

Florida Department of Education

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

LEA: _____ Florida Scholars Academy _____

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><i>By utilizing our Student Information System (SIS)-FOCUS, data was extracted to identify the total number of students enrolled in Florida Scholars Academy, the number of students with an ESE classification, the number of students identified as eligible for assessment participation in the FAA in the 2025-2026 SY and the individual students who've been identified as eligible for participation in the FAA. Further data was reviewed to determine assessment participation history for each of the identified students and that all students identified as eligible for FAA participation have ESE documents which support their eligibility and participation.</i></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: 1.8% of total population Math: 5% of total population Science: 4% of total population</p> <p><i>*The percentages above are skewed due to FSA's unique environment, court order placement versus residency enrollment process, typical enrollment being 6-9 months (not a typical school year) and the very transient nature of this student population. See question number six for further explanation.</i></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% of total population Math: 4% of total population Science: 3% of total population</p> <p>*See question number six.</p>
4.	<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 2024-25 SY in each of the following subjects?</p> <p><i>Based upon School Grade Percent tested:</i> ELA: 80% Math: 97% Science: 98%</p>
5.	<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: 95% Math: 97% Science: 98%</p>
6.	<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><i>Florida Scholars Academy (FSA) serves students from all over the state of Florida with a court order placement in a Department of Juvenile Justice residential facility. This poses a unique circumstance as students' home county of residency often differs from their assigned placements and those enrolled do not reflect the general student population. Students enrolled in Florida Scholars Academy have complex personal and educational histories, may have been underserved and may have been misidentified in prior educational settings. Prior to placement in FL Scholars Academy, IEP teams may find that FAA is the most appropriate measure of student progress, especially when cognitive impairments are compounded by behavioral or emotional challenges. Cognitive impairments may affect judgment, comprehension, and impulse control which could lead to students with significant cognitive disabilities committing crimes due to difficulty understanding rules and their actions may be interpreted as defiance or criminal intent. Systemic factors such as lack of early intervention, family challenges (physical/emotional trauma, substance abuse, etc.) truancy and mobility rates</i></p>

	<i>may serve as unique circumstances that could skew the overall percentage of students participating in the FAA.</i>
7.	<p>List the percentages of the following primary/secondary exceptionality categories in your LEA for students participating in the FAA in the 2025-26 SY for each of the following:</p> <p>Intellectual Disability (InD): 65% Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): 0% Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): 0% Other Health Impairment (OHI): 0%</p>
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><i>No patterns or trends emerged.</i></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><i>No disproportionate representation of students for the above-referenced subgroups have been identified.</i></p>

<p>10.</p>	<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><i>The LEA will seek to assess 95% participation in all assessments, including students with disabilities in all grades and subject areas by continuing to adhere to testing windows and creating unique testing plans at each of the DJJ residential facilities within Florida Scholars Academy. The DAT utilizes testing plans that carefully cater to student accommodations, on-site facility schedules, ESE and MTSS intervention schedules, as well as specified testing policies and parameters. This includes small and conducive testing environments where students are given the necessary testing materials, specific accommodations such as extended time or Spanish/English dictionaries for ELL students. FSA makes every effort to utilize these unique testing plans to ensure students are testing at the beginning of every test window. This plan has been created to ensure 95% participation considering unique barriers and challenges such as accommodating court dates, medical appointments, and other due dates and time sensitive occurrences that cannot be avoided or adjusted. Testing at the beginning of the testing window allows for those students with planned and unforeseen commitments to test later and still be assessed within the testing parameters.</i></p>
<p>11.</p>	<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><i>At Florida Scholars Academy, all ESE team members including ESE Administrators and Managers, ESE instructors, ESE specialists, various service providers and evaluators, including Speech Language Pathologists, therapists, school psychologists, behavior analysts, etc. serve all facilities within the district and throughout the state of Florida. This ensures consistency of processes in all facilities throughout the state. All district-based IEP team members participate in on-going professional development provided by the FLDOE, Access Project and internally to stay abreast of current best practices in the identification and programming for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Select staff will also participate in ISRD regional Staffing Specialist meetings that include the following applicable professional learning opportunity: Making Data Based Decisions: Access Points & Alternative Assessment, provided by Chelsea Strickland, BEESS. The district’s ESE department utilizes various standardized and formative assessment data to monitor student progress throughout the year and ensure an accurate understanding of individual student’s present level of</i></p>

	<p><i>performance. Florida Scholars Academy utilizes Florida’s Portal to Exceptional Education Resources (PEER), an electronic system for developing and managing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities. PEER is updated regularly to align with federal and state laws and regulations governing special education, including guidelines regarding which students should take the FAA. District processes exist which include utilizing PEER resources, such as checklists aligned to the federal and state guidelines for eligibility and exclusionary criteria. IEP teams consider important factors such as multi-tiered system of supports and interventions, progress monitoring data, classwork performance, supplementary aids and services, accommodations, assistive technology, and stakeholder input. Supporting documentation is maintained in the student’s Exceptional Student Education (ESE) file at FSA including evaluation data; documentation of the meeting, including notes and parent input; and instruction and assessment evidence.</i></p> <p><i>The ESE Manager provides guidance and support to ESE Instructors and ESE Specialists in understanding the required processes for deciding which assessment a student will participate in. The FDOE requirements and associated documents are reviewed, and access is provided to all through shared team sites. Prior to the testing window, the IEP team convenes to review each students prior IEP, current IEP present levels of performance, effects of disability and test accommodations. The IEP team completes the FDOE FAA Checklist for Course Assessment Participation to determine eligibility/exclusionary criteria, the appropriate course of instruction and the most meaningful assessment for the student.</i></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><i>At Florida Scholars Academy, we follow the determination process set forth in Rule 6A-1.0943, F.A.C. as a guide for determining eligibility to participate in the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment. The Individualized Education Program team, including the student’s parent/guardian, special education teacher, general education teacher, local education agency representative, and other members of the IEP team as appropriate, is responsible for considering all the eligibility factors, each of which is detailed in the six bullets below, and making the eligibility determination. A student may not be eligible to take the FAA unless he or she meets all criteria. The FSA IEP team documents the determination in the student’s IEP.</i></p> <p><i>The IEP team determines if the student is being provided with instruction based on Access Points, the alternate academic achievement standards aligned to the Florida Standards, by reviewing the IEP and documenting that all core content area goals are Access Point aligned. Classroom instruction, materials, and</i></p>

assessments must be based on the modified academic standards as described in the IEP to meet this criterion. The IEP team determines if the student has a most significant cognitive disability, as documented by formal psychological testing showing very significantly below average intellectual functioning, usually an IQ score of 67 or below, and on an adaptive behavior assessment, such as the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales.

The IEP team documents that the student requires extensive, direct, repeated, and individualized instruction and support in a variety of settings to learn and generalize skills, based on documentation such as teacher logs, instructional plans, and progress monitoring data that shows the student needs constant, one-to-one support and assistance with task scaffolding to acquire and maintain academic and functional skills. The IEP team documents that the student has demonstrated a need for extensive support in multiple domains, such as academics, communication, social-emotional, daily living, and motor, as shown by the multidisciplinary assessment data, IEP present level statement, and related services (speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist) reports.

The IEP team documents that the student's lack of academic success is not primarily due to excessive absenteeism, social, cultural or economic issues, or inappropriate instruction, based on the review of the attendance record, history of interventions, and response to intervention Multi-Tiered System of Supports documentation to support that appropriate instruction in the general education classroom, with accommodations and/or Tier 1 interventions, was provided and that the student did not respond adequately to these interventions. The IEP team should determine that, even with extensive and individualized instruction, the student is not expected to meet grade-level academic standards, as shown by district and statewide assessment data and progress monitoring results over time and IEP progress reports indicating that the student's performance is consistently well below grade level even with intensive support. All these criteria are considered and addressed by the IEP team and documented in the students' IEP along with a statement in the statewide assessment section of the IEP indicating the student will participate in the FAA and the reasons for that determination. Parents are told that students who take the FAA are working towards a diploma via access points and should be aware that these students are receiving instruction based on Access Points.

Supporting documentation is maintained in the student's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) file at FSA including evaluation data; documentation of the meeting, including notes and parent input; and instruction and assessment evidence.

<p>13.</p>	<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><i>Florida Scholars Academy has disenrolled a very small number of students (1) from the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment as allowed under the eligibility requirements of Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code. The typical amount of time that a student is enrolled at FSA is 6-9 months. During their enrollment, a student's progress and performance are regularly monitored, if it is suspected that the student is not meeting all six of the required criteria, an IEP team meeting is held to discuss whether a re-evaluation of the student's current functioning is appropriate. If a re-evaluation of the student is recommended, parent consent is obtained and updated cognitive and adaptive data along with classroom progress and performance, statewide and district assessment data, and progress monitoring data are gathered and reviewed. During the 24-25 SY, based on a comprehensive analysis of the student data, a re-evaluation was recommended for one (1) student. Upon completion of the re-evaluation, an IEP meeting was held to review the data and determine if the student continued to be eligible to take the FAA. The re-evaluation review and IEP team meeting resulted in the team determining that the student will participate in the general statewide assessments with appropriate accommodations. Guardians were fully included in the decision-making process and were provided with all information regarding the change. Documentation of the decision, data, and guardian input are included in the student's ESE file for review for state compliance.</i></p>
<p>14.</p>	<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><i>FSA informs parents, families, and students about instruction based on Access Points – Alternate Academic Achievement Standards and participation in the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment as required by Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code, during the annual IEP meeting, when the IEP team reviews and makes decisions about the curriculum and assessment options that are appropriate for the student based on their individual ability levels determined by evaluations conducted for educational planning purposes. Documentation of the parental input and communication regarding instruction in Access Points and participation in the FAA are documented in the FSA PEER IEP. Parents are also provided with an information flyer provided by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) which includes information, additional resources, FAQs regarding students with the most significant cognitive disability and federal assessment requirements.</i></p>

	<p><i>During IEP meetings, the LEA explains to parent/guardian or adult student that Access Points based instruction is provided on alternate academic achievement standards aligned to the Florida Standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and that instruction for students who participate in the FAA will be at a reduced level of complexity, and a student who takes the FAA will be working toward a diploma that reflects their level of ability to master the essential knowledge and skills within the general education curriculum rather than general education curriculum standards. The team also informs the parent/guardian or adult student of the long-term consequences of the curriculum and assessment pathway including its impact on postsecondary opportunities, graduation options, and loss of eligibility for certain programs. Parent/guardian or adult students are asked if they have any questions or concerns and are encouraged to actively participate in the decision-making process to ensure that they have a full understanding of the instructional approach and assessment implications, including limited options for post-secondary employment opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>The information is provided to the parent/guardian or adult student at least annually at the time of the IEP review for each student and more frequently if there is a proposed change in curriculum or participation in a statewide assessment. Documentation of the discussion and consent is maintained in the student's ESE file as part of the IEP record.</i></p>
15.	<p>Describe how IEP teams will review the assessment data of students with advanced proficiency or perfect scores in one or more content area and consider whether these students could participate in the general statewide progress monitoring (FAST) or EOCs with necessary supports and accommodations.</p> <p><i>FSA works with students and families to review the current academic performance of a student when current assessment data show that a student who is currently participating in the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment is demonstrating advanced proficiency or has achieved perfect scores in one or more content areas. The student's IEP team will review current assessment data including statewide FAA results, classroom-based assessments, district progress monitoring data, and teacher observation and note if the achievement could possibly reflect readiness to move from Access Points instruction to general education standards. This may include general statewide assessments, such as Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) progress monitoring or end-of-course (EOC) assessments with supports and accommodations. The IEP team would discuss the level of support used by the student (level and intensity) as well as rate of progress and ability to generalize to less scaffolded settings. If the IEP team determines the student could be successful, the IEP would be revised to reflect the general assessment in which the student will participate and remove Access Points as the basis of instruction. Parents are an important</i></p>

	<i>member of this decision-making process and the rationale and supporting data is included in the IEP and the student's ESE file.</i>
16.	<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><i>The District ESE team collaborates with the district assessment team (DAT) to assist schools in verifying the validity of the number of students taking the alternate assessment by conducting thorough review of records upon placement and enrollment in Florida Scholars Academy, regularly reviewing compliance reports, and utilizing electronic spreadsheets to ensure only students who are eligible are taking the FAA. In addition, the ESE Manager conducts trimester internal audits of randomly selected student files to verify eligibility evidence. Results will be shared with the DAT, instructional leaders and ESE leads with corrective actions as needed.</i></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><i>Florida Scholars Academy was established and opened as a district in July of 2024. As was the inaugural year, baseline data was collected in the 2024-2025 SY and no improvement activities were required or implemented. 2024-2025 SY, FLDOE on-site and desktop monitoring of FAA processes and procedures, and programming for students with significant cognitive disabilities resulted in no corrective action required.</i></p>
18.	<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><i>Progress monitoring activities to assist in determining the effectiveness of this action plan include: The District Instructional Leader of ESE (Marci Knight), the District of Accountability and School Performance (Eric Holland), the District Assessment Coordinator (DAC- Catherine Adcock) verifying total number and percentage of testers as well as number and percentage of students with disabilities taking the FAA. The DAC, ESE Manager (Micheal Green) and individual student case managers analyze prior years FAA test results to identify students earning advanced or perfect FAA scores to determine readiness for participation in FAST progress monitoring or EOC assessments with support. The ESE Manager</i></p>

	<p><i>will also monitor FAA participation rates by site and grade level each trimester. Sites exceeding the district average will receive targeted support and problem-solving sessions to address barriers to reducing FAA participation. Internal audits of IEPs and accompanying documentation each trimester to ensure comprehensive measures were taken to support eligibility or exclusionary criteria will be conducted by ESE Managers, shared with the ESE Administrator/Instructional Leaders, and reviewed with applicable team members for corrective action if needed. Each trimester, a virtual data day will be held with all members of the district ESE department to review individual student data, identify trends and patterns within the district, and determine appropriate next steps for increased achievement or corrective action.</i></p>
19.	<p>What professional learning will your staff complete for the 2025-26 SY?</p> <p><i>Applicable staff will be provided with FAA administration training prior to the test window. Additionally, two FSA ESE managers participated in the 2025 BSIS Professional Learning that included support from Project 10. Information provided included: understanding Florida’s approach to educating students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and teaching Florida’s state academic standards, walking through an example starting with a general education lesson, drilling down to a hypothetical entry point for the lesson, and discovering resources that can be used immediately. Select staff will also participate in ISRD regional Staffing Specialist meetings that include the following applicable professional learning opportunity: Making Data Based Decisions: Access Points & Alternative Assessment, provided by Chelsea Strickland, BEESS. FSA ESE team members participate in weekly team meetings which include updates to rules and regulations, best practices in special education and data driven discussions to increase student achievement. All FSA ESE team members have been provided one hour weekly dedicated solely to their professional development. Team members may choose from recommended trainings or self-selected trainings and are required to document their participation on a digital tracker which also describes the professional development opportunity and the impact the learning will have on our students.</i></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><i>To reduce the percentage of Florida Scholar Academy students participating in the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA), FSA will implement a multi-pronged strategy focused on early identification, targeted support, and inclusive practices such as supporting MTSS interventionists, ESE team members collaborating with the intervention team to ensure students with disabilities are able to participate in Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions without conflicting with their ESE services,</i></p>

ensuring students with disabilities receive instruction alongside their nondisabled peers during the school day, training all staff on best practices when working with students with significant cognitive disabilities, including how to differentiate instruction and provide accommodation and when and how to refer a student with a suspected disability. In addition, ESE instructors will provide individualized and small group explicit instruction in foundational skills of reading and math. FSA will continue to conduct thorough reviews of all incoming students with IEPs, collaborate with the DJJ Deputy Director of Education/IDEA Compliance Manager, Nick Johnson and state discretionary projects such as FDLRS, CARD, FIN, Project-10, SEDNET and Project Access.

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.

Julian Cazañas, Jr.

Signature of Superintendent

10/22/2025

Date

Signature of Exceptional Student Education
Director

10/22/2025

Date

Eric Holland

Signature of Director of Data

10/22/2025

Date