

2021-22 Alternate Assessment Justification

The following must be completed by districts that contribute to the state exceeding the 1% cap for students participating in the alternate assessment and will be posted on the department website upon receipt.

District Name: __Dyer County__

	% of Alternative Assessments 2017-18	% of Alternate Assessments 2018-19	% of Alternate Assessments 2020-21	% of Alternate Assessments 2021-22	Projected % of Alternate Assessments 2022-23
MSAA ELA	1.49%	1.50%	1.47%	1.84%	1.95%
MSAA Math	1.47%	1.52%	1.52%	1.89%	2.01%
TCAP- Alt Science	1.34%	<i>*Field test year, no data available</i>	1.41%	2.00%	1.89%

- 1. Eligibility Determination Process:** Describe the policies, training and supports in place to ensure IEP teams appropriately identify students for participation on the alternate assessments related to each of the three criteria. *Completing the form in EasyIEP is not sufficient justification. The description should include training or processes to ensure the IEP team is carefully considering both the student's data and the implication of participation in the alternate assessment.*

The Dyer County School System utilizes the Tennessee State Department of Education assessment guidelines for evaluation and assessment outlined for special education eligibility. All students referred for special education services will have a comprehensive evaluation that is deemed appropriate based upon referral needs and eligibility criteria. That comprehensive evaluation will contain a cognitive assessment, academic achievement

assessment, classroom observations, parent information, school/home adaptive behavior assessments (if necessary), adaptive behavior observations, and any other pertinent assessments that would address referral concerns (speech/language evaluation, behavior checklists/rating forms, OT/PT evaluations, etc.). The evaluation components will be completed by appropriately designated evaluation team members. Determinations are then made based upon a student's qualifying disability, individual needs, and ability to assess/participate in the general curriculum. These determinations are made on an individual basis and not based upon race, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, and/or district Alternative Assessment participation numbers. Dyer County School Special Education staff attend regional Special Education Supervisor meetings, West Tennessee Special Education Conference, and the TAASE Conference. In addition, Dyer County Special Education staff participate in TDOE EasyIEP conference calls, annual MSAA training, and Communities of Practice webinars. These continued trainings provide guidance on Alternative Assessment eligibility criteria and direction for selecting students that would be an appropriate candidate for this achievement measure.

- a. Criterion One: The student has a significant cognitive disability. Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should be considered for the alternate assessment.

Dyer County Schools only considers students for alternative assessment who have a cognitive/intellectual assessment score that falls at least two standard deviations below the mean when compared to same aged peers. The IEP then further evaluates the severity of the student's cognitive level and academic functioning when presented with grade level standards. These decisions are based upon a student's need for an alternative achievement measure that would reflect their personal academic growth/development. These decisions are not dictated by a cut score on a cognitive/intellectual assessment. However, if there is a state department pre-determined score that justifies the most severe cognitive level that information would be beneficial for districts decision making.

- b. Criterion Two: The student is learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards.

All teachers of students who take the alternate assessment have been trained on how to break down the state standards to a more appropriate level. All self-contained teachers attended a state department led workshop on how to modify state standards

for students with severe cognitive deficits. These teachers received training on how to teach students using the state standards at an individualized level for each student. Walkthroughs of the self-contained classes are performed in order to make sure that teachers are using these standards.

- c. Criterion Three: The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

Dyer County Schools only considers students for alternative assessment who require significant modification to the grade level content standards. Students considered for this assessment are not able to understand, reproduce, and/or show mastery of the grade level content standards without significant support from staff. Furthermore, students considered for alternative assessment require alternate state standards and substantial simplification of the grade- and age- appropriate curriculum. As an IEP team, each student's data is reviewed to determine what type of supports are necessary to promote academic success. The IEP team then reviews the continuum of services available and determines the least restrictive environment most appropriate for each student. Students whose needs cannot be met in the general education program, require more intensive support than provided by in the intervention/inclusion setting, and have significant adaptive skills deficits are considered for a comprehensive developmental classroom. In order to be classified as alternate assessment, the IEP team follows the participation decision flowchart. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis.

- 2. **Disproportionality:** Using your data by primary eligibility, describe your district data, including disproportionate participation on the alternate assessment and a plan for reducing/eliminating disproportionality.

Dyer County Schools will continue to follow the State Department of Education guidelines for assessment and identification of special education students. At this time, students with a primary disability of Intellectual Disability, Developmental Delay, Autism, and Multiple Disabilities are the only categories that have been considered for and made eligible for alternative assessment within our system currently. Within our district, consideration of alternative assessment is not optional if the minimum cognitive and adaptive deficits are not present through comprehensive evaluation. Thus, multiple disability categories are excluded

from alternative assessment consideration. This practice helps decrease the number of students participating and reduce disproportionality. The current percentage of alternative assessment participation in 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 is projected to show an increase for reading and math (MSAA ELA 1.84% - 1.95%; MSAA Math 1.89% - 2.01%). This increase is directly related to our overall school population decreasing and multiple students transferring to Dyer County Schools with significant needs that require alternative assessment. However, the current percentage of alternative assessment participation in 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 is projected to show a decrease in science (TCAP Alt. Science 2.00% - 1.89%). In an effort to reduce disproportionality, the IEP team will continue to make decisions for alternative assessment participation on an individual basis and consider only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

3. **Informed Parent Participation:** Describe the process and practices used to adequately inform parents of the eligibility requirements and implications of participation to ensure active parent participation in the IEP team discussion.

Parents are always invited to IEP meetings and informed of the meeting purposes in advance. Dyer County Schools always offers meeting alternative if parents are unable to meet in person and accommodates those parent requests (phone conference, zoom meetings, home visits, alternative meeting locations). Parents are always offered and provided a copy of the Procedural Safeguards during each IEP meeting. When discussing the alternative assessment requirements and implications, the IEP team will review the continuum of special education services available and possible academic achievement measures available. The IEP team then discusses the alternate high school diploma path that will be associated/linked to a student taking the alternative assessment. Parents are always informed that this decision will result in not obtaining/earning a regular education high school diploma.

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

Students who are not considered to be the "most severe" are still falling two standard deviations below the mean for intellectual/adaptive functioning. Thus, these students may not be considered the "most severe," but are still performing at or below the 2%ile when compared to same aged peers. The request for a "modified achievement assessment" is needed for the less severe students who are not appropriate to take the regular TnReady assessment, but still require an alternative achievement measure. The TCAP Alternative

Assessment could then be reserved for the most severe students. This might allow our system to stay within the 1% cap for the TCAP Alternative Assessment participation.

Assurance: The district is committed to ensuring all students are participating in the most appropriate assessments. Students determined eligible for the alternate assessment will meet the three criteria.

Signed: Rena McKnight

Date: 2/15/23