

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#

700 - Polk County

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

Bramblett, Frances

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. **

1.13

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. **

1.52

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. **

1.05

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

1.35

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

1.32

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

1.14

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.* *

1.14

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.* *

1.51

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.* *

1.05

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

1.35

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

1.32

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

1.02

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.3

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.23

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.61

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.06

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.06

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

1.11

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? *

Polk County requires that IEP teams consider cognitive and adaptive behavior scores from the student's most recent evaluation prior to determining eligibility for alternate assessment participation. The IEP team must consult with the school psychologist for input regarding validity of the scores and any factors that may have affected student performance. Students with the most significant cognitive and adaptive delays are considered for alternate assessment participation. Present data must show the student has a significant cognitive disability, requires extensive, individualized instruction and is unable to access general assessments even with accommodations. Justifications must focus on evidence such as IEP goals, progress monitoring and work samples, rather than disability category or placement.

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

Cognitive and adaptive behavior scores, classroom observations, academic achievement data, work samples

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

Adaptive behavior data helps establish the real world functional impact of a student's disability. When combined with cognitive and academic data, it supports a defensible, appropriate decision about whether alternate assessment is truly necessary.

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 team looks closely at whether the student has had consistent access to grade-level standards with appropriate supports, evidence based instruction delivered with fidelity, instruction from qualified personnel and sufficient time and opportunity to learn.

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

The team relies on a comprehensive body of evidence from multiple sources. Types of data that are used include cognitive functioning data, adaptive behavior data, academic achievement data, instructional and intervention data, current and past IEP goals and progress, present levels of performance, accommodations and modifications used, classroom performance and observations, communication and functional skills data, medical information (if applicable) and participation and access data of how the student engages with grade level content.

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 team relies on a comprehensive body of evidence from multiple sources. Types of data that are used include cognitive functioning data, adaptive behavior data, academic achievement data, instructional and intervention data, current and past IEP goals and progress, present levels of performance, accommodations and modifications used, classroom performance and observations, communication and functional skills data, medical information (if applicable) and participation and access data of how the student engages with grade level content. The team must ensure the decision is not based primarily on low academic performance alone, poor attendance or a limited opportunity to learn, English learner status, behavior issues or a disability category by itself.

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 decision is data driven, individualized and regularly reviewed.

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? *

If the support is essential for this student to make progress because of their disability, and goes beyond what is typically available to peers, it should be included in the student's IEP.

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.

From the Alternate Assessment Participation by Disability Category data, 47.06% of participating students in our LEA are identified under the category of Intellectual Disability, which aligns closely with the state participation rate. Participation rates across other subgroups, including ED status, EL status and gender, are also consistent with state trends. To reduce the overall percentage of students participating in the alternate assessment, the LEA will strengthen implementation practices by providing targeted training for case managers/teachers. Additionally, the LEA will require consistent use of the Determination of Eligibility for Alternate Assessment Participation document, as outlined in the state's Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines, to ensure that all decisions are data driven and aligned with established criteria.

*(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 through a clear verbal explanation during the IEP meeting, a review of data used in the consideration, written documentation and consent forms and on the Prior Written Notice. Implications are explained to the parent including that the student will be taught and assessed on the alternate academic achievement standards and that this may impact the student's path to a regular high school diploma and can also affect postsecondary opportunities.

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

Parents are required members of the IEP team and have the right to participate in all IEP meetings for their child, be involved in developing, reviewing and revising the IEP and helping to make decisions about goals, services, placement and assessment participation. Parents are given evaluation reports and data along with explanations of their child's performance, proposed supports/services and assessment options. After decisions are made, parents receive prior written notice explaining what was decided, why, what data was used and other options considered.

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? *Decisions about alternate assessment are discussed at annual IEP reviews. IEP teams complete the Determination of Eligibility for Alternate Assessment Participation checklist annually. Current data is reviewed to ensure the student still meets the criteria for alternate assessment participation.

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.* Our LEA ensures that students participating in the alternate assessment receive standards-based instruction and make appropriate academic progress by requiring individualized IEP team decisions based on current data, annual review of participation, parent involvement, and documentation that the student meets state alternate assessment criteria. Student progress is monitored through IEP goal data, classroom performance, work samples, benchmark data and ongoing review by teachers and case managers. The LEA reviews participation rates and provides staff training to ensure compliance with ESSA and that the IEP is reasonably calculated to enable appropriate progress in light of the child's circumstances.

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. * None at this time.