

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: Giles County Schools

	% 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	1.33%	.88%	1.39%	1.14%	1.0%
MSAA Math	1.32%	.89%	1.44%	1.12%	1.0%
TCAP-Alt Science	1.15%	<i>*Field test year, no data available</i>	1.40%	1.53%	1.0%

1. Eligibility Determination Process: Describe the policies, training and support 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.*

- 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.

- b. Criterion Two: The student is learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards.
- c. Criterion Three: The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.

Alternate Assessments 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 alternate assessments 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 alternate assessments, 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 alternate assessments are intended. This is not the case, however, because the participation criteria are much broader than a student's IQ score.

In making decisions regarding assessment participation, IEP teams must first determine if a student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability. Teams must address multiple considerations to ensure decisions are based on a holistic view of the student and do not focus purely on an IQ score as there are many factors that can impact assessment performance. For students who meet criterion 1, the team must then determine if the student is engaging in learning linked to the Tennessee Academic Standards. For students who meet Criteria One and Two, the team must then determine if the student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial support. The Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines: Decision Making Tools for IEP Teams guide teams in making this determination

In making decisions regarding assessment participation, IEP teams must determine if a student meets all three criteria. IEP teams document considerations used to determine eligibility and provide clear evidence that supports the IEP team decision by using the TDOE Consideration for Participation in the Alternate Assessment document during the decision making process. All decisions are explained within the prior written notice.

The district has developed a District Alternate Assessment Self-Reflection Guide as a resource for support based on the district's alternate assessment participation data. This self-reflection guide is designed to support the district in its data review process to address the appropriate eligibility of student participation in the alternate assessment. This guide supports district efforts to be proactive regarding alternate assessment participation rates. All district staff responsible for making assessment decisions are included in the self-reflection. This includes administrators who have the responsibility of serving as LEA representative at IEP meetings. Additionally, training is provided twice a year in using the Tennessee Alternate Assessment IEP File Review Rubric. In 2022-2023, training took place at the school level during in-service days (July 26-28, 2022). Additional training is planned for March 3, 2023.

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.

Using the district data by primary eligibility in comparison to State data, the district finds that the percent (25.93%) of students identified under the disability category of Autism that participate in the Alt. assessment is less than the State Alt. distribution for Autism (29.29%). The district Alt. assessment distribution for Intellectual Disability (59.26%) is only slightly above the State distribution (52.59%). District Alt. assessment distribution for the disability category of Multiple Disabilities was less than that of the State (7.41% compared to 9.60%). The district found that its Alt. assessment distribution for Other Health Impairments was twice that of the State (7.41% compared to 3.88%). This has prompted additional scrutiny by district staff.

A review of data collected by the TDOE which compares State Alt. distribution to the district's Alt. distribution in the areas of economically disadvantaged, EL status, gender and race/ethnicity was insightful. A higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students were identified in the Alt assessment in the district (44.44%) when compared to the State (38.61%). Fewer male students (55.56%) when compared to the State (66.60%) were identified in Alt assessment. When looking at race/ethnicity, Black or African American participation in the district was 29.63% compared to the State's 31.60%. Hispanic students participated in Alt assessment at 3.70% compared to 10.92% at the State level. This review indicated a disproportionate percent (66.6%) of white students were identified in the Alt assessment compared to the State (54.07%).

By gathering additional district and school data on current participation rates in the alternate assessment and by participation rates by grade level, the district was able to ascertain whether there were pockets of students, certain grades or schools in which the participation rate for alternate assessment was higher than expected. By gathering data on the characteristics of students participating in the alternate assessment and by using national studies as a benchmark, the district is able to judge whether there might be students participating in the alternate assessment who do not have significant cognitive disabilities. The district is then able to analyze the collected data on the characteristics of these alternative assessment students from the perspective of disproportionality. The resulting information is shared with school/IEP teams. The teams ensure that any problem is not a lack of implementation of the definition of significant cognitive disability. Training is provided for IEP team participants responsible for making alternate assessment participation decisions for students.

In an effort to reduce/eliminate any disproportionality, the district will do the following:

- A. Review the current Guidance for IEP Teams on Participation Decisions for the Alternate Assessment document and ensure that current IEP team practice aligns with this guidance document.
- B. Review local practice on assessment guidance and determine whether guidance has been implemented appropriately.
- C. Provide professional development to IEP teams regarding assessment selection and the use of the Tennessee alternate assessment system.
- D. Provide informational sessions for parents of students with disabilities so that they can participate in the IEP decision-making process about assessment participation.

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.

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.

4. **Support Requested:** Please detail any support needed from the department. (All reasonable requests for support 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:

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

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: Vickie M. Bean Date: Feb. 15, 2023