

STAAR Alternate 2

2022 Assurances and Justifications Summary

On December 21, 2022, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) requested a waiver extension from the United States Department of Education (USDE) regarding the 1.0 percent state cap on the number of students statewide who participate in the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Alternate 2. The *2022–2023 Texas One Percent Waiver Request* is available on the [STAAR Alternate 2 Resources](#) webpage. States who request a waiver of the 1.0 percent cap must also request information from local education agencies (LEAs) that includes justifications for exceeding the 1.0 percent threshold for students assessed with an alternate assessment and assurances that the LEA is following alternate assessment guidance.

Based on testing data from the 2021–2022 school year, TEA identified 794 LEAs who exceeded the 1.0 percent participation threshold out of more than 1,200 LEAs. Texas’ plan to make progress on assessing only students with significant cognitive disabilities with the alternate assessment included notifying each LEA that exceeded the 1.0 percent participation threshold to complete the [STAAR Alternate 2 Assurances and Justification form](#). The responses from LEAs were analyzed and are summarized in this document.

The STAAR Alternate 2 Assurances and Justification form required each LEA exceeding the 1.0 percent participation threshold to report primary disability information for the students who were assessed with STAAR Alternate 2 in spring 2022. Table 1 shows the number of students assessed in each disability category as reported by LEAs.

TABLE 1. PRIMARY DISABILITY INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS ASSESSED WITH STAAR ALTERNATE 2 IN 2022

Primary Disability	Number of Students Assessed with STAAR Alternate 2
Auditory Impairment	393
Autism	16,594
Deaf-Blindness	156
Emotional Disturbance	557
Intellectual Disability	24,914
Orthopedic Impairment	647
Other Health Impairment	4,456
Specific Learning Disability	1,999
Speech Impairment	1,066
Traumatic Brain Injury	277
Visual Impairment	333

Section 1 of the form asked LEAs to indicate the type of training that was provided to each member of the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee regarding participation requirements.

LEAs responded to this question by indicating the training opportunities that were provided to school personnel and parents regarding state assessment decisions for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Some LEAs reported that multiple types of trainings were provided. This information helps TEA understand what training resources should be developed in the future. Table 2 describes the number of LEAs who reported they had conducted particular types of training, including the audience for the training and the mode in which the training was delivered.

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TABLE 2. STAAR ALTERNATE 2 TRAINING PROVIDED TO LEA STAFF AND PARENTS

		Target Audience			
		School administrators	Special education staff	Parents	Related service staff
Training Mode	Face-to-face training	449	504	197	381
	Web-based resources	448	504	200	380
	Provided guidance documents	561	570	505	498
	Other	38	45	63	37
	No training provided	3	2	51	28

Section 2 required LEAs to indicate the primary justification for assessing more than 1.0 percent of its student population with STAAR Alternate 2.

Justification 2a. The small district or charter school size results in a greater impact on participation rates (for example, a district size of 180 with 2 students with significant cognitive disabilities results in a higher than 1.0% participation rate).

Of the LEAs that responded, 488 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 were given number ranges to choose from for their small student enrollment. Table 3 shows the student enrollment ranges for the LEAs that chose small district/charter school as its primary justification.

TABLE 3. STUDENT ENROLLMENT FOR LEAS EXCEEDING THE 1.0 PERCENT STAAR ALTERNATE 2 THRESHOLD

		Total Student Enrollment						
		0–250 students	251–500 students	501–750 students	751–1000 students	1001–1250 students	1251–2000 students	2001+ students
Number of LEAs		92	85	79	53	43	65	54

Justification 2b. The district or charter school includes school, community, or health program(s) that drew large numbers of students with significant cognitive disabilities.

TEA acknowledges that some LEAs include special programs within its attendance zone that attract students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and their families. Of the LEAs that responded,

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123 (15.7%) indicated that a nearby school, community, or health program was the primary contributing factor to having more than 1.0 percent of its student participate in the STAAR Alternate 2. Table 4 shows the number of LEAs that indicated having a particular type of special program in the area.

TABLE 4. SPECIAL PROGRAM IMPACTING STAAR ALTERNATE 2 PARTICIPATION RATES

Number of LEAs	Type of special program reported
53	The district/charter school area contains group homes, residential facilities, children’s homes, regional day schools, or state schools.
23	The district/charter school area contains special medical or mental health facilities for children with significant cognitive disabilities.
40	The district/charter school provides access to social services for children with significant cognitive disabilities based on its location in proximity to surrounding rural areas.
73	The district/charter school has a unique approach to special education services and special programs that attracts families to their schools.
12	The district/charter school area contains a military facility that includes children with significant cognitive disabilities as a part of the Exceptional Family Member Program.
19	The district/charter school describes other reasons for drawing larger numbers of families with students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Justification 2c. The ARD committee lacks the necessary knowledge to effectively use the participation requirements when defining a student as having a significant cognitive disability.

When given an opportunity to choose this justification, only 6 LEAs identified this as the primary reason for assessing more than 1.0 percent of its students with STAAR Alternate 2. The small number of responses for this justification provides evidence that LEAs are feeling more confident in their knowledge of the STAAR Alternate 2 participation requirements.

Justification 2d. None of the situations above apply.

LEAs were provided an opportunity to describe the circumstances that impacted its population of students with significant cognitive disabilities if the other justifications did not apply. Several LEAs cited a significant increase in enrollment of students receiving special education services to their region over the past year. Several LEAs reported the recent arrival of immigrants coming from parts of the world that lack proper access to special education services. Several LEAs reported being located in geographic regions with high poverty neighborhoods and cited research indicating a correlation between intellectual disability and poverty. Several LEAs also reported that they were responsible for providing specialized programs based on shared service arrangements with other LEAs.

The final section required LEAs to review and certify each of the following assurances.

- Your district or 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 alternate assessment.
- Your district or charter school will address any disproportionality in the percentage of students in any subgroup taking the 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.

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- 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 or 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.