

ATTACHMENT II

PLAN FOR DISTRICT OVERSIGHT AND SUPPORT

PURPOSE

Federal regulations under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require all states to assess less than 1.0 percent of the total tested student population with an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS), i.e. the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Alternate 2. During the 2017–2018 school year, Texas gathered and analyzed district data which was used to determine what training and oversight was needed to assist local education agencies (LEAs). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) believes that it can assist educators and parents in making the best assessment decisions through targeted training for Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams on the updated STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements, guidance on how to analyze local participation data, parent training explaining the nature of STAAR Alternate 2, and a statewide plan to monitor alternate assessment participation.

The purpose of the state assessment program is to measure achievement on state adopted curriculum standards and inform efforts to improve teaching and learning. The Texas alternate assessment, STAAR Alternate 2, exists to provide educators an assessment that is accessible for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the general statewide assessment, even with maximum allowable accommodations. TEA is committed to ensuring that students with special needs are provided an education with the services each student requires and are assessed with the most appropriate assessment. We are committed to ensuring that the state’s alternate assessment is administered only to those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

2018–2019 SCHOOL YEAR PROGRESS ON THE PRIOR YEAR’S PLAN

With the intent of ensuring that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an AA-AAAS, Texas developed a plan for the 2018 1.0 percent cap waiver request that included analyzing and making data available to LEAs, providing resources and support to parents, adding a monitoring component, and delivering guidance on use of revised participation requirements and definition of significant cognitive disability to each of Texas’ 20 regions. The following is a summary of the progress on the 2018–2019 Waiver Request plan.

2018–2019 School Year Waiver Request Plan	Action	Result
Targeted Outreach and Training for LEAs Exceeding 1.0 Percent Participation Rate	Provide foundational training to guide LEAs on how to review local participation data to assure only students with most significant cognitive disabilities are being assessed with STAAR Alternate 2.	Training was provided to district testing coordinators and special education directors at 11 of Texas’ 20 region service centers. The training included a workshop component to review and analyze local participation data and five-

		step training that school districts and charters can follow to ensure they are only assessing students with the most significant cognitive disabilities with an alternate assessment.
Analyzing and Making Data Available to LEAs	Deliver alternate assessment participation data to each LEA that assessed over 1.0 percent of assessed students in spring 2018. Guide LEAs through a process to review and analyze local participation data.	Over 800 LEAs received a data resource specific to their district or school charter alternate assessment participation rates showing overall participation counts and percentages. Subgroup participation counts were also provided for each subject/grade tested, race, ethnicity, gender, economically disadvantaged, and English learners. Through a workshop setting, each LEA's district testing personnel and special education staff worked through a series of activities to analyze their participation data and determine next steps to address local procedures.
Providing Resources and Support to Parents	Provide resources to support parents in their understanding of STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements.	The STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirement Companion Document was published and used during regional training to each of the over 800 LEAs with participation rates over 1.0 percent. The document shows parents a simplified flow chart of eligibility for alternate assessments. This document has also been promoted as a helpful tool for IEP teams to use when making a decision not to assess with STAAR Alternate 2. It helps illustrate how a student does not meet eligibility for the alternate assessment. Collaboration began with the Department of Special Education

		Programs to provide training to parents through their parent liaison team.
Adding a Monitoring Component	Every school district or charter school that exceeded the 1.0 percent participation rate submitted a justification/assurances document to the Student Assessment Division at the Texas Education Agency. The Division of Review and Support and the Student Assessment Division joined together to create a new special education indicator in the state’s monitoring system to monitor alternate assessment participation rates.	The justification/assurances document collected information from over 800 school districts and charter schools explaining why they have participation rates for alternate assessments exceeding the 1.0 percent. Information from this data collection supported training content and helped inform the type of technical assistance that is needed. The new special education monitoring indicator was implemented as a report only indicator for the 2018–2019 school year that will also provide important participation data specific to districts, campuses, and charter schools.
Delivering Guidance on STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements and Texas’ Definition of Significant Cognitive Disability	Training provided to specific stakeholder groups such as special education directors, regional technical specialists, and state special education evaluation specialists.	Training was provided to key stakeholder groups to guide school districts and charter schools in their interpretation of the state’s definition of significant cognitive disability and how the information could lead to adjusted assessment decisions. The training provided guidance on how to use the revised STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements and what groups of students may need to have assessment decisions reconsidered.

OVERVIEW

To continue to ensure that most students in the state are assessed with the general assessment and only students with significant cognitive disabilities are assessed with the alternate assessment, foundational training was provided to the remaining 9 regions in Texas. Now that special education directors from every region have a basic understanding of how new participation requirements should be used to make assessment decisions for students with significant cognitive disabilities, the Student Assessment Division will provide

mandatory training to a targeted group of districts and charter schools that represent large school district enrollment and whose spring 2019 STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates exceeded the state average.

Beginning November 2019, the state’s Division of Review and Support will put a special education indicator in place that is specific to the 1.0 percent participation rate for STAAR Alternate 2. The Division of Review and Support will use a checklist that includes questions specific to alternate assessment decisions during their cyclical review process. The Student Assessment Division will also continue to provide focused staff development to state leadership networks, such as special education evaluation staff, intense instruction state leads, and regional special education directors. The state leadership networks’ members will provide direct technical assistance to LEAs.

TEA’s Student Assessment Division has participated with the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) 1.0 Percent Community of Practice and analyzed data and information from other states that might inform Texas’ practice when addressing participation rates for STAAR Alternate 2. Based on a snapshot produced by the NCEO referencing 2016–2017 participation data, Texas experienced a lower AA-AAS participation rate than 19 other states in reading and 18 other states in math. (2016–2017 APR Snapshot #21 Participation and Performance Data).

Figure 1. Spring 2019 Participation Rates for STAAR Alternate 2

Description	Student Count	Percentage
Alternate 2 Tests, All Students Mathematics Numerator	41,836	1.5%
All Students, STAAR Mathematics Denominator	2,821,402	
Alternate 2 Tests, All Students Reading/ELA Numerator	47,136	1.3%
All Students, STAAR Reading/ELA Denominator	3,584,899	
Alternate 2 Tests, All Students Science Numerator	16,984	1.3%
All Students, STAAR Science Denominator	1,280,714	

Figure 1 shows statewide participation rates in mathematics, reading/ELA, and science are still above 1.0 percent; however, special populations data indicates that since the Special Education Strategic Plan has been put into place, special education referrals have been consistently increasing. Although special education referrals in Texas have had a continual increase for the years 2017 through 2019, rates of participation in STAAR Alternate 2 from 2018–2019 remained the same in reading/ELA and science.

Figure 2 shows the number of students whose primary disability is identified as Intellectual Disability (ID), Autism, or Other Health Impaired. These disability categories are important to note because they are the top three categories in which the majority of students taking STAAR Alternate 2 qualify for special education services. Although there were significant increases in the number of students qualifying for special education services in these three disability categories, the percentage of students assessed with an alternate assessment out of those identified consistently decreased over the last three years. In addition, these data increase confidence that participation decisions are not being made solely on a student’s primary disability, but IEP teams are looking at each student individually to make assessment decisions. For example, in the 2018–2019 school year the number of students in grades 3–8 who were identified for special education services under the primary disability category of ID was 28,642 in 2019 but only 18,828 students with ID were assessed with an alternate assessment.

Figure 2: STAAR Alternate 2 Disability Data Compared to Statewide Disability Data

	Students in grades 3–8 tested with alternate assessment/ Students in grades 3–8 identified for special education services		
	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Intellectual Disability (ID)	17,026/24,341	18,257/26,353	18,828/28,642
Percentage of students with ID who took an alternate assessment	69.9%	69.3%	65.7%
Autism (AU)	9,751/27,230	10,444/29,398	10,948/31,687
Percentage of students with AU who took an alternate assessment	35.8%	35.5%	34.6%
Other Health Impaired (OHI)	3,705/35,949	3,915/38,275	3,994/41,597
Percentage of students with OHI who took an alternate assessment	10.3%	10.2%	9.6%

PLAN OF ACTION TO SUPPORT AND PROVIDE OVERSIGHT

PROVIDING ENHANCED TRAINING MATERIALS AND TARGETED OUTREACH

“Addressing the 1.0 Percent Participation Rate for STAAR Alternate 2” training was delivered to over 300 special education directors and testing coordinators from the remaining 9 regions in the state. Now that foundational training has been completed, TEA will focus training and technical assistance to districts demonstrating significant needs that cannot be addressed sufficiently through the universal regional trainings. Mandatory trainings will be required of a target group of school districts and charter schools consisting of large school enrollment and participation rates above the state average. Targeted outreach to specific districts and charter schools will be accomplished through special education cyclical reviews to school districts and charter schools. The cyclical reviews will include an audit of some IEP documentation specifically related to assessment decisions. In addition, STAAR Alternate 2 participation data will be made available to the Division of Review and Support so district and charter reviews can be prioritized based on need.

Additional stakeholder specific training will be offered via various face to face and video conferencing platforms. The Student Assessment Division will also continue to provide focused staff development to state leadership networks, such as special education evaluation staff, intense instruction state leads, and regional special education directors so that they may provide technical support to districts and charter schools.

TEA is responding to a request from regional specialists to develop student profiles that the Statewide Intensive Program of Instruction lead specialists will use in regional training. The Student Assessment Division will conduct site visits and interviews to develop student profiles for use in training materials. Final student profiles will be published and posted on the STAAR Alternate 2 webpage.

ANALYZING AND MAKING AVAILABLE DATA TRENDS ACROSS THE STATE

The Student Assessment Division analyzed spring 2019 data and updated the data that will be presented during training for individual stakeholder groups. Key stakeholder training will include the presentation of

statewide data trends from spring 2019 and provide guidance for analysis of each district's and charter school's data.

Each of the almost 800 school districts and charter schools whose spring 2019 STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates exceeded 1.0 percent will receive LEA specific participation data in October 2019. The data will include participation rates by subject/grade, gender, race, ethnicity, economically disadvantaged status, and English learner status data. Each LEA's data is developed by the Division of Research and Analysis at the Texas Education Agency. LEA representatives participated in foundation training from January through September 2019 that provided guidance on data analysis.

As a result of regional trainings from January through September 2019, region specialists gathered data specific to particular districts that had exceptionally high participation rates or students identified as taking STAAR Alternate 2 with primary disability labels of Specific Learning Disability or Speech Impairment in order to provide direct technical assistance to those districts. Beginning in October 2019, the Division of Review and Support will take a greater role in reviewing and monitoring LEA participation data, which includes review of specific participation data, through a cyclical review process for key districts within the 20 regions of the state.

Updated data from the spring 2019 test administration will be presented at the state assessment conference along with trend data from 2017 through 2019.

PROVIDING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS

The Student Assessment Division will develop and publish a parent resource for STAAR Alternate 2 explaining graduation for students who are assessed with the STAAR Alternate 2 assessment. The parent brochure is scheduled to be published on the TEA website in fall 2019.

TEA has created a website (TexasAssessment.gov) to provide information and resources to parents regarding the state assessment program. This website has historically been a rich media source that provides information about the general assessment, but the agency is currently developing enhancements to the website to also support the alternate assessment. Enhancements to this website will explain the what, where, when, why, and how of the STAAR Alternate 2.

The Student Assessment Division will continue to coordinate with the Division of Special Populations' parent liaison team to participate in training opportunities that provide guidance on STAAR Alternate 2 parent resources.

ADDING A MONITORING COMPONENT

All LEAs whose spring 2019 STAAR Alternate 2 data indicated they exceeded the 1.0 percent participation threshold will receive email notification and complete a justification and assurances document. LEAs are required to describe the training that was delivered to IEP teams and parents regarding participation in an alternate assessment. They are also required to provide justification for why the LEA is assessing more than 1.0 percent of their tested population with an alternate assessment. Finally, each LEA must verify the following assurances that they followed state guidelines when making assessment decisions.

- Your district/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 this alternate assessment.
- Your district/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/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 Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) is a district-level, data-driven monitoring system developed and implemented annually by Performance-Based Monitoring (PBM) Division in coordination with other TEA divisions and departments. The PBMAS for the 2019–2020 school year will include a special education indicator specifically to monitor participation rates in the alternate assessment. The new PBMAS indicator will collect data and report district information for planning purposes. For this initial year, the special education indicator will have a report only status. The inclusion of report only indicators in PBMAS provides districts with an opportunity to review current data and inform instructional programs.

The TEA Division of Review and Support will be conducting cyclical reviews to provide general supervision and monitoring of LEAs to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations and to improve services and results for students with disabilities. The cyclical reviews will assist LEAs in resolving specific issues or concerns that impact services and outcomes for students with disabilities. The district and charter school review will include IEP documentation specifically related to alternate assessment decisions and the district’s responses regarding analysis of participation data. In addition, district and charter school STAAR Alternate 2 participation data will be made available to the Division of Review and Support so that it can be included in the reviews. Specific indicators that the Division of Review and Support will be reviewing pertaining to participation in the alternate assessment include the following.

- Explain the district’s training processes for parents regarding the STAAR Alternate 2 assessment (student experience, administration of, implications for curriculum and instruction).
- Explain the district’s processes for training IEP team members on identification of students for participation in the STAAR Alternate 2 assessment.
- Did analysis of the participation data show any anomalies in campus or district trends for students participating in STAAR Alternate 2? Explain the distribution based on performance levels, disability categories, and grades/subjects or courses.
- Did analysis of the STAAR Alternate 2 participation data reveal that there was a misunderstanding in eligibility criteria that was evident across the district, or at specific campuses? Specific individual(s)? Please elaborate.
- Other possible variables that may have contributed to the overrepresentation (mitigating circumstances)?
- Explain the district’s procedures for reviewing the disability data information for students participating in the alternate assessment. Identify trends or other information discovered upon a review of this data.
- Does a review of the student’s IEP show that the most recent Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE), Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), Accommodations, and Student Schedule accurately provide evidence of a student with a significant cognitive disability?

MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF OUR PLAN

TEA’s Student Assessment Division recognizes the minimal progress toward meeting the 1.0 percent cap on alternate assessment participate data since our original waiver was submitted and approved. However, when participation data for LEAs exceeding the 1.0-percent cap is broken out by region, the percentage of LEAs exceeding the 1.0 percent within a region decreased for more than half the regions. Over 50 percent of the regions had decreases of between 3 percent and 29 percent in the number of LEAs exceeding the cap for the last two years. The Student Assessment Division in conjunction with the Division of Review and Support will conduct in depth analysis of the regions that had significant decreases to explore the technical assistance that was provided and duplicate that assistance statewide.

It is our expectation that spring 2020 participation results will indicate a reduction in the percent of students taking an alternate assessment as IEP teams will have had sufficient time to reevaluate assessment decisions as a result of the training, guidance, and additional resources provided by TEA. In addition to adding a monitoring component, the agency’s “Addressing the 1.0 Percent Participation Rate for STAAR Alternate 2” training has been the most comprehensive action provided to LEAs. The foundational training began in January 2019, so by spring 2020 IEP teams should have had an opportunity to use the new participation requirements and adjust assessment decisions to ensure students are assessed appropriately.

TIMELINE

Texas’ assessment window for the STAAR Alternate 2 is open from March 30 to April 21, 2020. At least ninety days prior to the start of Texas’ alternate assessment window (December 20, 2019), the agency will submit a waiver request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) to assess more than 1.0 percent of assessed population in math, reading/ELA, and science.

November 2018–Present	Participate in bi-weekly calls with NCEO 1% Community of Practice.
January 10–February 4, 2019	Conduct region trainings for 11 educational service centers.
February 10, 2019	Publish companion document for STAAR Alt 2 Participation Requirements in English and Spanish.
February–April 2019	Participate in NCEO 2019 Peer Learning Group “Digging into Your Data: Building a 1% Data Analysis and Use Plan”.
May 2019	Integrate TEA’s Division of Review and Support monitoring plan with STAAR Alternate 2 monitoring plan.
June 11, 2019	Deliver South Texas Special Education Conference training on STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements.
June–August 2019	Participate in and submit resources for NCEO 2019 Peer Learning Group, “Guiding and Evaluating District Justifications for Exceeding the 1% Cap”.
August 2019	Receive and analyze spring 2019 participation data. Update training materials.
September 3–23, 2019	Conduct region trainings for remaining 9 educational service centers.
September–October 2019	Conduct webinars to train on Differentiated Monitoring and Support (Cyclical and Targeted Reviews).
September 27, 2019	Draft text for parent resource.
October–December 2019	Participate in NCEO 2019 Peer Learning Group “Building Capacity of IEP Teams and Parents/Guardians in Making Decisions about Assessment Participation”.
October 1, 2019	Conduct remote video meeting for regional special education directors.

October 2, 2019	Provide updated training all regional and large district assessment specialists.
October 3, 2019	Deliver training to district testing coordinators on upcoming email notification to LEAs exceeding the 1.0 percent cap and completing the justification and assurances form.
October 18, 2019	Provide video conference to all regional assessment staff regarding 2019 updates for STAAR Alternate 2.
October 25, 2019	Provide training through online video conferencing to regional liaison support staff to discuss technical assistance.
October 25, 2019	Email 700+ districts and charter schools letter indicating participation rates over 1.0 percent, spring 2019 participation data, and link for online justification and assurances form.
October 31, 2019	Explore plan to create an active monitoring checklist and have the Student Assessment Division conduct random site visits during STAAR Alternate 2 testing window.
November 2019	Approve and post parent brochure to TEA website.
October 28–November 15, 2019	Conduct site visits and interviews to create student profiles of appropriate eligibility decisions for STAAR Alternate 2.
November 5, 2019	Present updated STAAR Alternate 2 participation data at Texas Assessment Conference.
November 18–22, 2019	Distribute drafted student profile to state network for Intensive Program of Instruction for review and comments.
November 22, 2019	Receive all justifications and assurances forms submitted by districts and charter schools.
November 22, 2019	Complete plan for targeted technical assistance to districts and charters.
November 8–December 10, 2019	Post waiver extension for public comment.
December 20, 2019	Submit waiver extension to USDE.
January 10, 2020	Publish student profiles to be used in training materials.
March 30–April 21, 2020	Administer STAAR Alternate 2 testing statewide.
August 2020	Analyze spring 2020 STAAR Alternate 2 data.