

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 February 26, 2019 by 5:00pm CST.

District Name: Decatur County Schools

% of Alternative Current % of Projected % of
Assessments: Alternate Alternate

2016-2017 Assessments: Assessments: Administration 2017-2018 2018-2019

Administration Administration MSM ELA

1.39% 1.28% .99%

MSA Math 1.38% 1.28% .99%

1. **Percentage Goal:** What is your goal in addressing decision making for identifying the right students for the alternate assessment? Our goal in Decatur County is to rest below the 1% cap for students participating in the alternate assessment. We hope to rethink our decision making via the process outlined in question #2 below.

2. **Process:** Describe the process, training, and steps the district will use to meet the percentage goal reduction proposed above. I will meet with each of our CDC special education classroom teachers for a re-training as far as justification for each student slated to take the alternate assessment. Although we are trending in the right direction - 1.39% down to 1.28% - there is work to be done. I actually shared these questions with the teachers in question and had them offer feedback included herein. By submitting to my teachers the question, "How will you help us to reduce the number of students taking the alternate assessment?", our teachers responded with: "I will increase the amount of time students are included in regular education classrooms", "My students taking the MSAA are below kindergarten level and are not showing adequate progress in order to take a grade level assessment with only the accommodations and modifications that are allowed", and "My students function on a K or below level and are not capable of taking general education tests." All of these teachers communicated that this was a unanimous IEP team decision.

To address reducing our number of students participating in the alternate assessment going

forward, I will share with these teachers the Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines document, the Criterion 1, 2 and 3 documents addressing Considerations for Participation in the Alternate Assessment, and the document titled Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the One Percent Cap. These documents have been shared with these teachers previously, but I will personally meet with each teacher and review the documents thoroughly, stressing the content therein.

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). By utilizing our Annual Local Determinations provided by the TDOE, our school psychologist and I review policies and procedures to assure that we are not disproportionate in any area. If we are found disproportionate, we examine our efforts, call upon TDOE for help via resources or personnel, and move to remove that which is disproportionate. On our most recent Local Determinations, we were not found to be disproportionate.

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 decision of whether or not the student participates in the alternate assessment is an IEP team decision. Based upon the student's significant cognitive disability and current adaptive skills requiring extensive direct instruction, assessments administered by our school psychologist, and observations and assessments administered by the student's special education teacher, the decision is made. Parents are informed during the IEP team meeting that participation in the alternate assessment does not align to the state's general high school diploma criteria. Most, if not all of the parents do not want their child to become frustrated by taking the regular grade level assessment. Their children struggle enough every day, and they do not see the need to add to that frustration level.

5. **Support Requested:** Please detail any support needed from the department. (All feasible requests for supports will be considered.) I welcome any individual or group from the state department or our Core Office that may be available to assist us in staying below the cap for students participating in the alternate assessment. We are a small district with only four of our special education teachers that have students on their caseload which take the alternate assessment. Of course, it would be easier for us if someone could come to us, rather than us going to another location.

Submitted Monday, February 25, 2019 by Tina Gardner

Decatur County Schools