

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#

880 - Van Buren County

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

Tonya Pettit

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. **

0.48

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. **

0.8

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. **

0.53

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

0.78

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

1.18

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

1.35

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.* *

0.48

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.* *

0.8

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.* *

0.54

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

0.78

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

1.06

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

1.06

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.18

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

0.55

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

0.53

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

0.79

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. *

1.06

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**. *

0

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

0

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? *

The IEP team carefully considers the student's data and implication of participation in alternative assessment. Special Education Director, School Psychologist meet with teachers, administrators, and parents to discuss results of comprehensive evaluation data that is collected and the IEP team determines if alternate assessment is appropriate for the student. The team also reviews criteria for alternate assessment eligibility.

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

The cognitive and adaptive data of all students who participate in the alternate assessment are reviewed by the IEP team led by the school psychologist to determine if alternate assessment is most appropriate. All students who participate in the alternate assessment meet criteria for participation due to significant cognitive/intellectual disabilities and significant adaptive skills deficits.

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

When determining what assessment the student with disability is going to take, the IEP team used adaptive scores from normed based assessments such as Vineland to determine adaptive levels of performance. Adaptive scores are reviewed annual as consideration for the alternate assessment participation.

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 IEP team completes a formal evaluation with a cognitive assessment and uses those scores to determine the student's cognitive functioning level. All students who participate in the alternate assessment receive individualized standards-based instruction that is specifically aligned to appropriate lessons from the DLM.

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

The IEP team uses data collected from teacher observations, student mastery of skills checklists, skills based notebooks, and work samples to determine present levels of performance. These are also used to assist in making an informed determination of the need for participation in alternate assessment.

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? *

Data collected from teacher observations, student mastery of skills checklists, skills based notebooks, and work samples are used to determine present levels of performance that aligns with TIER I instruction in the general education classroom. Cognitive and adaptive scores of each student who takes the alternate assessment are also reviewed yearly. These scores along with present level performance data are used to assist in making an informed determination of the need for participation in alternate assessment.

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? *

Each student requires specific supports that requires teachers and assistants to provide extensive direct individualized instruction based on the individual student's needs. These are needed to achieve gains that are alligned with grade and age appropriate 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 individual supports are needed based on the student's specific needs. The IEP team members have opportunities to contribute necessary information to assist during the decision making process discussing supports that are available as part of the instructional enviroment for students with comprensive education needs.

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.

Van Buren County Schools student population is evenly distributed and the alternate assessment participation reflects a similar distribution.

*(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 involved in the IEP team decision making process that determines alternate assessment participation and that decision is revisited at the student's annual IEP team meeting. Parents are informed of that alternate assessment participation does not meet the criteria for a general education high school diploma. The parent also acknowledges their agreement in their child's participation in the alternate assessment during the annual IEP team meeting.
34. How are parents included in the IEP team decision-making process? * All parents are invited to the child's IEP team meeting and have the opportunity to provide additional information to assist during the decision making process.
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? * Parents are involved in the IEP team decision making process that determines alternate assessment participation and that decision is revisited at the student's annual IEP team meeting. During the annual IEP team meeting, alternate assessment data from previous years are reviewed and used as a factor for determining the future years participation in alternate assessment needs.

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.*

Van Buren County Schools strives to provide a free appropriate public education to all students including students with disabilities. Van Buren County Schools is accountable for all students including students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are provided the same educational opportunities and access to grade level standards comparable to their non disabled peers. Students with disabilities need to be challenged with high academic content in the least restrictive environment. Appropriately ambitious goals are created and monitored for students with disabilities in order for those students to have actual academic results. IEPs are monitored at random monthly to check for compliance and quality of smart goals.

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. * Van Buren County Schools work diligently and reviews all data to determine if a student meets criteria requirement for participating in the alternate assessment. Student population changes yearly and there seems to be an upward trend to more comprehensive students entering into our district or even state-wide. Any training scheduled for alternate assessment instruction would be beneficial to all counties.