

Kentucky Alternate Assessment:  
District Justifications for Alternate Assessment Participation

2020-2021 School Year Eligibility Data<sup>1</sup>  
2020-2021 Reporting Year



Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL)

July 2021

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<sup>1</sup> The KDE received approval of an assessment and accountability state waiver from the ED on March 30, 2020, which provided relief from the federal assessment, accountability and specific reporting requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, no state assessment was administered during the 2019-2020 school year.

## Overview

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires Kentucky to ensure the total number of students assessed in each subject using the Kentucky 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 Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP). States that anticipate exceeding 1.0% participation in the AA-AAAS must submit a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) ninety days before the beginning of the AA-AAAS testing window.

Kentucky requested and received a one-year extended waiver from ED regarding the 1.0% cap on participation in the AA-AAAS for the 2020-2021 school year.

Kentucky's AA-AAAS participation rates for each subject area for the 2020-2021 school year are listed in *Table 1* below.

**Table 1:** *Estimated participation rates by subject area for the 2020-2021 school year<sup>2</sup>*

SUBJECT	ESTIMATED NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN AA-AAAS	ESTIMATED NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT	ESTIMATED PERCENT PARTICIPATING IN AA-AAAS
Reading (elem/middle/high)	3,206	349,553	0.91 %
Math (elem/middle/high)	3,206	349,553	0.91 %
Science (elem/middle)	1,487	147,036	1.01 %

ESSA also requires each district or community school to submit an annual justification if the district anticipates AA-AAAS participation rates will be greater than 1.0% in one or more subject areas.

The 2020-2021 school year eligibility data is based on the student Individualized Education Programs (IEP) used to identify any district 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 ninety-four districts that exceeded 1.0% eligibility in at least one subject area. The KDE requested written assurances from the districts that all IEP Teams, known in Kentucky as an Admissions and Release Committee (ARC), are following the [Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Estimated number and percentage of students anticipated to participate in the general assessment and AA-AAAS based upon 2020-2021 IEP and student population data. These numbers include students who may have been exempt from participating and does not include students where ARCs have yet to determine assessment decisions for the upcoming school year.

when making assessment participation decisions. The KDE also required the 94 identified districts to submit information justifying the need to exceed the 1.0% threshold. The following data includes justification responses for the ninety-four districts. A list of districts exceeding 1.0% eligibility to participate in the AA-AAAS is in Appendix A.

Questions about the 1.0% justification responses should be directed to the DIMR by phone at (502) 564-4970 or by emailing the [KDE Alternate Assessment Inbox](#). Individual district justification responses may be available upon request.

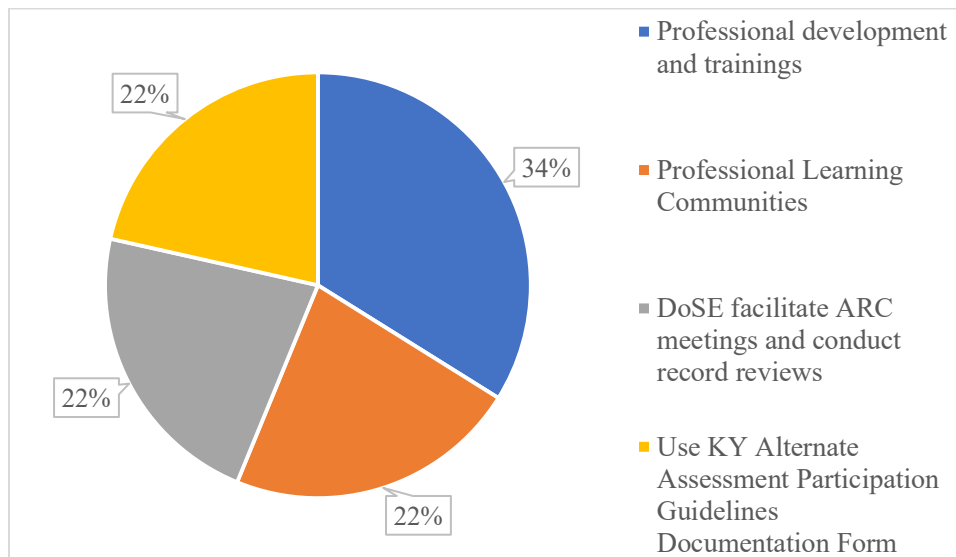
Information on the ESSA requirements for a state waiver request can be found in [Requirements for the Cap on the Percentage of Students who may be Assessed with an Alternate Assessment Aligned with Alternate Academic Achievement Standards \(AA-AAAS\)](#), dated May 16, 2017, provided by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Additional information on the 2020-2021 school year waiver requirements can be found in the [Letter to State Assessment Directors \(OSEP June 9, 2020\)](#), provided by the ED.

### **Questions and Responses**

The KDE formed the Alternate Assessment and Diploma Advisory Group (AADAG) in 2017 to assist with developing a statewide process for ensuring appropriate oversight of districts and how the state will respond to districts exceeding the 1.0% cap. The advisory group included renowned experts in the field of low incidence disabilities from the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky, consultants who specialize in low incidence disabilities from the state's Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL), Directors of Special Education (DoSE) from districts and low incidence consultants from the Regional Educational Cooperatives. The state employees from the OSEEL and the Office of Assessment and Accountability (OAA) participated in advisory group meetings. Each meeting was led by an external facilitator. As part of the process, the KDE and AADAG annually revise the justification form based on feedback from districts and stakeholder input.

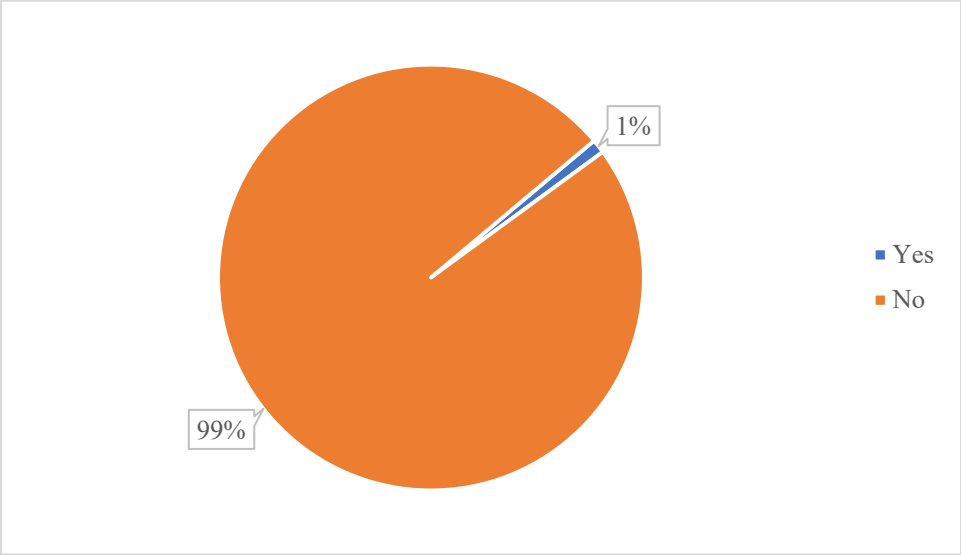
The justification form included twelve questions for districts to answer. Each question was developed to inform the KDE of current district processes around AA-AAAS eligibility and participation and provide districts with an opportunity to identify any factors contributing to the district exceeding 1.0% participation.

**Question 1: How has the district ensured all Admissions and Release Committees (ARC) are using the participation guidelines correctly to make assessment participation decisions?**



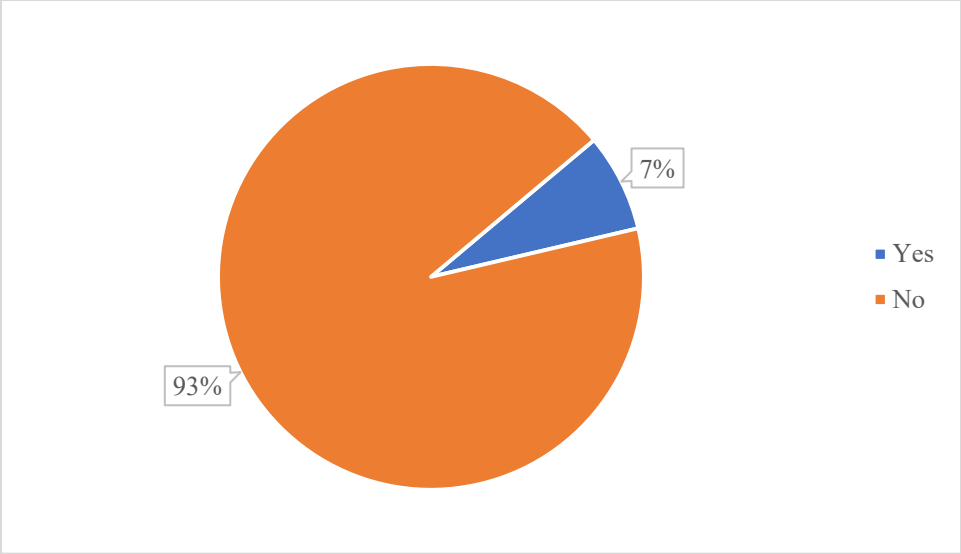
Of the ninety-four responses received, forty districts indicated they require district staff to complete AA-AAAS training modules provided by the DIMR. Forty-one districts indicated they require district staff to participate in annual professional development and trainings provided by the district and regional special education cooperative. The professional development and trainings include AA-AAAS eligibility requirements and appropriate documentation. Twenty-seven districts indicated district leadership meets with district staff to participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to review Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form and training resources. Twenty-seven districts indicated Directors of Special Education (DoSE) monitor the ARC's completion of the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form through facilitating the ARC meetings themselves or through a review of student due process records. Twenty-six districts indicated all ARCs use the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form to discuss and document participation in the AA-AAAS

**Question 2: Do district staff have questions about specific participation criteria or areas of the eligibility guidelines?**



Of the ninety-four responses received, one district indicated a need for additional information and had questions specific to participation criteria indicated on the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form. The KDE shared those requests with the district’s respective regional special education cooperatives to determine additional training and support needs to improve AA-AAAS participation decision-making. The cooperative worked with the district to develop an understanding regarding cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior eligibility requirements.

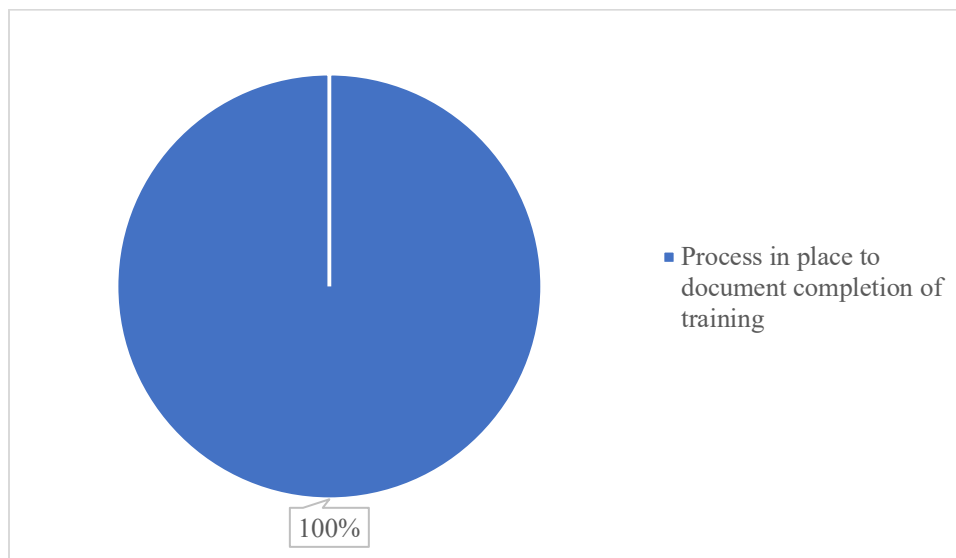
**Question 3: Do district staff require additional training on specific participation criteria or areas of eligibility guidelines?**



Of the ninety-four responses received, seven districts indicated they did require additional

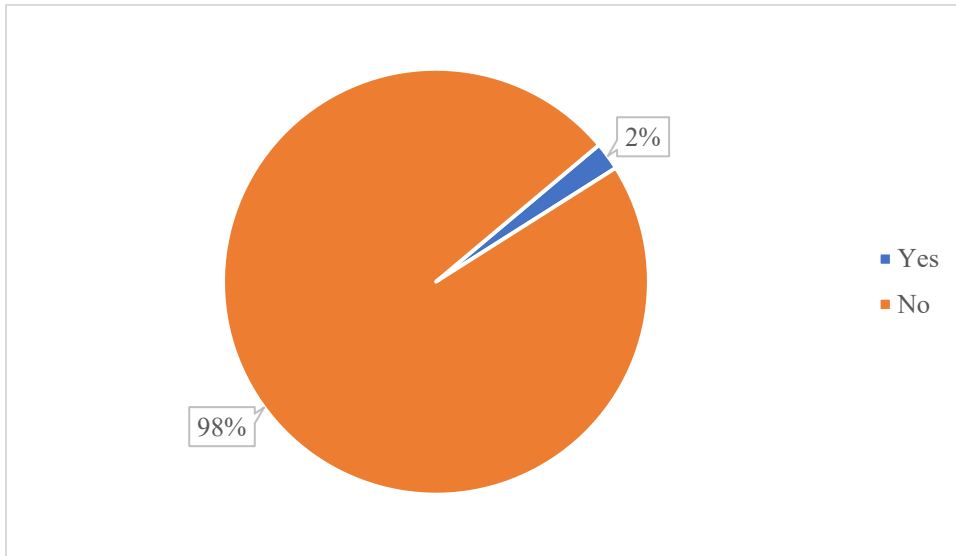
training on specific participation criteria or areas of eligibility. Two of the seven districts asked for further training and guidance due to the intricate nature of determining eligibility to participate in the AA-AAAS. Four of the seven districts clarified they require district staff to complete all available training on the AA-AAAS.

**Question 4: How does the district document that all ARC Chairpersons and special education teachers who work with students assessed with the AA-AAAS have completed AA-AAAS participation guidelines training?**



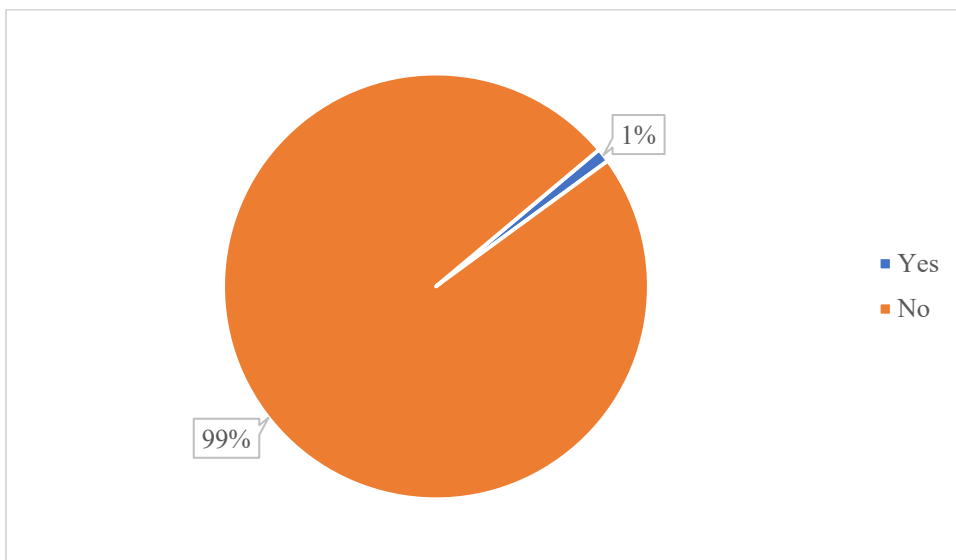
All ninety-four districts reported they have a process in place to document the completion of AA-AAAS training modules. All ninety-four districts indicated the DoSE uses various methods to monitor completion of trainings, including module certificate tracking, training sign-in sheets, professional learning community meetings, and other district-wide training tracking systems.

**Question 5: Did the ARC lack the necessary knowledge to effectively use the participation guidelines to determine a student has a significant cognitive disability?**



Of the ninety-four district responses received, two districts indicated a lack of knowledge of the participation guidelines as a reason for exceeding 1.0% AA-AAAS participation. One district stated it has new teachers and chairpersons in the district who are unfamiliar with the participation guidelines. This district requested training and support from the regional special education cooperative. The other district did not offer an explanation as to why ARC members lacked the necessary knowledge.

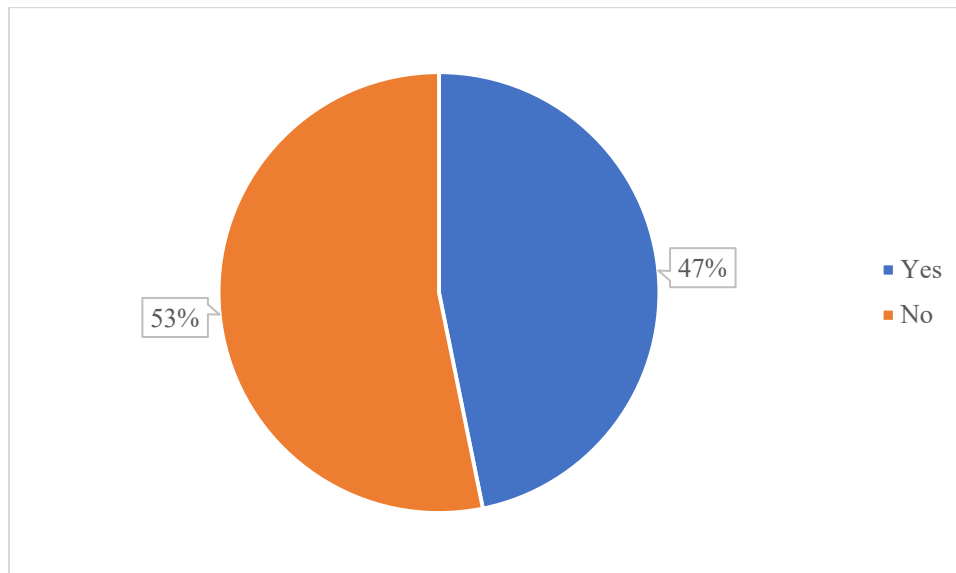
**Question 6: Did the ARC lack knowledge of how to gather and analyze data when making the decision for determining a student eligible to participate in the AA-AAAS?**



Of the ninety-four district self-monitoring responses received, one district acknowledged student due process files did not include an appropriate analysis or all documentation required

for the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form. The district described professional development efforts and trainings completed this school year to improve data analysis and documentation.

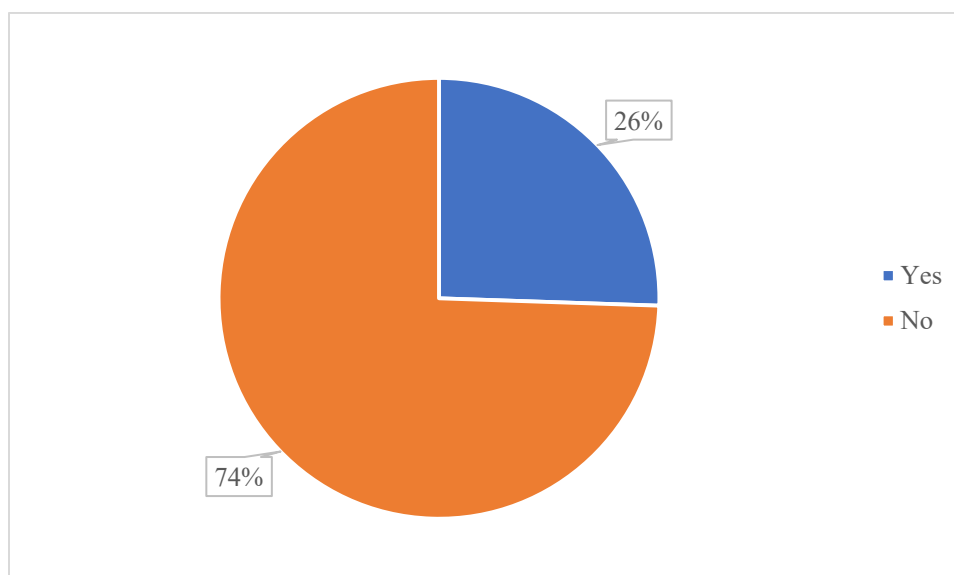
**Question 7: Does your district have a small size population which resulted in a higher participation rate? (Example: district size 180 students with two students with significant cognitive disabilities which resulted in higher than 1.0% participation rate)**



Of the ninety-four district responses, forty-four districts responded yes, the small size of the student population in their district caused them to exceed 1.0% AA-AAAS participation. Forty-three districts provided the total district population, total number and percentage of students participating in the AA-AAAS. These percentages depict the districts' overall percentage of students participating in the AA-AAAS, not by subject area. One district did not provide participation rates.



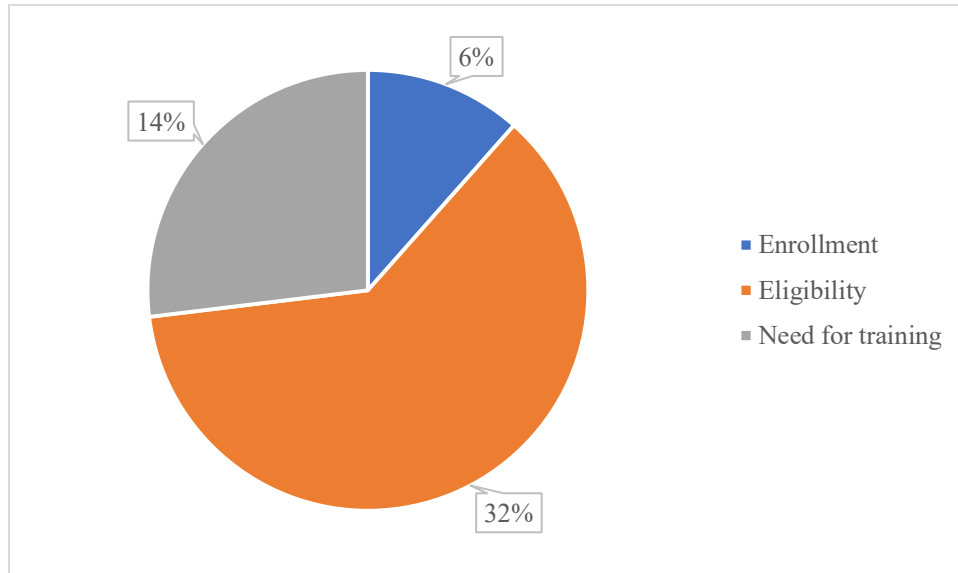
**Question 8: Does the district include school, community or health programs that draw large numbers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**



Of the ninety-four district responses, twenty-four districts described a variety of school, community and health programs that have drawn a higher number of families with students who have significant disabilities. Some examples provided by the districts included:

- Early intervention services
- Partnership with the Kentucky Autism Training Center
- Behavioral health services provided locally
- Small school and class sizes for students
- After school education programs for students with significant disabilities
- Full-day kindergarten programs
- On-site health, mental health and dental services
- Close proximity to hospitals and residential facilities
- High level of support for students with disabilities from local colleges and community organizations
- Family Resource Youth Service Center provides additional support and transportation needs for students with disabilities to be included in school and outside activities (i.e., school sports and events, Special Olympics)

**Question 9: Are there other reasons why your district has more than 1.0% of students eligible to participate in the AA-AAAS? Please describe.**



Of the ninety-four district responses, forty-four districts did not include additional reasons for exceeding 1.0% of students eligible to participate in the AA-AAAS. Fifty districts provided additional reasons why the district has more than 1.0% of students eligible to participate in the AA-AAAS. The KDE reviewed and analyzed the responses and found three common themes within the responses provided; these themes included enrollment, eligibility and a need for training.

Justification Answers Provided - Common Themes	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Enrollment	6	6%
Eligibility	30	32%
Need for Training	13	14%

**Enrollment**

- Transient pupil population, such as students enrolled in multiple schools per school year, students enrolling from group homes and medical facilities near children’s hospitals

**Eligibility**

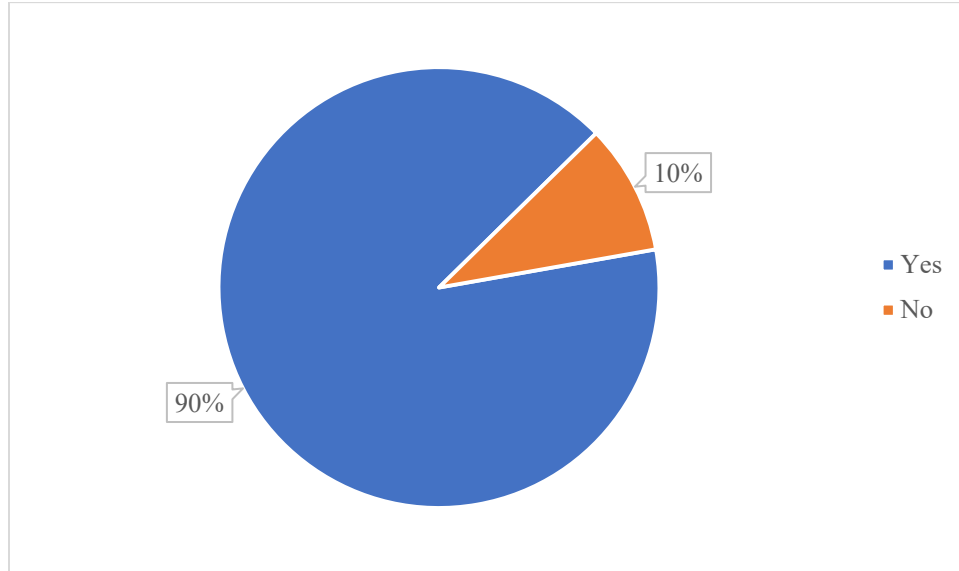
- 1.0% cap calculation based on each subject area as opposed to overall population participation affected the numbers
- High number of eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities

**Need for Training**

- Socio-economic issues, such as low poverty levels or high levels of substance abuse

- District misinterpretation of the participation criterion required for AA-AAAS

**Question 10: Has the district reviewed and analyzed data on students eligible for AA-AAAS based on identified disability? If Yes to 10, provide an analysis of these data. If No, please explain why data have not been reviewed or analyzed.**



Of the ninety-four district responses, eighty-four districts answered, “Yes, it has reviewed and analyzed the data of students eligible for the AA-AAAS.” Of the eighty-four districts, thirty-six districts provided an analysis of data. Fifty-one of the eighty-four districts explained the process used within the district to analyze AA-AAAS participation and eligibility data.

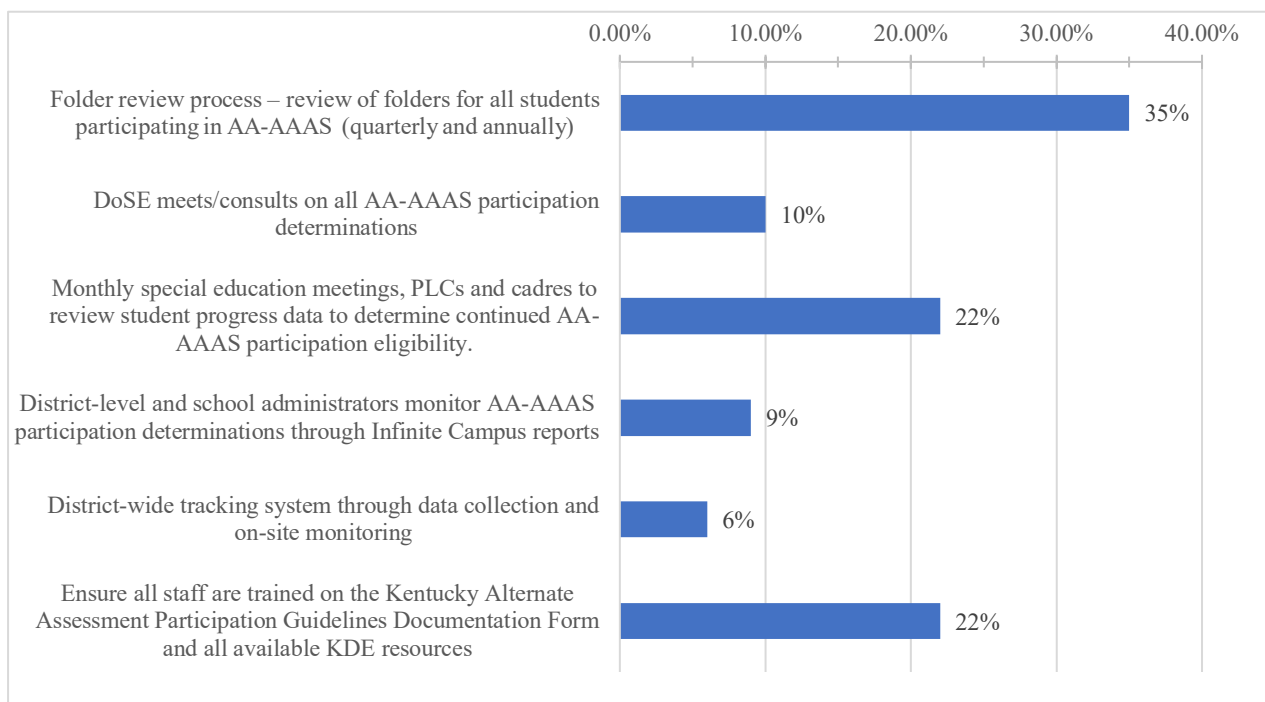
Of the ninety-four district responses, eight districts reported, “No, they have not reviewed and analyzed data of students eligible for the AA-AAAS.” Two districts are developing a process for reviewing and analyzing AA-AAAS participation and eligibility data. One district indicated they did not review or analyze AA-AAAS participation and eligibility data because it was not available for them. The KDE has reached out to the district to provide the AA-AAAS data and how they can obtain that data using the Kentucky Student Information System. The other district did not provide an explanation. Two districts also stated they do not complete a data analysis for AA-AAAS participation and eligibility because all eligibility decisions are based on the individual student, and the student must meet all eligibility requirements.

**Question 11: How does the district monitor eligibility for students to participate in AA-AAAS?**

Of the ninety-four district responses, all ninety-four districts indicated they have processes in place to monitor AA-AAAS eligibility and participation. The ninety-four districts indicated a variety of processes to monitor AA-AAAS eligibility and participation.

Current processes in place for monitoring AA-AAAS participation included:

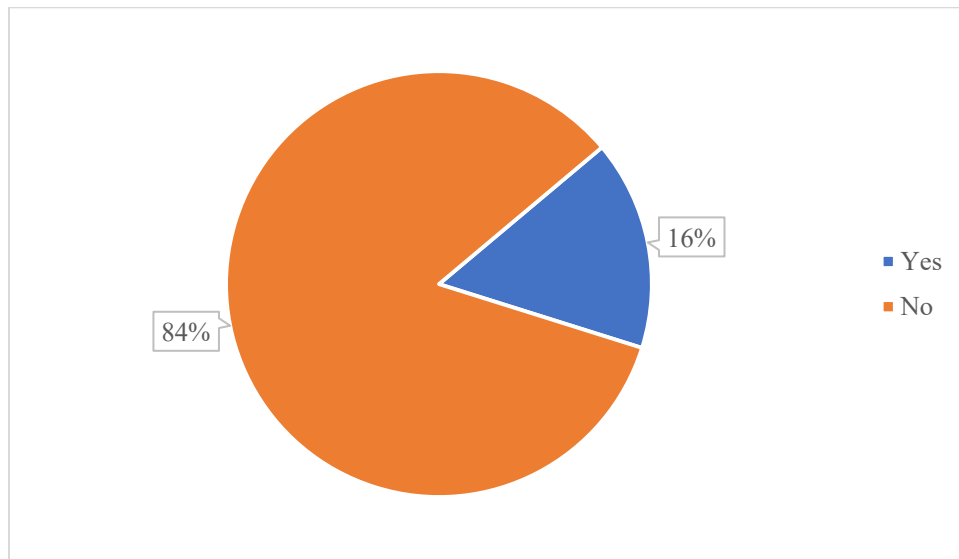
Process to Monitor AA-AAAS Participation	Number of Respondents
Folder review process – review of folders for all students participating in AA-AAAS (quarterly and annually)	35
DoSE meets/consults on all AA-AAAS participation determinations	10
Monthly special education meetings, PLCs and cadres to review student progress data to determine continued AA-AAAS participation eligibility	22
District-level and school administrators monitor AA-AAAS participation determinations through Infinite Campus reports	9
District-wide tracking system through data collection and on-site monitoring	6
Ensure all staff are trained on the <a href="#">Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines Documentation Form</a> and all available KDE resources	22



The KDE strongly recommends districts establish a process to review and monitor the

identification of students taking the AA-AAAS. The KDE has recommended a list of steps districts can take to develop a process to monitor the identification of students participating in the AA-AAAS. Those recommendations are included in the [Participation Guidelines for the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Review Document](#).

**Question 12: Is there any additional training or guidance needed for your district to improve the AA-AAAS participation decision-making process? (Example: specific guidance for parents, training on excessive modifications)**



Of the ninety-four district responses, fifteen districts indicated they do require additional training or guidance. KDE shared those requests with the district's respective regional special education cooperatives to identify and provide the needed training and support. Seventy-nine of ninety-four districts indicated they do not need additional training or guidance; however, six districts did note that they would welcome any additional training and guidance from the state to improve its processes around determining AA-AAAS eligibility decision making.

## Appendix A

AA-AAAS Eligibility – Districts with more than 1.0% of its students eligible for the AA-AAAS, in at least one subject area.

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
<b>State Target</b>	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Adair County	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Allen County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anchorage Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Anderson County	Yes	No	No	No
Ashland Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Augusta Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ballard County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barbourville Independent	Yes	No	No	No
Bardstown Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barren County	Yes	No	No	No
Bath County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Beechwood Independent	Yes	No	No	No
Bell County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Bellevue Independent	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Berea Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boone County	Yes	Yes	No	No
Bourbon County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bowling Green Independent	Yes	No	No	No
Boyd County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boyle County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bracken County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breathitt County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breckinridge County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bullitt County	Yes	No	No	Yes
Burgin Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Butler County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Caldwell County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Calloway County	Yes	No	Yes	No
Campbell County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Campbellsville Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Carlisle County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Carroll County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carter County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Casey County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Caverna Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Christian County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clark County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clay County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clinton County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cloverport Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Corbin Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Covington Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crittenden County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Cumberland County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Danville Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daviess County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dawson Springs Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dayton Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
East Bernstadt Independent	No	No	No	No
Edmonson County	Yes	No	Yes	No
Elizabethtown Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elliott County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eminence Independent	Yes	No	Yes	No
Erlanger-Elsmere Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estill County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Fairview Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fayette County	Yes	No	No	No
Fleming County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Floyd County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Fort Thomas Independent	Yes	No	No	No
Frankfort Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Franklin County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Fulton County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Fulton Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Gallatin County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Garrard County	Yes	No	Yes	No
Glasgow Independent	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Grant County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Graves County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grayson County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Green County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greenup County	Yes	No	No	Yes
Hancock County	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hardin County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Harlan County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Harlan Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Harrison County	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hart County	Yes	No	No	No
Hazard Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Henderson County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Henry County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Hickman County	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Hopkins County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jackson County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jackson Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Jefferson County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jenkins Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jessamine County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Johnson County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kenton County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Knott County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Knox County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Larue County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laurel County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lawrence County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lee County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Leslie County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Letcher County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lewis County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lincoln County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Livingston County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Logan County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ludlow Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lyon County	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Madison County	Yes	Yes	No	No
Magoffin County	Yes	Yes	No	No

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Marion County	Yes	Yes	No	No
Marshall County	Yes	No	No	No
Martin County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mason County	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mayfield Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
McCracken County	Yes	Yes	No	No
McCreary County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
McLean County	Yes	Yes	No	No
Meade County	Yes	No	No	No
Menifee County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mercer County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Metcalfe County	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Middlesboro Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monroe County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Montgomery County	Yes	No	No	No
Morgan County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Muhlenberg County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Murray Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nelson County	Yes	No	No	No
Newport Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicholas County	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ohio County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oldham County	Yes	No	No	No
Owen County	Yes	Yes	No	No
Owensboro Independent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Owsley County	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Paducah Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paintsville Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paris Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pendleton County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Perry County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Districts	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2016-17	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2017-18	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Participation in at least one subject for SY 2018-19	Districts Exceeding 1.0% Eligibility in at least one subject for SY 2020-21
Pike County	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pikeville Independent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pineville Independent	Yes	No	No	No