



Alternate Assessment 1 Percent Threshold Guidance

Dr. Tony Sanders, State Superintendent

November 2024

This document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on the subject matter listed above. For specific questions, please contact the Illinois State Board of Education at altexception@isbe.net.

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Introduction

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act amendments of 2004 stipulate that all students, including those with disabilities, must participate in the state accountability assessments. In Illinois, the following three options exist for meeting this requirement:

- (1) Participation in the regular state assessment without accommodations,
- (2) Participation in the regular state assessment with accommodations, or
- (3) Participation in a state-approved alternate assessment with accommodations.

Students with disabilities should receive needed accommodations as allowed by the state accountability assessment as a means of facilitating their participation. These accommodations, which must not compromise the purpose or security of the test, should be a part of the student's regular instructional routine and should not be used or introduced solely for the purpose of state-required accountability assessment. It is expected that the alternate assessment offers the most appropriate opportunity for participation in state accountability assessment for a small percentage of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by ESSA of 2015 [ESEA §111(b)(2)(D) and 34 CFR 200.6(c) places a 1 percent threshold on the number of students who may participate in alternate assessments. The alternate assessment participation guidelines will assist Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in determining whether students should participate in the alternate assessment.

Alternate Assessment Participation Calculation

The percentage of students taking the alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic standards (AA-AAAS) is calculated by dividing the number of students in a Local Education Agency (LEA) taking the alternate assessment by the total number of students in the LEA participating in state accountability assessments and multiplying by 100. (See Figure 1.) State accountability assessments include the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, the Illinois Science Assessment, the ACT, and the AA-AAAS. The ACT 8/9 and the ACT 10 are not included in the calculation.

Figure 1: To calculate the 1 percent:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of students in Grades 3-8 and 11 taking the ALTERNATE assessment}}{\text{Total number of students in Grades 3-8 and 11 across ALL assessments}} \times 100$$

Monitoring Activities

ISBE provides guidance to districts on which students should be taking the AA-AAAS. ISBE monitors assessment data to ensure that the overall participation in English language arts, math, and science meets the 95 percent participation rate for all students and for students with disabilities. ISBE also monitors and provides technical assistance to districts identified with AA-AAAS participation rates above the 1 percent threshold.

Assigned Levels of Support

Districts exceeding the 1 percent threshold are assigned to a level of support using three-year data. ISBE uses three years of finalized data to determine how much support to provide LEAs above the 1 percent threshold and which activities they must complete. LEAs identified as being above the 1 percent threshold according to the most recent finalized data were assigned Level 1 supports and activities. LEAs identified as being above the 1 percent threshold for the two most recent consecutive years were assigned Level 2 supports and activities. LEAs identified as being above the 1 percent threshold for three consecutive years were assigned Level 3 supports and activities. Table 1 describes the supports and activities for each level. This system is intended to provide the support needed for LEAs to reduce their 1 percent participation rate using the following activities:

- Justification statements and assurances;
- LEA Action Plans;
- The provision of resources, including the alternate assessment participation guidelines; and
- Technical assistance.

Table 1: Monitoring Supports and Activities by Level

Level	Supports	Activities
1	• Assigned principal consultant to answer questions • Professional learning event at the beginning of the cycle (January) • Guidance documents and resources	• Complete justification and assurances form
2	• Assigned principal consultant to answer questions • Professional learning event each quarter (January, April, July, October) • Guidance documents and resources	• Complete justification and assurances form
3	• Assigned principal consultant to answer questions • Professional learning event monthly from January through November (no August meeting) • Guidance documents and resources	• Complete justification and assurances form • LEA Action Plan

Justification and Assurance

Every district that exceeds the 1 percent threshold is required to complete a form addressing the justification for exceeding the threshold, disproportionality, and assurances. This must be completed prior to the state waiver submission in December. This online form can be tracked to ensure that all districts identified for exceeding the 1 percent threshold have submitted their documentation, as required. ISBE is required to post these forms to its website. Districts should carefully prepare responses and avoid including Personally Identifiable Information about students.

Alternate Assessment Pre-Identification Data Analysis

Once ISBE identifies LEAs that are above the 1 percent threshold, it begins analyzing their current pre-identification data and providing feedback and resources if inconsistencies are identified.

- ISBE staff receives the pre-identification file for the alternate assessment twice monthly from November – January and then weekly from February until the testing window opens.
- ISBE compares the Student Information System pre-identification files to its special education database to determine if a student has an active IEP.
- ISBE analyzes the data by the disability categories of Specific Learning Disability, Emotional Disability, and Speech/Language Impairment (only) and compares it against the identified assessments in the active IEP.
- ISBE supports district to correct areas of non-compliance through a [34-57 G Amendment](#).

LEA Action Plan

LEAs receiving Level 3 support are required to complete and submit an LEA Action Plan. This plan identifies areas of concern and outlines activities the district will engage in to address these concerns. The LEA Action Plan is meant to be a working document that the LEA updates throughout the monitoring cycle. Initial plans are due in February and completed plans with deliverables/evidence of activities are due in October. Plans must be submitted to AltException@isbe.net with the name of the principal consultant assigned to the district included in the email subject line. Files should be named using the following formats:

- [School District Name][School District Number] LEA Action Plan
- [School District Name][School District Number] LEA Action Plan COMPLETED

Timeline and Activities

Timeline	Action
November	• ISBE identifies LEAs above the 1 percent threshold. • ISBE determines level of support for each LEA based on three-year finalized data. • Notification letters sent to LEAs identified as above the 1 percent threshold. • Beginning in November, ISBE analyzes IEP status and primary disability category for students rostered for the upcoming spring alternate assessment twice a month. If discrepancies are identified, ISBE provides guidance to the district and verifies that IEP amendments are completed.
December	• Deadline for all districts identified as exceeding the 1 percent threshold to submit their justification and assurances form.
January	• Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of the upcoming professional learning events. • Professional learning event for all districts identified as about the 1 percent threshold held with office hours to follow. • LEAs assigned to Level 3 support are assigned to develop an LEA Action Plan before a professional learning event in February.
February	• In February, ISBE will analyze IEP status and primary disability category for students rostered for the upcoming spring alternate

	assessment weekly until the testing window opens. If discrepancies are identified, ISBE will provide guidance to the district and verify that IEP amendments are completed. • Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Professional learning event for LEAs assigned Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow. • LEA Action Plans will be discussed at the professional learning event. • LEAs assigned to Level 3 support must submit their LEA Action Plan to altexception@isbe.net.
March	• Testing window opens. • Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Professional learning event for LEAs assigned Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow.
April	• Testing window remains open. • Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Quarterly professional learning event for LEAs assigned to Level 2 and Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow.
May	• Testing window closes. • Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Professional learning event for LEAs assigned Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow.
June	• Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Professional learning event for LEAs assigned Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow.
July	• Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Quarterly professional learning event for LEAs assigned to Level 2 and Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow.
August	• Window for AA-AAAS corrections in Student Information System closes. • New school year begins. • NO professional learning events will be held to allow for administrators to be present with their students and staff in the first few weeks of school.
September	• Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. • Professional learning event for LEAs assigned Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow.
October	• Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events.

	- Quarterly professional learning event for LEAs assigned to Level 2 and Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow. - LEA Action Plans with completed activities and deliverables due.
November 2025	Current Cycle: - Mass communication will be used to remind LEAs of upcoming professional learning events. - FINAL professional learning event for LEAs assigned Level 3 support will be held with office hours to follow. - ISBE sends out cycle closing letter. New Cycle: - Most recent finalized data becomes available. - ISBE identifies LEAs above the 1 percent threshold. - ISBE determines level of support for each LEA based on three-year finalized data. - Notification letters sent to LEAs identified as above the 1 percent threshold. - Beginning in November, ISBE analyzes IEP status and primary disability category for students rostered for the upcoming spring alternate assessment twice a month. If discrepancies are identified, ISBE provides guidance to the district and verifies that IEP amendments are completed.

Important Resources

[Frequently Asked Questions Alternate Assessment 1 Percent Threshold Frequently Asked Questions Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Form](#)

Participation Guidelines Supplemental Tools:

[Alternate Assessment Eligibility Decision-Making Companion Tool](#)

[LEA Action Plan Template](#)

[Justification and Assurances Form](#)

