

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: Tennessee School for the Blind

	% 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	57.14%	55.74%	48.00%	44.44%	47.37%
MSAA Math	52.54%	53.97%	47.06%	38.71%	46.55%
TCAP- Alt Science	51.61%	<i>*Field test year, no data available</i>	46.81%	40.74%	53.85%

- 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.*

All Special Education Teachers, School psychologists, and speech-language pathologists will be provided training at the beginning of each school year addressing the specific criteria for determining eligibility for students to participate in the alternate assessment. A copy of the alternate assessment participation

guidelines will be provided as a reference for teachers. When a student is considered for the Alternate Assessment for the first time, the team reviews all pertinent data, and the participation of the school psychologist is required. This is to ensure the appropriate interpretation of data to support the need for alternative or traditional testing. At the Tennessee School for the Blind, admissions to the school happens on a rolling basis. When students enroll at TSB, many times the home LEA has already made the determination of which assessment the student will take. Once the student enrolls, the Team reviews the students' information and conducts assessments to gather more information about the student. Within 30 days of enrollment, an IEP Team is scheduled to review and develop an IEP based on the student's current placement. If necessary, at this time the TEAM will address the student's participation in state-mandated assessments.

Information is shared throughout the school year with teachers, school psychologist, speech-language pathologists, guidance counselors, and school administrators. Any questions regarding the alternate assessment are directed to the Director of Special Populations and/or the school psychologist.

- 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.**

The team must take a holistic approach when considering a student's participation in the alternate assessment. The Teams do not focus solely on an IQ score as a single determining factor. The team reviews current and/or past evaluations, psychological evaluation reports, results of individual cognitive ability tests, adaptive behavior skills data, results of individual or group administered achievement tests, individual reading assessments, communication, language proficiency assessments, teacher collected data, classroom observations, universal screening results, progress monitoring data, and information from IEPs. The teams also take into consideration what a student is truly able to do. The student could possibly function at a higher level than what the test results yield, but there may be factors that impact the students' performance. The student must have documentation of a significant cognitive disability or severe intellectual disability and significant adaptive skills deficits which results in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations.

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

Once it is determined that a student meets criterion 1, the team then determines if the student's disability impacts their active participation in instruction aligned to the state standards. The teams take into consideration whether the student requires substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to access the general education curriculum. Additional factors to consider include does the student require direct individualized instruction and support that is not temporary, the need for adapted materials, individualized methods of accessing information, and does the student need alternate ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across a variety of settings (i.e., school, work, home, and community). IEP teams must rule out the inability to achieve the state grade level achievement expectation is not the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences. If a student requires substantial modifications and adaptations, then their instruction should be based on the alternate assessment 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.

For students who meet the eligibility of Criteria 1 and 2, the team must then determine if the student meets Criteria 3, if the student requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports. Factors considered include: LRE was determined based on current comprehensive data, present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives, and post school outcomes determined based on strengths as well as needs, what accommodations, modifications, or supports are needed for the student to actively participate, and the appropriateness of the accommodations, modifications, services, or supports.

- 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.

The district has reduced the number of students participating in the alternate assessment. The district has shown a decrease in the numbers beginning with the 2020-2021 school year and a decrease for the 2021-2022 administration but is projecting an increase in the numbers for the 2022-2023 school year. This may be due to students moving up in grade levels and now requiring them to participate in the state-mandated assessments. Training all staff on the qualifications for the alternate assessment criteria is crucial in reducing the disproportion. Informing all staff on the repercussions of placing a student on the Alternate Assessment should be addressed during training and emphasized during data chats or meetings about students. It is also critical for the Team to review student information for those transferring to the Tennessee School for the Blind who have already been determined to participate in the alternate assessment. It is imperative that we make sure the students meet the criteria.

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 participate in the IEP team discussion.

Parents are invited to attend their child's IEP meeting, during which the Team discusses testing options and the requirements that must be met to qualify for the alternate assessment. A copy of the Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines: Decision-Making Tools for IEP teams, is provided to parents/guardians at the meeting. This document is used to guide the team through the determination of the eligibility process. Parents are told that a student testing on an alternate assessment, does not typically graduate with a general education diploma. During the meeting, the Alternate Assessment paperwork is considered, discussed, and finalized. Parents are provided copies of this documentation along with a copy of the IEP, IEP meeting notes, and a Prior Written Notice.

If a parent is not available to attend the IEP meeting, phone conference, or through a proxy, the team will discuss testing options, propose their determination of testing, and complete a draft copy of the IEP and send it home for review. The parent is asked to review the IEP and contact the Director of Special Populations with any questions that they may have regarding the IEP. Once the IEP has been finalized, the parent gets another copy of the IEP, meeting notes, and prior written

notice. A copy of the Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines: Decision-Making Tools for IEP teams is provided to parents/guardians if they did not attend the IEP meeting.

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

Training provided by TDOE for the teachers and school administrators on eligibility for the alternate assessment. This training should include an in-depth discussion about the implications of putting a student on the alternate assessment. Additional training on how to differentiate instruction within the general education classroom for students with varied ability levels.

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: *Jennifer Darden*

Date: February 15, 2023