

## 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#

810 - Stewart County

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

Crain, Robyn

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. \**

1.28

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. \**

1.54

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

0.97

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

0.87

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

0.89

## 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.* \*

1.31

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.* \*

1.31

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.* \*

1.63

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

1.03

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

0.83

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

0.89

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

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

1.46

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

1.38

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

0.97

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

0.98

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

0.83

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

0.83

## 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**.

1

## 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? \*

Currently, training on Alternate assessment includes any state updates and guidance used in making decisions related to participation in alternate assessment. Additionally, staff directly responsible for the administration of Alternate Assessment are trained to monitor appropriate indicators for alternate participate. The current framework for training on Alternate assessments includes all state-level updates and guidance essential to determining participation in Alternate assessments. Additionally, personnel responsible for administering assessments undergo specialized training to monitor and evaluate appropriate indicators of Alternate participation, ensuring that students are placed in appropriate assessment pathways based on their individual needs. The policy used by the SCSS for identifying students who are appropriate for Alternate participation is aimed at reviewing data, determining needs, and making a team based decision for students. When a teacher or parent brings up the possible need for a student to participate in Alternate Assessment, a school based meeting is scheduled to review data and participation factors. This meeting is generally led by the Special Education supervisor or school psychologist. At this meeting, the exclusionary criteria listed on Edplan (Factors not to be considered) are listed and reviewed. For example, factors not to consider include academic performance and/or expected poor performance on TCAP. The purpose of this portion of the meeting is to ensure that these are not the basis of alternate participation. If it is discovered at this point that the primary reason for Alternate participation is one or more of the exclusionary criteria, relevant parties are notified of the decision and the student remains on TCAP.

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

Multiple sources of data are always considered whenever alternate assessment is being determined for a student. Cognitive and adaptive data are always included as this is a state level determinate for eligibility. Additionally, the need for modified and adapted curriculum is a major source of data. Behavior alone is not a consideration unless the student also demonstrated deficits in cognitive, adaptive, and curriculum that require support. Other sources of data considered include developmental history and any school based data that supports or refutes modified curriculum.

## Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

### Criterion One

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

Adaptive behavior data provides an important component of the decision to consider Alt-Assessment. Low cognitive scores can have multiple causes including lack of testing effort, exposure, etc. Adaptive behavior gives context to the true needs of a student since it reveals if deficits are specific or global. It also is used to show a need for modified content and life skills education to prepare for post secondary transitions.

## 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? \*

To begin with, an IEP team considering Alt Assessment will ensure there has been a comprehensive psychological evaluation that includes both cognitive and adaptive data. If an assessment has not been completed, one will begin either through an initial evaluation or reevaluation depending on which process is appropriate. Cognitive and adaptive data are the initial basis for determining the difference between instructional disadvantage and a true cognitive disability. Additionally, the evaluation will have observational and historical data which allows the IEP team to carefully consider the source of suspected deficits. For example, if a developmental history and observations are aligned with cognitive results, that is strong evidence that a true disability exists. However, if they do not align, other factors such as instructional disadvantage might be present, and the IEP team would opt to not consider Alt Assessment. For the purposes of alternate assessment in the SCSS, in order to participate, a student must require extensive special education support in the CDC classroom. The fit with a CDC environment, which provides the most intense level of support and life skill development is a major indicator for the appropriateness of Alternate assessment. This provides another level of monitoring for the students taking Alt. Standards used in the CDC classroom for Alternate assessment are linked directly to state content standards. The standards are modified as determined by the IEP in order to provide for the student's education, but the basis for all instruction are state content standards.

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

There are several sources of data that are considered including cognitive and adaptive scores. Additionally, observation and performance in a CDC classroom are considered for Alt.



## 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? \***

For the purposes of alternate assessment in the SCSS, in order to participate, a student must require extensive special education support in the CDC classroom. The fit with a CDC environment, which provides the most intense level of support and life skill development is a major indicator for the appropriateness of Alternate assessment. This provides another level of monitoring for the students taking Alt.

#### **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? \***

This determination is made by comprehensively reviewing all available data and considering input from as many individuals as possible who are familiar with the student. This includes parents, teachers, other staff, and any related service or outside providers. This data is then used to determine the needs and support that a student requires. Teams at SCSS always attempt to include students in general assessment and on a regular diploma path unless absolutely needed.

#### **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 relies on data from Psychoeducational evaluations and ongoing assessment / observation in order to determine what needs are disability related and what can be provided in the instructional environment. Previous evaluations provide significant information regarding the nature of a student's disability and possible impacts the disability. Additionally, each school have Student Assistance Teams that review both regular and special education data to determine needs, interventions, and adjustments to programs. These SAT teams bring together administration, counseling, gen Ed, SPED, and other professionals. This adds a layer of oversight and review.

## **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.

No disproportionality was identified.

*(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 at a meeting prior to consideration of alternate assessment. At this meeting, the possibility of Alternate assessment is discussed along with a specific discussion on the impact in high school and with graduation. The parent is informed that at the high school level, if the student is still on Alternate assessment, their graduation track is different than a regular education diploma. Depending on student age and grade, current alternate diplomas are discussed in depth. At this point, the parent's input is critical to determining the decision. If the parent agrees, any needed data is collected such as additional testing. If the parent refuses, adjustments are made to the current IEP to attempt to best meet the student's needs. This discussion includes eligibility criteria including cognitive, adaptive, and modified curriculum data.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? \*The primary means used to inform parents about participation and implications is a direct IEP meeting with parents at which time discussion covers these topics. A discussion of eligibility requirements occurs when the IEP document covers participation in Alternate assessment. At this time, data is reviewed from the file and from any additional assessments that were completed to inform the decision. After eligibility is discussed, the impact is addressed. For those students who are elementary or middle school aged, some time is spent outlining the impact of those grade levels, but the primary focus is on the effect if the student participates in Alt at the high school level. To ensure that parents are aware of the decision, the impact on graduation and diploma is also discussed toward the end of the IEP when the assurance statements are signed by parents and staff.
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? \*SCSS uses the Assessment participation tab of the student's IEP in order to have a designated point to discuss Alt participation. Included in this discussion is previous assessment results and performance in settings such as general education classrooms. This ensures an annual review occurs and a discussion of the suitability of the student for Alt Assessment is considered.

## 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 district maintains a structured, multi-layered approach to ensuring that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are reasonably calculated to enable students to make appropriate progress in light of their circumstances, consistent with the standard established in *Endrew F.* Central to this approach is ongoing professional development for certified and support staff. On an annual basis, staff participate in targeted training focused on IEP development, with an emphasis on writing measurable, ambitious goals aligned to student needs and present levels of performance. These trainings reinforce expectations for data-driven decision-making and ensure a shared understanding of legal and instructional standards across schools. In addition to training, the district engages in systematic monthly IEP reviews at the district level. During these reviews, teams examine IEP documents to evaluate the quality and rigor of goals, alignment with student data, and overall compliance with best practices. This process allows the district to identify trends, provide corrective feedback, and implement adjustments where necessary. The review structure promotes consistency across schools while also supporting continuous improvement in IEP development and implementation. To monitor student progress and inform instructional decisions, the district utilizes benchmarking data as a core component of its practices. Student performance is regularly assessed using standardized benchmark measures, and this data is used to evaluate progress toward IEP goals. When data indicate that a student is not making expected progress, teams reconvene to adjust goals, services, or instructional strategies. Conversely, when students exceed expectations, goals are revised to maintain an appropriate level of challenge. This ongoing cycle of data review and responsive adjustment ensures that IEPs remain dynamic and appropriately ambitious for each 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. \*

At this time, no particular support appears to be clearly needed. Since 2017, trends have shown a reduction in the number of students taking Alternate Assessment. The extent that the SCSS has exceeded the 1% is approximately 4 students, which is well within expectations in a given year for change. The SCSS will consider ways to continue to lower the trend of students designated for Alternate Assessment.