

## 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#

870 - Union County

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

Roberts, Shawn

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.* \*

0.95

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.* \*

0.97

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.* \*

1.34

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

1.48

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

1.31

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

1.48

## 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.* \*

0.94

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.* \*

0.98

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.* \*

1.29

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

1.4

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

1.24

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

1.41

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

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

0.99

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

0.93

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

1.3

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

1.36

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

1.28

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

1.5

## 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**.

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? \*

Professional development is provided for the types of state assessments available to students with disabilities. District and school personnel who work with students with significant cognitive disabilities are trained on the specific criteria for participation in alternate assessment. Additionally, one of the district Special Education Coordinators performs an annual review of each student participating in the Alternate assessment using the Alt Assessment file review rubric. The coordinator will then collaborate with the IEP team members to ensure that all criteria are considered when determining whether the student has a significant cognitive disability.

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

IEP teams, at a minimum, use results from a cognitive ability test indicating a significant cognitive disability, an evaluation of adaptive behavior skills, a review of student performance indicating performance relative to expected grade level, and exclusionary factors.

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

Specific adaptive behavior deficits identified are monitored for progress as outlined in their individual IEPs. Students whose performance in areas of adaptive behavior is determined to be inconsistent across domains or between raters are typically identified by assessment specialists at the time of eligibility. Any time there is concern regarding the validity or reliability of scores or observational data indicating that students are performing closer to their same-aged peers, teams are directed to consult with the certifying specialist or convene a re-evaluation meeting to request assessments.

## 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? \*

IEP teams are trained to approach programming and assessment decisions using the least dangerous assumption. In the absence of data, it should be expected that students can perform at the same level as their general education peers. For students participating in alternate assessment, Union County Schools ensures modified curriculum used maintains alignment with state standards through instructional targets that are aligned to the Tennessee English Language Arts(ELA) and Math Standards and DLM Essential Elements for ELA and Math. As well as alignment to Tennessee Academic Standards in Science and Social Studies, and TCAP-Alternate Science and Social Studies Blueprints.

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

Students' work and performance on classroom instructional activities, as well as their comprehensive educational profile, are reviewed to ensure underperformance is due to 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? \*

Pertinent data specific to the development of the IEP, such as parental input, formal evaluation data, classroom performance, and progress monitoring, in addition to historical performance data.

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? \*

When determining supports, the IEP team focuses on the student's unique needs rather than on the educational setting. The team reviews evaluation data, classroom performance, and progress monitoring to understand the student's strengths and the specific barriers preventing access to the general education curriculum.

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 determines what modifications, accommodations, related services, and personnel supports are needed to help the student make progress toward their goals, regardless of the instructional environment.



## **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.

Currently, there is no identified disproportionate representation in participation in alternate assessment.

*(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? \*

During the annual IEP meeting, parents are specifically informed that participation in the alternate assessment means the student is participating in a curriculum that does not lead to a traditional high school diploma. In most cases parents are provided with a draft of the proposed IEP in advance of the meeting indicating that the student will participate in an alternate assessment.

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

Parents participate in reviewing the student's data and learning needs to determine the appropriate assessment path at the annual IEP meeting or more often as 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? \*As part of the annual IEP review process, the team determines what modifications, accommodations, related services, and personnel supports are needed to help the student make progress toward their goals concurrently with the review of eligibility for participation in alternative assessment.

## 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 IEP team determines what modifications, accommodations, related services, and personnel supports are needed to help the student make progress toward their goals. Additionally, Union County Schools ensures that when modified curriculum is used, it maintains alignment with state standards through instructional targets that are aligned to the Tennessee English Language Arts(ELA) and Math Standards and DLM Essential Elements for ELA and Math. As well as alignment to Tennessee Academic Standards in Science and Social Studies, and TCAP-Alternate Science and Social Studies Blueprints.

## 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. \*
- As Union County Schools operates a statewide virtual school, it is requested that consideration be given to the diverse representation of students served.