Revised STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements
Webinar Norms

• Please make sure to keep your microphones muted.

• Please send questions through the Q/A function. TEA is producing an FAQ document that will be posted soon.
Agenda

- STAAR Alternate 2 Overview
- USDE Statewide 1% Waiver Denial
- STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Additional Resources
Webinar Goals

- Provide an overview of STAAR Alternate 2

- Provide an understanding of the United States Department of Education (USDE) Statewide 1% Waiver Denial

- Provide local education agencies (LEAs) with accurate information and available resources pertaining to the revised STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements
STAAR Alternate 2 Overview
What is STAAR Alternate 2?

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Alternate 2 is

- an assessment based on prerequisite skills of the enrolled grade-level state curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS);
- designed to meet the needs of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; and
- developed to meet federal requirements of both the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
Who is assessed with STAAR Alternate 2?

- Only students who meet the Texas Education Agency (TEA) definition of a student with the most significant cognitive disability may be assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 and who are enrolled in:
  - grades 3–8 or
  - specific high school courses—Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, or U.S. History.

- Students who meet participation requirements are assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 for all grades/subjects and courses.

- The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee is required to evaluate and make state assessment participation decisions annually.
TEA Definition of Student with the Most Significant Cognitive Disability

A student with the **most** significant cognitive disability:

- Exhibits significant intellectual and adaptive behavior deficits in their ability to plan, comprehend, and reason, and who indicates adaptive behavior deficits that limit his or her ability to apply social and practical skills (e.g., personal care, social problem-solving skills, dressing, eating, using money) **across all life domains**.

- Requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction and needs substantial supports that are neither temporary nor specific to a particular content area.
USDE Statewide 1% Waiver Denial
ESSA Waiver Denial Notification

After reviewing TEA’s waiver extension request, I am declining to exercise my authority under section 8401(b) of the ESEA to grant a one-year (school year 2022-2023) waiver of section 1111(b)(2)(D)(i) of the ESEA, so that the State may assess more than 1.0 percent of the total number of students in the State who are assessed in R/LA, mathematics, and science using an AA-AAAAS. TEA has not demonstrated progress in reducing the AA-AAAAS participation rate in R/LA, mathematics, and science between the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years.

| TABLE 1. SPRING 2022 PARTICIPATION IN ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT BY SUBJECT |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| DESCRIPTION                              | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
| STAAR ALTERNATE 2 TESTS, ALL STUDENTS MATHEMATICS | 43,270  | 1.5%         |
| STAAR TESTS, ALL STUDENTS MATHEMATICS        | 2,856,986 | 1.4%         |
| STAAR ALTERNATE 2 TESTS, ALL STUDENTS R/LA  | 48,795  | 1.4%         |
| STAAR TESTS, ALL STUDENTS R/LA               | 3,537,439 | 1.3%         |
| STAAR ALTERNATE 2 TESTS, ALL STUDENTS SCIENCE | 17,842  | 1.3%         |
| STAAR TESTS, ALL STUDENTS SCIENCE            | 1,337,884 | 1.3%         |

(2023 Texas One Percent Waiver Denial Letter)
In March of 2023, USDE denied the 1% waiver for 14 states (indicated in darker blue) for not making significant progress toward meeting the 1% state limit and/or not testing at least 95% of eligible students.

Eight states saw their waiver approved for making 'significant progress' towards reaching the 1% state limit.
Does the 1% cap apply to individual districts or campuses?

No. The 1% cap on students participating in the alternate assessment applies to the state. LEAs who are over 1% student participation are required to complete a justification and assurances form to indicate LEA specific information as to why more than 1% of students were assessed using the alternate assessment.
Revised STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN AND WHO</th>
<th>WHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| In August 2023, STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements were revised using recommendations and feedback that included the following stakeholders across the state:  
• Special education educators and administrators  
• ESC administrators and specialists  
• Special education advocates  
• TEA Special Populations personnel | The purpose of revising the participation requirements was to  
• clarify the scope of students that are assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 and  
• satisfy ESSA requirements. |
STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements
Background and Instructions

- The ARD committee must review state assessment decisions annually.

- The ARD committee must understand all assessment options, including the characteristics of each assessment option and the potential implications of each assessment option.
Background and Instructions (continued)

- What data does the ARD committee need to consider to determine a student's eligibility for STAAR Alternate 2?

To determine a student's eligibility, the ARD committee must review the participation requirements against the supporting documentation within the student’s individualized education program (IEP), such as the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP).

- Is there other data or documentation that an ARD committee may consider?

Yes. Documentation is not limited to the student’s full individual evaluation (FIE) or PLAAFP. The ARD committee may also consider other sources of evidence such as parent and teacher observations and data, the student's goals and objectives, and progress monitoring data. For additional sources of evidence that may be used, refer to the Companion Document.
Step I: Determining Eligibility

Step I includes two statements to determine if the ARD committee should proceed to Step II.

1. The student meets eligibility for special education and related services due to a specific learning disability (SLD).
   - Yes
   - No

   If Yes is marked, stop here. The student does not meet the eligibility criteria as a student with a significant cognitive disability per 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §300.8(c)(10)(ii): An SLD “does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”

2. The student meets eligibility for special education and related services due to a speech impairment (SI), which is the ONLY disability designation.
   - Yes
   - No

   If Yes is marked, stop here. The student does not meet the eligibility criteria as a student with a significant cognitive disability per 34 CFR §300.8(c)(11): An SI “means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.”
**Step II: Determining Eligibility**

The ARD committee must review the criteria in each row in this section regarding the student’s access to enrolled grade-level curriculum and adaptive behavior skills and check the box that is most applicable to the student.

If after reviewing all available data the committee is struggling to decide between Column 1 and Column 2, presume competence and select the criteria in Column 1.

The information selected means that it is documented in the student’s IEP.

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### The student’s IEP documents the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic goal aligned to expected grade level success in all subject areas, including social/emotional development</td>
<td>Academic goal aligned to expected grade level success in all subject areas, including social/emotional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routinely participates in traditional methods of assessment and progress in general education settings, academic class dedication</td>
<td>Routinely participates in alternative or non-traditional methods of assessment and progress in general education settings, academic class dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs for assistive devices and adaptive behavior support</td>
<td>Needs for assistive devices and adaptive behavior support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can problem solve, self-direct, self-monitor, and make choices</td>
<td>Can problem solve, self-direct, self-monitor, and make choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages in meaningful and significant social interactions</td>
<td>Engages in meaningful and significant social interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One box must be checked in each of the eight rows.</td>
<td>One box must be checked in each of the eight rows.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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19
Step II: Row 1

The student’s IEP documents the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMN 1</th>
<th>COLUMN 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Academic goals aligned to enrolled grade-level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) with accommodations or modifications in some or all content areas</td>
<td>☐ Academic goals aligned to prerequisite skills significantly below enrolled grade-level TEKS in ALL content areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The ARD committee should ask the question:

Does the student access ALL enrolled grade-level TEKS through prerequisite skills, including math, reading language arts, science, social studies, and any other TEKS based course?
Step II: Row 2

| Routine participation in traditional methods of assessment (e.g., multiple-choice, short answer, essay) with or without individualized support (e.g., modifications, accommodations, assistive technologies) | Routine participates in alternate or non-traditional methods of assessment (e.g., isolating information; tactile support; pointing to, reaching for, or touching an answer choice; formulating a response using a choice board) |

The ARD committee should ask the question:

Does the student routinely require alternate or non-traditional methods of assessment?
### Step II: Row 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs that impact access and progress in several or all academic areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant needs that impact access and progress in ALL academic areas, which affect the student’s ability to function independently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ARD committee should ask the question:

How significant are the student’s needs in relation to how they impact access and progress in all academic areas, which affect the student’s level of independence?
Any student with an IEP can have functional goals identified. The functional goals listed in Column 2 are needs so pervasive that without ongoing adult assistance the student is unable to function independently.
Step II: Row 5

The ARD committee should ask the question:

How extensive is the support required for the student to function safely in daily life and participate in academic instruction across ALL settings?
Step II: Row 6

| Initiates, performs, and completes self-care routines (e.g., feeding, dressing, toileting, personal hygiene) with no or minimal adult assistance (e.g., verbal reminders, visual schedule) | Requires ongoing adult assistance (e.g., prompting, cueing, physical assist) to initiate, perform, and complete self-care routines (e.g., feeding, dressing, toileting, personal hygiene) |

NOTE: The student’s requirement of adult assistance is NOT due to a physical disability alone but rather to the student’s significant cognitive disability.

The ARD committee should remember:

Other self-care routines may include, but are not limited to, tasks such as: brushing teeth, bathing, selecting appropriate clothing for the weather, washing hands, determining an appropriate meal, transitioning safely in the hallway or between classes, etc.

The ARD committee should ask the question:

How extensive and frequent is the adult support required for the student to initiate, perform, and complete self-care routines?
Frequently Asked Question

My student can_____ independently, can they still participate in STAAR Alternate 2?

It is important to look at what independence looks like for the student. What level of support is the adult providing so the student can initiate, perform, and complete the self-care routine?

Are there supports, such as:

- Visual, verbal, physical prompts
- Cueing
- Visual schedules
- Timers
- Adult transition support
- Adult physical support
- Task analysis

If a student requires any of these example supports on an ongoing basis, then the student is not independently initiating, performing, or completing self-care routines.
Step II: Row 7

| Follows age-appropriate directions, daily routines, and schedules with some specialized support (e.g., accommodations, assistive technologies) | Requires ongoing, individualized, specialized supports (e.g., modifications, task analysis, direct instruction, assistive technologies, first/then charts, tactile schedules, social narratives) and ongoing adult assistance (e.g., prompting, cueing, physical assist) to follow directions, daily routines, and schedules |

The ARD committee should ask the question:

How extensive and frequent is the adult support required for the student to follow directions, daily routines, and schedules?
Step II: Row 8

The ARD committee should ask the question:

| ☐ Independently uses alternate response modes (e.g., augmentative and alternative communication [AAC]) to participate in academic and social conversations at an age-appropriate level |
| ☐ In the process of developing a functional and consistent mode of communication (e.g., currently non-verbal, uses very limited non-symbolic communication) |
| ☐ Independently uses traditional response modes (e.g., verbal, sign language, written) to participate in on-topic academic and social conversations at an age-appropriate level with minimal adult assistance |
| ☐ Uses traditional response modes (e.g., verbal, sign language, written) but may be inconsistent when expressing wants and needs AND requires individualized supports to participate in on-topic academic and social exchanges at an age-appropriate level |

How extensive and frequent are the individualized supports required for the student to participate in on-topic and age-appropriate academic and social exchanges?
Step II: Review Criteria

3. **Does the student have the MOST significant cognitive disability?**
   - Yes—All criteria marked are in Column 2
   - No—One or more criteria is marked in Column 1
   
   **STOP** If No is marked, stop here. The student does not meet the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 and must take STAAR.

- The ARD committee will need to determine if the student has the **most** significant cognitive disability after reviewing all the criteria, completing each row, and selecting the appropriate response.
- Based on the response to Question 3, the ARD committee will either move on to the next step or stop on Step II.

Remember that a student with the **most** significant cognitive disability requires extensive, direct, individualized instruction, as well as a need for substantial supports that are neither temporary nor specific to a particular content area.
Step III: Provide Assurances and Confirm

All assurances must be reviewed and marked for the student to participate in STAAR Alternate 2.

The ARD committee will also need to respond to Question 4 to either confirm or not confirm the student’s eligibility for STAAR Alternate 2.
Frequently Asked Questions

What needs to be included in the rationale box? How specific do I need to be?

The rationale needs to include:

• A statement about why the student cannot participate in STAAR and why the alternate assessment is appropriate and
• A statement of necessary allowable accommodations.

Each row in the participation requirements does not need to be individually addressed in the rationale box because they will have already been discussed and completed in Steps I and II.
Step IV: STAAR Alternate 2 Summary

The ARD committee needs to complete the information only for the grade level or courses in which the student is enrolled during the applicable school year.

A student who meets the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 must take the alternate assessments for all applicable grades/subjects or courses.

STAAR Alternate 2 is administered once each school year, and retest opportunities are not available.

STEP IV: STAAR ALTERNATE 2 SUMMARY

Complete the information below only for the grade level or courses in which the student is enrolled during the applicable school year. A student who meets the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 must take the alternate assessment for all applicable grades/subjects or courses. Note that STAAR Alternate 2 is administered once each school year, and retest opportunities are not available.

A student in grade 3–8 who meets the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 should be assessed only in the grade and subjects in which they are enrolled and should NOT be assessed above grade level. Mark the student’s enrolled grade during the applicable school year, indicating which STAAR Alternate 2 assessments the student will take.

- Grade 3 mathematics and RLA
- Grade 4 mathematics and RLA
- Grade 5 mathematics, RLA, and science
- Grade 6 mathematics and RLA
- Grade 7 mathematics and RLA
- Grade 8 mathematics, RLA, science, and social studies

A student in high school who meets the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 and is enrolled in a course that has a Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) course number indicating that the coursework is accessed through prerequisite skills should take the corresponding end-of-course (EOC) assessment. Mark the alternate high school courses with associated PEIMS course numbers in which the student is enrolled during the applicable school year, indicating which STAAR Alternate 2 EOC assessments the student will take.

- Algebra I Alternate 03100507
- English I Alternate 03220107
- English II Alternate 03220207
- Biology Alternate 03010207
- U.S. History Alternate 03340107
Frequently Asked Questions Section
Frequently Asked Question

My student no longer meets eligibility for STAAR Alternate 2, will his or her special education programming need to change?

- If a student is not eligible to take the alternate assessment, the ARD committee is responsible for educating the student in the least restrictive environment while still addressing the student’s needs and critical skills (goals and short-term objectives).

- A student may have a significant cognitive disability but does not meet the criteria as having the most significant cognitive disability. The ARD committee will determine the programming that is most appropriate to ensure access to and progress in the general curriculum. **For some students this may mean their programming does not change, but that is an ARD committee decision and TEA cannot provide guidance on the frequency, duration, or location of individual students’ special education supports and services.**

- Staffing considerations for individual students are an ARD committee decision.
Frequently Asked Question

My student no longer meets eligibility for STAAR Alternate 2, can he or she still receive instruction at the prerequisite or modified level?

- Yes. The student's ARD committee will continue to determine how the student will receive instruction. It is possible that a student will take STAAR while accessing the enrolled grade-level TEKS through modifications and/or prerequisite skills.

- Only students who meet the participation requirements and will take STAAR Alternate 2 EOC assessments can be associated with the alternate course codes in PEIMS for Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History.
Frequently Asked Questions

My student has always taken STAAR Alternate 2 but no longer meets the participation requirements. What happens if my student takes STAAR and does not pass? Is he or she required to receive accelerated instruction?

- Texas law requires all students who do not achieve *Approaches Grade Level* or higher on STAAR to be provided accelerated instruction. These requirements were recently updated with the passage of House Bill 1416, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

- A parent may elect to modify or remove a requirement for the accelerated instruction by submitting a written request to the administrator at the campus in which the student is enrolled. To request the change, the student must have been administered and failed to perform satisfactorily on STAAR or administered a beginning-of-year assessment aligned with the TEKS for that grade/subject or course. An LEA may select a beginning-of-year assessment designed to show grade level proficiency on the TEKS. A student who does not have a failed STAAR assessment must be administered a beginning-of-year assessment for the parent to be able change the requirements.

- Additionally, an ARD committee may be convened if the committee feels that the student’s IEP needs to be modified based on the accelerated instruction requirements.
Frequently Asked Question

Does the ARD committee have to meet again if the committee had already reviewed and determined participation for the 2023–2024 school year using the previous STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements?

- It depends. The ARD committee must review and determine student participation in STAAR or STAAR Alternate 2 for each school year. If the ARD committee has already reviewed and determined participation for the 2023–2024 school year using the previous STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements, district personnel must review all eligible students to determine if any STAAR Alternate 2 decisions need to be re-evaluated based on the revised participation requirements.

- For those students whose participation needs to be re-evaluated based on the updated participation requirements, assessment participation decisions may be made through an ARD amendment in accordance with 34 CFR §300.324(a)(i) or a full ARD meeting.

- For any future assessment participation decisions, the ARD committee should use the updated STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements.
Frequently Asked Question

My student meets the participation requirements for STAAR Alternate 2 in some areas but not all; is he or she still required to take STAAR?

- Yes. Remember that the definition of a student with the most significant cognitive disability requires extensive supports in all areas not just in particular subject areas.

- Students must meet the participation requirements in ALL subject areas to be eligible to take STAAR Alternate 2.
I have only ever given STAAR Alternate 2 but now have a student who needs to take STAAR; do I need to be trained in administering both assessments?

- Yes. If you will be administering both types of assessments, you will need to be trained in test security and administration procedures specific to each assessment program. All district personnel who participate in state-mandated testing or handle secure test materials and content are required to be trained at least once in test security and administration procedures for the applicable assessment.

- If the student is also eligible for assessment accommodations, the test administrators must understand the proper implementation of the accommodations.
Frequently Asked Question

My student is eligible for special education services based on only a speech impairment (SI) but meets all other requirements in Step II; can he or she take STAAR Alternate 2?

- No. Remember that STAAR Alternate 2 is authorized under federal law for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. A student who is identified with only a speech impairment would not meet eligibility requirements as a student with a cognitive disability.

- This is why the STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements indicate that if a student is identified with only SI, then the student is not eligible to participate in STAAR Alternate 2.

- If an LEA believes that a student still meets all criteria in Step II under Column 2, then the ARD committee may need to address whether additional student evaluations may be
Additional Resources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements</td>
<td>Used by the ARD committee to determine if a student meets the eligibility requirements to participate in STAAR Alternate 2. The form is available in English and Spanish.</td>
<td>Administrators, Coordinators, Teachers, Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAAR Alternate 2 Companion Document</td>
<td>Used in conjunction with STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements. Sources of evidence for a student’s eligibility for STAAR Alternate 2 are on page 2 of this document. The document is available in English and Spanish.</td>
<td>Administrators, Coordinators, Teachers, Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAAR Alternate 2 Participation Requirements FAQs</td>
<td>Will include frequently asked questions and answers related to the updated STAAR Alternate 2 Participation. (Coming soon on the STAAR Alternate 2 Resources webpage.)</td>
<td>Administrators, Coordinators, Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAAR Alternate 2 Overview and Eligibility Training</td>
<td>Assists the ARD committee in better understanding the unique features of STAAR Alternate 2, and thereby, in determining the most appropriate assessment for each student. (Coming soon in the Learning Management System.)</td>
<td>Administrators, Coordinators, Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAAR Alternate 2: Before, During, and After the Assessment Course</td>
<td>Is designed for new test administrators to be helpful in understanding the testing process and may also serve as a refresher to experienced test administrators. (Coming soon on the TEA Learn webpage.)</td>
<td>Administrators, Coordinators, Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Texas Assessment Educator Committees

Classroom teachers, instructional coaches, campus and district content specialists, and campus administrators can serve in a variety of ways:

- **Educator item review**—each potential question for a state test is reviewed and approved by a committee of Texas educators

- **Subject-area advisory groups**—groups of educators are convened to provide feedback on subject-area-specific topics

https://www.texasassessment.gov/educator-committees.html
TEA Contact Information

For inquiries related to development, administration, scoring, and reporting of state assessments please contact:

Student Assessment Help Desk
(512) 463-9536
https://tea.Texas.gov/student.assessment/
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