

## 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#

751 - Murfreesboro

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

Melissa Snyder

3. Identify your role within the LEA. Compliance Specialist

- 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.* \*

1.07

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.* \*

1.18

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.* \*

1.4

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

1.62

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

1.54

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

1.69

## 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.* \*

1.07

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.* \*

1.17

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.* \*

1.4

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

1.62

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

1.54

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

1.69

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

### 16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 \*

1.15

### 17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 \*

1.15

### 18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 \*

1.14

### 19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 \*

1.51

### 20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 \*

1.47

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

1.69

## 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**. \*

4

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

2

## 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? \*

In order to reduce the number of students who are being administered ALT, Murfreesboro City must begin with establishing a culture where decisions are data driven: Step 1-Training Staff and fostering a culture that secures justifications which are built around Tennessee's three participation criteria, annual IEP team decision making, required parent notification and district monitoring expectations tied to the 1% federal cap.

To meet these expectation the following must be top priority by our district: 1. Overarching district principles include: A student must meet all three TN criteria. 2. Decision is made annually by the IEP team and supported by current data from multiple sources. 3. Decision is not based on disability eligibility criteria, placement, poor attendance, language barriers, poverty or low expectation for regular education assessment performance. 4. Adaptive behavior is critical to Criterion 1 review-academic weakness does NOT justify meeting this requirement. Steps to meet expectations include: (Tools for training-state flowchart, state ALT worksheet and case study. • Training principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, SLPs and student case managers specifically on the three-point criteria, diploma outcomes and exclusionary factors. At staff training each criterion will be reviewed separately and show examples of evidence that supports or does not support each criterion. Also included in staff training will be how to ensure that parents receive a clear understanding of what alternate assessment means in regards to instruction, expectations, and diploma pathway. (prepare a parent dialogue document) • SPED Department will meet with administration in August 2026 to review criteria and implications. • SPED Department coaches will meet with sped teachers, school psychologists, SLPs, and Vision Teachers to review each criterion and implications during in-service day in August 2026. After fall training has been completed, next step includes 1) review of current student files to verify that cognitive data, adaptive behavior data, current PLEPs, work samples, progress monitoring, communication data, and attendance. This will be completed by a review team including case managers prior to the opening of the fall DLM/KITE assessment window. (September 2026). If any behavior or cognitive data is outdated or shows inconsistency, file will be flagged until evaluation data has been updated and supports ALT decision. Prior to IEP meeting which may (or possibly may not) support an alternate assessment decision, school case manager may invite sped coaches or other staff to attend the IEP meeting. Prior to IEP Meeting there will be an opportunity to review all available data used in making such decision.

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

### Criterion One

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

No one data source is used by teams to make ALT decision: Student must show significant cognitive impairment (typically 2 standards below the mean) MCS uses a triangulated data approach: Cognitive and adaptive assessments, academic achievement data, and IEP progress data. Strong decisions are based upon: 1) consistency across multiple data source 2) evidence over time 3) clear link to a significant cognitive disability

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

The IEP team reviews adaptive behavior assessments typically, Vineland , ABAS scales to see how the student functions across ALL settings: conceptual, social and practical.

## 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? \*

MCS IEP Teams uses the following data in making this distinction. • Present levels of Performance • Response to previous interventions • Level of prompting-Independent vs. verbal, visual, physical prompting. • Generalizing of skills across all settings • Adaptive functioning • Rate of Progress (compared to peers, even with supports in place. • Assistive technology (AAC, switches) • Student work samples across multiple settings • Adaptive functioning including communication, daily living and social skills data

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

Data from answer # 27 must clearly show that the student needs intensive, individualized instruction, cannot access grade level standards without substantial supports as well as having a significant cognitive disability.



## 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 IEP team uses multiple sources of data over time to determine that the student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports. These include: • IEP Present Levels of Performance and student progress monitoring data • Goal progress data showing rate of acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of skills • Formal and informal assessments (e.g., psychoeducational evaluations, adaptive behavior scales, curriculum-based measures) • Classroom performance data (work samples, task analyses, teacher observations) • Response to instruction/intervention data, including the need for repeated, explicit instruction • Assistive technology and communication data • Related service provider input (speech, OT, PT, etc.) On-going Teacher Data Collection consistently demonstrates that the student: • Requires systematic, explicit, repeated instruction to learn new skills • Needs ongoing adult support to engage in and complete tasks • Shows limited independence in accessing grade-/age-appropriate content without significant adaptations

#### 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 determines support through an individualized, data-driven decision-making process, regardless of placement. SPED teachers and IEP Teams are required to collect and review data which clearly demonstrates: • Identifies student strengths, needs, and learning characteristics • Analyzing how the student responds to varying levels of: o Instructional intensity o Prompting and cueing o Material adaptations • Using trial and error/data collection to determine what supports result in measurable progress

#### 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? \*

On-going teacher data collection supports a higher need greater than typical accommodations such as extended time, some small group support and differentiated instruction. To meet prong 3 of ALT criterion student supports are intensive, individualized on-going for the student to access, engage in, and demonstrate what he or she has learned.

## **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.

Based upon disproportionality analysis data, Murfreesboro City Schools participation rate mirrors very closely to that of the state participation rate for categories: economically disadvantaged vs. not economically disadvantaged and by gender. However, Murfreesboro City Schools participation rate for ELL students is almost double the state's participation rate. In moving forward to address any possible overidentification, Murfreesboro City Schools SPED will provide targeted professional development in collaboration with ELL Specialists: • Differences between language acquisition v. disability • Culturally and linguistically responsive evaluation practices

*(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? \*

As a part of annual ALT staff development training a checklist has been developed to guide the IEP team in its conversation with parents. • The following information is shared with parents annually regarding ALT criteria, data sources, standards and diploma pathway. • ☐ All 3 eligibility criteria • ☐ Student-specific data • ☐ Instructional implications • ☐ Cognitive & adaptive data • ☐ Academic performance • ☐ Progress monitoring • ☐ Work samples • ☐ Based on highly modified/alternate standards • ☐ Focused on essential elements of grade-level content • ☐ General vs. alternate instruction • ☐ Diploma pathway (e.g., alternate/occupational diploma) • ☐ Decision is based on data, not placement or label • Asked for parent input during IEP Meeting: • ☐ Student independence • ☐ Support needs at home • ☐ Generalization of skills • ☐ Decision is based on data, not placement or label • ☐ Decision will be reviewed annually • ☐ Student may transition at any time

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

\*Attending IEP meetings, sharing concerns and input and reviewing and providing data used which is used in making this determination. It is important that our parents are informed, involved, and included in making this decision. I

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? \*IEP Parent Consent, Prior Written Notice, Parent Input and Checklist

## 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.\*

Murfreesboro City Schools implements procedures to ensure that all students including those participating in TN ALT Assessment, receive standards-aligned instruction ground in the Tennessee Academic Instruction. Current curriculum utilized by the district include: • Edmark • Everyday Speech • ULS • STAR • Connecting Math • Language for Learning Instruction is individualized through the IEP Team process, with measurable annual goals, objectives and specially designed instruction to ensure that each student is able to make measurable progress. Murfreesboro City Schools implements on-going progress monitoring using multiple data sources, and instructional decisions are adapted based upon individual student performance. All students are provided access to the general education curriculum in their least restrictive environment with appropriate accommodations and supports as determined by the IEP Team. MCS uses evidence-based instructional practices and participates in on-going professional development related to alternate standards, IEP development and data-driven instruction. District level oversight includes self-monitoring practices, providing staff training as it relates to curriculum and best practices to ensure that the district remains in compliance. Families are actively engaged in the educational process through regular communication; specialized parent SPED 101 opportunities and participation in IEP meetings. .

## 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 noted at this time.