

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#

660 - Obion County

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

Robertson, Dawn

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.* *

1.67

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.* *

1.36

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.* *

1.97

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

2.11

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

1.57

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

1.83

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.* *

1.7

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.* *

1.33

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.* *

1.94

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

2.12

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

1.41

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

1.83

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.42

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

0.99

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.91

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

2.04

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.88

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

1.9

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**. *

8

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

7

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 protocol for determining participation in the alternate assessment is to review data annually. During preparation of the draft IEP for the annual review, the school psychologist completes the alternate assessment worksheet based on the most current cognitive and adaptive assessment data for the team's consideration. At the annual IEP meeting, the team reviews these scores, along with communication concerns, exclusionary factors, current modifications and supports, and yearly goal data to determine whether the student should participate in the alternate assessment. The team uses the 3 criteria from the state as guidance at the meeting to help guide with the determination.

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

The team uses cognitive, adaptive, communication, exclusionary factors, goals, and modification and support data to determine eligibility for alternate assessment. The team annually evaluates whether the student has a significant cognitive disability and whether the student's adaptive functioning is consistently below that of same-aged peers. Consideration is also given to the presence of both academic and adaptive behavior deficits. Additionally, the team reviews whether the student's instructional content is aligned with Tennessee academic standards and whether the student requires direct instruction and significant supports to make progress toward grade-and age-appropriate curriculum. The team examines the student's goals and objectives and evaluates the student's ability to make reasonable progress toward those goals. Communication skills are also considered a part of this review.

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

The team reviews conceptual, practical, and social domains of the adaptive behavior scores to determine whether or not they have been consistently lower compared to same-age peers.

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 accurate identification by confirming: The student had full access to grade-level instruction. Instruction was aligned, individualized, and appropriately supported. The student shows limited understanding, application, and generalization. Progress data shows persistent, significant difficulties despite interventions.

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

The team uses the current IEP areas to help make an informed decision: current levels of performance, impact of mastery, goals, objectives, accommodations, modifications, progress monitoring, least restrictive environment, and services.

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? *

To support this determination, multiple sources of data are used that show the student needs intensive, individualized instruction and substantial supports to make progress in the general curriculum. This can include but is not limited to observations, progress monitoring data, intervention, test scores, current IEP goal data, classroom performance, and work samples. The goal is to demonstrate both the level of need and the limited effectiveness of less intensive interventions.

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 IEP team makes appropriate support and LRE decisions based on current data, documented attempts in general education, and choose placement by subject. Supports are individualized, based on student strengths, and tailored to specific settings and content. The IEP team also considers if the student shows ongoing progress, with clear evidence that supports are effective and actively used.

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 between supports required due to the student's disability and those that are typically available within the general instructional environment through a structured comparison of what all students receive versus what the individual student uniquely needs to access and make progress in the curriculum. The IEP team determines if support is necessary for the student to receive FAPE. If it is targeted, frequent, intensive, specialized, or individualized, then it is required due to the student's disability. If it is not individualized, available at the teacher's discretion, and not legally required for a student, then it is general classroom support.

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.

For the 2024-2025 APR data, there were no findings for disproportionate representation for Indicator 9 or Indicator 10.

*(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 by a combination of structured processes with clear communication practices including Procedural Safeguards outlining their rights and ability to disagree or request mediation or due process, and an explanation and eligibility determination through the IEP process with written documentation explaining the process and how it differs from general assessments where instructional expectations are provided in plain language or translated into the family's home language. Explanation by professionals at the IEP team meetings are used to ensure parents fully understand both the eligibility requirements and the implications of alternate assessment participation. Consequences of alternate assessment participation are discussed because alternate assessments can affect a student's educational pathway. Before decisions are finalized, the prior written notice is provided that explains the proposals, refusals, decisions made, and data used. Notification is provided that any IEP team member, including parents, can request a meeting at any time. This ensures that if a student demonstrates new skills or changing needs, the team can promptly revisit the assessment decision rather than waiting for the annual review.

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

Parents are invited to actively participate in each annual IEP meeting review, encouraged to ask questions, and provided updated information on both assessment options and implications. This reinforces that the decision is collaborative and continuously evaluated. Together, these processes ensure that alternate assessment participation remains a data-driven, annually reviewed decision rather than a permanent designation, and that students have meaningful opportunities to transition to general assessments whenever appropriate.

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? *A review is conducted at the annual IEP meeting, and assessment of participation is revisited using current data and criterion worksheets. Documentation is provided to support all decisions with clear rationale indicating students' present levels of performance. Prior written notices are provided for all decisions.

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.* Teachers use adapted materials, scaffolded instruction, and evidence-based practices to maintain meaningful access to the general curriculum. Present levels of performance describe the student's current skills and grade level expectations. Annual goals are developed to be ambitious yet attainable and linked to grade level content, and specially designed instruction is explicitly outlined to address student need. Data drives the instruction and progress monitoring. There is IEP team review annually and documentation to reflect student progress and continued need for alternate assessment. The LEA provides ongoing support and training for special and general educators.

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. * I feel it would be beneficial for my department to have training from the state to assist in meeting these requirements along with building level administrators.