

# STAAR Alternate 2

## 2023 Justification and Assurances Summary



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

Based on testing data from the 2022–2023 school year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) identified LEAs that assessed more than 1.0 percent of its students with the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Alternate 2 (Texas’ AA-AAAS). In November 2023, TEA notified each LEA that exceeded the 1.0 percent participation threshold of its requirement to complete the [STAAR Alternate 2 Justification and Assurances Form](#). A PDF version of the form was also made available on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Resources](#) webpage for reference. Responses from 811 identified LEAs are 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 2023.**

LEAs responded to this question by entering the number of students assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in spring 2023 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 the number of students assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 by each disability category as reported by LEAs.

**TABLE 1. PRIMARY DISABILITY FOR STUDENTS ASSESSED WITH STAAR ALTERNATE 2 IN 2023**

Primary Disability	Number of Students Assessed
Orthopedic Impairment	559
Other Health Impairment	4,822
Auditory Impairment	242
Visual Impairment	409
Deaf-Blindness	140
Intellectual Disability	26,166
Emotional Disturbance	307
Specific Learning Disability	214
Speech Impairment	186
Autism	18,843
Traumatic Brain Injury	302

### Justification

**The form required LEAs to select the primary justification for assessing more than 1.0 percent of its student population with STAAR Alternate 2.**

- (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).

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Of the LEAs that responded, 421 (or 50.7%) 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. Table 2 shows the student enrollment ranges of the LEAs that chose small size as its primary justification.

**TABLE 2. STUDENT ENROLLMENT OF SMALL LEAS**

Total Student Enrollment	0–250 students	251–500 students	501–750 students	751–1000 students	1001+ students
Number of LEAs	103	98	92	54	74

- (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 within its attendance zone that attract students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and their families. Of the LEAs that responded, 33 (or 4.1%) 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.

When given an opportunity to choose this justification, only 21 LEAs (or 2.6%) identified this as the primary reason for assessing more than 1.0 percent of students with STAAR Alternate 2. The small number of responses for this justification indicates that LEAs are feeling more confident in its knowledge of the updated STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements. Respondents who selected justification (c) were asked to provide details regarding the resources, trainings, and actions the LEA took to provide ARD committees with the necessary knowledge to effectively use the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2. Of the 21 respondents, all provided detailed responses documenting actions to better prepare district personnel to make appropriate assessment decisions.

- (d) None of the situations above apply.

The 339 LEAs (or 41.8%) that chose option (d) were provided with an opportunity to describe the circumstances that impacted its population of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities if other justifications did not apply. LEAs reported being located near a medical center or residential facility that provides 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 increases in the enrollment of students receiving special education services.

### Disproportionality

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

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LEAs responded to this question by using the [STAAR Alternate 2 Disproportionality Calculation](#) guidance document to identify disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup taking STAAR Alternate 2 in spring 2023 based on the data provided by TEA. Table 3 shows the number and percentage of LEAs who reported identifying disproportionality.

**TABLE 3. LEAS THAT REPORTED DISPROPORTIONALITY IN STAAR ALTERNATE 2 PARTICIPATION RATES**

Disproportionality in STAAR Alternate 2 Data	Number of LEAs	Percentage
Yes	328	40.4%
No	483	59.6%

The 328 LEAs that responded “Yes” to identifying disproportionality in its STAAR Alternate 2 participation rates were then required to select subgroups where disproportionality was found. LEAs were directed to mark all subgroups where disproportionality was found. Table 4 shows the subgroups selected by the 328 LEAs with disproportionality in the percentage of students taking STAAR Alternate 2.

**TABLE 4. SUBGROUPS WITH DISPROPTIONALITY IN STAAR ALTERNATE 2 PARTICIPATION RATES**

Subgroup	Count	Percentage
African American	141	43%
American Indian	20	6%
Asian	52	16%
Hispanic	144	44%
Pacific Islander	10	3%
Two or more races	82	25%
White	148	45%
Economically Disadvantaged	164	50%
English Learner (EL)	82	25%
Female	108	33%
Male	158	48%

Additionally, the 328 LEAs who responded “Yes” to identifying disproportionality in its STAAR Alternate 2 data were required to describe the actions it will take to address the identified disproportionality. LEAs reported they will continue provide professional development, training, and resources to district personnel to ensure only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities qualify for STAAR Alternate 2. LEAs cited providing guidance to ARD committees to carefully review the STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements to ensure assessment decisions for students are made based on the criteria in the requirements.

### STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements

The form provided LEAs with information on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements](#) that were updated in August 2023. The updated participation requirements state that a student who meets eligibility for special education and related services due to a specific learning disability (SLD) or a speech impairment (SI) as the only disability designation is not eligible for STAAR Alternate 2 and must take STAAR.

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LEAs were required to determine whether any students had participated in STAAR Alternate 2 with the disability category of SLD or a SI as the only disability designation. Of the LEAs who responded, 36 (or 4.4%) indicated they have students with SLD or SI as the only disability designation participating in STAAR Alternate 2. The LEAs that responded “Yes” were asked how and when ARD committees will re-evaluate STAAR Alternate 2 participation decisions based on the updated participation requirements. Several LEAs reported plans for ARD committees to convene during the 2023–2024 school year and use the updated participation requirements to make assessment decisions.

In addition, LEAs were required to select which data sources ARD committees use to determine participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2. LEAs were directed to select all data sources that apply. Table 5 shows the data sources selected by LEAs that ARD committees use to determine STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements.

**TABLE 5. DATA SOURCES USED TO DETERMINE STAAR ALTERNATE 2 PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**

Subgroup	Count	Percentage
Individualized Education Program (IEP) documentation	803	99%
Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)	795	98%
Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIIE)	795	98%
Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED)	746	92%
Other	243	30%

### Assurances

**The final section of the form required LEAs to review and mark each statement assuring that it has or will have the stated conditions in place for the 2023–2024 school year.**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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- (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.