

Florida Department of Education

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Justification for Exceeding the 1% Cap Participation Action Plan (AP)

LEA: Escambia County

Please select one:

My LEA **does not expect to exceed** one percent of the number of assessed students participating in the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA) in the 2025-26 school year (SY).

My LEA **expects to exceed** one percent of the number of assessed students participating in the FAA in the 2025-26 SY.

Please check the LEA size.

Small

Medium

Large

Very Large

1.	<p>How has your LEA reviewed the data for assessment participation to make informed decisions for implementation?</p> <p>In Escambia County, we review our FAA participation data annually through district-level 1% self-assessments and FDOE 1% Data Discussions with our state liaison. We review discrepancies and correct errors immediately. Escambia County Public Schools have been compliant all 4 years the district has participated in the FAA Assurances.</p>
2.	<p>What are your LEA's percentages of students that participated in the FAA in the 2024-25 SY in each of the following subjects?</p> <p>ELA: 1.43% Math: 1.60% Science: 1.59%</p>
3.	<p>What is your LEA's projection for the percentage of students participating in the FAA in the 2025-26 SY in each of the following subjects?</p> <p>ELA: 1.43% Math: 1.60% Science: 1.59%</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p>What are your LEA’s percentages of students participating in the Florida Assessment for Student Thinking (FAST) 3-10 Progress Monitoring and End-of-Course (EOC) assessments in the 2025-26 SY in each of the following subjects?</p> <p>Answers for Question 4 are students not included in the percentages from Question 3.</p> <p>ELA: 97.23% Math: 97.85% Science: 96.7%</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>What is your LEA’s projection for the percentage of students participating in the FAST 3-10 Progress Monitoring and EOC assessments in the 2025-26 SY in each of the following subjects?</p> <p>ELA: 97.23% Math: 97.85% Science: 96.7%</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Are there unique circumstances in the LEA that might draw large numbers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to live in the LEA, which in turn might result in more than one percent of students participating in the FAA? If so, describe those unique circumstances (i.e., migrant families, military bases, hospitals, rehabilitation centers or student enrollment).</p> <p>Escambia County’s student population profile includes several factors that may contribute to a higher-than average percentage of students participating in the Florida Alternate Assessment. These unique circumstances include:</p> <p>Socioeconomic disadvantage: Escambia County is a high poverty area, with almost 74% of students economically disadvantaged and nearly 3% experiencing homelessness. Studies have shown that students for low socioeconomic backgrounds and those experiencing homelessness can experience academic and developmental challenges.</p> <p>Military bases: The county is home to three Naval Bases (Pensacola Naval Air Station, Corry Station and Saufley Field) and the Blue Angels Flight Team. The transient nature of military life often results in students transferring into the school system, some with pre-determined ESE eligibility and modifications that may not align with Florida’s requirements.</p> <p>Hospital: Studer Family Children’s Hospital is the only full service children’s hospital in Northwest Florida. Families often relocate to Escambia County to</p>

	<p>access the specialized medical care available at the hospital, bringing their children, some of whom may have significant cognitive disabilities, into the school district.</p> <p>Special Center: Escambia Westgate Special Center caters specifically to students with the most significant intellectual and physical disabilities. The center attracts families seeking specialized services, including those from surrounding counties who utilize school choice options to access the unique programming offered at Escambia Westgate.</p> <p>Region: The bordering of Alabama influences school enrollment as families travel to work in Florida and bring their students with them. Additionally, organizations like Caring Hearts can provide essential medical and support services to families with significant needs outside of the school hours.</p> <p>School Choice: Escambia County also has charter schools including East Hill Academy and Morning STAR which specialize in serving students with autism or significant cognitive disabilities.</p> <p>Enrollment: Escambia County's declining enrollment has impacted numbers.</p>																
7.	<p>List the percentages of the following primary/secondary exceptionalty categories in your LEA for students participating in the FAA in the 2025-26 SY for each of the following:</p> <table data-bbox="310 1245 1079 1396"> <tr> <td>Intellectual Disability (InD):</td> <td>331</td> <td>182 FAA</td> <td>.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):</td> <td>945</td> <td>173 FAA</td> <td>.87%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):</td> <td>3</td> <td>1 FAA</td> <td>< 1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Health Impairment (OHI):</td> <td>941</td> <td>56 FAA</td> <td>.2%</td> </tr> </table> <p>Total SWD- 6270 Total enrollment- 22,230</p>	Intellectual Disability (InD):	331	182 FAA	.8%	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):	945	173 FAA	.87%	Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):	3	1 FAA	< 1%	Other Health Impairment (OHI):	941	56 FAA	.2%
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8.	<p>After reviewing your data on students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, were there any patterns that emerged? For example, were students who attended a specific class or school more likely to participate in the alternate assessment? Does the participation rate vary?</p> <p>When reviewing our data, the district identified the need for updated intellectual, adaptive and achievement level testing before IEP teams consider placement on</p>																

	<p>Access Points Standards. The district will initiate re-evaluations prior to the end of the third grade year when deemed appropriate by the IEP team.</p> <p>One school with larger numbers is located within 2 miles of the Children’s Hospital.</p>
9.	<p>Regarding the participation of students in alternate assessments, is the LEA aware of any disproportionate representation of students in the following subgroups: English Language Learners, African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, male/female students or low-income students? If so, please describe the steps the LEA will take in the coming year (or the steps already taken) to find the root cause and reduce the impact of any disproportionate representation of students in the above-referenced subgroups among those taking the FAA.</p> <p>Escambia County is a high poverty county. Seventy four (73.8) percent of our students are economically disadvantaged. Almost three percent of our student population is homeless. The district is not aware of any disproportionate representation of students as evidenced in the LEA Determination Federal Fiscal Year 2023.</p>
10.	<p>How will the LEA seek to assess 95% participation in all assessments, including students with disabilities in all grades and subjects? Review your individual educational plan (IEP) data and identification practices to identify the root cause of why the LEA is under the 95% participation rate and over the 1% threshold for students participating in the FAA.</p> <p>According to the Florida Department of Education, Escambia County has a 98.2 percent participation rate for all statewide assessments. Our LEA is at 98.2% which is over the rate of participation.</p>
11.	<p>How are IEP decisions in all schools within your LEA consistently implementing the state’s guidelines and criteria regarding which students should take the FAA? (Please consider using the “Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation” for IEP team meetings within your LEA.)</p> <p>Escambia County uses the Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation for IEP meetings. Staff is trained on the guiding questions for instruction on Access Points and Alternate Assessment during pre-school professional development each school year. The district requires responses to the Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation to be entered in the student’s IEP.</p>

	<p>Teachers are trained to provide written responses in the <i>optional</i> text boxes in PEER. All persons acting as school LEAs are trained on understanding the FAA State Board Rule regarding instruction on Access Points.</p>
12.	<p>Describe the process and required evidence of finding a student eligible to participate in the FAA using all the criteria in Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code.</p> <p>Prior to meeting with families to discuss the FAA, the IEP team must document that all required criteria have been fully met. Escambia County uses the Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation. District ESE Facilitators review criteria with elementary school administration teams prior to the start of the school year and as needed during the course of each year.</p>
13.	<p>Has your LEA removed students from participating in the FAA using state guidelines? If so, please provide more information, such as how many, what process was followed and any other feedback.</p> <p>Yes. Upon enrollment, transfer students initially receive comparable services for their previous IEP. However, the district prioritizes reviewing and renewing these IEP to align with Florida's eligibility requirements for Access Points.</p> <p>For students who were previously on Access Points but no longer meet Florida's eligibility criteria, IEP teams develop new plans to transition them back to the general curriculum. These new IEPs incorporate additional support to help the student succeed. The district acknowledges that some parents may disagree with the decisions made, especially when it involves a student moving away from Access Points. The district ensures parents understand the governing rules and requirements. School based administrators adjust personnel to effectively provide the additional support outlined in the updated IEP.</p>
14.	<p>Describe how the LEA informs parents, families and students of the instruction in Access Points – Alternate Academic Achievement Standards and participation in the FAA, as well as the possible implications of this instruction and participation. How is it provided in the parent or student's native language? How often is this information provided?</p> <p>The district provides the information about Access Points and the possible implications of this instruction annually to the parents in the IEP meeting. We review the form provided in PEER <i>Parental Consent Form Decision to move to</i></p>

	<p><i>Access Points – Alternate Academic Achievement Standards and participation in the FAA</i> to guide the discussion with the family. If the primary language is not English, the district uses live translators or a language assistance program (phone) for translating information in the family's native language. The information is provided annually at the IEP review or more often as needed.</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>Describe how IEP teams will review the assessment data of students with advanced proficiency or perfect scores in one or more content areas, and consider whether these students could participate in the general statewide progress monitoring (FAST) or EOCs with necessary support and accommodations.</p> <p>IEP teams will review the FAA assessment data with the parents, student and team. Both the ESE teacher and the general education teacher will present information about required standards based on appropriate age and grade of the student. The IEP team will identify possible gaps in understanding and develop goals and objectives within the IEP to support the students participation on regular education standards. The team will review each core subject matter to identify strengths and areas of concern to determine appropriateness of changing standards of instruction. Data will drive the decision making within the State Board Rules.</p>
<p>16.</p>	<p>Describe your LEA’s AP to assist schools in verifying the validity of the number of students taking the alternate assessment. The plan should include actionable steps and how the LEA will monitor progress or address challenges (it should not be the state’s guidelines reiterated).</p> <p>The district will assist schools in verifying the number of students taking the alternate assessment by providing clear eligibility guidelines, reviewing student data, offering professional development and requiring justifications for higher than average participation rates. This process is crucial for ensuring the number of students does not exceed the 1% cap.</p> <p>The district will ensure that the Individualized Education Plan teams at each school are properly trained and have all the necessary information to determine if a student has the “most significant disability.”</p> <p>The ESE department will provide IEP teams with guidelines and resources to ensure that Access Points Standards are only used for eligible students.</p> <p>The district will collect and review data on alternate assessment participation from each school. The district will use this date to identify schools with unusual</p>

	<p>patterns or rates of participation that exceed the state threshold, prompting further inquiry.</p> <p>The district will require individual schools with high participation rates to provide additional justification and assurance that the students were properly identified.</p> <p>The district will continue to review and monitor data ensuring the district and school are following proper procedures and maintaining adequate documentation for each student on alternate assessment.</p> <p>The district will continue to provide training to educators.</p> <p>The district will continue to analyze data files that contain student-level information from statewide assessments , including demographic details and achievement levels. The district will use this information to help identify trends. The district will examine the demographic characteristics of students taking FAA to detect potential disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup. The district will continue to review cumulative files to include, attendance record, grades and discipline records. This will help provide context of if alternate assessment is the appropriate placement.</p> <p>The Director of Evaluation Services will continue to monitor and review data to determine the timeline for instruction on Access Points prior to taking the FAA. When schools attempt to change testing prior to meeting instruction on Access Points for 2 FTE periods, evaluation services will not issue the test.</p> <p>Teachers and data specialists will receive training on correctly documenting alternate assessment within our data information system. The district is working to develop systems to help PEER communicate information to FOCUS even better.</p>
17.	<p>Describe any improvement activities implemented by your LEA in the 2024-25 SY. Were they effective? If not, please describe why your LEA feels that they were not effective and what your next steps are.</p> <p>Yes, as evidenced by our FAA testing percentage going from 1.9 to 1.5%. Each school year our number of students taking the FAA have continued to decline from our starting 1.9%</p> <p>School based administrators/staff are seeking clarification and asking questions more frequently in regards to Access Points eligibility for students. The guiding</p>

	<p>questions regarding instruction on Access Points are being reviewed during the IEP meetings and not skipped over.</p>
<p>18.</p>	<p>Describe your LEA’s AP. List your progress monitoring activity and data source that will assist in determining the effectiveness of the AP. Identify the persons responsible for monitoring the progress of the AP.</p> <p>As a part of the Escambia County Action Plan the district will continue ongoing desktop monitoring for students taking alternate assessments to grow school based capacity. The LEA will randomly select records for students being instructed on Access Points Standards to ensure appropriateness of services and quality of the IEP. Each review will be completed with school personnel. The district will use the same documents/forms used for the State Assurance Process.</p> <p>At the beginning of each school year, all ESE teachers will continue to receive training on using the Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation to guide the IEP discussion for serving a student on Access Points Standards. Principals, Assistant Principals, Curriculum Coordinators and anyone serving as a school LEA will also receive training to ensure their understanding of the State Board Rule.</p> <p>District ESE facilitators will continue to support elementary schools by reviewing documentation to ensure compliance with all established requirements prior to initiating the school recommendation for instruction on Access Points Standards.</p> <p>The ESE Director will be responsible for monitoring the Action Plan.</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>What professional learning will your staff complete for the 2025-26 SY?</p> <p>Professional development was provided to ESE teachers during pre-school. The <i>Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation</i> was reviewed with all ESE teachers. All school principals and assistant principals received a review of district requirements regarding instruction on Access Points and FAA Assessment during the summer.</p> <p>New ESE teacher training occurred in September 2025.</p>

	<p>“Access Points in the General Education Setting” professional development facilitated by Project Access was delayed from October 2025 to February 2026 due to the move of the project.</p> <p>The district will be providing training for the administration of the FAA in October 2025.</p> <p>ESE District Staff will receive ongoing training each month based on progress monitoring, record reviews, and at the request of local schools.</p>
20.	<p>What other additional actions does your LEA plan to implement to ensure the reduction of the percentage of students participating in the FAA?</p> <p>The district will continue to presume competence for our students while ensuring the rights guaranteed students through FAPE. This includes specially designed induction and related services, provided in the least restrictive environment possible, with the goal of preparing our students for graduation, higher education, vocational training, employment and independent living.</p>

By submitting this LEA justification AP, the LEA verifies that all the information provided is valid and accurate and can provide any requested documentation of evidence.

Kate Swanson

9.29.2025

Signature of Superintendent

Date

Sandra Hill

9.29.2025

Signature of Exceptional Student Education
Director

Date

Colt Reynolds

9/29/25

Signature of Director of Data

Date