

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 Monday, Feb. 11, 2019 by 5 p.m. CT.

District Name: Monroe County Schools

| | % of Alternative Assessments: 2016-2017 Administration | Current % of Alternate Assessments: 2017-2018 Administration | Projected % of Alternate Assessments: 2018-2019 Administration |
|-----------|--|--|--|
| MSAA ELA | 1.86% | 1.28% | 0.97% |
| MSAA Math | 1.86% | 1.29% | 0.97% |

1. **Percentage Goal:** What is your goal in addressing decision making for identifying the right students for the alternate assessment? The goal is for a School Psychologist to be included on every IEP team that is considering alternate assessment. All district School Psychologists have been trained on and understand the State guidance for participation in the alternate assessment and also the local criteria used to determine what constitutes the "most significant cognitive and adaptive behavior skill deficits." The ultimate goal is not to exceed the 1% cap for students participating in the alternate assessment, while still allowing IEP teams the right to make the most appropriate decisions for each individual student.
2. **Process:** Describe the process, training, and steps the district will use to meet the percentage goal reduction proposed above. In the fall of 2018, the Special Education Supervisor worked directly with Lori Nixon Morris, who at the time was the State's Assessment Supervisor, to carefully review and revise local participation criteria. Previously, Monroe County considered students who had IQ and Adaptive Behavior scores falling below 70 as being potentially eligible for alternate assessments. Working with Ms. Nixon and our School Psychology team, the local criterion was lowered to 60 or below in both areas (IQ and Adaptive ratings). We believed that lowering the criteria for consideration would help us stay below the 1% cap; however, it did not. Additionally, we continued to follow all State and Federal guidance related to participation in alternate assessments, understanding that the decision for participation is ultimately the responsibility of each IEP team based on the individual needs of each student. For the current

school year, we are carefully monitoring each situation and require the inclusion of a School Psychologist on the team anytime alternate assessment is being proposed or discussed. We also continue to utilize the State's *Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation* which includes detailed explanation of the three consideration criteria (significant cognitive disability, engagement in learning linked to Tennessee's Academic Standards, and the need for extensive, direct, individualized instruction and support).

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). For the previous six school years, Monroe County has not been found disproportionate in any of these areas. However, due to the higher likelihood for smaller systems without diverse populations to be identified as disproportionate, we have taken steps to more closely monitor areas of potential disproportionality. Our district-wide Special Education staff meets monthly to discuss topics of relevance. Each month, this includes a discussion about disproportionality with particular emphasis on identification for autism, intellectually gifted, and participation in the alternate assessment. This discussion is led by the Special Education Supervisor and requires input from all School Psychologists and county-wide Special Education Program Coordinators.
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)? IEP team meetings are scheduled to discuss student participation. The parents/guardians are always invited to these meetings. Additionally, a school psychologist is required to attend, along with other required participants. At the meeting, discussions are held to explain whether or not the student actually meets the requirements for consideration in the alternate assessment, what that means for the current year's testing, and also what it means for the student's long-term educational plan (i.e., explanation that participation in the alternate assessment means that the student will not be working toward attainment of a regular high school diploma). If the decision is made that the student will participate, the LEA and team must sign in agreement that the decision was made in the best interest of the student and not in the best interest of the school or the school's overall test scores. After the meeting, a Prior Written Notice is developed and presented to the parent that summarizes the decisions made during the IEP team meeting. If the meeting is not an initial placement meeting and the parent does not attend or gives permission for the team to proceed without their involvement, paper copies of the IEP and Prior Written Notice are mailed to the parents/guardians. Parents are always informed that they have the right to discuss any decision further with the local Special

Education team or with State Special Education officials as outlined in the Procedural Safeguards.

5. **Support Requested:** Please detail any support needed from the department. (All feasible requests for supports will be considered.) Monroe County felt as if the work we did during the 2017-2018 school, examining student participations for the alternate assessment, lowering our criteria, and more carefully utilizing the State's participation guidelines, would have kept us under the 1% cap. We were very disappointed that the final calculations revealed that we slightly exceeded the 1% cap. If we exceed the 1% cap for the current year, we would like to request some direct assistance/training for our team that would better help us guide our IEP teams in making more appropriate decisions for our students regarding the alternate assessment.