

1.0 Percent Participation Justification Form 2017–18

The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* requires each district and charter school to complete and submit a justification when it anticipates exceeding 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject area with the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment. Justifications from each district and charter school will be reviewed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), and follow up actions will be determined based on the information found in the justification document. Staff from the Exceptional Children and Accountability Divisions in each district and charter school should collaborate to provide the following information on the justification document. Responses to numbers 1–4 are required; it is optional to include additional information (see page 3). This justification document will be publicly posted. As such, the document **must not contain any personally identifiable information**. If necessary, additional pages may be attached to this form.

1. Enter contact information for the primary district/charter school staff member responsible for overseeing the completion of the justification form.	
3-Digit LEA/Charter Code: 620	District/Charter Name: Montgomery County Schools
Contact Name: Dr. Pokie Noland	Contact Title: Director of Exceptional Children's Programs
Contact Phone No.: (910)576-1742	Contact E-Mail: pokie.noland@montgomery.k12.nc.us
<p>2. Enter a description of how the district/charter school will assure that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are adhering to the eligibility criteria as outlined in the <i>Testing Students with Disabilities</i> publication when determining student eligibility for participation in the alternate assessment.</p> <p>Montgomery County Schools has employed a multi-pronged approach to ensure that IEP teams are adhering to the eligibility criteria as outlined in the <i>Testing Students with Disabilities</i> handbook. We must ensure that the students who are currently being instructed in the Extended Content Standards and assessed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment are appropriately placed. In addition, we must ensure that students who are found eligible for the Exceptional Children's Program are instructed on the appropriate curriculum standards and assessed with the appropriate assessment to best meet their needs and encourage them to grow to meet high expectations. At the school level, the individual's progress towards meeting Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and in the curriculum, whether the regular Standard Course of Study or Extended Content Standards, must be discussed each year in the annual review of the IEP by the IEP team. The IEP team includes the parent(s), school administrator, Exceptional Children's Program (EC) teacher who instructs the student, regular education teacher who instructs the student, and any related services personnel. This team looks at current and past assessment data, current grades, progress made in mastering curriculum objectives, progress in meeting IEP goals, teacher input, and parent input. The team synthesizes this information together to make the best informed decision based on the information at hand placing this student on the Extended Content Standards or the regular Standard Course of Study and the appropriate assessment. Factored into this decision are the supports the student needs to access the regular Standard Course of Study and whether or not the provision of these supports enables the student to fully access the curriculum or are the student's needs so great that even with these supports in place, the student continues to require extensive and repeated individualized instruction to make meaningful gains. Of consideration as well for this student is that he or she requires substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways.</p> <p>At the school level, all of our students who are assessed on the regular Standard Course of Study with the regular End of Grade test (EOG) have appropriate access to accessibility features on statewide tests. Based on the specific needs of the individual student, the IEP team determines whether or not the student needs read aloud, extended testing time, testing in a small group or one-to-one setting, multiple testing sessions, and/or additional schedule breaks to allow the student to access the regular EOG in an equitable manner with</p>	

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his nondisabled peers. This decision is made based on data the regular classroom teacher and EC teacher track during the school year to determine the student's need for supports. When the IEP team determines that even with these supports in place, the student cannot participate in the regular Standard Course of Study and the regular EOG because the student utilizes substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways, the IEP team determines that the appropriate instruction content is the Extended Content Standards and that the student should be assessed using the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and are data-driven decisions looking at the entire student and his or her needs.

At the district level, Assistant EC Director/Compliance monitors the student's placement on the correct course of study and assessment through reviewing reports run in EasyIEP and comparing the data on the report with the student's IEP. This step allows the Central Office EC department to spot trends and hold conversations with school administrators and EC teachers where needed.

In the first prong of our approach, the Central Office EC staff have trained administrators who serve as Local Education Agency (LEA) representatives in the IEP meetings and facilitate these meetings on the eligibility criteria for students who will participate in the Extended Content Standards and be assessed on the NCEXTEND1 – Alternate Assessment. The training focuses on the requirements the student must meet in order to be assessed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment, a description of the student who the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment is not appropriate for, and the evidence a decision to participate in the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment is not based on. The training focuses on the fact that the student placed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment must have a "significant cognitive disability" that significantly impacts his or her adaptive behaviors, requires extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains, and uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways. The training compares this to the student who demonstrates delays only in academic achievement, low reading level, has an expected poor performance on the general education assessments, is served at the resource level of services or separate setting, and/or anticipated emotional distress on the student. Comparing these two different situations of students fostered discussion and allowed those who serve as LEA representatives in the IEP meetings to better understand the student for whom the Extended Content Standards and NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment are intended to serve. At the beginning of the year, all of our teachers in the Exceptional Children's Programs and related services personnel were trained on this content as well. This training is very beneficial in reminding teachers and related services personnel of the criteria the student who is on the Extended Content Standards and NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment must meet and educating our new teachers to the program as well. The Assistant Superintendent of Accountability and Diversity provides an overview training for testing students with disabilities on both the regular Standard Course of Study and Extended Content Standards as well at the beginning of each school year. The professional development provided by the district helps build capacity at the school level and classroom level.

The second prong of our approach has been to provide more in-depth training for our teachers in the Exceptional Children's Program who teach the Extended Content Standards. These teachers meet in monthly Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at the Central Office with other teachers who instruct students in the Extended Content Standards, the Director of Exceptional Children's Programs, and the Assistant Director of Exceptional Children's Programs/Compliance. In the PLC, the group has spent significant time analyzing and applying the criteria for a student who will test on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment in different scenarios. The group has also looked at items on the released versions of the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment to gain a better knowledge of how to appropriately place any student who functions too high to be placed on the Extended Content Standards, but who will need significant supports to place them on the regular Standard Course of Study. These discussions have been robust with active problem-

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solving by all members of the PLC. The PLC has also examined how a “significant cognitive disability” is defined and how the student’s disability significantly impacts adaptive behaviors, defined as those skills which are essential for someone to live and function independently. Examining how the student’s significant cognitive disability impacts his or her access to the curriculum, the extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains required, and the student’s use of substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways has led these teachers to a deeper understanding of the student who needs to be instructed on the Extended Content Standards and assessed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternative Assessment. This training impacts the EC teacher in the classroom as he or she deepens his or her understanding of students with significant cognitive delays. We have reached out to our state and regional support people in the Department of Public Instruction in the Exceptional Children’s Program. They have provided meaningful dialogue regarding the definition of “significant cognitive disability” and how this manifests itself in a student.

In the third prong of our approach, we have worked with the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) teams at each of the schools and district level. The school’s MTSS team provides wrap-around supports for each of our students on an individualized basis so that they can succeed in accessing the regular Standard Course of Study. The MTSS team looks at all facets of the student’s needs including attendance, behavior, significant events that may impact the student, grades, and progress on state assessments. Students with disabilities are included in these discussions as well to provide needed supports in addition to those received in the Exceptional Children’s Programs (EC) classrooms or inclusion setting. These supports may begin in pre-K and continue through high school ensuring graduation with a high school diploma. Each child is looked at as an individual with individual needs and aspirations to succeed. The supports that are provided to students with disabilities in the general education setting may need to be intensified for those students who are moving from the Extended Content Standards to the regular Standard Course of Study. While the IEP team makes the decision with input of multiple data points, information from parents, and information from teachers, the school’s MTSS team is involved in the discussion as well. Involving everyone, both regular education and special education, in the conversation means that each student receives the continuum of services and supports he or she needs to succeed.

The district’s MTSS team examines the academic and behavioral progress of secondary and tertiary interventions that have been implemented with students who are being referred for an evaluation for special education. Additional support is provided to school MTSS teams when warranted.

In the fourth prong of our approach, the EC teachers who provide instruction on the Extended Content Standards with a particular class in grades 3-8 and high school, the Director of Exceptional Children’s Programs, and Assistant Director of Exceptional Children’s Programs/Compliance met to discuss the students who are currently placed on the Extended Content Standards and slated to take the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment. Our IEP teams had been doing a good very good job with placing students appropriately on either the Extended Content Curriculum Standards or the regular Standard Course of Study. However, with the narrowing of the cap to 1% in each grade level of students assessed in grades 3-8 and high school on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment, we needed to further analyze our students placed on the Extended Content Standards for instruction to ensure each student was placed in the most appropriate instructional placement. To do this, we created a spreadsheet of each student who tested on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. The spreadsheet included the student’s initials, grade, school, disability category, NCEXTEND1 scores for reading, math, and science for 2016-2017, 2015-2016, and 2014-2015, the student’s most recent IQ score, the student’s most recent education scores, the student’s most recent adaptive behavior scores, related services provided to the student, teacher observations regarding the need for extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support, the student’s use of substantially adapted materials, and the individualized methods of accessing

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information in alternative ways. The most recent IEP for each student was pulled to analyze progress towards mastering IEP goals, service times provided, and supports that are in place for the student to successfully access the curriculum and make progress. This information was taken to each student's IEP team where the student's strengths and areas of need were discussed along with the specific student information that had been gathered. The team looked at the eligibility requirements for the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment and based on the data shared with the IEP team, determined whether or not the student should remain on the Extended Content Standards and NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment or move to the regular Standard Course of Study and EOC/EOC assessment with appropriate supports put into place. If the IEP team determined the student should move to the regular Standard Course of Study, then supports were put into place to allow the student to successfully access the curriculum and the regular EOG.

At the district level, Central Office EC personnel will continue to monitor students who have been placed on the Extended Content Standards and NCEXTEND1-Alternative Assessment to ensure this is an appropriate placement for them.

Our EC teachers who provide services to students with disabilities in the resource setting and separate setting have spent significant time in PLC's this year discussing the supports needed for these students who have moved from the Extended Content Standards and NCEXTEND Alternate Assessment to the regular Standard Course of Study and regular EOG/EOC. Because each student is individual in his or her needs for supports to access the regular Standard Course of Study, a continuum of supports have been put into place to meet these needs. Several of our EC teachers who teach the Extended Content Standards are dually certified in EC and elementary education in the K-5 grade span. When we move to the middle school, one of our EC teachers who teaches the Extended Content Standards is dually certified, but the other is not. In order to provide the supports that the students need to be successful on the regular EOG, we have problem-solved and discussed how to best provide the access to the regular Standard Course of Study with supports that these students need. We have made great strides in meeting these needs for our students who have moved to the regular Standard Course of Study and EOG.

We will continue this training next year to ensure that our IEP teams are making the best, data-driven decisions while taking into consideration the whole student and adhering to the eligibility criteria outlined in the *Testing Students with Disabilities* handbook when determining a student's eligibility for participation in the alternate assessment.

3. Enter a description of how any disproportionality among race, gender, or socioeconomic status groups is defined and plans for how that disproportionality will be addressed.

- Description of how any disproportionality among race, gender, or socioeconomic status groups is defined:

Montgomery County Schools anticipates that we will exceed the 1% cap in grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 for the 2017-2018 school year. Based on our current data, we have analyzed the student enrollment at grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 as of April 1, 2018, the student enrollment of students with disabilities in grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 as of April 1, 2018, and students who will be assessed on the NCEXTEND1 as of April 1, 2018. Please see the charts below.

Grade 4: Total Student Enrollment as of 4/1/2018: 330

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
173 52.4%	157 47.6%	3 0.09%	79 23.9%	103 31.2%	14 4.2%	131 39.7%

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Grade 4: Total Enrollment of Students with Disabilities as of 4/1/2018: 52 (15.75%)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
33 19.1%	19 12.1%	0	16 20.2%	8 7.7%	1 7.1%	27 20.6%

Grade 4: Total Students to Be Assessed on NCEXTEND1 as of 4/1/2018: 4 (1.2% of Students Enrolled in Grade 4)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
2 1.17%	2 1.2%	0	1 1.2%	2 1.9%	0	1 0.7%

Grade 6: Total Enrollment as of 4/1/2018: 280

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	Pacific Islander	White
142 50.7%	138 49.2%	5 1.7%	51 18.2%	94 33.5%	11 3.9%	1 0.03%	118 42.1%

Grade 6: Total Enrollment of Students with Disabilities as of 4/1/2018: 44 (15.7%)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	Pacific Islander	White
26 18.3%	18 13%	0	10 19.6%	13 13.8%	0	0	21 17.8%

Grade 6: Total Students to Be Assessed on NCEXTEND1 as of 4/1/2018: 4 (1.4% of Students Enrolled in Grade 6)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	Pacific Islander	White
2 1.4%	2 1.4%	0	1 1.9%	1 1.0%	0	0	2 1.7%

Grade 7: Total Enrollment as of 4/1/2018: 313

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
155 49.5%	158 50.4%	9 2.8%	50 15.97%	122 38.97%	11 3.5%	121 38.65%

Grade 7: Total Enrollment of Students with Disabilities as of 4/1/2018: 50 (15.9%)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
33 21.2%	17 10.8%	2 22.2%	8 16.0%	18 14.7%	1 9.1%	21 17.3%

Grade 7: Total Students to Be Assessed on NCEXTEND1 as of 4/1/2018: 5 (1.6% of Students Enrolled in Grade 7)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
2 1.3%	3 1.9%	0	0	3 2.4%	0	2 1.6%

Grade 8: Total Enrollment as of 4/1/2018: 236

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
120	116	7	45	78	5	101

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50.8%	49.2%	2.96%	19.1%	33.1%	2.1%	42.79%
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Grade 8: Total Enrollment of Students with Disabilities as of 4/1/2018: 30

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
16 13.3%	14 12.1%	0	5 11.0%	12 15.3%	1 20.0%	12 11.8%

Grade 8: Total Students to Be Assessed on NCEXTEND1 as of 4/1/2018: 4 (1.6% of Students

Enrolled in Grade 8)

Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race	White
2 1.6%	2 1.7%	0	1 2.2%	2 2.5%	0	1 0.9%

Montgomery County Schools is a small district with a total enrollment of 3876 students in grades K-12 as of April 1, 2018. The grades where we exceed the 1.0% cap are reflective of the number of students enrolled in each of the grades, K-12. The total students enrolled in grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 are such low sample sizes that one student placed on the NCEXTEND1 places the district over the 1% cap. Every one student enrolled in a grade level generates approximately 0.3% to 0.4% of the 1.0%. While the data shows that we exceed the 1% cap, there is not a significant disproportionality of students placed on the NCEXTEND1 in each of these grade levels. The data shows that when disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity, each student represents a larger percentage in these smaller data samples. Decisions by the IEP team to place students on the NCEXTEND1 is made on a case-by-case basis and is data-driven with information gleaned from several data points.

- Plans for how disproportionality will be addressed:

Montgomery County Schools will continue to monitor total student enrollment data, enrollment of students with disabilities data, and enrollment of students placed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment to look for disproportionality of students in gender and race and/or ethnicity placed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment in each grade level 3-8 and high school. Another area that we will monitor closely is reviewing of records for assessment information when students transfer into our district. We will also continue to train our staff members in the criteria for eligibility to be placed on the NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment. The MTSS process provides opportunities for discussion with regular education teachers regarding the instructional and assessment needs of our students with disabilities as they examine opportunities to best meet the needs of our students. We will continue the more in-depth training with our administrators who serve as LEA representatives in the IEP meetings and all of our EC teachers.

4. Enter additional justification of variables not covered but deemed essential to understanding why the district/charter school has a higher rate of alternate assessment participation.

Chiefly, Montgomery County Schools is a small district with an enrollment of 3876 in grades K-12 as of April 1, 2018. Enrollment ranges from 330 in fourth grade to 235 in grade 8 with the other grade levels falling in the range between 280 and 309. These small sample sizes mean that 1 student impacts the 1.0% cap from 0.3% to 0.4%. Our middle school enrollment has been impacted by a charter school opening in an adjacent county, thus reducing the enrollment numbers of students in grades 6-8. These small enrollment numbers are reflective of how one or two students impact the sample size as we are over the 1% cap in these three grade levels.

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An additional variable that impacts our school system is that we serve students who are residents of a residential facility that serves school-age children with intellectual and developmental disabilities that is located in the southern part of the district's attendance area. Currently, three of the students have been placed on the Extended Content Standards and NCEXTEND1-Alternate Assessment by their IEP teams. Of these three students, one student is enrolled in sixth grade, one student is enrolled in seventh grade, and one student is enrolled in eighth grade, again impacting the 1% cap for middle school grades.

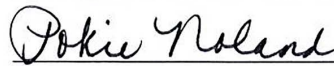
Signatures

Superintendent/Charter School Director



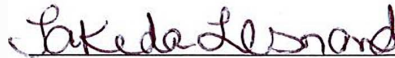
Date 5/1/18

Exceptional Children Director



Date 4/30/18

LEA/Charter Test Coordinator



Date 4-30-18

The completed justification form must be signed by the superintendent/charter school director, exceptional children's director, and testing coordinator. The form must be scanned and emailed to alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov by **May 4, 2018**.

The NCDPI will notify districts/charter schools in writing if further information is needed and will include next steps. For questions, please contact your Exceptional Children Director or Regional Accountability Coordinator.