

NCDPI/Division of Accountability Services 1 March 2018

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: 740
Contact Name: Virginia C. Gaynor
Contact Phone No.: 252.695.7989

District/Charter Name: Pitt County Schools
Contact Title: Exceptional Children's Director
Contact E-Mail: gaynorv@pitt.k12.nc.us

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 *Testing Students with Disabilities* publication when determining student eligibility for participation in the alternate assessment.

- Pitt County Schools (PCS) has a formal referral process that includes a tiered problem-solving team with various multi-positional/multidisciplinary staff who are members (counselor, general education teachers, instructional coaches, psychologists). The problem-solving team helps provide interventions that are evidenced-based and implemented with fidelity at both Tier 1 and 2 levels. When a student is not making substantial progress a referral(Tier 3) is made to the Exceptional Children's Department so a multidisciplinary team assessment can occur. All referrals follow policies governing services for children with disabilities NC1503-2, NC1503-2.1, NC1503-2.2, NC1503-2.4, and NC1503 2.5. These NC codes spell out the legal processes for initial referrals and reevaluations that include eligibility requirement by categories for suspected disabilities and reevaluations. By following these processes, Pitt County Schools helps ensure that students are firstly identified correctly by state and federal law. These processes help the IEP team ensure fidelity in evaluation and eligibility determination.
- Secondly, PCS schools use multiple sources of data to determine the academic and behavioral growth of students with IEPs: Universal (entire district) benchmarks assessments occur at set time intervals (beginning of the year, middle of year and end of the year) by general education teachers. In addition, Special education teachers for students receive special education services also collect data at set intervals for all students with disabilities. Students with mild to moderate delays who are functioning below academic development are provided instruction via evidence-based strategies and progress is monitored. Teachers are required to maintain multiple data points to document academic status and progress toward IEP goals. The majority of students with disabilities are

considered for standard EOG state tests with modifications. But for students with significant disabilities, the IEP team (based on data, observations, teacher input, artifacts and student needs) may recommend the Extend 1 or portfolios as an alternative assessment. Students with significant delays are on the adapted curriculum and functional curriculum. These students are taught the extension of the content standards which in turn have these students taking only Alternative Assessment which is the Extend 1.

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: Disproportionality is defined as an over - representation of a student based on their race, gender and or socioeconomic group. It can occur through any of the 14 special education categories, special education placement continuums and through discipline for out of school suspensions for students with disabilities receiving special education services. Pitt County Schools is on the warning list for disproportionality in the Intellectually Delayed -Mild category and Seriously Emotional Disabled categories with majority of students being African American Male.

Plans for how disproportionality will be addressed:

- Our district has addressed this disproportionality by having an IEP team consider more than one suspected area in the initial referral process and consider and discuss at least two placement options that are from the least restrictive setting for students when they are suspected of having a disability based on the evidenced based data of the needs of students. Psychologist who are at the initial referral meeting when students are triaged for areas of suspected disabilities help guide the referral teams in reviewing data and considering more than one suspected disability area. In addition, district level SPED staff are required to attend meetings when continuum changes that may require a change in placement to a more restrictive setting outside of the regular classroom is being considered by the IEP team in each of the 37 schools. PCS's local procedures do not allow IEP teams to change a student's placement continuum without the district staff(Program Specialist, Exceptional Children's Director) attending the meeting. This also provides another level of monitoring placement and program decisions by each school's IEP teams.
- LEA rep training on disproportionality in the areas of gender, race and socioeconomic is conducted at K-12 principal meetings. Disproportionality is also explained at SPED Contact monthly meetings with SPED school contacts.
- Discipline data based on these indices are provided by the Coordinator of Student Services at principal's meetings and principals are encouraged to use alternative settings when considering out of school suspension.
- PCS has implemented more proactive programs that schools can use in lieu of suspensions by expanding programming options and having an alternative education program (for middle and high school students) so students with disabilities can receive educational services within programs of PCS. For students with higher tier needs, PCS has a public separate program (Alpha Center) and

- has a licensed Day Treatment program on its campus and works collaboratively with a behavior health agency.
- To aid in reducing suspensions, School Based Mental health is in all of the 37 schools and this public separate program helps meet the needs of students who may need to access mental health services.

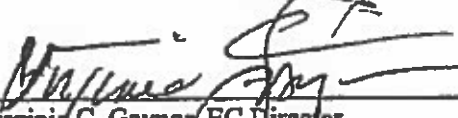
4. Enter additional justification of variables not covered but deemed essential to understanding why the district/charter school has a higher rate of alternate assessment participation.

- The population of Pitt County, NC is 55.5% White, 34.2% Black, and 5.92% Hispanic. Pitt County Schools is located in Eastern North Carolina and is one of the largest districts in Region One. While it has a number of resources: Vidant Hospital, East Carolina University, ECU Medical School, ECU Dental School and manufacturing companies; there is a disparity of resources based on socioeconomic and educational status for many of its residents.
- PCS has 18 schools that are Title One schools and are eligible for the Community Eligibility Program. Pitt County has a 24.5 % poverty index and a significant number of students receive free and reduced lunches and many of these students are African American and of Hispanic ethnic groups. Even when residents are employed, they are under-employed; not making enough money to qualify for health insurance yet making too much to qualify for free health care services.
- Sociological variables such as drug use (opiates, meth, marijuana), single female headed households, the lack of access to healthcare, and early intervention programs also impact our county and public education. As these variables affect Americans on a national level, so they do on a local level.
- On the other hand, Pitt County has many citizens who are very educated moving to access resources for their children particularly if the students are on the Autism Spectrum. This is to access the many resources we have to address their family/ child's needs like TEACCH, ABA therapy companies, Aces for Autism and a new Pediatric wing of Vidant Hospital. Many of these families come to Pitt County from more rural counties to access medical services in Pitt County with children with complex developmental and cognitive disabilities.

The cumulation of all these variables impact services and options for students with disabilities at all levels of student need but particularly at the level of students with severe and significant developmental needs.


Ethan Lenker, Superintendent

4/27/2018
Date


Virginia C. Gaynor, EC Director

4/27/18
Date


Towanda Wilkins, Testing & Accountability Director

4-27-18
Date


Shannon Wainwright, 6-8 Director

4-27-18
Date