. Overall progress is reviewed at least annually but can be reviewed at anytime to discuss a less restrictive setting for a student.

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. * Marion County does not require additional TDOE suport at this time.