

Florida Department of Education

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

LEA: Polk 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>Each year, our department reviews the previous years assessment participation for the district. The district has set a target of 98% for all assessments. Discussions occur on a regular basis between our AAE and ESE departments about students with disabilities participating in assessments for FAST and/or EOC's along with Alternate Assessment. Using school based and district reports from our Student Information System, the team monitors and communicates areas/schools where the participation rate is not meeting expectations.</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: 1.7% Math: 1.7% Science: 1.8%</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: 1.7% Math: 1.7% Science: 1.7%</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>ELA: 98.7% Math: 98.1% Science: 97.7%</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: 98% Math: 98% 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>Polk County is documented to be the fastest growing county in the state of Florida. We are seeing in increase of students with disabilities, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities enroll in our schools from northern states. Our district is close to two large cities (Tampa and Orlando) and the cost of living in Polk County is less so many families move to our county to live and work in the larger cities. We have a large population of migrant students within certain cities within our large county. Even though our district enrollment has increased over the last 5 years, the percentage of students on alternate assessment has not increased proportionately. We maintained a 1.7% in ELA and only increased .1% in Math and Science.</p>
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): Primary- 57%; Secondary- 8% Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Primary- 36%; Secondary- 5% Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): Primary- <1%; Secondary-<1% Other Health Impairment (OHI): Primary- 5%; Secondary- 8%</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>

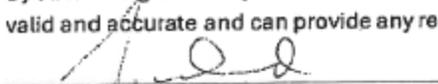
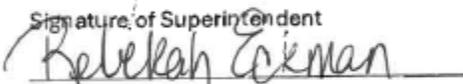
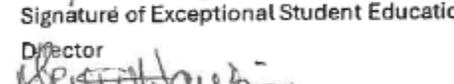
	<p>All of our students who attend our 3 center schools are assessed on alternate assessment. We also have 2 charter schools in our district that support students on Access points. Together, these 5 schools account for 31% of the total number of students assessed. The next largest number are high schools as they have more students than elementary or middle schools. Looking at the data regionally, the Northeast region, which includes cities such as Haines City and Davenport, has the largest number of students on alternate assessment in each of the three types of schools. This is aligned with the increase in population of this area of our county, as well as the fact the schools in this region are much larger than schools in other regions of the county. When looking at the total number of students per school and the number of students on alternate assessment, there are not any schools that have a ratio that is larger than others, with the exception of our public and charter center schools. Even though our district enrollment has increased over the last 5 years, the percentage of students on alternate assessment has not increased proportionately. We maintained a 1.7% in ELA and only increased .1% in Math and .2% in Science.</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>In reviewing the data provided from the state for the 23-24 assessment, there are 4 areas that the risk ratio is over 2. Three of the four are male in all subject areas and the fourth is American Indian/Native Alaskans in Science only. There are about 2,000 more males taking assessments throughout the county, but almost double taking alternate assessment. This can be attributed to the fact that males are more likely to be diagnosed with ASD and IND throughout the country. For the 25-26 school year, our district will work to review each male who is taking the alternate assessment to ensure that the data is recent (within 3 years) and hold IEP meetings if it is not to discuss re-evaluation needs. If the data is current and accurate, our district staff will continue to work to educate staff about the overidentification of males and how to identify female students who may have a disability but present differently in their needs than males.</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>Our district has met the 95% participation rate for the since the 21-22 school year. We worked to train additional district staff members in alternate assessment so that we could ensure that all students were assessed and by staff who knew how to provide the assessments using the guidelines set by the state. We maintain communication with our assessment department to ensure that schools are be provided with information about how students with disabilities should be included in assessments, whether state standardized assessments with accommodations or alternate assessments based on cognitive impairment.</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>Our district has a questionnaire/checklist that is completed at each IEP meeting when discussing if a student is eligible to be on access point curriculum and require alternate assessment, even if the student has been on access point curriculum and taken alternate assessment in the previous years. This checklist is embedded within the IEP and is modeled after the state checklist. This checklist and eligibility requirements for students is reviewed every year with district staff who support the IEP team when determining if a student is eligible for alternate assessment.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<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>In order for students to be found eligible to participate in alternate assessment, the IEP team must review the data and complete the Alternate Assessment Eligibility page embedded in the IEP. The two page document asks questions that are aligned with the criteria in Rule 6A-1.0943 using sections (4)(e) (1-11) F.A.C..</p>
<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>Our district has removed students since the rule change by the state. The data that was reviewed in each case was different. Some data that was used was a re-evaluation that a team requested to get an update IQ to determine if the student was still eligible under the cognitive deficit requirement. Additional data that was</p>

	<p>reviewed was how a student performed on the alternate assessment. Students who were scoring high or perfect, had their data reviewed to determine if they still need to take the alternate assessment or if they could participate in standardized assessment with accommodations in place. The data was reviewed at the IEP meeting and the team used the checklist within the IEP to determine that the students no longer qualified for Alternate assessment and the IEP was written to support them taking standardized assessments.</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>At each IEP meeting, the team discusses what the criteria is for students to participate in Access Points and FAA and how this allows the student to get a standard diploma using alternate standards. The IEP is printed in the family’s native language and translators are used during meetings as needed. Parents must provide consent each year allowing their child to participate in Access Points and Alternate Assessment each year at the IEP review.</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>FSA scores are distributed to schools and district staff at the beginning of the year. IEP teams include the most recent alternate assessment scores within the IEP and the data is discussed at the IEP meeting. District compliance staff identifies students who have perfect scores and participated in the IEP meeting to discuss if access point/alternate assessment is still appropriate for the student.</p>
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>Students on Alternate Assessment are provided to district staff at the beginning of the year to review who participated and if they were qualified to participate. Regional senior managers will have conversations with school leaders about any students who are reported as taking alternate assessment who fell into categories of concern (not scheduled into Access courses, students who have primary exceptionalities that are not eligible for alternate assessment, etc.) and make corrections to upcoming assessments. The Compliance leadership team</p>

	will monitor reports monthly to ensure that students who are scheduled into Access classes and assigned to take Alternate assessment are qualified.
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>District staff was provided with training on how to run monitoring reports and criteria was reviewed in the fall. Our percentage rate of students being assessed did not increase so these activities were effective. Continued training in monitoring will continue this school year.</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>Our progress monitoring activity will be to run monthly reports using our student information system by our district compliance staff and in collaboration with our Assessment, Accountability, and Evaluation department to ensure all students scheduled to take FSAA are qualified to take this assessment.</p>
19.	<p>What professional learning will your staff complete for the 2025-26 SY?</p> <p>Our staff will complete training on the eligibility criteria for alternate assessment. They will also review data regarding the 1% cap and what we can do to ensure that only students who meet all criteria for alternate assessment will participate.</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>Reviews of IEP's for students who have been initially placed on access point instruction and guiding questions for IEP teams when determining if a student should be instructed on Access Points.</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.

	<u>9/30/25</u>
Signature of Superintendent	Date
	<u>10.1.25</u>
Signature of Exceptional Student Education Director	Date
	<u>10/1/25</u>
Signature of Director of Data	Date