

2017-18 Alternate Assessment Justification

The following must be completed by districts contributing to the state exceeding the 1% cap for students participating in the alternate assessment. Please return the completed form to Leslie.M.Hoffman@tn.gov by Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019 by 5 p.m. CT.

District Name: Giles County Schools

	% of Alternative Assessments: 2016-2017 Administration	Current % of Alternate Assessments: 2017-2018 Administration	Projected % of Alternate Assessments: 2018-2019 Administration
MSAA ELA	1.30%	1.36%	1.0%
MSAA Math	1.28%	1.36%	1.0%

1. Percentage Goal: What is your goal in addressing decision making for identifying the right students for the alternate assessment?

Alternate Assessments aligned with alternate academic standards (AA-AAAS) are intended to assess the academic achievement of students with the most significant intellectual disabilities, representing about 1% of the total student population. Students are considered to be *appropriate participants* in AA-AAAS if they (a) have an individualized Education Program (IEP) or one is being developed; (b) have an intellectual disability; (c) require instruction in multiple settings or in multiple ways to generalize their learning; and (d) participate in a curriculum that includes functional skills. IEP teams identify students with significant intellectual disabilities as appropriate participants in AA-AAAS, deeming this a suitable way to assess these students' academic achievement. On the surface, it may appear easy to identify students with the most significant intellectual disabilities, for whom AA-AAAS are intended. This is not the case, however, because the participation criteria are much broader than a student's IQ score. Our goal in addressing decision making for identifying the right students for alternate assessment is to assess 1.0% or less of assessed students using an AA-AAAS.

2. Process: Describe the process, training, and steps the district will use to meet the percentage goal reduction proposed above.

- A. Gather district and school data on current participation rates for the alternate assessment.
- B. Compare participation rates across schools and correspond such rates to programs operated in each building.

- C. Compare participation rates across grade levels.
- D. Review the current *Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions for the Alternate Assessment* document.
- E. Determine if current IEP team practice aligns with this guidance document.
- F. Provide professional development to IEP teams regarding assessment selection and the use of the Tennessee alternate assessment system.
- G. Gather data on the characteristics of students participating in the alternate assessment. Trends will be explored regarding the rates across eligibility and placements/programs.
- H. Compare characteristics of students participating in the alternate assessment against those noted in the *Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions for the Alternate Assessment*.
- I. Determine if there are any local written or unwritten policies regarding participation in the Tennessee alternate assessment system:
Are any such policies or practices in conflict with Tennessee's assessment selection guidance on the alternate assessment?
- J. Review the local practice on assessment guidance and determine:
Whether guidance has been implemented appropriately;
Whether local policy or practices need to be revised; and
Whether training needs for teachers and IEP team members have been considered.
- K. Provide informational sessions for parents of students with disabilities so that they can participate in the IEP decision-making process about assessment participation
- L. Provide sufficient training for school staff persons who participate as members of an IEP team or other placement teams so they understand and implement the guidelines established by the State so that all students are appropriately identified and assessed.

3. **Disproportionality:** Explain how the school district is addressing any disproportionality identified in areas that include, but are not limited to: student's IEP disability, number of students with disability, grade bands (elementary, middle, high school).

Gather district and school data on current participation rates in the alternate assessment. Examine participation rates in district. Check participation rates by grade level. These data help in understanding whether there are pockets of students or schools in which the numbers are higher than expected and whether there are certain grades in which participation in the alternate assessment is higher than expected.

Gather data on the characteristics of students participating in the alternate assessment. Use existing data from national studies as a benchmark for judging whether there might be students participating in the alternate assessment who do not have significant cognitive disabilities. Collect data on the characteristics of these alternate assessment students. Analyze this data from the perspective of disproportionality. Share data with schools/IEP teams. Check to make sure that any problem is not lack of implementation of the definition of significant cognitive disability. Provide training for IEP team participants responsible for making alternate assessment participation decisions for students.

4. Parent Participation: How do parents participate in, or how are they notified of, the IEP decision for their student to participate in the alternate assessment(s)?

The determination is made annually by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team, which includes parents and/or guardians. There is an IEP Team Guidance for Participation Decisions that explains which factors are to be considered and which factors are not to be considered in making that decision. Special education staff and school counselors facilitate conversations with parents regarding the implications of a student's instructional path that may include an alternate assessment, which may result in the student potentially not meeting requirements for a regular high school diploma. There is a parent resource with this information at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/resources>. Generally, students who take this assessment will have significant cognitive disabilities that affect the student in both ELA and math, and in all settings (including home and school). Parents receive notice of all decisions made by the IEP team through the Prior Written Notice. The IEP is not implemented for fourteen days giving parents the opportunity to request another meeting or to file due process if they are in disagreement with the decisions of the team.

5. Support Requested: Please detail any support needed from the department. (All feasible requests for supports will be considered.)

Giles County Schools requests that the TDOE consider providing assistance in the following way:
Conduct training on Tennessee's alternate content expectations:

- Characteristics of students who typically take this assessment
- Understanding all state assessment options and how this fits into local assessment practices
- Understanding the *Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions for the Alternate Assessment*.