

STAAR Alternate 2

2024 Justification and Assurances Summary



Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), requires states to provide information to the U.S. Department of Education if the state anticipates that more than 1.0 percent of the total number of students assessed statewide will be assessed with an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). States who anticipate exceeding the 1.0 percent participation threshold for students assessed with an AA-AAAS must also request from local educational agencies (LEAs) information that includes a justification for exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold and assurances that the LEA is following alternate assessment guidance.

Based on testing data from the 2023–2024 school year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) identified LEAs that assessed more than 1.0 percent of their students with the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Alternate 2 (Texas' AA-AAAS). In October 2024, TEA notified each LEA that exceeded the 1.0 percent threshold that it was required to complete the STAAR Alternate 2 Justification and Assurances Form, which is available on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Resources](#) webpage. Responses from 648 identified LEAs were analyzed and are summarized in this document.

Special Education Disability Codes

The STAAR Alternate 2 Justification and Assurances Form asked LEAs to report the primary disability codes of students assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in spring 2024.

LEAs responded to this question by entering the number of students assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in spring 2024 under each disability category. Respondents were also asked to confirm the students' primary disability coding through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). Table 1 shows by disability category the number of students assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 as reported by LEAs.

Table 1. Primary Disability for Students Assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in 2024

Primary Disability	Number of Students Assessed
Orthopedic Impairment	429
Other Health Impairment	3,442
Auditory Impairment	0
Visual Impairment	329
Deaf-Blindness	1,256
Intellectual Disability	19,661
Emotional Disturbance	176
Specific Learning Disability	76
Speech Impairment	142
Autism	17,647
Traumatic Brain Injury	252

Justification

The form required LEAs to select one of the following four options as the LEA's primary justification for assessing more than 1.0 percent of its student population with STAAR Alternate 2.

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- (a) The small size (less than 1,300 students) of the LEA results in a greater impact on participation rates (for example, an LEA of 100 students with 2 students identified with the most significant cognitive disabilities results in a higher than 1.0 percent participation rate).

Of the LEAs that responded, 337 (or 52.0 percent) indicated that small student population was the primary contributing factor for more than 1.0 percent of its students participating in STAAR Alternate 2. Respondents who selected justification (a) were asked to provide the most recent enrollment of the LEA, which had to be less than 1,300 for the respondent to be able to proceed with submitting the form. Table 2 shows the student enrollment ranges of the LEAs that chose small size as their primary justification.

Table 2. Student Enrollment of Small LEAs

Total Student Enrollment	0–250	251–500	501–750	751–1000	1001–1299
Number of LEAs	85	81	74	47	50

- (b) The LEA provides a targeted campus that draws large numbers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

TEA acknowledges that some LEAs include targeted campuses that attract students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and their families to their attendance zones. Of the LEAs that responded, 22 (or 3.4 percent) indicated that a targeted campus was the primary contributing factor to having more than 1.0 percent of its students participate in STAAR Alternate 2. Respondents who selected justification (b) were asked to provide the county-district-campus (CDC) number of the specific targeted campuses. TEA will review these entries and follow up with LEAs as needed.

- (c) The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee lacks the necessary knowledge or training to effectively use the participation requirements when identifying students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Only 15 LEAs (or 2.3 percent) identified this as the primary reason for assessing more than 1.0 percent of their students with STAAR Alternate 2. The small number of responses for this justification indicates that LEAs feel more confident in their understanding of the updated STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements. Respondents who selected justification (c) were asked whether they would like to be contacted by TEA for additional training, resources, or technical assistance. TEA will review these responses and provide the LEAs with the necessary assistance to help them make appropriate assessment decisions.

- (d) None of the situations above apply.

The 274 LEAs (or 42.3 percent) that chose option (d) were provided with an opportunity to describe the circumstances that impacted their populations of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities if other justifications did not apply. Among the circumstances reported, LEAs identified being located near health care centers or facilities that offer medical services for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, being responsible for providing special education services and resources based on a shared service arrangement with other LEAs, and

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improved special education programs having the effect of increasing the enrollment of students who meet the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2.

Disproportionality

The form requested that LEAs determine whether disproportionality was found in their STAAR Alternate 2 participation rate data.

LEAs responded to this question by using the STAAR Alternate 2 Disproportionality Calculation guidance document and their spring 2024 data provided by TEA to identify disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup taking STAAR Alternate 2. Table 3 shows the number and percentage of LEAs who reported identifying disproportionality.

Table 3. LEAs with Reported Disproportionality in STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Rates

Disproportionality in STAAR Alternate 2 Data	Number of LEAs	Percentage
Yes	180	27.8%
No	468	72.2%

The LEAs that responded “Yes” to identifying disproportionality in their STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates were then required to select all subgroups where disproportionality was found. Table 4 shows the number of times the subgroup was selected and the percentage of the 180 LEAs with disproportionality in STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates that selected the subgroup.

Table 4. Subgroups with Disproportionality in STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Rates

Subgroup	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs with Disproportionality
African American	67	37.2%
American Indian	16	8.9%
Asian	29	16.1%
Hispanic	79	43.9%
Pacific Islander	9	5.0%
Two or more races	62	34.4%
White	84	46.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	81	45.0%
English Learner (EL)	32	17.8%
Female	52	28.9%
Male	95	52.8%

Additionally, the 180 LEAs who responded “Yes” to identifying disproportionality in their STAAR Alternate 2 data were required to describe the actions they will take to address the identified disproportionality. The LEAs reported that they will continue to provide professional development, training, and resources to district personnel to ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are assessed with STAAR Alternate 2. The LEAs also cited plans to instruct ARD committees to carefully review the STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements to ensure that assessment decisions are made based on those criteria.

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STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements

LEAs were required to determine whether any students had participated in STAAR Alternate 2 with Specific Learning Disability (SLD) or Speech Impairment (SI) as the only disability designation. Of the LEAs who responded, 16 (or 2.5 percent) indicated that they have students with SLD or SI as the only disability designation participating in STAAR Alternate 2. The LEAs that responded “Yes” were asked to describe how and when ARD committees will reevaluate STAAR Alternate 2 participation decisions. LEAs reported plans for verifying that ARD committees use the participation requirements to make appropriate assessment decisions for the 2024–2025 school year.

Assurances

The final section of the form required LEAs to assure that they will have each of the following conditions in place for the 2024–2025 school year.

- (a) The LEA implements clear and appropriate guidelines, consistent with the STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements, for ARD committees to apply in determining on a case-by-case basis which students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be assessed with the alternate assessment.
- (b) The LEA ensures that the determination of a student’s participation in STAAR Alternate 2 is not based *solely* on the student’s particular disability, English proficiency level, previous low academic achievement, or previous need for accommodations to participate in assessments.
- (c) The LEA ensures ARD committees are provided with a clear explanation of the differences between the general and alternate assessments including the effect participation in alternate assessments may have on completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma.
- (d) Parents and guardians in the LEA are informed that their child’s achievement will be measured based on alternate academic achievement standards and how participation in such assessments may affect the student in completing the requirements for a regular high school diploma.
- (e) The LEA ensures students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are not precluded from attempting to complete the requirements for a regular high school diploma.
- (f) The LEA ensures students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are included, to the extent possible, in the general education curriculum based on the academic content standards for the grades in which the students are enrolled.
- (g) The LEA disseminates information on and promotes the use of appropriate accommodations to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities who do not meet the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 participate in grade level academic instruction and assessments.
- (h) The LEA will address any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any focal group taking STAAR Alternate 2.