

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#

890 - Warren County

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

Willmore, Candice

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.* *

1.71

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.* *

1.39

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.* *

1.72

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

1.34

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

1.06

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

0.95

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.* *

1.72

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.* *

1.37

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.* *

1.69

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

1.27

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

0.93

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

0.9

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

1.78

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

1.62

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

1.72

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

1.22

20. Science Participation Rates 2024-25 *

1.19

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

0.95

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**.

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? *

Warren County continues to work hard to ensure identified students are appropriately participating in the alternative assessment. We have steadily decreased our percentages of student taking the alternative assessments over the last three years. All team members are informed and understand the criterion to be eligible to take the alternative assessment, along with serious discussions about the pathway this could lead to through high school (not a regular diploma).

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

All IEP teams review the assessment data (specifically focusing on current data that is available), student goals, progress monitoring of students who are identified as meeting the criteria for alternative assessment. The data the team primarily focuses on includes their cognitive abilities and their adaptive abilities. Students must have significant deficits in these areas to be discussed for eligibility of alternative assessments. By reviewing this data at annual meetings, teams can investigate if any of these students were inappropriately identified. If they were inappropriately identified, IEP teams meet to change their identification from alternative assessment to regular TCAP assessment. In addition, for students who have previously scored Advanced on the alternative assessments, IEP teams have in depth discussions to possibly transition these students to regular TCAP. Over the past years, we have moved several students from the alternative pathway to regular TCAP pathway.

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

As stated earlier, the data the team primarily focuses on to determine eligibility for alternative assessment includes cognitive abilities and adaptive abilities. Students must have significant deficits in these areas to be discussed for eligibility of alternative assessments. By reviewing this data at annual meetings, teams can investigate if any of these students were inappropriately identified. If they were inappropriately identified, IEP teams meet to change their identification from alternative assessment to regular TCAP assessment. In addition, for students who have previously

Process for Determining Alternate Assessment Eligibility:

Criterion One

scored Advanced on the alternative assessments, IEP teams have in depth discussions to possibly transition these students to regular TCAP.

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? *

For students who qualify for the alternative assessment, the IEP team ensures there is sufficient data for this decision, including the student learning content link to state content standards, the student's disability impacts their participation in instruction, which is aligned to state standards, instruction is designed to support the student participation, grade level standards are scaffolded and broken down into smaller steps to support student learning. The IEP team determines how the student will participate in instruction, including where and when it will take place, which is aligned to these state standards and develop measurable annual goals with short-term objectives to support increased opportunities for learning. Considerations for these determinations include accommodations used in the lesson and designed for students' participation and access to the standards, strategies to modify to instruction as needed, strategies used to engage students and support their learning, planning with others to ensure all students can make progress toward the grade level standards with accommodations and/or modifications as needed, reported progress toward mastery of their IEP goals, and evidence of student progress toward mastery of the standard-based instruction. All school psychologists and special educators are trained each year on the alternative assessment guidelines and reminded to review every student who participates in the alternative assessment to ensure they are appropriately assessed. IEP teams work with parents at an early age to discuss the benefits and concerns of a student being assessed on the alternative assessment, such as participating in this assessment does not lead to a regular diploma at high school graduation and could impact the student's postsecondary and career pathway. We want our students, parents, and staff to be well aware and well versed to understand the impact of making these decisions for our students.

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

Data used to make this informed determination includes data from their psychoeducational evaluation, which includes a measure of cognitive abilities, adaptive abilities in school and home, and review of academic abilities (though not part of the criterion to meet eligibility). In addition, the team reviews progress monitoring of goals and objectives, universal screener data (if applicable) and any other data that appears relevant for this decision.

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? *

IEP teams are taught and reminded that the alternative assessment is only appropriate for students who require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial support to make progress in the grade and age-appropriate curriculum. Data for this determination includes teacher reports of student performance on grade level standards in the general education classroom, progress monitoring of goals related to instruction, along with observations of the student working in the general education classroom.

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? *

Students determined to be eligible for the alternative assessment often require substantially modified materials and individualized methods of assessing information. The IEP teams assist in determining the alternative means the students need to maintain, generalize, and transfer skill sets across multiple settings. IEP teams use this data to determine their least restrictive environment for these students based on their progress monitoring data, evaluation data, teacher reports, present levels of academic, functional and social performances. Often, our students can actively participate in some classes, but then they struggle in other classes. It is the IEP teams' decision as to the LRE for each individual student.

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 discusses which supports are needed to access their general educational environment, and if at all possible, students are learning in these environments. We can provide numerous supports for students eligible for the alternative assessment in the regular programming which are placed on their IEP and modeled, discussed, and reviewed with the team on a regular basis.

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.

Warren County does not currently have a significant disproportionality for alternative assessment participation rates. Our distribution among disabilities is either below the state rate or slightly above in two areas (Intellectual Disability and Multiple Disabilities), although not significant. We only have four categories of disabilities in which students are eligible for alternative assessment: Autism, (30%), Intellectual Disability (56%), Multiple Disabilities (12%), and Other Health Impairment (2%). Regarding other disproportionality areas, Warren County is evenly distributed: Only 26% of students taking alternative assessments are economically disadvantaged. With English Learners, 100% of our students on alternative assessment are NOT English learners. With Gender, 30% of our students on alternative assessment are female with 70% males. With race/ethnicity, 68% of our students on alternative assessment are White, 24% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, and 4% are Black/African American.

*(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? *

At each and every meeting in which possible alternative assessment is an option, we discuss with the team (and parents) that a student is less likely to earn a traditional regular diploma. We discuss this even for students who are in elementary school who are eligible for this type of assessment. We ensure this discussion happens at each meeting so everyone is aware the student is working on highly modified content with possible lower expectations.

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

Parents are a vital part of the IEP team decision team. They are invited to attend and be fully engaged throughout the process. They have provided the team data from adaptive skills reports, along with providing input on their student's strengths and needs. Throughout all of these IEP meetings discussing alternative assessments, there are multiple points where parents are asked if anything needs clarified, along with allowing for numerous times for their participation and input. While the LEA makes the recommendation of the IEP decision, parents have the opportunity to sign and either agree or disagree with the IEP team's decision

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? *Fortunately, data from a student's evaluation has to be input annually when discussing alternative assessment. We require our school psychologist to be at these annual meetings for students who are already on the alternative assessment, those who may become eligible for alternative assessment, and those who may be taken off alternative assessment to take TCAP.

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.*

For our students with disabilities, we work hard to ensure our Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are reasonably calculated to enable each student to make appropriate progress in light of their circumstances (Endrew F). We use multiple data sources to establish measurable annual goals, monitor progress regularly, and adjust services and supports as needed. We also use evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions, provide professional development to our teachers and staff, have quarterly review of data at the school level, and continue to progress monitor students' goals and objectives each month. Our students on Alternative Assessment participate in our regular education programs, especially for classes in which they take the alternative assessment with modified content and appropriate accommodations. This has been a huge win for both our students, teachers, and general education students to understand that everyone learns differently and everyone has strengths.

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. *
- We are very intentional when making the decision to place students on the alternative assessment, and we involve all team members input when making these decisions. We ONLY place students who meet the criteria for alternative assessment on this path, and all of those students have significant deficits in cognitive and adaptive levels of functioning which prevents them from being fully involved with grade level state content standards while using program modifications. While we have lowered these percentages over the last three years, and we will continue to work on lowering our percentages, we would always request any new ideas from the department to assist us in lowering them further. Thank you for all your support!!!