

2023-2024 Policies and Procedures: Hernando (Approved)

Section E: Participation in State and District Assessments

The school district administers districtwide assessments of academic student achievement.

- Yes
- No

History

If **yes**, include the name of each districtwide assessment and whether the assessment is administered to students on alternate academic achievement standards. If the districtwide assessment is not administered to students on alternate academic achievement standards, identify the corresponding alternate assessment. (If your school district uses a portfolio as a corresponding district alternate assessment, the data collected should be based on grade-level alternate academic achievement standards. For portfolios, indicate what information is being collected, how the information is being recorded, what type of scoring rubric is being used, and how the school district ensures that all teachers are collecting the same information and scoring the data the same way.)

STAR-ESE Prekindergarten students who will be entering kindergarten the following year • End of Course Exams (EOC) for general education courses and Access Courses • iReady (Access students use this as well) • Unique placement tests • TeachTown

History

Parental Consent Documentation

In accordance with s. 1003.5715, F.S., and Rule 6A-6.0331(10), F.A.C., the school district may not proceed with a student’s instruction in access points and the administration of an alternate assessment without written and informed parental consent unless the school district documents reasonable efforts to obtain parental consent and the student’s parent has failed to respond or the school district obtains approval through a due process hearing. The school district shall obtain written parental consent for the actions described above on the Parental Consent Form – Instruction in Access Points – Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AP-AAAS) and Administration of the Statewide, Standardized Alternate Assessment, Form 313181 <https://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-14585>.

The school district certifies that it either obtains prior parental consent or due process approval for every student participating in the FAA program. If prior parental consent is not obtained, the school district certifies that it has documentation of reasonable efforts to obtain that approval and consent, or a final order from DOAH.

- Yes
- No

History

Percentage of Students on Alternate Assessment

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (which can be found at <https://www.ed.gov/essa>), limits the percentage of students that a state may assess with an AA-AAAS to no more than 1 percent of all assessed students in the grades assessed in a state for each subject.

While there is a limit on the percentage of students statewide who may participate in the AA-AAAS, there is no such limit among school districts; however, 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(3)(ii) and (iv) require that a school district submit information justifying the need to assess more than one percent of its students in any subject with an AA-AAAS. The state must make that information publicly available, provided that such information does not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.

It is understood that school districts have unique circumstances that may contribute to a higher number of students who are in access courses and participating in the FAA program. The purpose of this justification is to ensure that school districts are cognizant of their current processes and procedures to ensure that an IEP team decision to place a student in access courses is in alignment with state requirements and is the most appropriate academic decision for the student.

What is your school district's 2022-23 participation percentage in the FAA in the following areas?

Reading

1.3%

History

Mathematics

1.3%

History

Science

1.4%

History

Is the school district over one percent in any area?

- Yes
- No

History

The criteria for the following statement is outlined in s. 1008.22(3)(d), F.S., and Rule 6A-1.0943, F.A.C., and on the Checklist for Course and Assessment Participation, which can be found at <https://faa.fsassessments.org/-/media/project/client-portals/florida-alt/2023-2024-faa/manuals-and-guides/checklist-for-course-and-assessment-participation.pdf> for use in determining student eligibility for participation in the FAA program.

If the school district is over one percent in any area, please provide a description of how the school district is ensuring that IEP teams are adhering to the criteria (see above.)

Ensuring adherence to criteria for determining eligibility of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for alternate state assessments involves a structured process within Hernando County. The following is our current process. Hernando County ESE leaders will ensure that training is continued within this area at least 2 times per school year with the LEA representatives.

- 1. IEP Team Composition:** The IEP team is composed of professionals and individuals knowledgeable about the student, which include special education teachers, general education teachers, parents/guardians, school psychologists, and other relevant specialists. The LEA representative will guide the committee through the alternate assessment eligibility criteria at each meeting where alternate assessment is being considered.
- 2. Review of Assessment Data:** The team reviews various types of assessment data from multiple sources to understand the student's strengths and needs. This may include formal assessments, informal observations, progress monitoring data, and input from teachers and parents.
- 3. Documentation of Significant Cognitive Disabilities:** For a student to qualify for the alternate state assessment, the IEP team must document that the student has significant cognitive disabilities that prevent their participation in the general state assessment, even with maximum accommodations, supports, and supplementary aides and assistance.
- 4. Use of Eligibility Criteria:** The district adheres to specific eligibility criteria set forth by state and federal regulations. These criteria include guidelines on the severity and nature of the disability, the student's participation in the general education curriculum, and whether the student requires extensive supports to access the curriculum.
- 5. Individualized Decision-Making:** The decision-making process is individualized and takes into account the unique needs of the student. The team considers whether the student's disability affects their ability to understand or respond to the general assessment items, and whether the student requires significant modifications or supports to participate.
- 6. IEP Documentation:** If the team determines that the student qualifies for the alternate state assessment, this decision is documented in the student's IEP. The IEP includes specific goals and objectives related to the alternate assessment, as well as accommodations and supports necessary for the student to participate in educational activities.
- 7. Annual Review and Revision:** The IEP team reviews the student's progress annually and revises the IEP as necessary. This includes ongoing evaluation of whether the student continues to meet the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment or if changes in the student's needs or abilities warrant a reassessment of eligibility.
- 8. Procedural Safeguards:** Throughout the process, the district ensures compliance with procedural safeguards to protect the rights of students and their parents/guardians. This includes providing notice of meetings, obtaining informed consent for evaluations, and offering opportunities for parents/guardians to participate in decision-making.

By following these structured steps and adhering to established criteria, the public school district aims to ensure that the IEP team makes informed and appropriate decisions regarding the eligibility of students with significant cognitive disabilities for alternate state assessments. This process promotes fairness, transparency, and accountability in supporting the educational needs of these students.

History

Provide a justification, with supporting evidence, that identifies specific programs or circumstances within the school district that may contribute to higher enrollment of students in access courses that exceeds one percent (e.g., center schools serving surrounding school districts).

Some possible justification of circumstances where enrollment of students in access courses and taking the alternate assessment exceeds one percent requires a focus on programs and practices that support students with significant cognitive disabilities. Here are specific justifications with supporting evidence:

1. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Planning:

- **Justification:** IEP teams in Hernando County carefully consider the unique needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities, often resulting in the selection of access courses aligned with their educational goals. We used data-based decision making to ensure that only students who meet the alternate assessment requirements are placed within the access standards and are eligible to take the alternate assessment. Many of the decisions to place students on alternate assessment or keep them on general education standards are made late into the school year (After the 2nd reporting period of FTE in February).
- **Supporting Evidence:** Studies show that individualized planning through the IEP process leads to more appropriate educational placements and supports for students with disabilities, including those requiring alternate assessments (Shogren et al., 2015; Yell et al., 2018).

2. Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria:

- **Justification:** Hernando County follows specific criteria for determining eligibility for the alternate assessment, ensuring that students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the general state assessment, even with accommodations, are identified appropriately. All of our students currently meet the current state criteria for participation in alternate assessment.
- **Supporting Evidence:** Research indicates that valid and reliable alternate assessments provide a means for students with significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in alignment with academic standards (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 2002; Quenemoen et al., 2003). Currently our high school population (that will be graduating out of the system) has a higher percentage of students taking the alternate assessment, then our students at the elementary or middle school level. We are hopeful that as students graduate, we will be back within the 1% cap outlined in statute.

These justifications and supporting evidence underscore how specific programs and practices within Hernando County Schools may contribute to higher enrollment of students in access courses and taking the alternate assessment. By focusing on individualized supports, inclusive practices, rigorous IEP planning, and professional development, districts can effectively meet the diverse needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities while promoting their academic and functional skills development and maintain that only students with the most severe cognitive delays participate in access courses and the alternate assessment.

History

What is your school district's risk ratio for disproportionality in each content area for each subgroup?

ELA American Indian or Alaskan Native

4.5%

History

ELA Black, non-Hispanic

| 0.92%

[History](#)

ELA Hispanic

| 0.94%

[History](#)

ELA Asian or Pacific Islander

| 2.27%

[History](#)

ELA White, non-Hispanic

| 0.97%

[History](#)

ELA Economically Disadvantaged

| 0.95%

[History](#)

ELA English Language Learner

| 0.60%

[History](#)

Math American Indian or Alaskan Native

4.8%

[History](#)

Math Black, non-Hispanic

0.99%

[History](#)

Math Hispanic

0.95%

[History](#)

Math Asian or Pacific Islander

2.74%

[History](#)

Math White, non-Hispanic

0.93%

[History](#)

Math Economically Disadvantaged

0.78%

[History](#)

Math English Language Learner

| 0.59%

History

Science American Indian or Alaskan Native

| 3.7%

History

Science Black, non-Hispanic

| 0.97%

History

Science Hispanic

| 0.81%

History

Science Asian or Pacific Islander

| 2.36%

History

Science White, non-Hispanic

| 0.95%

History

Science Economically Disadvantaged

| 0.95%

History

Science English Language Learner

| 0.82%

History

Social Studies American Indian or Alaskan Native

| n/a

History

Social Studies Black, non-Hispanic

| NA

History

Social Studies Hispanic

| NA

History

Social Studies Asian or Pacific Islander

| n/a

History

Social Studies White, non-Hispanic

NA

History

Social Studies Economically Disadvantaged

NA

History

Social Studies English Language Learner

n/a

History

If an identified risk ratio is 3 or above in any area, describe the school district’s plan to address this disproportionality. This could include examining practices, such as the training and technical assistance provided to personnel on culturally responsive practices; working within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to promote best practices in screening; progress monitoring; and initial eligibility determination. School districts may also refer to their efforts to decrease disproportionality in evaluation, identification and discipline if similar efforts are made in that area.

Currently there are 3 separate areas that correspond to a risk ratio of >3.00. The subgroup is American Indian/Alaskan Native in all circumstances which fall in the subject areas of Math (risk ratio = 6.00), ELA (risk ratio = 5.50), and Science (risk ratio = 7.00). The high risk ratio in these for this particular subgroup has been determined to be due to the low enrollment district wide of this particular ethnicity. There are 40 students district wide that fall into this ethnic group, 10 of those students are ESE, and 2 of those students have been found eligible to take the FAA assessment. This higher number of students in this category that fall within ESE, causes the disproportionality number to increase. To address this this concern, we formed a task force, consisting of Principals, Teachers, Staffing Specialists, Reading Coaches, Math Coaches, ESE Instructional Personnel, and ESE Administrators to discuss and develop a plan for ESE students on lowering the disproportionate subgroups in the area of ELA, Math and Science.

History

Rule 6A-1.0943, F.A.C., Statewide Assessment for Students with Disabilities
District-Specific Procedures

These are the criteria required for participation in the statewide, standardized alternate assessment as per Rule 6A-1.0943(5), F.A.C.:

Section A: The decision that a student with a significant cognitive disability will participate in the statewide, standardized alternate assessment as defined in Rule 6A-1.0943(5)(a), F.A.C., must be made by the IEP team and recorded on the IEP.

If the definition of “most significant cognitive disability” is not met according to the criteria set in Rule 6A-1.0943(1)(f)1., F.A.C., then complete Section E of this document, which satisfies Rule 6A-1.0943(1)(f)2., F.A.C.

Section B: The provisions regarding parental consent for participation in the statewide, standardized alternate assessment found in Rule 6A-6.0331(10), F.A.C., must be followed.

Section C: In order for a student to participate in the statewide, standardized alternate assessment, all of the following criteria must be met:

1. The student must receive exceptional student education (ESE) services as identified through a current IEP and be enrolled in the appropriate and aligned courses using alternate achievement standards for two consecutive full-time equivalent reporting periods prior to the assessment;

Evidence of criteria will be provided through the student’s current IEP and student schedule.

2. The student must be receiving specially designed instruction, which provides unique instruction and intervention support that is determined, designed and delivered through a team approach, ensuring access to core instruction through the adaptation of content, methodology or delivery of instruction and exhibits very limited to no progress in the general education curriculum standards;

Evidence of criteria will be provided through MTSS or response-to-intervention (RtI) documentation.

3. The student must be receiving support through systematic, explicit and interactive small-group instruction focused on foundational skills in addition to instruction in the general education curriculum standards;

Evidence of criteria will be provided through MTSS or RtI documentation.

4. Even after documented evidence of exhausting all appropriate and allowable instructional accommodations, the student requires modifications to the general education curriculum standards;

Evidence of criteria will be provided with _____ (the required IEP and school district documentation of services provided—accommodation logs, accommodation logs compared to classroom performance).

5. Even after documented evidence of accessing a variety of supplementary instructional materials, the student requires modifications to the general education curriculum standards;

Evidence of criteria will be provided with _____ (the required IEP and school district documentation of the provision of supplementary instructional materials—may be a summary from teacher, speech-language pathologist (SLP) or other service providers).

6. Even with documented evidence of the provision and use of assistive technology, the student requires modifications to the general education curriculum standards;

Evidence of criteria will be provided with _____ (the required IEP and school district documentation of the provision assistive technology services provided).

7. Even with direct instruction in all core academic areas (i.e., ELA, mathematics, social studies and science), the student is exhibiting limited or no progress on the general education curriculum standards, and requires modifications;

Evidence of criteria will be provided with _____ (the required IEP and school district documentation of the provision of supplementary instructional materials—may be a summary from teacher, SLP or other service providers).

8. Unless the student is a transfer student, the student must have been available and present for grade-level general education curriculum standards instruction for at least 70 percent of the school year prior to the assessment;

Evidence of criteria will be provided through the student’s attendance report.

9. Unless the student is a transfer student, the student must have been instructed by a certified teacher for at least 80 percent of the school year prior to the assessment; and

Evidence of criteria will be provided through the teacher’s certificate and teacher’s attendance record.

10. The assessment instrument used to measure the student's global level of cognitive functioning was selected to limit the adverse impact of already-identified limitations and impairments (e.g., language acquisition, mode of communication, culture, hearing, vision, orthopedic functioning, hypersensitivities and distractibility).

Evidence of criteria will be provided through available evaluations, medical reports or screeners provided in the past.

11. The student has a most significant cognitive disability.

Section D: A student is not eligible to participate in the statewide, standardized alternate assessment if any of the following apply:

1. The student is identified as a student with a specific learning disability or as gifted;

Evidence of criteria will be provided through IEP and applicable evaluation results.

2. The student is identified only as a student eligible for services as a student who is deaf or hard of hearing or has a visual impairment, a dual sensory impairment, an emotional or behavioral disability, a language impairment, a speech impairment, or an orthopedic impairment; or

Evidence of criteria will be provided through IEP and applicable data.

3. The student scored a level 2 or above on a previous statewide, general education curriculum standardized assessment administered pursuant to Section 1008.22(3)(e), F.S., unless there is medical documentation that the student experienced a traumatic brain injury or other health-related complications subsequent to the administration of that assessment that led to the student having the most significantly below-average global cognitive impairment.

Evidence of criteria will be provided through statewide standard assessment results, if applicable.

Section E: In the extraordinary circumstance when a global, full-scale intelligent quotient score is unattainable, a school district will comply as follows:

More specifically, in the event when a student cannot be directly assessed, the student who has a suspected most significant cognitive disability for whom assessment via the FAA may be appropriate as defined in Rule 6A-1.0943(1)(f)1., F.A.C., will be identified through the following detailed procedure:

List the factors the school district will use to determine that a direct assessment of cognitive functioning is not achievable.

The school district will use various factors to determine whether a direct assessment of cognitive functioning is not achievable. These factors may include:

1. **Presence of Physical or Sensory Impairments:** If the student has physical disabilities or sensory impairments (e.g., blindness, deafness) that significantly interfere with their ability to participate in or respond to standardized cognitive assessments.
2. **Language or Communication Barriers:** When the student's primary language is different from the language in which the assessment is administered, or if the student has limited verbal or nonverbal communication skills that make it difficult to understand or respond to assessment items.
3. **Behavioral Challenges:** Some students may exhibit behavioral challenges, such as severe attention deficits, hyperactivity, or oppositional behaviors, which interfere with their ability to engage in the assessment process effectively.
4. **Medical or Health Conditions:** Certain medical or health conditions, such as severe anxiety disorders, epilepsy, or traumatic brain injury, may impair the student's ability to concentrate, sustain effort, or perform cognitive tasks accurately during the assessment.
5. **Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities:** Students with significant intellectual or developmental disabilities may have cognitive functioning that is too impaired to allow for valid and reliable assessment using standardized measures.
6. **Environmental Factors:** External factors in the assessment environment, such as noise, distractions, or unfamiliar surroundings, may adversely affect the student's performance on cognitive assessments.
7. **Limited Attention Span or Fatigue:** Some students, particularly younger children or those with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), may have a limited attention span or experience fatigue during lengthy assessment sessions, making it challenging to obtain accurate results.
8. **Cultural or Socioeconomic Factors:** Cultural differences or socioeconomic disadvantages may impact the student's familiarity with testing procedures, response styles, or the content of assessment tasks, leading to biased or invalid assessment results.
9. **Previous Testing History:** If the student has a history of unsuccessful testing experiences or has previously demonstrated difficulties with cognitive assessments, it may indicate that a direct assessment of cognitive functioning is not feasible at the present time.

10. Individualized Needs or Accommodations: Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans may require specialized accommodations or modifications to access and participate in cognitive assessments effectively. If these accommodations are insufficient or ineffective, a direct assessment may not be achievable.

By considering these factors, the school district can make informed decisions about whether a direct assessment of cognitive functioning is appropriate and feasible for a particular student, and if not, they can explore alternative assessment methods or strategies to evaluate intellectual functioning accurately.

History

Describe the assessment process the school district will use to determine if a student has a most significant cognitive disability in the absence of reliable direct assessment of cognitive functioning.

When reliable direct assessment of cognitive functioning is not achievable, the school district may use alternative assessment processes to determine if a student has a most significant cognitive disability (MSCD). Here's a general description of the assessment process we might use:

1. **Review of Existing Information:** The school psychologist begins by gathering and reviewing existing information about the student's academic, developmental, medical, and behavioral history. This may include previous assessment results, school records, medical records, teacher observations, and input from parents or guardians.
2. **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA):** If the student exhibits challenging behaviors that interfere with assessment procedures, the school psychologist may conduct an FBA to identify the antecedents, triggers, and consequences of these behaviors. This information helps develop behavior intervention strategies to support the student during assessment activities.
3. **Observations:** The school psychologist observes the student in various settings, such as the classroom, therapy sessions, or social interactions, to gain insights into their behavior, communication skills, adaptive functioning, and learning preferences.
4. **Informal Assessment:** Instead of standardized cognitive tests, school psychologists may use informal assessment methods to gather information about the student's cognitive abilities. These may include structured observations, curriculum-based assessments, performance assessments, checklists, and interviews with teachers, parents, or other professionals who work closely with the student.
5. **Adaptive Behavior Assessment:** Assessment of adaptive behavior evaluates the student's ability to function independently and perform everyday activities required for personal and social competence. School psychologists may use standardized measures or structured interviews to assess adaptive skills in areas such as communication, self-care, socialization, and community participation.
6. **Portfolio Assessment:** A portfolio assessment involves collecting samples of the student's work overtime to document their progress, accomplishments, and areas of difficulty. The portfolio may include academic work, projects, artwork, writing samples, and other artifacts that provide evidence of the student's abilities and achievements.
7. **Collaborative Team Approach:** The assessment process typically involves collaboration among a multidisciplinary team, including school psychologists, special education teachers, general education teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and other relevant professionals. This team approach ensures comprehensive evaluation and considers the student's strengths, needs, and individualized supports.
8. **Parent and Student Input:** Parents or guardians and, when appropriate, the student themselves, provide valuable input regarding the student's strengths, challenges, preferences, and goals. Their perspectives help inform the assessment process and

guide decision-making about appropriate interventions and supports.

9. Documentation and Reporting: The school psychologist documents assessment findings, interpretations, and recommendations in a comprehensive report. This report summarizes the student's strengths, areas of need, and eligibility for special education services, including whether the student meets criteria for a most significant cognitive disability.

10. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development: Based on assessment results, the IEP team develops an individualized education program that outlines the student's educational goals, specialized services, accommodations, and modifications to support their learning and development. The IEP is periodically reviewed and updated to reflect the student's progress and changing needs.

By using a combination of alternative assessment methods, collaboration with stakeholders, and a student-centered approach, the school district can effectively determine if a student has a most significant cognitive disability and develop appropriate interventions to support their educational success.

History

Describe how the school district will train and monitor staff with compliance of the determination and assessment process.

The Hernando County School District implements a comprehensive training and monitoring program to ensure that Program Staffing Specialists, ESE (Exceptional Student Education) Specialists, and IEP (Individualized Education Program) Teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to determine the need for a student to take an alternate assessment and to facilitate the accompanying assessment process. Here's how training will be completed:

- 1. Initial Training:** The district provided initial training to Program Staffing Specialists, ESE Specialists, and IEP Teams on the criteria for determining the need for an alternate assessment, including regulations from the state education department or relevant governing bodies. This training covers the types of disabilities that may warrant consideration for alternate assessments, eligibility criteria, and the decision-making process.
- 2. Legal and Procedural Compliance:** Training emphasizes the legal and procedural requirements related to assessment and eligibility determination, ensuring that staff members understand their roles and responsibilities in adhering to state and federal laws, district policies, and professional standards.
- 3. Assessment Procedures and Tools:** Staff members receive training on the assessment procedures and tools used to evaluate students for alternate assessments. This includes familiarization with standardized assessment instruments, observation techniques, portfolio assessment methods, and other alternative assessment approaches appropriate for students with diverse needs.
- 4. Data Collection and Analysis:** Training emphasizes the importance of collecting relevant data, including academic, behavioral, and adaptive functioning information, to inform decision-making about alternate assessments. Staff members learn how to collect, analyze, and interpret data effectively to determine eligibility and develop appropriate educational plans.
- 5. Collaborative Decision-Making:** Staff members are trained in collaborative decision-making processes involving multidisciplinary teams, including educators, parents or guardians, related service providers, and other stakeholders. Training emphasizes the importance of active communication, consensus-building, and consideration of diverse perspectives in determining the need for alternate assessments and developing individualized plans.
- 6. Cultural Competence and Sensitivity:** Staff members receive training on cultural competence and sensitivity to ensure that assessment practices are unbiased, culturally responsive, and respectful of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students and families.
- 7. Ongoing Professional Development:** The district provides ongoing professional development opportunities, including workshops, seminars, conferences, and online resources, to support continuous learning and skill development related to alternate assessments and compliance with assessment procedures.

8. **Monitoring and Quality Assurance:** The district implements monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that assessment practices align with established guidelines and standards. This may include regular reviews of assessment documentation, fidelity checks on assessment procedures, and feedback mechanisms for staff members.

9. **Documentation and Reporting:** Staff members are trained in accurate documentation and reporting practices, ensuring that assessment results, eligibility determinations, and educational plans are documented in compliance with regulatory requirements and district policies.

10. **Feedback and Support:** The district provides feedback, guidance, and support to staff members throughout the assessment process, addressing any concerns, challenges, or training needs that may arise. This includes access to supervision, consultation, and professional development resources as needed.

By implementing a robust training and monitoring program, the Hernando County School District ensures that Program Staffing Specialists, ESE Specialists, and IEP Teams are well-prepared to make informed decisions about alternate assessments and to support the educational needs of students with disabilities effectively.

[History](#)