



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

March 19, 2019

TO LEA Superintendents
Charter School Directors

FROM LaTeesa Allen, Interim Deputy Superintendent
Office of Deputy Superintendent of Innovation

Tammy Howard, Director
Division of Accountability Services

Sherry Thomas, Director
Exceptional Children Division

JUSTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR EXCEEDING 1.0 PERCENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are eligible to take an alternate assessment aligned with the alternate academic achievement standards (see the attached NCEXTEND1 eligibility criteria and *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart*). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and charter schools must provide sufficient training such that school staff who participate as members of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team understand the eligibility criteria and implement the guidelines established by the state so that all students are appropriately assessed.

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject using the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards does not exceed 1.0 percent of the total number of all students assessed in each subject. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has reviewed the participation data for the NCEXTEND1 assessment in 2017–18 and found at the state level that over 1.0 percent of students in North Carolina participated in some of the NCEXTEND1 content areas. Additionally, data showed there are more than 100 districts and more than 40 charter schools that exceeded the 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment during the 2017–18 school year.

Based on the 2017–18 school year participation data, the NCDPI anticipates the state will exceed the 1.0 percent cap on alternate assessment participation in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading at grades 3–8, Mathematics at grade 11, Science at grades 5 and 8, and Science at grade 11 for the 2018–19 school year.

Table 1

Subject and Grade(s)	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
Mathematics Grades 3–8*	7,722	712,177	1.1%
Mathematics Grade 11*	1,170	101,504	1.2%
ELA/Reading Grades 3–8*	7,732	712,478	1.1%
ELA/Reading Grade 10	1,010	114,483	0.9%
Science Grades 5 & 8*	2,630	232,304	1.1%
Science Grade 11*	1,169	103,986	1.1%

*Subject areas that exceed 1.0 percent of test population.

DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY SERVICES

6307 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6307 | (919) 807-3787 | Fax (919) 807-3772

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

As required by the ESSA, the NCDPI must notify districts and charter schools that are identified (based on 2017–18 school year participation data) as being likely to exceed 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject area (i.e., ELA/Reading, Mathematics, and/or Science) on the NCEXTEND1 for the 2018–19 school year. These identified districts and charter schools must provide the NCDPI a justification of the need to assess more than 1.0 percent of its students on the NCEXTEND1 in any assessed subject. Districts and charter schools that did not exceed 1.0 percent in 2017–18, but anticipate exceeding in 2018–19, must also submit a justification.

To assist in this process, assessment participation data for districts and charter schools is located on the secure shell at 2018/ALTPARTXXX.xls (XXX is the LEA or charter school code). Superintendents and charter school directors must review this data and determine if participation on the NCEXTEND1 in any subject (i.e., ELA/Reading, Mathematics, and/or Science) may possibly exceed the 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment for the 2018–19 school year.

If it is determined the participation is anticipated to exceed 1.0 percent, the ESSA requires the district or charter school to complete and submit a justification. Justifications from each district and charter school will be reviewed by the NCDPI, and follow up actions will be determined based on the information in the justification document. Each district's and charter school's staff for students with disabilities and testing/accountability should collaborate to provide the justification. A copy of the justification form is attached to this memo, and an electronic copy to complete is posted on the Testing News Network (TNN) home page under the Administrative Documents section.

The completed justification document must be signed by the superintendent/charter school director, Exceptional Children's' director/coordinator, and LEA/charter school test coordinator. The document must be completed electronically, scanned, and emailed to alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov by May 3, 2019. Per ESSA, the justification documents must be publicly posted. As such, the document must not contain any personally identifiable student information. The NCDPI will notify districts/charter schools in writing if further information is needed and will include next steps. For questions, please contact your district Exceptional Children Director or Regional Accountability Coordinator.

As always, thank you for all you do for our schools and for ensuring that we appropriately instruct and assess all students in North Carolina.

LA:TLH:ST:mkm

c: Mark Johnson, State Superintendent
Maria Pitre-Martin, Deputy State Superintendent of District Support
Dave Machado, Director, Charter Schools
Dreana McCoy, Section Chief, Supporting Teaching and Related Services
Curtis Sonneman, Section Chief, Analysis and Reporting
Molly McGahey, Education Consultant, Testing Policy and Operations
Regional Accountability Coordinator
District Exceptional Children Director
Charter School Exceptional Children Coordinator
LEA/Charter School Test Coordinator

Attachments (3)

1.0 Percent Participation Justification Form 2018–19

The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* requires each district and charter school to complete and submit a justification when it anticipates exceeding 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject area (i.e., English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, and/or Science) with the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment. Justifications from each district and charter school will be reviewed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), and follow up actions will be determined based on the information found in the justification document. Staff from the Exceptional Children and Accountability Divisions in each district and charter school should collaborate to provide the following information on the justification document. Responses to Sections 1–4 and the designated signatures are required; it is optional to include additional information (see page 5). This justification document will be publicly posted. As such, the document **must not contain any personally identifiable information**. If necessary, additional pages may be attached to this form.

Section 1: Contact Information

Enter contact information for the primary district/charter school staff member responsible for overseeing the completion of the justification form.

3-Digit LEA/Charter Code: Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact Phone No.: Click or tap here to enter text.

District/Charter Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact Title: Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact E-Mail: Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 2: Analyzing Contributing Factors

Did your Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams utilize the alternate assessment eligibility criteria and the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart to make alternate assessment participation decisions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Indicate how all members of the IEP teams have been informed or trained on the alternate assessment eligibility criteria and the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision Making Flow Chart. Check all that apply.

Training Method	School Administration	Special Education Staff	Parents	Related Service Staff
Face-to-face training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Given copy of guidance documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No training provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please explain below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**1.0 Percent Participation
Justification Form 2018–19**

Other, please explain below:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does your district or charter school identify students to participate in the alternate assessment that do not traditionally participate (i.e., Speech and Language Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, etc.)? If yes, please explain how the district determined these students meet the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Explain below:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does your district or charter school provide a targeted program that may contribute to a higher enrollment of students with significant cognitive disabilities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Explain below:

Click or tap here to enter text.

1.0 Percent Participation Justification Form 2018–19

Does your district or charter school have a small overall student population that increased the likelihood of exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Explain below:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 3: Assurances

Does your district or charter school have a process in place to monitor alternate assessment participation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Explain below:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does your district or charter school have a process in place to identify and address disproportionality in alternate assessment participation (specifically, among race, gender, or socioeconomic status groups)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Explain below:

Click or tap here to enter text.

1.0 Percent Participation Justification Form 2018–19

Section 4: Resources and Technical Assistance

What resources and technical assistance does your district or charter school need from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to ensure that students are being assessed using the appropriate assessment?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Signatures

Superintendent/Charter School Director	_____	Date	_____
Exceptional Children Director/Coordinator	_____	Date	_____
LEA/Charter School Test Coordinator	_____	Date	_____

The completed justification form must be signed by the superintendent/charter school director, exceptional children's director/coordinator, and LEA/charter school testing coordinator. The form must be scanned and emailed to alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov by May 3, 2019.

The NCDPI will notify districts/charter schools in writing if further information is needed and will include next steps. For questions, please contact your Exceptional Children Director or Regional Accountability Coordinator.

Note: See page 5 for additional information that can be included but is not required.

The following additional information can be included with the justification documentation, but is not required:

- Evidence that all educators who administer the alternate assessment meet the requirements for test administrators and have received test administration training prior to administering the alternate assessment.
- Evidence that all students have appropriate access to accessibility features on statewide tests.
- A review of the percentage of students taking the alternate assessment at grade 3 versus grades 4–7 versus grade 8 versus high school and an explanation of how Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are making consistent participation decisions across grade levels.
- A review of data to determine if students are moving from the alternate assessment to the general assessment or vice versa and an explanation for grade levels where this action is more prevalent.
- Evidence that the district is providing appropriate supports and services to students with disabilities to assist in meeting the same graduation requirements as their non-disabled peers.
- An evaluation of students instructed using the Extended Content Standards, but who are spending more than eighty percent (80%) of their day in the general education setting.
- Evidence of data-driven team decisions to determine appropriate instruction and assessment.
- An assessment of varying practices across a district and/or between different schools.
- An explanation of special programs or populations that are served by the district/charter school that may contribute to the alternate assessment participation rate.

NCEXTEND1 Eligibility Criteria Grades 3–8, 10 and 11

To determine participation in any of the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments, the following eligibility requirements must be met:

- The student must have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The student is enrolled in grades 3–8, 10, or 11, according to PowerSchool.
- The student is instructed using the North Carolina Extended Content Standards in all assessed content areas (i.e., English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, and Science).
- The student has a significant cognitive disability.
 - The student's disability significantly impacts adaptive behaviors, defined as those skills which are essential for someone to live and function independently.
 - The student requires extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains.
 - The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways.

The vast majority of students with disabilities do not have a significant cognitive disability. The NCEXTEND1 is not appropriate for students who

- are being instructed in any or all of the assessed general grade-/course-level content standards of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* (i.e., English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, and Science);
- demonstrate delays only in academic achievement;
- demonstrate delays only in selected areas of academic achievement;
- demonstrate delays attributed to primarily to behavioral issues; or
- if in high school, are pursuing a North Carolina high school diploma (including students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study pathway).

Evidence for the decision to participate in NCEXTEND1 is not based on;

- a disability category or label;
- poor attendance or extended absences;
- native language/social, cultural, or economic differences;
- expected poor performance on the general education assessment;
- academic or other services the student receives;
- educational environment or instructional setting;
- percent of time receiving special education services;
- English Learner (EL) status;
- low reading level/achievement level;
- anticipated disruptive behavior;
- impact of student scores on the accountability program;
- administration decision;
- anticipated emotional distress; or
- need for accommodations to participate in the assessment process.

North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Chart

Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams can utilize this chart to determine if a student is eligible to take the NCEXTEND1. In order for a student to be eligible to take the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment, the answer to each question must be “yes.”

