

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#

590 - Marshall County

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

Collins, Meredith

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.* *

0.78

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.* *

0.88

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.* *

1.19

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

1.16

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.* *

0.68

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.* *

0.79

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.* *

0.88

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.* *

1.18

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

1.17

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

0.91

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

0.61

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

0.78

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

0.92

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.05

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.13

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

0.94

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

0.87

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**. *

7

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 district has implemented procedures, reinforced criteria, and strategies to ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are considered for alternate assessments, a structured and thorough process is implemented by IEP teams. With the implementation, several key components to improve the district process are reflective: IEP teams are trained on specific guidelines established by state education departments or federal regulations regarding alternate assessments. An Alternate Assessment checklist has been created for district utilization. These guidelines clearly define "significant cognitive disability," ensuring a shared understanding among team members. The District Special Populations team visits and discusses criteria at the regular monthly meetings. The district school psychologist is informed of upcoming IEP, Reevaluation, and Eligibility meetings and reviews the data included in the IEP draft.

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

The IEP team along with the district school psychologist look at the entire picture of the student. Both formative and summative data are utilized in the decision making process. The determination process relies on multiple sources of data, which includes information from standardized assessments which include cognitive assessments that provide quantifiable measures of a student's intellectual functioning, teacher input, parent input, academic performance data from Aimsweb, Sonday (Let's Learn Play and I), iReady, and Edmark, historical academic records are reviewed to assess the student's progress and responsiveness to general education curriculum, and functional assessment data which includes evaluations that measure the student's ability to perform daily living tasks and their level of independence. For several years our district has participated in the 2nd Grade TCAP assessment, this assessment was used as a baseline to provide evidence and guidance in the evaluation of criteria for the alternate assessment. The grade level benchmarks are utilized as well in the process.

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

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

process? *

Adaptive behavior assessments play a crucial role in this decision-making process. Such assessments evaluate a student's social skills, communication abilities, self-care skills, and other everyday functioning capabilities compared to peers. This data is instrumental in establishing whether a student exhibits significant limitations in adaptive behavior that align with cognitive disabilities.

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 district has enforced a strong initiative toward a strong inclusive setting for all special education students no matter the cognitive levels to receive access to grade-level, standards-aligned instruction. Also, our district has pushed out and implementing Acceleration 4 All platform. Special education teachers are involved in the grade level PLCs in planning, exposure to grade level standards and expectations, effective classroom strategies and scaffolding techniques.

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

The IEP team collects various forms of evidence to demonstrate that the student is engaged in standards-based instruction from parent input, teacher input, classroom observations, standardized assessments and formative assessments. Through the newly implemented involvement in grade level PLC's this illustrates how the curriculum used in the classroom aligns with state content standards. In this process both special education and general education teachers utilize the IPG platform in order to follow through with lesson preparation to indicate how specific learning objectives meet grade-level standards and expectations. Regular formative and summative assessments provide insights into student performance relative to state standards. The IEP team ensures that the level of rigor and intensity of instruction is comparable to that experienced by same age peers without disabilities. This can be assessed through: Classroom observations and district walk throughs that gauge the instructional methods being employed and whether they are appropriately challenging. The implementation of differentiated instruction strategies tailors to meet individual needs while maintaining high expectations is crucial. Inclusion is a high priority in our district to ensure exposure, it is necessary to monitor the duration of instructional time allocated for each subject area. It is essential for the IEP team to maintain ongoing communication with general education teachers to foster an inclusive environment where students with significant cognitive disabilities can thrive alongside their peers. Collaboration between special education staff and general educators ensures that all students benefit from a rich, standards-aligned curriculum. Moreover, professional development opportunities for educators focused on teaching strategies for diverse learners can further enhance the quality of instruction provided to students with cognitive disabilities. In summary, ensuring access to grade-level, standards-aligned instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities requires diligent evidence collection, robust instructional practices, continuous monitoring of student progress, and informed decision-making by the IEP team. By adhering to these principles, educational institutions can create equitable learning environments conducive to all students' success.

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 first step in this process involves gathering comprehensive data on the student's current performance levels across various domains which includes: Academic Assessments of Standardized tests and curriculum-based assessments that measure academic skills, Behavioral Assessments such as Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) to understand behavioral challenges and triggers, Social-Emotional Evaluations that assess social skills, emotional regulation, and peer interactions, and Observational Data of direct observations in different settings to evaluate engagement, communication, and adaptability. Team collaboration ensures diverse perspectives on the student needs. Instructionally Appropriate High-Quality Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development founded on the data analysis from standardized assessments and formative assessments. This document serves as a roadmap for the necessary supports. The team must critically assess which supports are essential for the student's success versus those that are generally available in the environment. This distinction often involves: - analyzing the effectiveness of existing supports in meeting individual goals, considering how environmental factors can be adjusted to better serve the student's needs without replacing individualized interventions. It is vital for teams to engage in ongoing assessment and modification of supports as needed. Regular progress monitoring allows for timely adjustments to interventions based on student performance.

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? *

The extent of direct individualized supports and services required for a student with significant needs, particularly in the context of a highly modified special education setting, a systematic and data-driven process is essential. Several key steps, integrating various data sources to ensure that the supports provided are both appropriate and effective are involved.

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 identification of how educational teams assess the needs of students who require extensive supports, especially those whose Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is a modified special education setting. The LRE principle mandates that students with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. However, for some students, particularly those with more profound challenges, a highly modified environment may be necessary for part or all of their educational day.

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 Marshall County LEA serves a student population that is approximately 73.5% White, 5.56% Black, 13.57% Hispanic, and 7.37 % Other. Students with Disabilities in Marshall County reflect the following data: 82.9% White, 8.57 % Black, 8.57% Hispanic. The discussion of disproportionality can indicate underlying issues such as not appropriate assessments being utilized for our county and district demographics. The assessment was not for minority or low-income students that had previously been used in our district. Our district has a new team of school psychologist who have implemented and utilized current and demographic assessments in the determination of meeting the state criteria for a Special Education Eligibility. The reduction efforts for the elimination of disproportionality through the following practices: 1. Data Review and Monitoring: Regularly analyze disaggregated data on assessment participation to identify trends and areas needing attention. This includes tracking referrals for alternate assessments by race and ethnicity. 2. Training for Educators: Implement professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching practices and implicit bias training for educators and staff involved in assessment decisions. 3. Community Engagement: Foster partnerships with community organizations to engage families from diverse backgrounds. Providing information about assessment processes can help demystify procedures and ensure that all families understand their rights and options. Chapel Hill Elementary School implemented the first community engagement on December 5, 2024 and the parents involved wish to continue to meet periodically throughout the rest of the school year. 4. Individualized Support Plans: Develop tailored support plans for students at risk of being misidentified for alternate assessments. Ensure that intervention strategies are evidence-based and culturally relevant. Our district has focused on this area during the 2024-2025 school year. 5. Reinforce Procedures Implemented: Examine existing procedures related to special education services and alternate assessment eligibility to ensure the promotion of equity and do not inadvertently disadvantage certain groups. 6. Feedback Mechanisms: Establish channels for feedback from parents, teachers, and community stakeholders regarding the assessment process and its perceived fairness. It is crucial to recognize that addressing disproportionality requires ongoing commitment and collaboration among all stakeholders involved in education. The implementation of these strategies should be accompanied by an annual review process to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments based on new data insights.

*(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? *

Many of our district schools hold dedicated parent nights aimed at educating parents about the Tennessee graduation paths at the early grade levels which focus on the criteria for eligibility, the nature of modified content, and potential impacts on graduation pathways. Child find information is posted on the Marshall County School System Webpage. Also the Special Education team delivered and mailed Child Find brochures to community stakeholders and businesses.

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

Parents are very instrumental in the decision-making process of the IEP team. A variety of communication modes and numerous invites, attempts to reach parents, and reminders are sent prior, during, and after the IEP team meeting. It is important to recognize that parental involvement is crucial not only for compliance with educational policies but also for fostering student success. Research indicates that when parents are actively engaged in their child's education—particularly in special education settings—students tend to perform better academically and socially. Moreover, schools should strive to create an environment where parents feel empowered to advocate for their child's needs while also being informed about their rights regarding assessment choices. In conclusion, a robust framework for informing parents about alternate assessments involves a combination of proactive communication strategies, collaborative decision-making practices within IEP teams, and ongoing support mechanisms that empower parents throughout their child's educational journey.

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? *Each year, during the annual IEP review meeting, the team assesses the student's progress and considers whether continuing with alternate assessments remains appropriate. This involves a thorough review of assessment data, classroom performance, and parental input and teacher input as well as previous scores on standardized 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 LEA follows policies and procedures outlined by the district to ensure students are provided instruction that meets the requirements set forth. The district has also implemented the practice of Acceleration for All. ALL means ALL. The district leadership team has brought back information from the A4A trainings and presented to the Building Level Administrators.

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. * The Marshall County School System has implemented and put into place procedures, criteria, and guidance on the student's Least Restrictive Environment, proper state testing pathways based off of criteria, and working to achieve that all students are in the general education setting 80% of the day except for our most significant cognitive students who lack those adaptive behavior skills. However, the district has worked extremely hard to make sure that all students with disabilities are attending specials, lunch, recess, Physical Education, and any other opportunities in the school setting.