

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#

987 - Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

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

Bridges, Katie

3. Identify your role within the LEA. Special Education Coordinator

- 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

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.* *

0.53

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.* *

0.98

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

1.15

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

1.07

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

1.1

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

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.* *

0.54

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.* *

0.94

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

1.05

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

1.04

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

1.1

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

16. Science Participation Rates 2020-21 *

0

17. Science Participation Rates 2021-22 *

0.78

18. Science Participation Rates 2022-23 *

0.98

19. Science Participation Rates 2023-24 *

0.94

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. *

1.1

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**. *

14

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

8

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 Tennessee Public Charter School Commission is a unique district in that it is comprised entirely of charter schools, and each school implements their own process for holding IEP meetings that include discussions of whether a student might qualify for alternate assessment. Generally, when a student is to be considered for the alternate assessment, the school psychologist is invited to participate as a member of the IEP team and review data related to the student's most recent psychological and adaptive assessments. This would include discussing the severity of the student's cognitive ability. The team should provide input on how communication, behavior, and/or fine motor needs may impact the student's true ability. The team should also rule out exclusionary factors such as limited English proficiency, socio-economic status, and lack of instruction.

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

The IEP team should review psychological assessments including cognitive and adaptive behavior data, classroom performance, schoolwide assessment data, progress towards IEP goals, observation data, input from the family, related service provider data, and any other relevant data such as school behavior reports or FBA/BIP data.

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

The IEP team should review adaptive behavior data collected in conceptual, practical, and social domains. If adaptive data is inconsistent, the team can use systemic observation data to help determine the relevance of the 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? *

All Commission authorized charter schools are required to instruct students according to the Tennessee state standards. This requirement is reviewed annually through school level results-based monitoring.

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

Each school's IEP team reviews data from universal screeners and general education assessments if applicable, and considers the impact that accommodations, modifications, and other supports have on the student's academic performance and their ability to actively participate. Schools also review the student's IEP goals and progress reports.

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 consider whether the individualized instruction and support needed by the student to achieve measurable gains in the grade and age appropriate curriculum is truly extensive, even within the student's setting, and whether this support is needed by the student across multiple settings. Sources of data may include student academic performance, student service delivery plans, communication/assistive technology needs, and the accommodations and modifications needed to participate in instruction. Schools may also review IEP goal progress to determine whether, with the extensive support, students are meeting their goals.

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? *

Schools include data in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAPFs) to support the need for the type and level of supports that are included in the student's accommodations and modifications section of the IEP. This includes considering the accommodations and modifications needed in each subject/setting. Schools collect and review progress monitoring data to determine if current supports are working and whether additional support is 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 team would consider whether universal supports can be provided, or whether the supports are required in order to access the curriculum.

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.

According to 24-25 state report card data, 40% of Commission students are considered economically disadvantaged. Twenty-three percent of students are English Learners, and 83% of students identify as Black, Hispanic, or Native American. The distribution of students taking the alternate assessment with this LEA includes 42% of students who are considered economically disadvantaged, 11% identifying as English Learners, and 95% identifying as Black, Hispanic, or Native American. Commission staff will share the analysis that English Learners may be under identified with each school. The Commission is an unusual school district in that it is continually adding schools. For SY26-27 our portfolio of schools is projected to increase by 12%, and almost 50% of our schools will add grade levels. This makes it difficult to plan for reducing/eliminating disproportionality, as the Commission does not know the exact demographics or needs of students until the school year begins. Additionally, as charter schools are schools of choice with the ability to employ unique models, there are some schools within the district that have enrolled above average percentages of students with disabilities due to their strong community reputation and their flexible resource allocation. In order to work toward reducing/eliminating disproportionality, the Commission will provide training to all schools on alternate assessment participation criteria, the potential implications of scoring advanced on the DLM assessment, and the demographic data of students taking the 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? *

Commission staff have shared resources, such as handouts on the various diploma options developed by TN-TAN, that schools may use to hold informed discussions with families about the implications of choosing to participate in alternate assessment. School psychologists are required to attend meetings of students that have previously participated in alternate assessment to serve as a resource for reviewing the criteria listed in the alternate assessment worksheet and interpreting data.

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

All authorized charter schools include parents as a member of the IEP team.

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? *Assessment discussions are a required component of IEP meetings. The school psychologist leads the discussion and supports the team in reviewing current data to determine if a student still qualifies.

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 authorized charter schools are required to instruct students according to the Tennessee state standards. This requirement is reviewed annually through school level results-based monitoring. The Commission's School Performance Framework analyzes student subgroup performance, including students with disabilities. Each school's performance in this subgroup is published in our annual report. Schools are required to report on subgroup performance and growth during their annual site visit each year. The Commission's special education policies support schools in writing compliant IEPs that allow students with disabilities to make academic progress.

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. *
- I have attended multiple very helpful trainings on alternate assessment participation. I would love to see case studies incorporated in the annual trainings to have more examples for schools on factors that would influence whether a student is truly eligible to participate. Thank you!