



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

June 17, 2024

The Honorable Lizzette Reynolds
Commissioner of Education
Tennessee Department of Education
Ninth Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243-0375

Dear Commissioner Reynolds:

I am writing regarding the Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE's) percentage of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities taking an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) limits the percentage of students that a State may assess with an AA-AAAS to no more than 1.0 percent of all assessed students in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science.

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) recognizes that this was a new requirement starting in the 2017-2018 school year and that most States previously assessed more than 1.0 percent of students with the AA-AAAS. We further understand that States have needed time to adjust their systems to reduce AA-AAAS participation rates.

For the 2022-2023 school year, TDOE submitted the following AA-AAAS rates to the Department via *EDFacts*:

Reading/language arts: 1.19% **Mathematics:** 1.09% **Science:** 1.40%

The State's AA-AAAS participation rates all increased since the 2021-2022 school year and remain above 1.0 percent. As a result, I am placing a condition TDOE's fiscal year 2023 Title I, Part A grant award. To remove the condition, TDOE must:

1. Within 60 days of receiving this letter, submit an updated plan for reducing the rate of AA-AAAS participation in future years in order to comply with the 1.0 percent requirement. Please submit this plan by email to the Department at ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.
2. Submit evidence that the State's plan and timeline are made publicly available on the State's website when the plan is provided to the Department.
3. Demonstrate substantial progress in reducing the percentage of students tested on alternate assessments in the 2023-2024 school year as validated by TDOE's *EDFacts* assessment participation data submission.

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The condition will remain in effect until the State can demonstrate it has assessed less than 1.0 percent of students with an alternate assessment.

If the State continues to report AA-AAAS rates over 1.0 percent in future years, the Department may take additional action. This is particularly true if the State is unable to demonstrate that it is making progress reducing the percentage of students taking the AA-AAAS.

The Department continues to support Tennessee and all States in meeting this critical ESEA requirement. I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for students. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Adam Schott
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Jennifer Jordan, Assistant Commissioner of Special Education and Intervention Programs