

**Kentucky Alternate Assessment:  
Local Educational Agency (LEA)  
Justifications for Alternate Assessment  
Participation**

2024-2025 School Year  
Assessment Data  
2025-2026 Reporting Year



Kentucky Department of  
**E D U C A T I O N**

**Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL)**

**April 2026**

## Overview

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires Kentucky to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject using the alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) does not exceed 1.0% of the total number of all students participating in the statewide assessment – the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA). States that anticipate exceeding the 1.0% participation rate in the AA-AAAS must submit a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) 90 days before the beginning of the AA-AAAS testing window.

Kentucky requested a one-year waiver from the USED regarding the 1.0% cap on participation in the AA-AAAS. The request was denied due to a lack of substantial progress in student participation rates for the AA-AAAS.

Kentucky’s AA-AAAS participation rates for each subject area for the 2024-2025 school year are listed in *Table 1* below.

**Table 1: 2024-2025 AA-AAAS Participation by Subject**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN AA-AAAS</b>	<b>NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>PERCENT PARTICIPATING IN AA-AAAS</b>
Reading (elem/middle/high)	4,244	335,620	1.26%
Math (elem/middle/high)	4,234	335,284	1.26%
Science (elem/middle/high)	1,714	138,802	1.23%

ESSA also requires each local educational agency (LEA) or community school to submit an annual justification if the LEA anticipates that AA-AAAS participation rates will exceed 1.0% in one or more subject areas.

The 2024-2025 assessment data was used to identify any LEA with an AA-AAAS participation rate greater than 1.0% in one or more subject areas. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results (DIMR) identified 141 LEAs and required the identified LEAs to submit information justifying the need to exceed the 1.0% threshold.

The following data includes a summary of justification responses for the 141 LEAs identified from the 2024-2025 assessment data as exceeding the 1.0% participation rate in one or more subject areas. A list of LEAs with participation in the alternate assessment exceeding 1.0% can be found in Appendix A.

Additional information on the ESSA requirements for a state waiver request can be found in the [“Requirements to Request a Waiver or Waiver Extension for the 2025-26 School Year](#)

from the 1.0 Percent Cap on the Percentage of Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities Who May Be Assessed with an Alternate Assessment Aligned with Alternate Academic Achievement Standards”, dated Sept. 25, 2025, provided by the USED.

Questions about the 1.0% justification responses should be directed to the DIMR at (502) 564-4970 or by emailing Lauren Thieneman at [lauren.thieneman@education.ky.gov](mailto:lauren.thieneman@education.ky.gov). Individual district justification responses are available upon request.

## Survey Questions and Responses

The justification form included eight questions for LEAs to answer. Each question was developed to protect personally identifiable student information. The questions were designed to inform the KDE about current LEA processes for AA-AAAS participation and to provide LEAs with an opportunity to identify any factors contributing to LEAs exceeding 1.0% participation.

### **Question 1: Has the district ensured that all Admissions and Release Committees (ARCs) are using the participation guidelines correctly to make AA-AAAS participation decisions?**

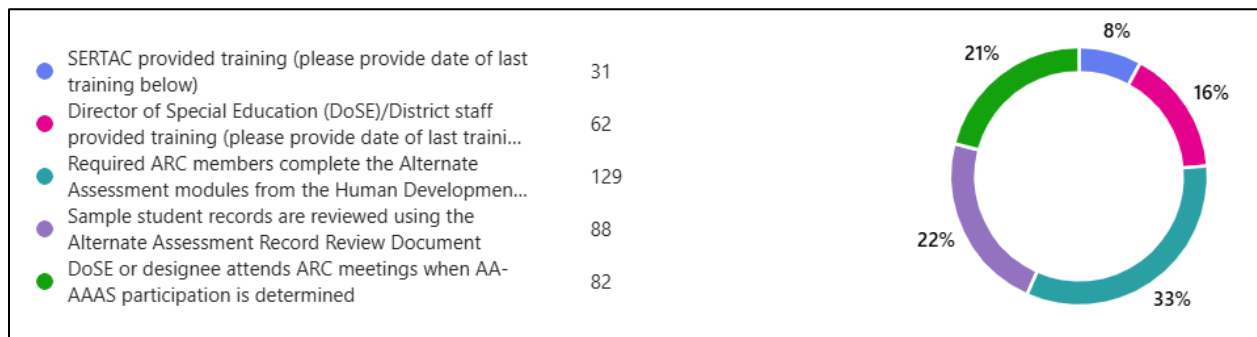
Of the 141 LEAs that responded, 140 indicated that they have ensured ARCs use the participation guidelines correctly when making AA-AAAS participation decisions. One LEA reported “no”. The KDE will follow up with this LEA to determine whether additional training is needed. Students must meet all eligibility requirements in the participation guidelines to participate in the alternate assessment.



**Question 2: How has the district ensured ARC members are using participation guidelines correctly? (Check all that apply)**

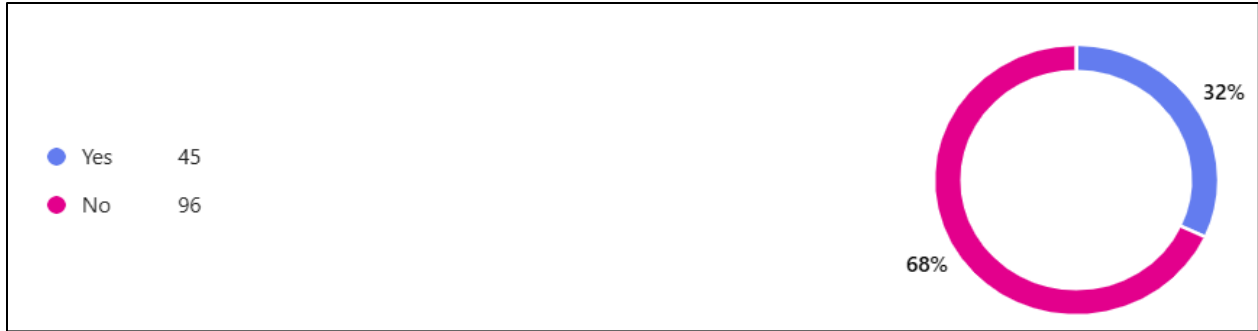
LEAs indicated they are using various strategies to ensure staff correctly use AA-AAAS participation guidelines. Strategies included:

- Training provided by Special Education Regional Technical Assistance Centers (SERTACs): 31
- Training provided by Directors of Special Education (DoSEs) or district personnel: 62
- Requiring ARC members to complete Alternate Assessment modules published by the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky: 129
- Using the Alternate Assessment Record Review Document to review a sample of student records: 88
- Having the DoSE chair or attend ARC meetings where AA-AAAS participation is discussed: 82
- Other: Experienced teachers serve as mentors for new teachers; designated ARC chairs for meetings determining AA-AAAS eligibility; data review committee; district created checklists to prepare for ARC meetings



**Question 3: Does the district identify specific programs or circumstances within the district that may contribute to higher enrollment of students identified with the most significant cognitive disabilities that would result in the AA-AAAS participation rate exceeding 1.0%?**

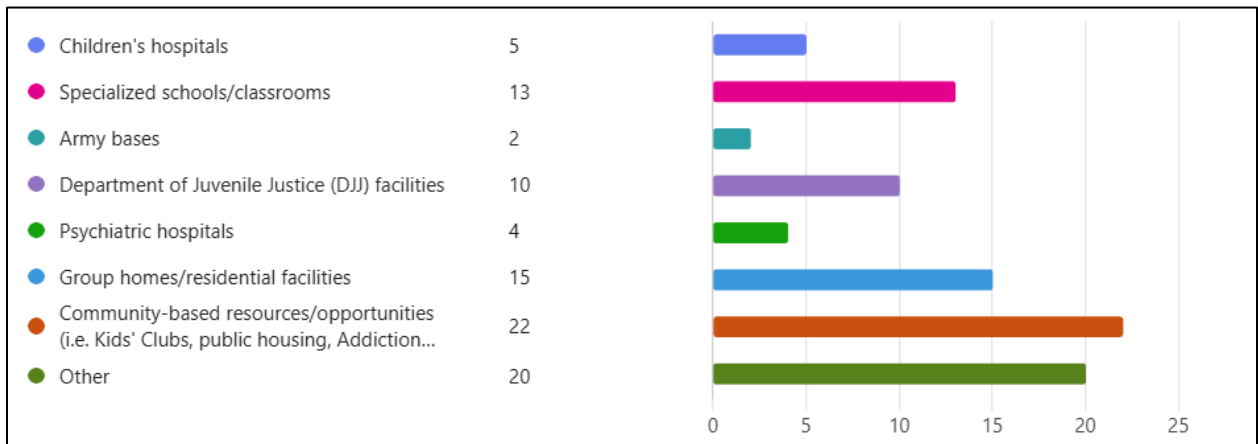
Of the 141 LEAs that responded, 45 indicated that they have specific programs or circumstances that contribute to a higher enrollment of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.



**Question 4: Which programs/circumstances explain higher enrollments of students with significant cognitive disabilities? (Check all that apply)**

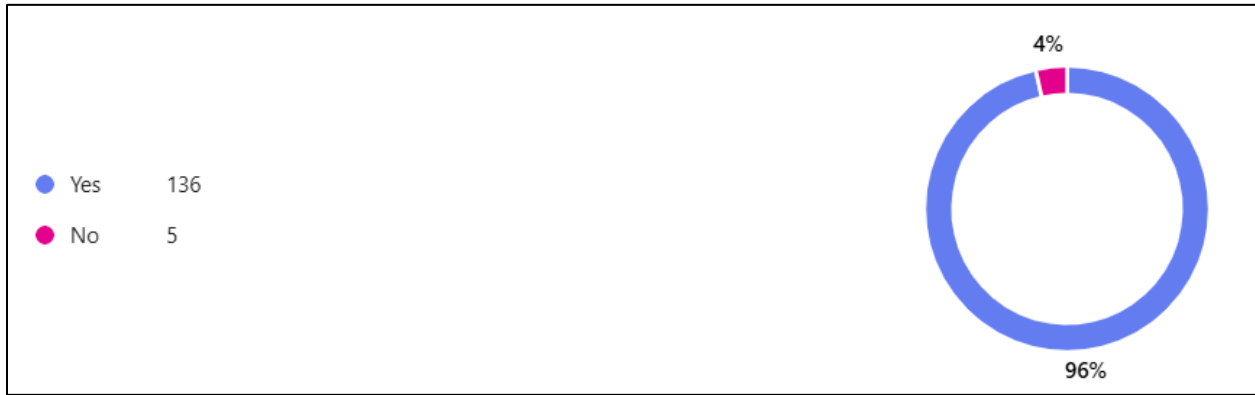
Circumstances that led to higher enrollments of students with significant cognitive disabilities included:

- Children’s hospitals: 5
- Specialized classrooms: 13
- Army bases: 2
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities: 10
- Psychiatric hospitals: 4
- Group homes or residential facilities: 15
- Community-based organizations such as public housing, Kids’ Clubs, addiction treatment centers or homeless shelters: 15
- Other: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Centers; foster care facilities



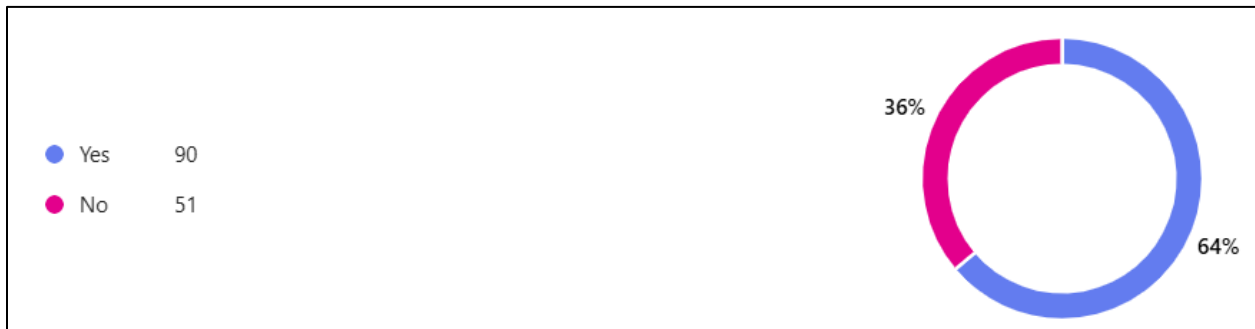
**Group 5: Has the district reviewed and analyzed data (i.e. disability categories, Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI), English Learner (EL), communication status) on students eligible for the AA-AAAS?**

Of the 141 LEAs that responded, five reported that they have not analyzed data on students eligible for the AA-AAAS. The KDE will follow up with these five LEAs with additional guidance.



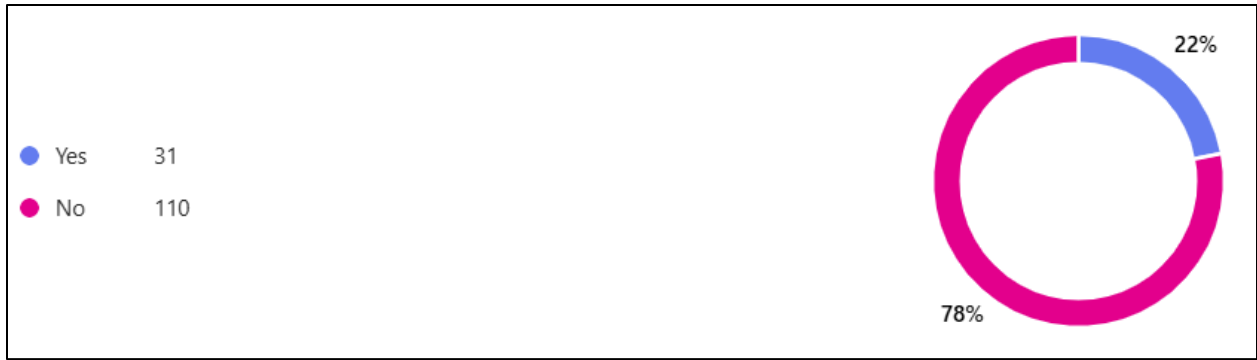
**Question 6: Small district sizes may result in a greater impact on participation rates. Is your district's participation rate impacted by an overall small student population size?**

Of the 141 LEAs that responded, 51 reported that small district size has impacted their participation rates due to the overall small student population size.



**Question 7: Do district staff need additional training on AA-AAAS participation?**

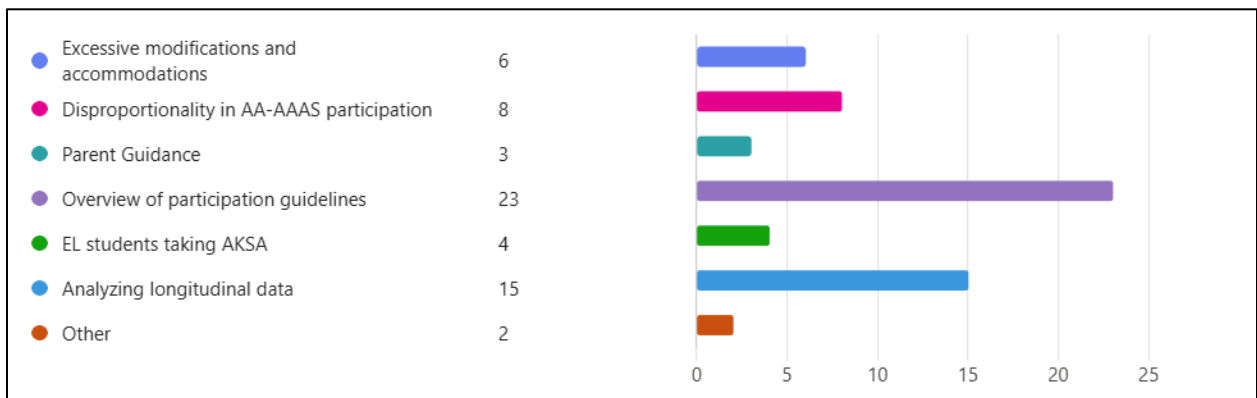
Of the 141 LEAs that responded, 31 indicated they would like additional training for district staff on the AA-AAAS. The KDE is actively working with the SERTACs to develop additional training and technical assistance on AA-AAAS.



**Question 8: Which training topics would benefit district staff? (Check all that apply)**

Districts requested additional training in:

- Excessive modifications and accommodations: 6
- Analyzing disproportionality data: 8
- Parent guidance: 3
- Participation guidelines: 23
- English Learner (EL) students eligible for the AA-AAAS: 4
- Analyzing longitudinal data: 15
- Other: trainings repeated throughout the year due to teacher/ARC chair turnover



## Appendix A

The following LEAs assessed more than 1.0% of their assessed students in one or more subject areas with an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS).

LEAs that exceeded the 1.0% participation rate in at least one subject for 2024-2025 School Year (SY)
Adair County
Allen County
Anchorage Independent
Ashland Independent
Augusta Independent
Ballard County
Bardstown Independent
Bath County
Bell County
Bellevue Independent
Berea Independent
Bourbon County
Boyd County
Boyle County
Bracken County
Breathitt County
Breckinridge County
Bullitt County
Butler County
Caldwell County
Calloway County
Campbell County

LEAs that exceeded the 1.0% participation rate in at least one subject for 2024-2025 School Year (SY)
Campbellsville Independent
Carlisle County
Carroll County
Carter County
Casey County
Caverna Independent
Christian County
Clark County
Clay County
Clinton County
Corbin Independent
Covington Independent
Crittenden County
Cumberland County
Danville Independent
Daviess County
Dawson Springs Independent
Dayton Independent
East Bernstadt Independent
Elizabethtown Independent
Elliott County
Eminence Independent
Erlanger-Elsmere Independent
Estill County
Fayette County

LEAs that exceeded the 1.0% participation rate in at least one subject for 2024-2025 School Year (SY)
Fleming County
Floyd County
Fort Thomas Independent
Frankfort Independent
Franklin County
Fulton Independent
Gallatin County
Garrard County
Glasgow Independent
Graves County
Grayson County
Green County
Greenup County
Hancock County
Hardin County
Harlan County
Harlan Independent
Harrison County
Hart County
Hazard Independent
Henry County
Hickman County
Hopkins County
Jackson County
Jackson Independent

LEAs that exceeded the 1.0% participation rate in at least one subject for 2024-2025 School Year (SY)
Jefferson County
Jenkins Independent
Jessamine County
Johnson County
Kenton County
Knott County
Knox County
Larue County
Laurel County
Lawrence County
Lee County
Leslie County
Letcher County
Lewis County
Lincoln County
Livingston County
Logan County
Lyon County
Madison County
Magoffin County
Marion County
Marshall County
Martin County
Mason County
Mayfield Independent

LEAs that exceeded the 1.0% participation rate in at least one subject for 2024-2025 School Year (SY)
McCracken County
McCreary County
McClellan County
Menifee County
Mercer County
Middlesboro Independent
Monroe County
Montgomery County
Morgan County
Nelson County
Newport Independent
Ohio County
Owsley County
Paducah Independent
Paintsville Independent
Paris Independent
Pendleton County
Perry County
Pike County
Powell County
Pulaski County
Raceland Worthington Independent
Rowan County
Russell County
Russell Independent

LEAs that exceeded the 1.0% participation rate in at least one subject for 2024-2025 School Year (SY)
Science Hill Independent
Scott County
Somerset Independent
Southgate Independent
Taylor County
Todd County
Trigg County
Trimble County
Union County
Walton Verona Independent
Washington County
Webster County
Whitley County
Williamsburg Independent
Williamstown Independent
Wolfe County
Woodford County
Kentucky School for the Blind
Kentucky School for the Deaf