

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#

840 - Tipton County

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

Varissa Smith-Richardson

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.* *

1.53

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.* *

1.65

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.* *

1.6

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

1.74

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

1.79

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

1.67

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.* *

1.55

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.* *

1.67

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.* *

1.6

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

1.76

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

1.63

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

1.5

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.47

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.6

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.68

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.7

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.78

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

1.7

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**.

6

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 Tipton County, each year our SPED Consulting Teachers are trained on the criteria and expectation of participation concerning TCAP Alt. We also review DLM scores to determine which students were advanced and the steps the IEP Team needs to take in order to support the students in transferring from DLM to TCAP or EOC assessments. The school psychologist reviews each students IEP data for criterion 1 he/she encourages and support the team to collaborate to finish criterion 2 and 3.

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

In our district, we use most recent IQ score (WISC and KABC), the most recent Adaptive scores (ABAS, Vineland), psychological evaluations, achievement assessments (WJ4, KTEA, WIAT), communication or language assessments (CELF), teachers observations, benchmark assessments(Mastery View), and progress monitoring data (Aimsweb).

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

To ensure that students that need substantial support participate in the Alt Assessment, we review the adaptive skills that are rated by teachers and parents. Utilizing the data from across different setting is important in our decision making process. We stress to the SPED Consulting Teachers that we are comparing the students to their same aged peers. We only place students on Alt assessments that exhibit significantly low academic and adaptive scores.

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? *

At each IEP team meeting, all the student's data is reviewed in order to make an informed decision concerning assessment. The general education teacher, special education teacher, and related services providers attend the IEP meeting to ensure that they have input on determining the appropriate assessment. The Team reviews what will make the student successful and what support are needed in order for them to access Tier 1 instruction. The Team analyzes supports that are already accessible in the classroom and determines what additional supports that are needed.

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

The IEP Team utilizes student attendance data, Masterview (Common Assessments), Aimsweb (Progress monitoring), teacher observation data, IQ scores (WISC etc.), achievement scores (WJ4), formative assessments data (bell work, morning work, exit tickets, homework), and report card data. We also review BIP data and the number of office referrals because it may be that the student has a gap in instruction due to behavioral concerns.

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? *

Each SPED Consulting Teacher is given a guiding document developed by our school psychologist to assist in making decisions concerning the levels of support. The IEP Team reviews the data folder on each student that consists of: MAGS data (based on the goals), any progress monitoring (formal or informal), and work samples. Other considerations that the IEP Team reviews are: PLAAFPs, accommodations, modifications, and LRE.

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 first step of determining the type of supports is reviewing the psychological evaluations, including the adaptive measures. This gives the Team needed information in order to make an informed decisions concerning supports. The next step is reviewing an classroom data. Is the student able to work independently? Can student complete task independently? What is the frequency and duration of supports needed across settings? Can the individual need the support just in the Tier 1 setting or in the comprehensive setting to complete work task?

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 leans heavily on our informal and structured observational data in the psychological evaluations. We also consider classroom indicators of educational performance which may not be embedded in the psychological report. This would be any formative assessments and any accommodations that have been given to the student.

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.

After reviewing the data, it seems that our data is commensurate to our total student population.

*(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 a pivotal part of our IEP Team. Parent participation is important on all decisions making for a student with a disability. In Tipton County, all attempts are made before the IEP Team meets in order to ensure the parents are a part of the process. During the meeting, all data is discussed such as most recent IQ score, the most recent Adaptive scores, psychological evaluations, achievement assessments, communication or language assessments, teachers observations, benchmark assessments, and progress monitoring data to determine if the student meets the eligibility for the alternate assessment. During that same meeting, diploma options are discussed. We want the parents to understand what type of diploma their child is working towards. We also inform the parents that the diploma options are fluid and can be changed based on data collected during the school year. After we receive the data from the Alternate Assessment, the special education team reviews the data to determine who met or exceeded expectations. If we have a student that scored advanced on any subtest, we schedule an IEP Meeting with the parent to discuss next steps. At that IEP meeting we discuss all the students' data.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? * If the parent cannot attend the IEP meeting, we offer phone conference meetings, Zoom meetings, and home visits. If none of these options work for the parent and they just cannot attend, we make them aware of the decision via phone call as well as sending the IEP home. We make every effort to involve the parent and that they are informed. Alternate Assessment participation is discussed annually during the annual IEP Meeting.
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? * We meet each year for the annual IEP Meeting. In order to proceed with the development of the IEP, TN Pulse makes us enter all the data at that time. Also, the school psychologist has to review the data and sign off on the Alternate Assessment page in TN Pulse. Once our district receives the DLM Assessment/TCAP Alt. scores, if the student scores advanced on either the ELA, Math or Science portions of the test, an IEP Meeting is scheduled to change the student from the Alternate Assessment to the TCAP/EOC Assessment. The Team can also review eligibility for TCAP Alt during the Reevaluation Meeting.

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.*

All curriculum in our district is aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards, including the curriculum used for our significantly cognitive impaired students. We utilize tiered instruction in order to meet the diverse needs of our students and provide monthly walkthrough and professional development to ensure teachers are trained on implementing high quality instruction strategies and differentiation. Universal screenings are administered three times a year to monitor progress of the student's Reading and Math skills. Benchmark assessments are administered twice a year in the areas of Reading, Math, Social Studies, and Science to measure progress towards grade level standards. Report cards are sent home to the parents every 9 weeks and progress reports are sent home every 4 1/2 weeks to maintain transparency and collaboration and to determine if the students are meeting grade level expectations. IEP Progress Reports are sent home every nine weeks to track individualized goals. Once the district receives the DLM/TCAP Alt assessment data, it is reviewed to determine whether a student has mastered standards.

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. * It is very difficult to manage this 1% cap when we have so many student who have a great need for the DLM/TCAP Alt Assessment.