

# STAAR Alternate 2

## 2021 Assurances and Justification Summary

On December 27, 2021, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) requested a waiver extension from the United States Department of Education (USDE) regarding the 1.0 percent state cap on the number of students statewide who participate in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Alternate 2. The *2021-2022 Texas One Percent Cap Waiver Request* can be found on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Resources](#) webpage. States who request a waiver of the 1.0 percent cap must also request information from local education agencies (LEAs) which includes justification for exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold for students assessed with an alternate assessment and assurances that the LEA is following alternate assessment guidance.

Based on testing data from the 2020-2021 school year, TEA identified 721 (LEAs), out of more than 1,200 Texas, with STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates exceeding 1.0 percent. Included in the plan to make progress on assessing only students with significant cognitive disabilities with the alternate assessment is the notification and completion of the STAAR Alternate 2 Assurances and Justification form by each LEA that exceeded the 1.0 percent threshold. The responses from LEAs were analyzed and are summarized in this document.

The STAAR Alternate 2 Assurances and Justification form required each LEA exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold to report primary disability information for the students who were assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in spring 2021. Table 1 shows the number of students assessed in each disability category as reported by LEAs.

**Table 1. Primary disability information for students assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in 2021**

Primary Disability	Number of Students Assessed with STAAR Alternate 2
Auditory Impairment	203
Autism	10,920
Deaf-Blindness	83
Emotional Disturbance	245
Intellectual Disability	18,695
Orthopedic Impairment	362
Other Health Impaired	3,088
Specific Learning Disability	88
Speech Impairment	142
Traumatic Brain Injury	231
Visual Impairment	248

\*Pending analysis of all LEA data

**Section 1 of the form asked LEAs to indicate the type of training on participation requirements that was provided to each member of the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee.**

LEAs responded to this question by indicating the training opportunities that were provided to school personnel and parents regarding state assessment decisions for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Some LEAs reported that multiple types of trainings were provided. This information helps TEA understand what training resources should be developed in the future. Table 2 describes the number of LEAs who reported they had conducted particular types of training, including the audience for the training and the mode in which the training was delivered.

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Table 2. STAAR Alternate 2 training provided to LEA staff and parents

		Target Audience			
		School administrators	Special education staff	Parents	Related service staff
Training Mode	Face-to-face training	549	621	205	484
	Web-based resources	374	424	185	336
	Provided guidance documents	485	508	457	433
	No training provided	4	1	51	23

Section 2 required LEAs to indicate the primary justification for assessing more than 1.0 percent of its student population with STAAR Alternate 2.

**Justification 2a. The small district/charter school size results in a greater impact on participation rates (for example, a district size of 180 students with 2 students with significant cognitive disabilities results in a higher than 1.0% participation rate).**

Of the LEAs responding, 447 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 were given number ranges to choose from for their small student enrollment. Table 3 shows the student enrollment ranges for the LEAs that chose small district/charter school as its primary justification.

Table 3. Student enrollment for LEAs exceeding the 1.0 percent STAAR Alternate 2 threshold

		Total Student Enrollment						
		0–250 students	251–500 students	501–750 students	751–1000 students	1001–1250 students	1251–2000 students	2001+ students
Number of LEAs		88	75	84	44	33	68	55

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**Justification 2b. The district or charter school includes school, community, or health program(s) that draw large numbers of students with significant cognitive disabilities.**

TEA acknowledges that some LEAs include special programs within its attendance zone that attract students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and their families. Out of the 721 LEAs that responded, 196 (27.2%) indicated that a nearby school, community, or health program is the primary contributing factor to having more than 1.0 percent of its students participate in STAAR Alternate 2. Table 4 shows the number of LEAs that indicated having a particular type of special program in its area.

**Table 4. Special program impacting STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates**

Number of LEAs	Type of special program reported
52	The district/charter school area contains <b>group homes, residential facilities, children’s homes, regional day schools, or state schools.</b>
24	The district/charter school area contains special <b>medical or mental health facilities</b> for children with significant cognitive disabilities.
33	The district/charter school provides access to <b>social services</b> for children with significant cognitive disabilities based on its location in proximity to surrounding rural areas.
55	The district/charter school has a <b>unique approach</b> to special education services and special programs that attracts families to their schools.
12	The district/charter school area contains a <b>military facility</b> that includes children with significant cognitive disabilities as a part of the Exceptional Family Member Program.
20	The district/charter school describes <b>other reasons</b> for drawing larger numbers of families with students with significant cognitive disabilities.

**Justification 2c. The ARD committee lacks the necessary knowledge to effectively use the participation requirements when defining a student as having a significant cognitive disability.**

When given an opportunity to choose this justification, no LEA identified this as the primary reason for assessing more than 1.0 percent of its students with STAAR Alternate 2. The lack of response for this justification provides evidence that LEAs are feeling more confident in their knowledge of the STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements.

**Justification 2d. None of the situations above apply.**

LEAs were provided an opportunity to describe the circumstances that impact its population of students with significant cognitive disabilities if the other justifications did not apply. Several LEAs cited the significant increase in enrollment of students receiving special education services to their region over the past year. Several LEAs reported close proximity to high poverty neighborhoods and cited a high number of birth defects in the region that results in more children with significant cognitive disabilities. Several LEAs also reported that they are responsible for providing specialized programs based on shared services arrangements with other LEAs.

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The final section required LEAs to review and certify each of the following assurances.

- Your district or charter school implements clear and appropriate guidelines, consistent with the STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements, to use in determining when a student’s significant cognitive disability justifies participation in the alternate assessment.
- Your district or charter school will address any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup taking STAAR Alternate 2.
- Parents are informed when their student will be assessed based on alternate achievement standards, including information about the implications of participation in STAAR Alternate 2.
- Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are included, to the extent possible, in the general curriculum and assessments aligned with that curriculum.
- Your district or charter school disseminates information and promotes the use of appropriate accommodations to increase the number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are tested against grade-level academic achievement standards.
- General and special education teachers and other appropriate staff are knowledgeable about the administration of assessments, including making appropriate use of accommodations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

The individual submitting the form must acknowledge the assurances with his or her initials and affirm that the superintendent or chief administrative officer of the LEA is aware of the information being submitted.

A sample preview of the [STAAR Alternate 2 Assurances and Justification](#) form can be found on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Resources](#) webpage.