



Alternate **ASSESSMENTS**

1% Cap Justification per District School Year 2023-2024

Acorn Montessori Charter School

Since we are a Charter School many of the public schools do not offer the individual attention, we give to our students. Also, many parents transfer from the public schools to our school because of school choice with Alternate Testing already in place. We have wellness programs, small groups and include our students in our general education population. We do not have an inclusion program. There is more than 1 teacher in our classrooms that can help with students that have major struggles. This school year (2024-2025) we were able to get the percentage down by re-evaluating students and several students left to go to school where they has better placements for them.

Ajo Unified District

The school has gone over the number of students who are taking state assessments at all levels. Based on comparisons between this year and the past years, the school has identified that there has been a significant increase in the number of students who are enrolling in the school district who have a high level of needs. After reviewing these numbers and researching newly enrolled students, the school district cannot determine a root cause as to why new students are enrolling in the Ajo School District. The school has also closely reviewed their policies and procedures when it comes to identifying students with special needs and following the proper checklists when it comes to alternative assessments. After conducting this review, the school has determined that all decisions have been made in accordance with state and federal regulations. The students who have been selected to participate in alternate assessments truly require this method of being assessed at a state level.

Alhambra Elementary District

AESD has been accepting open enrollment for students in self contained classrooms, which is not a typical practice in surrounding districts. Some of those students were eligible for Alternate Assessments. Some surrounding districts have gone to a 4-day school week, and parents have requested to open-enroll in AESD so their children can go to school and receive services 5 days a week. AESD's boundaries include several apartment complexes, and the population is very transient. In addition, we have encountered an increase in students with significant cognitive disabilities and medical needs. Overall enrollment is decreasing; however, ESS enrollment is increasing.

Alpine Elementary District

We are a small, rural district that services students from nearby cities. Our student population is only about 50% in district. Our district also takes the siblings of currently enrolled students and students on the waiting list for out of district enrollment. Our district is also the school of choice for many out of district families because of our small class sizes and the resources we provide. In addition, we are often unaware of the needs of our students or the extent of their disabilities when they transfer in from out of district until after enrollment.

Altar Valley Elementary District

Grand families and Special Needs Support

The presence of grandparents raising grandchildren—particularly those with special needs—creates a distinctive household structure that schools must account for. These caregivers often face generational gaps in navigating modern educational systems, especially those involving IEPs, digital communication tools, and behavioral supports. Tailored outreach, flexible meeting schedules, and accessible resources are critical to supporting these families effectively.

Foster Care Dynamics

A substantial foster care population introduces added layers of trauma-informed care, academic inconsistency, and mental health needs. Teachers and support staff must be equipped to handle frequent transitions in student placements, gaps in learning, and the emotional impacts of displacement. Coordination with child welfare agencies and training in trauma-sensitive practices are essential.

In-Migration for Educational Quality

The trend of families relocating to this rural area for its small-school benefits brings both opportunities and challenges. While this indicates a positive reputation for personalized learning, it also introduces greater diversity in academic preparedness, cultural backgrounds, and parental expectations. Schools must balance the needs of long-established residents with those of incoming families to maintain a cohesive, inclusive learning environment.

Amphitheater Unified District

Amphitheater Public Schools is home to the only Level D placement in the county, serving students who are medically fragile or have severe-to-profound disabilities. We also operate specialized Level C cross-categorical programs from Pre-K through grade 12 for students with mild-to-moderate cognitive impairments—several of whom meet criteria for the alternate assessment. Many of these programs serve students from high-poverty communities, and research shows a strong correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and increased identification of cognitive disabilities, which further elevates our alternate-assessment population. To bring participation below the 1 % cap, MSAA eligibility will be determined solely by each student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance—ensuring that only those whose needs cannot be met on the general assessment remain on the alternate assessment.

Apache Junction Unified District

The district previously exceeded the goal of 1% due to a lack of understanding of who is eligible and higher needs in the district area. We have a population of special need students with higher needs than is typical.

The district services the students in the area however numbers are decreasing with students having the opportunity to enroll into neighboring districts. Special education numbers have not decreased however the total enrollment numbers have gone down. This causes the overall special education percentage to increase even when it is staying the same. Students who require higher levels of support tend to have less opportunities for school choice and stay in their neighborhood school. We also have new homes being built that has attracted new families as the homes have amenities that could support a child with more needs.

Archway Classical Academy Arete

Since we are a small school district any participation in alternate assessment causes us to be over the 1% threshold. The testing population is very low since we are a one district school therefore having any participation in alternative assessments puts us over the 1% threshold

Archway Classical Academy North Phoenix

Because we are a small single district charter school, even a small amount of participation in alternate assessment causes us to be over the 1% threshold. Our campus only tests third, fourth, and fifth grades, so our student population participating in AASA each year is right around 360 students total. Since only fifth grade participates in AZSci, that lessens the number of students to only about 120 students. We also do not offer a self-contained model for special education but do offer an inclusion model. This has proven to be attractive for some of our enrolling families who have children with an IEP.

Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc.

Arizona Autism Charter School (AZACS) is committed to providing a high-quality, individualized education for students with Autism and other neurodiverse needs. While AZACS welcomes students with and without disabilities, the school is designed to support students who qualify for special education services. As a result, AZACS classrooms primarily consist of special education students. We currently have 966 students enrolled in our charter organization, with 879 students qualifying as special needs. In addition to a high proportion of students with Autism, we also serve students with disabilities in the different categories of Intellectual Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities. The design of our program is set up to support students of all ability levels which results in one-third of each grade level having significant cognitive and adaptive needs.

Arizona Community Development Corporation

We had just over 1% who qualified to take the MSAA in FY24. This was not intentional nor did we stop any team from making the unilateral decision to determine that any of these students needed the alternative assessment. After this we will be more aware of the 1% threshold and train our staff on being aware but if a team has determined that the MSAA is the correct assessment for a student we will not prevent that student from taking it regardless of the threshold.

Arizona Connections Academy Charter School, Inc.

Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) is an online, statewide, K–12 public charter school serving a diverse student body across Arizona. Due to our unique virtual model, we consistently observe a higher participation rate in alternate assessments, exceeding the 1% threshold. This variance stems from distinct factors related to our open enrollment patterns, specialized programming, and rigorous individualized education program (IEP) processes. Although enrollment has declined across all grade levels, the number of students participating in the Alternative Assessment has remained stable. This consistency is largely due to the fact that once enrolled, these students typically remain with us throughout their entire educational career. Families enroll at ACA because they are seeking a more tailored educational experience for their children—particularly when traditional school settings have not sufficiently addressed their child’s diverse needs. Reference the explanation below regarding exceeding the 1% participation in alternate assessments.

- 1. Enrollment of Students with Prior Eligibility for Alternate Assessments:** ACA is an open-enrollment charter school that welcomes students throughout the academic year. Many of our students transfer mid-year, with IEPs that indicate eligibility for the alternative state assessment. When a student transfers to ACA, a transfer IEP and Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) review meeting is held. During this meeting, we thoroughly review the student’s documents, including the previous IEP, the eligibility criteria for alternate assessments, parent input, and academic history to determine if the student remains eligible and to ensure appropriate placement. If the student continues to meet the eligibility criteria, they are appropriately placed in our alternative curriculum program, which mirrors the support offered in self-contained classrooms in brick-and-mortar schools.
- 2. High Population of Students with Special Needs:** ACA does not restrict enrollment and this inclusive practice contributes to a higher-than-average population of students with special needs, including those who are eligible for alternate assessments. Our online environment offers flexibility and individualized learning that families believe better suits the needs of their children, particularly those who might not thrive in traditional school settings. This contributes to a higher proportion of students qualifying for alternate assessments.
- 3. Open Enrollment and Acceptance of All Special Education Students:** As an open-enrollment school, ACA does not deny enrollment to any student, regardless of their special education status or assessment eligibility. We accept all special education students and do not limit enrollment based on their need for alternate assessments. This open enrollment policy means that we are more likely to enroll students with significant cognitive disabilities who may qualify for the alternate assessments, which impacts our overall participation rate.
- 4. IEP Process and Consideration of Eligibility for Alternative Assessments:** Our IEP teams are dedicated to ensuring that all students are appropriately placed according to their unique needs. In cases where students are newly identified or re-evaluated through our “child find” process, we carefully assess whether the student meets the eligibility criteria for the alternate assessment. The IEP team, which includes the student’s special education case manager, administrators, and other relevant personnel, such as the school psychologist, related service providers, parents and general education teachers, who thoroughly examines the student’s cognitive ability, academic performance, and other relevant data such as social emotional, adaptive, and communication evaluations when applicable. If a student is determined to have a significant cognitive and adaptive disability based on eligibility criteria and the team agrees that a fully comprehensive evaluation has occurred, they are considered for the alternative assessment. If the student is qualifying for the first time, parents must consent to the

Arizona Connections Academy Charter School, Inc. (cont...)

initial provision of services. ACA also includes parents as active participants in the eligibility process which includes providing parents a copy of the procedural safeguards and state specific criteria for eligibility decisions

5. Demographics and Virtual Education Factors: As an online charter school serving students across the continuum, ACA serves a wide array of students, including those with disabilities, who may require more individualized support. Our model is designed to serve students with varying needs, including those who may have difficulty with the general assessment due to variations in cognitive processing. This demographic factor contributes to a higher percentage of students qualifying for alternative assessments. Moreover, because we are an online school, we are not limited by physical location and our student population includes students from across all of Arizona.

5. Training and Careful Adherence to Eligibility Criteria: The special education case managers and administrators at ACA are trained on the eligibility criteria for alternate assessments via state-provided professional development and internal training modules. ACA uses the criteria from the Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines and Annual Eligibility Determination to determine if criteria for the alternate assessment has been met, as well as the eligibility checklists in our state reporting system when making eligibility decisions with the multidisciplinary team. We take a very cautious and diligent approach to ensure that students are only placed in the alternative assessment program when students fully meet the criteria. Our commitment to adhering to the strict eligibility criteria ensures that only students who genuinely meet the requirements for alternative assessments are placed into the program.

6. Root Cause Analysis of Higher Participation: Our higher participation rate in alternative assessments is a direct result of our unique student population, with many transferring from other districts with IEPs that qualify them for the alternative assessment. Incoming IEP's are always reviewed to ensure that the criteria for the alternate assessment participation is accurate based on ADE and ACA procedures. Furthermore, the virtual nature of our school allows us to serve a broader range of students grades K-12, some of whom may not have access to the services they need in traditional brick-and-mortar settings. These factors contribute to the increase in the number of students eligible for alternate assessments. In summary, the LEA's exceeding of the 1% participation threshold is a result of ACA's open enrollment process, which allows for the enrollment of students who may already meet the criteria for alternative assessments, our diligent IEP process that carefully considers each student's individual needs, and the unique demographic characteristics of our virtual school model. We ensure that all students are appropriately placed and only those who meet the strict eligibility criteria for alternate assessments are included in the program. Additionally, the growing enrollment of students with special needs and the overall high need for individualized learning in our online environment further contribute to the higher participation rate in alternate assessments.

Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

ASDB is a small district with only two campuses. Students are referred from their home districts throughout the state of Arizona, to our campuses. ASDB is the school of placement by each district and not through open enrollment. One campus in Tucson (housing the school for the Deaf and the school for the Blind, as well as our dormitories), and one campus in Phoenix (Phoenix Day School for the Deaf). ASDB students who have the most significant cognitive disabilities in addition to their sensory impairment make for a much higher percentage of our student population and therefore offsets the number of students in our general population. ASDB's schools offer instruction in American Sign Language for our Deaf learners, directly from teachers who are trained in the language acquisition for the Deaf, as well as instruction on reading braille and low vision assistive technology for the Blind.

Arlington Elementary District

Arlington Elementary School District is a single-school district located in a rural community. During the 2023/2024 academic school year we saw an influx of families moving out to our rural community looking for affordable land costs. With this influx of families has come an increase in student enrollment, specifically special education students-which includes those who qualify for the MSAA.

This year we enrolled students who were already determined eligible for the alternate assessment by the team at their previously attended school. As a result, our overall percentage of students who were qualified to take the MSAA science assessment superseded our 1% goal.

Ash Fork Joint Unified District

Ash Fork Joint Unified School District #31 respectfully submits this justification for exceeding the 1% participation threshold in alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

As a small rural district, we have a limited total student population. Consequently, even a small number of students eligible for alternate assessments causes our participation percentage to exceed the federal cap.

ASU Preparatory Academy

ASU Preparatory Academy (89949) is a Charter with a small student population, serving kindergarten through eighth grades. Because the student population is low, even a small number of students testing in alternate assessments skews total participation percentage.

ASU Preparatory Academy

ASU Preparatory Academy (90273) is a Charter with a small student population, serving third through sixth grades. Because the student population is low, even a small number of students testing in alternate assessments skews total participation percentage.

Avondale Elementary District

The Avondale and Goodyear areas continue to experience significant population growth due to increased housing developments and affordability. As a result, Avondale Elementary School District (AESD) has seen a rise in student enrollment, including students transferring in with existing IEPs that identify eligibility for alternate assessments such as MSAA. AESD utilizes a transfer checklist to review the current MET and IEP for MSAA eligibility in all transfer and out-of-state student files. Upon review of the documentation, the determination of MSAA eligibility for the students was found to be fair and appropriate in supporting the provision of FAPE.

In addition, AESD has experienced a steady increase in students qualifying for services under the Autism eligibility category. Over the last three years, the number of specialized programs for students with Autism has doubled from two to four, now serving approximately 40 students. The special education population overall grew by 23% from SY22–23 to SY23–24, and an additional 16% in the current school year. While not all of these students qualify for alternate assessments, the increase has directly impacted the proportion of students who do.

AESD's IEP teams follow a rigorous review process for new enrollments to ensure alternate assessment eligibility aligns with Arizona Department of Education criteria. This includes verifying cognitive functioning, adaptive behavior, and instruction aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. AESD is committed to reviewing and revising eligibility decisions to maintain alignment with state expectations and reduce participation percentages where appropriate.

AZ Compass Schools, Inc.

Looking through the average enrollment for the 11th grade cohorts over the last 4 years, there was a significant decline for FY24 at 41 students.

FY23 (51 students)

FY22 (54 students)

FY21 (30 students)

AZ Compass Prep School also services the Gila River Indian Community. Significant information is that this community observed COVID for almost 3 years. Many students did not return to campus in March 2021 as the other schools did. When you consider students that did not actually go back to brick-and-mortar school until 2023, they missed a significant amount of education. Some students received online instruction, some picked up weekly packets, and some did not attend any school, all students missing direct instruction from a teacher. We are currently receiving students from feeder schools in the GRIC community that are significantly below where they should be academically and socially. With that being said, we have a history of this school receiving most students working at 2-3 grade levels below from this community. With the COVID issue, those students are now 3-4 grade levels below. This is an issue that we are currently working to address in other areas outside of special education, but the impact on this campus is significant.

Looking at our enrollment data for students in tested grades who come from the Gila River Indian Community over the last few years:

FY24- 29%

FY23- 18%

FY22- 31%

FY21- 30%

AZ Compass Prep School is an alternative school, as identified by ADE and the State Board of Charter Schools. We are a Title 1 school servicing a low-income area of Chandler.

Baboquivari Unified School District #40

The United Census Bureau for 2023 reported the poverty rate for the Tohono O'odham Nation at 36.5% compared to the overall poverty rate of 12.5% for Arizona. -Parents of transfer students have stated that BUSD40 has a better educational program and their student(s) will receive a better education despite their home being within closer proximity to other schools. For some of these students, they travel an hour or more one way to attend school. -Many households on the Tohono O'odham Nation do not have internet access. -Lack of resources and opportunities for students on the Tohono O'odham nation. There is no public library, limited social events, a limited number of recreational facilities, no public transportation a limited number of medical facilities, etc. -The University of Arizona reports that 7% of grandparents in Arizona are raising their grandchildren who are under the age of 18 years old. This can cause hardship for grandparents. Many of students are raised by grandparents in our school district. -Many grandparents caring fo rehear grandchildren lack the understanding of technology, homework or social issues the student may be experiencing. Some grandparents are in ill health and are not able to meeting the student's general needs. -We are a Title I school due to the significant overall needs that are present on the Tohono O'odham Nation. -BUSD40 currently qualifies for 100% free lunch for all students. -We have a high number of students identified for McKinney-Vento. We currently have 282 (27%) students who qualify for McKinney-Vento services, which places BUSD40 in a significant range.

Ball Charter Schools (Dobson)

Dobson Academy currently exceeds the 1% threshold of students participating in alternate assessments as outlined by ESSA guidelines. This trend appears to be influenced by a combination of demographic, community, and programmatic factors specific to our school. Below is an analysis of possible contributing factors: Dobson Academy serves a student population with a notably higher incidence of significant cognitive disabilities, as documented in IEP classifications. This may be attributed to a combination of factors including regional birth outcomes, limited access to prenatal care, environmental influences, and the high proportion of families living in low socio-economic conditions. Our school's robust Child Find and early intervention programs are highly effective in identifying and transitioning children with cognitive delays into the school system, which leads to earlier and more consistent identification of students who may qualify for alternate assessments. Additionally, Dobson Academy offers inclusive and specialized programming tailored to students with complex needs. These programs attract families from surrounding areas, contributing to an overrepresentation of students with significant disabilities in our enrollment compared to other schools. Strong, trusting relationships between families and special education staff foster a collaborative environment where parents feel supported in pursuing alternate assessment pathways when appropriate. Our school also benefits from a higher ratio of experienced special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers. This staffing strength enhances the accuracy of student identification and supports the reputation of Dobson Academy as a desirable placement for families of students with significant needs.

Ball Charter Schools (Val Vista)

Val Vista Academy currently exceeds the 1% threshold of students participating in alternate assessments as outlined by ESSA guidelines. This trend appears to be influenced by a combination of demographic, community, and programmatic factors specific to our school. Below is an analysis of possible contributing factors: 4. Val Vista Academy serves a student population with a comparatively higher incidence of significant cognitive disabilities, as indicated by IEP classifications. This trend may stem from factors such as regional birth outcomes, access to prenatal care, and possible environmental influences that contribute to developmental challenges. The school's strong Child Find and early intervention efforts are highly effective in identifying and supporting children with cognitive delays from an early age, resulting in timely and consistent identification of students who may meet the criteria for alternate assessments. Furthermore, Val Vista Academy offers inclusive and specialized educational programs designed to support students with complex learning needs. These offerings often attract families from neighboring areas, which can lead to a higher concentration of students with significant disabilities compared to other schools. The school has cultivated strong, trusting partnerships between families and special education staff, creating an environment where parents feel confident in the decision-making process around alternate assessments. In addition, Val Vista Academy is staffed with a greater number of experienced special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers, which supports both accurate identification and its reputation as a supportive setting for students with more intensive needs.

Balsz Elementary District

We have had a decrease in our enrollment for general education students at all our campuses due to the increase in Charter Schools and online school options. Our Special Education Population has continued to increase; therefore, our Alternative Assessment numbers have increased.

Another factor is, that we are close to Phoenix Children's Hospital and have more affordable housing in our district boundaries that families with students who have disabilities chose to live in. Lastly, the overall increase of students enrolling in our schools that have severe disabilities like Autism has also increased our number of students who qualify to take the Alternative Assessments versus the ASAA.

Beaver Creek Elementary District

Beaver Creek School is a small school district with an enrollment of around 300 students. This makes it very likely that we will exceed the 1% cap for any alternative testing. Our local demographics are a low-income area that struggles with poverty, arrests, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol misuse. Our enrollment for students who take the general assessments and the students who take the alternative assessments has remained fairly steady over the last few years. Our staff continues to put effort into providing students with special programming based on the students' needs.

Bell Canyon Charter School, Inc

As a very small K-8 public charter school, with a low overall enrollment (286 students), Imagine Bell Canyon Charter School, Inc. accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood include highly migrant, transient, and homeless families, including a diverse enrollment of students with disabilities. 77% of the overall enrollment includes students who are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools close to home after reporting concerns with their home school district. Imagine Bell Canyon Charter School, Inc. competes with a neighboring district that is the 5th largest in Arizona, where class sizes are larger, and families report they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child and choose to enroll with us.

Benson Unified School District

BUSD is a small rural district about an hour away from Tucson. We have a diverse socio-economic status, but many new families are moving to this area from other places within and outside our state. Some of these incoming families reside with extended family and friends on larger, more rural land with room for travel trailers and living environments unavailable in larger cities/school districts. We also have many families with multiple children and extended family units. Some of our families have a high incidence/prevalence of disabilities and more fluid family units. More families have moved in and out of the District within the last year, and their more transient nature impacts our MSAA percentages.

Bicentennial Union High School District

Bicentennial Union High School #76 (BUHSD) is a single school district with a wide geographical area. As a single high school in a rural district the number of students enrolled has a steady percentage of about 20% of learners with special needs over the last three years.

Bouse Elementary District

During the fiscal year 2024, Bouse School District had 35 students participate in state testing for ELA and Math and 11 students participate in the Science test. Having a small population of students taking the AASA causes us to have a high percentage rate of students participating in the MSAA. Having any students that qualify for MSAA puts us over 1%.

Buckeye Elementary District

Buckeye continues to be the fastest growing communities in Arizona with an emphasis on affordable housing and service provision. Within the past year alone, the city has approved and construction has begun on at least 2 planned communities and 2 apartment housing projects, which is continuing the trend that the community has seen over the past 5 years. Buckeye continues to be the school district with the largest and most robust special programs department (within a 10 mile radius). We did keep data on the number of parent inquiries about special education that were received at the district office level who then turned into enrollment. Of the 19 inquiries that were received through out the year, 15 turned into student enrollment. All of those students, of course, did not qualify for MSAA, but it does follow the growth trend of the district overall. While we did have students removed from MSAA qualification this year after following through last year's training commitment in the action plan, we saw a zero net reduction when looking at students who moved in qualifying for MSAA as compared to the number of student that were removed or graduated. The rate of new identification for students who were not considered new to the district decreased slightly as training has been more robust, but this may not have been significantly significant enough to offset move in numbers.

Buckeye Union High School District

When looking at the BUHSD 1% numbers for the 22/23 SY and prior, we were under 1% and were not concerned with the 1% threshold. For 22/23 SY, we were at .8987% for math and ELA, and .7371 for science. As a new ESS Director, since this was never a concern before, there was no training implemented on my part to educate the staff. After review, it is apparent that there were no systems in place to monitor the eligibility process for alternate assessments (MSAA). One other factor that may have contributed to us exceeding the 1% threshold. When reviewing incoming 9th grade student IEPs, there were several students that qualified for the alternate assessments (MSAA) for the elementary school IEP team, that would not have met our criteria for alternate assessments (MSAA) eligibility in our district. Our IEP teams were just continuing the eligibility without making sure they met the 'significant cognitive disability' criteria. Another factor may be that we are a traditional high school district that provides all types of services to all our students. Some of the Charter Schools in our area do not provide similar services and these students often return to us due to limited services offered at Charter Schools. Finally, one other factor may be that we have a high transient population which results in having students move in and out during the year which may result in more students qualifying for alternate assessments.

Bullhead City School District

We are the only elementary public-school district within the city limits. The charter schools in our area do not accept students that require a higher level of service. We are located in a rural area that has a highly transient population. The smaller rural schools are sending students to our district as they do not have the staffing to provide the services required to meet the student level of needs. When we meet to go over their data and we do our own evaluations we are finding that many of these students qualify for the MSAA.

Camp Verde Unified District

Camp Verde Unified District is a comparable small school in a rural area of Arizona. While most students residing in the community of Camp Verde have other options for their education, students with significant cognitive disabilities only have access to the Special Education/Life Skills Program offered within the district. Due to the lack of educational resources for these students, the district's number of students with significant cognitive disabilities taking the Alternate Assessment is higher.

Canon Elementary District

Canon Elementary School District conducted a root cause analysis of our school exceeding the 1% threshold and the results are outlined below: Canon is a small K–8 school district in rural Arizona, serving 111 students. Due to our limited student population, we face ongoing challenges in remaining under the 1% cap for alternative state assessments. The qualification of even one student places Canon over the state's recommended 1% threshold. Canon school is located in a remote, economically disadvantaged community with a highly mobile population. Currently, 34% of our students are identified as experiencing homelessness, and 85% qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, reflecting a significant poverty rate. Additionally, 21% of our students receive special education services. These percentages are all well above the state average. As a Title I school (school-wide Tier 3), Canon serves a student body with considerable needs, including a high number of children entering kindergarten and first grade lacking foundational academic skills.

Cartwright Elementary District

Increased special education enrollment, in contrast with a declining general education population, has proportionally elevated the district's alternate assessment participation rate, contributing to the percentage exceeding the 1% cap. B. In some instances, eligibility decisions were made without the support of a full comprehensive cognitive assessment, resulting in reduced clarity or misinterpretation of a student's cognitive profile. This lack of critical data may have contributed to inaccurate determinations of alternate assessment eligibility and ultimately impacted the district's overall participation rate. C. Several students who transferred into the district during the school year had existing eligibility for alternate assessment in their prior placements and remained eligible upon transition, potentially contributing to the current participation percentage. D. One contributing factor to exceeding the 1% threshold is the continuation of alternate assessment eligibility without a thorough review of student data. In some cases, IEP teams have maintained eligibility based on a student's prior participation in alternate assessments rather than re-examining current, comprehensive data aligned to state criteria. While often well-intentioned, this practice can result in the continued over-identification of students who may no longer meet—or may have never fully met—the requirements for alternate assessment participation. E. A portion of the over-identification can be attributed to misinterpretations of the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Determination criteria, resulting in misconceptions during the completion of required documentation. This indicates a need for clearer guidance and more targeted training to ensure accurate and consistent application of eligibility standards across all sites.

CASA Academy

We are in a low income area. We are a small school with a high structure charter model that has drawn in families from larger district schools who have not felt that their needs were met.

Casa Grande Elementary District

Casa Grande Elementary School District (CGESD) recognizes that its participation rate for alternative assessments currently exceeds the 1% cap in English Language Arts (1.7274%, 30 students over), Math (1.7381%, 31 students over), and Science (1.9986%, 14 students over). This overrepresentation is primarily due to the district's commitment to appropriately serving a student population with a relatively high incidence of significant cognitive disabilities. CGESD supports several specialized programs and classrooms designed for students with complex needs, including those with co-occurring intellectual and adaptive functioning challenges, who often require highly individualized instruction aligned with alternate achievement standards. Additionally, staff turnover and varying levels of understanding of the strict eligibility criteria for alternate assessments have contributed to inconsistencies in determining appropriate student participation.

Casa Grande Union High School District

With our history as a rural community our feeder communities have covered a large geographical area. We have four K-8 districts that feed into our 9-12 High School district. These schools have identified these students, and we receive higher percentages of students taking the alternate assessment. We consistently have 2-3% of our students in grade 11 taking the alternative assessments. This number is lower when our students enter ninth grade due to larger cohort sizes. For the 2022- 2023 school year the COVID-19 pandemic could be a contributing factor as students remain online and did not return to our brick-and-mortar district to complete their high school career, resulting in a smaller cohort overall but no significant withdrawal of Alternate Assessment students in those cohorts. As we have returned to consistent in-person instruction we are seeing more of our feeder populations with data that supports transitioning from the Alternate assessment to standard assessments.

Chandler Unified District #80

As enrollment decreases in the CUSD, the SPED program participation increases. May 2023: 11% SPED population (2,550 of 22,711) May 2024: 12% SPED population (2,571 of 22,215) • CUSD continues to expand the number of programs we offer to support all students’ needs as we’ve seen an increase in children with autism and students identified as LOS B and LOS C. • Some students are returning to CUSD after not being able to receive the services needed due to vouchers. • Many special education staff are new to the district and/or new to the teaching profession. Training needs continue to increase each year. • The majority of grade levels received a higher percent of students scoring performance level 4 compared to the state average (see table below). While acknowledging successes in high academic performance, our analysis of MSAA data indicates a vital need to strengthen protocols for annual review and appropriate transition when needed to general state testing.

		2024 Level 4 Performance Level Outcomes		
		ELA %	Math %	Science %
Third Grade	CUSD%	<u>16</u>	9	-
	State %	8	12	-
Fourth Grade	CUSD%	<u>2</u>	<u>19</u>	-
	State %	3	7	-
Fifth Grade	CUSD%	<u>6</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>25</u>
	State %	4	8	21
Sixth Grade	CUSD%	<u>13</u>	<u>16</u>	-
	State %	9	13	-
Seventh Grade	CUSD%	5	10	-
	State %	10	10	-
Eighth Grade	CUSD%	6	<u>14</u>	8
	State %	8	12	11
Eleventh Grade	CUSD%	<u>15</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>15</u>
	State %	7	10	12

Chinle Unified District

The circumstances that are affecting the participation rate for our district is that we found that our district-wide enrollment has decreased by 3% in the last year. As we continue to have Child Find more students have been identified and some families are relocating to the Chinle USD area. Our team will continue to take a look at the data and provide continuous training to the staff, so they are familiar with the process to see if an ESS student qualifies for Alternate Testing.

Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary District

We were under the 1% threshold for Math, but not ELA. The issue was that our 7th and 8th grade writing test was invalidated due to a self-reported break, which disqualified the entire ELA test. In other words, we assessed 324 students in both ELA and Math; however, with the invalidation of the 7th and 8th grade ELA test, it appears we only assessed 230 students in ELA, which pushed the MSAA percent over 1% for that subject. Outside of this self-reported mistake, we were actually under the 1% Threshold for both subjects.

Colearn Academy Arizona

Colearn Academy Arizona has a higher enrollment of students receiving special education services (24% of our students). Many students with disabilities transfer to Colearn Academy Arizona seeking a more personalized, at-home learning environment. We are a small LEA and this disproportionately affects the percentage.

Colorado River Union High School District

We are a smaller Union HSD, with a couple of Elementary feeder districts, and several charter school districts.

We are also a very transient area, and border two other states. We have seen an increase of students coming in from other states, with alternative assessments recommended.

We have a growing number of low functioning autistic student arriving on our doorstep, there are more arriving than leaving the district. At this time our projections are concerning. There was an increased number students requiring MID/MOD support classroom of less than 40% need factor. We have a growing population of homeless students with ESS needs.

Our area has been reported to be a more affordable community to reside in, this information may be attractive to family seeking new housing.

We have a new homeless shelter and program in our community.

Concho Elementary District

At the time of MSAA student registration, our DTC had resigned two weeks prior, I was learning as fast as I could. I was dependent on the SPED director and SPED teacher at the time to help make the decisions for the MSAA as they were part of the IEP team. Me being unsure of the qualifications at the time, the team was given the eligibility guide, and I was informed which students needed to be administered the Alternative Assessment. I now understand the qualifications and process to determine who is eligible for the MSAA.

Congress Elementary District

We are a very small community with only one school that all students attend. We are an A plus school with an open enrollment policy and do not turn students away if we can accommodate.

Continental Elementary District

Our school is small, with an enrollment of 644 for preschool through 8 th grade. Out of the total enrollment, our Special Education population for preschool through 8 th grade is 83. Out of the 93 preschool to 8 th grade students who receive special education services, 48 are eligible to take the state assessments. Each student who a team deems eligible for the alternative assessments is one whose eligibility is reviewed very carefully. Trends for our students have indicated there will be years where there is a higher population of students who may be found eligible for alternative assessments, and other years where it will not be as high, all based on the demographics, category of eligibility and learning profile. As housing developments are continuing to be built, there are more opportunities for families to move into our school boundaries. There are families moving from out of state, neighboring cities, and communities. Families move into our boundaries because we are a small community.

Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary District

Cottonwood Oak Creek School district is a small rural community in Northern Arizona with a 70% rate of students qualifying for Free and Reduced. There is a high level of generational poverty in our community and the majority of our free and reduced families are living in multi generational housing. Our district has an overwhelming number of students that enroll in our schools that have significant intellectual disabilities. Our Developmental Preschool is always at max capacity every year

Deer Valley Unified District

Deer Valley Unified School District has experienced consistent declining enrollment over the last two years: April 1, 2022: 33,325 students April 1, 2023: 33,669 students (increase of 1%) April 1, 2024: 32,860 students (decrease of 2.46%) Despite declining enrollment in The Deer Valley Unified School District, the overall special education enrollment continues to increase, as evidenced below: 2022: 4,219 students with IEPs 2023: 4,382 students with IEPs (increase of 3.72%) 2024: 4,497 students with IEPs (increase of 2.56%) The DVUSD has multiple Charter Schools within our boundaries. Students who are eligible to take alternate assessments return to DVUSD, as we have the resources, staff, and ability to meet the needs of our students. Charter schools such as Great Hearts and Basis accept and retain students with social capital while encouraging parents of students with high academic or behavioral needs to return to their PEA of residence citing that DVUSD has more resources (which we do, as evidenced by the disproportionate amount of students who take MSAA in DVUSD vs. Charters in our attendance area). DVUSD has multiple Great Hearts and Basis Charters within our boundaries. It is interesting to note that in 2024, DVUSD's enrollment declined by 2.46%. However the enrollment of students with IEPs has disproportionately increased by 6.18% over three school years. Our explanation of why is explained above in regards to Charter Schools. SY: 22/23 Total DVUSD Students Tested AASA: Math: 17,452 ELA: 17,371 Science: 7,648 Total DVUSD Students Tested MSAA: Math: 197 (1.128%) ELA: 197 (1.134%) Science: 73 (0.954%) SY: 23/24 Total DVUSD Students Tested AASA: Math: 17,192 ELA: 17,129 Science: 7,641 Total DVUSD Students Tested MSAA: 190 students Math: 187 (1.043%) ELA: 187 (1.09%) Science: 70 (.916%) It is important to highlight our trend in decreasing the percentage over the 1% Threshold requirement despite the increase of enrolled students with IEPs. The DVUSD has decreased MSAA eligibility by .085% in Math and .044% in ELA. The Deer Valley Unified School District follows very strict guidelines for eligibility for MSAA, however, we receive many transfers from other districts who appear not to follow the same consideration process that DVUSD adheres to. There is a process to correct and remedy this in DVUSD. The campus team calls an IEP meeting for each student to review the data and MSAA eligibility. When a team meets to review cognitive and adaptive skills, IEP teams find that some students who qualified in other school districts are found ineligible for MSAA in DVUSD due to our strict adherence to the state/federal alternate assessment guidelines. Nine (9) students (4.5% of originally identified MSAA students) were deemed ineligible and removed from the MSAA selector by DVUSD IEP Teams after a thorough file review. 29 students (18% of originally identified MSAA students) transferred into DVUSD as eligible for the MSAA -adding .193% to the threshold. It would be helpful to have access to the amount of students assessed by the AASA and the MSAA in Charter Schools within our attendance area. The District strongly believes that these results would bring The District far below the 1% threshold. DVUSD is required to enroll any and all students, unlike the charter schools and private schools surrounding us. This indisputably has an effect on the amount of students who are eligible for the alternate assessments. As such, it is important to include the number of charter and private schools in our attendance areas who accept only students who do not require significant specially designed instruction, programmatic supports, and educational supports.

Douglas Unified District

DUSD #27 is a small rural district located on the border of Mexico. We have a high percentage of families who are considered low-income. Our school district offers a functional program for our highest need students at all three grade spans: K-5th, 6-8th, and 9-12th. The Charter and Private schools in our boundary area do not offer a functional program to students with high needs. In addition, DUSD #27 is experiencing an overall decline in student enrollment which has caused the percentage of students who qualify for the MSAA assessment to increase. Our district exceeded the 1% participation in the Alternate Assessments for the 2023/2024 school year in Science. Because only grades 5, 8, and 11 are assessed in Science, fewer students are able to test in the alternate assessment for Science. If all testing grade levels would have also taken the Science test we would have been under the 1% threshold.

Dysart Unified District

Dysart Unified School District serves over 23,000 pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students in the Northwest Phoenix Metropolitan area. The district encompasses 140 square miles, serving parts of El Mirage, Glendale, Surprise, Youngtown, and Maricopa County. The district is home to four K-4 elementary schools, four middle schools serving grades 5-8, 12 K-8 elementary schools, four comprehensive high schools, a preschool, and one alternative program.

Over the past several years, there has been a significant increase in the number of charter schools that serve the Dysart community and can be found within the Dysart Unified School District's physical boundaries. Dysart has seen a decrease of over 3200 general education students (the assumption is that many of these students are being served in the aforementioned charter schools) however, our overall special education population has increased by nearly 400 students. Therefore, Dysart's overall special education percentage have increased due to this decrease in general education students.

Additionally, while many of these charter schools may serve students with disabilities, we are not aware of any that focus on, or even provide options for students with more significant cognitive disabilities. Dysart however, has two programs that specifically support students who are eligible for Arizona State Alternate Assessments, should they require a more restrictive environment with more significant supports and modified curriculum (described below). This is In addition to being able to serve and support students in the general education and resource settings.

STC Program

The Structuring Teaching Classroom (STC) Program provides a highly structured environment with strategies to support communication embedded in the environment. Students who participate in the STC program must meet the criteria for the Arizona State Alternative Assessments in order for IEPs to consider the program as a least restrictive environment.

ASPIRE Program

The Assisting Student Participation in a Relevant Education (ASPIRE) program provides educational activities in a classroom environment with high levels of support in activities of daily living and functional life skills for students with limited mobility as well as complex communication and physical/medical needs.

Dysart Unified School District does not discriminate against students with disabilities, and provides the full continuum of services and least restrictive environments and appropriate assessment based on individualized data and through an IEP team decision making process..

EAGLE College Prep Maryvale, LLC

EAGLE College Prep Maryvale, LLC. serves a unique population characterized by high mobility and frequent mid-year enrollment changes, typical of the surrounding urban community. The school is located in a densely populated area where families often relocate due to housing instability, job transitions, or temporary living arrangements. Between the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 school years, total student enrollment increased from 294 to 331 students—a growth of over 12%—largely due to intensified marketing and outreach efforts. During this same time, the proportion of students receiving special education services also increased slightly, from approximately 12% to 13%. While the number of students eligible for alternate assessments remained stable, the combination of increased enrollment, shifting demographics, and community-based factors contributed to the school temporarily exceeding the 1% threshold.

EAGLE College Prep Mesa, LLC.

EAGLE College Prep Mesa, LLC serves a small but evolving student population. While the total enrollment has remained relatively stable—decreasing slightly from the previous year—there has been a significant shift in student demographics. Between the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 school years, the proportion of students receiving special education services increased from approximately 10% to 15%. Additionally, the surrounding community has seen an increase in the number of English Learners and students with more complex educational needs. These demographic changes, rather than changes in alternate assessment eligibility practices, contributed to the LEA temporarily exceeding the 1% threshold for alternate assessment participation. The school continues to apply ADE eligibility guidance with fidelity during IEP team decisions.

Edge School, Inc.,

Our schools have small enrollment populations, and thus our annual testing cohorts are also small, with fewer than 50 students in the 11th grade cohort in the District. Our overall district population significantly declined since the pandemic and has not yet recovered that enrollment. Over the past 10 years we have experienced an increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities overall as a percentage of total enrollment. Our District self-paced instructional model focused on mastery based learning is a beneficial model for students with disabilities that provides them a small school setting and opportunity for flexible academic time, specialized instruction, least restrictive environment and enrichment opportunities with peers.

Edkey, Inc.

Edkey, Inc. recognizes the federal requirement under the Every Student Succeeds Act that no more than 1% of all tested students should participate in alternate assessments aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. However, we exceeded this threshold due to several special circumstances:

Population of Students

Caurus serves a small overall student population, which can cause the percentage of students participating in alternate assessments to appear disproportionately high, even when the actual number of students with significant cognitive disabilities is appropriate and justifiable. For example, if only a few students qualify for alternate assessments based on IEP team determinations, they may represent more than 1% of the total tested population due to the low enrollment. This statistical impact is compounded by the rural nature of our district and our commitment to ensuring each student's unique needs are met through individualized education planning in compliance with state participation criteria.

Consistency with IEP Team Decisions

All decisions to administer alternate assessments were made individually by each student's IEP team, based on state guidelines and the Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria. No decisions were made based on disability category alone, and we maintained rigorous review processes to ensure compliance.

Training and Monitoring

Our district provides training to IEP teams on proper participation decision-making. Internal reviews and state-provided guidance were used to validate IEP team decisions, ensuring that only students who meet the criteria are included.

We remain committed to reducing our alternate assessment participation rate to align with federal expectations while continuing to uphold the integrity of IEP decisions that best meet individual student needs.

Edkey, Inc. - Sequoia School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Edkey, Inc. recognizes the federal requirement under the Every Student Succeeds Act that no more than 1% of all tested students should participate in alternate assessments aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. However, we exceeded this threshold due to the population of students:

Population of Students

Sequoia School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a specialized institution serving a unique population of students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, many of whom also present with significant cognitive disabilities. Given the dual exceptionalities among this small student population, the percentage of students assessed via the Alternate Assessment exceeds the 1% cap mandated by ESSA.

Even a few students qualifying for alternate assessments disproportionately increase the school's percentage.

Students may present complex profiles involving language deprivation, developmental delays, or neurological conditions contributing to cognitive impairments.

Consistency with IEP Team Decisions

All decisions to administer alternate assessments were made individually by each student's IEP team, based on state guidelines and the Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria. No decisions were made based on disability category alone, and we maintained rigorous review processes to ensure compliance; however, there are limited statewide guidelines tailored to Deaf+ (Deaf + cognitive disability) populations. Teams needed to navigate both communication and cognitive profiles without clear state-specific examples for dual-impacted students.

Training and Monitoring

Our district provides training to IEP teams on proper participation decision-making. Internal reviews and state-provided guidance were used to validate IEP team decisions, ensuring that only students who meet the criteria are included.

Edkey remains committed to reducing our alternate assessment participation rate to align with federal expectations while continuing to uphold the integrity of IEP decisions that best meet individual student needs.

Flagstaff Unified District

Flagstaff is a community with many charter schools and families that are selecting the Empowerment Scholarship. Charter schools and families on the Empowerment Scholarships have absorbed a number of students who participate in the AASA test but have not absorbed our students who qualify for the Alternative Assessment, which gives us a higher percentage.

Overall enrollment in the Flagstaff Unified School District continues to decline, however our special education population is holding steady giving us a disproportionate number of students that are in special education and qualify for the Alternative Assessment.

Florence Unified School District

Florence Unified School District exceeded the 1% participation threshold in ELA (1.5937%), Science (1.5632%), and Math (1.5796%) during the 2023-2024 administration of the alternate assessment. There are various reasons the district exceeded the threshold. We are a growing district that currently has 1,691 students with special education needs in grades K-12, which is an increase from last year. Our total enrollment is down, so our ESS population is currently at 19.7% of our total population, an increase from 18.5% last year. We have 351 (20.8% of the ESS Population) students with services provided in a more restrictive setting (Levels C, D, and Home Instruction) due to higher needs. Due to the growing population of students who need specialty programs in self-contained classrooms, we now have 39 specialty programs in our district K-12. Our sites with more specialty programs housed on campus have a higher number of students participating in the Alternate Assessment. With open boundaries and as knowledge of our exceptional specialty programs increases across the community, we are bringing additional students into our district who may have previously been served in other districts or charter schools who qualify for the alternate assessments.

Flowing Wells Unified District

The Flowing Wells Unified School District serves a high-poverty community, with poverty rates of approximately 17% for individuals and 15.2% for families—both higher than the national average of around 12%. We operate in a high poverty area with 75% of students across our District qualified for free-and-reduces lunch options for the 2023 – 2024 school year. That number may not represent the true number of students in need as it is voluntary and in the previous year the percentage was 79% pre COVID 19 and a grant where all students qualify for free lunch regardless of need. We continue to experience an influx of students with significant cognitive disabilities and adaptive needs coming into our school district at all levels. In the school year 2018 – 2019 we had 99 who met state/federal qualification for the alternative assessment and were listed on our database. In less than six years that number has grown to 136 students in our system. These requirements are significant cognitive disability; learning content linked to (derived from) state content standards; and need for extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains in the grade appropriate curriculum.

Fowler Elementary District

The Fowler School District has seen a large increase in refugee students. Many of these students have undiagnosed disabilities and significant medical needs. We have also had a higher than average number of preschool students qualifying with significant needs and more students have a preschool severe delay than in the past.

These students transition to kindergarten and many have language needs and are eligible for the AltELPA based on their language proficiency and cognitive deficits. These students often require an alternate curriculum and continue to have needs that impact their ability to learn the grade level standards.

Due to these reasons, we were over the target of 1%.

Fredonia-Moccasin Unified District

There are currently 129 students in grades K – 12 for the entire district. There are 49 students in grades 3 – 8 who take state testing at Fredonia. There are currently 10 students in grade 5. We have experienced declining enrollment since 1995 due to families electing to attend other schools with the implementation of School Choice and Homeschooling options. Fredonia is designated a Frontier area, and many families are moving to more populated areas of Arizona and Utah to seek out more favorable options for employment.

Friendly House, Inc.

The science test was over the 1% threshold because there were less students overall taking the science test. Since the science test is only given to 5th and 8th grade students, the overall number of students taking the test is lower, making the percentage higher than the ELA or math test.

Gadsden Elementary District

Our unique circumstances of being in a border community with the vast majority of our student population being first generation families or migrant families. The plan is conducting a thorough root cause analysis to determine the reason Gadsden Elementary School District #32 exceeds the 1% participation. Upon further review it was discovered that some students did not meet the Severe Cognitive Impairment criteria. These cases have been identified as false positive for AA. Our internal analysis alongside our ADE Program Specialist considered IQ as a defining measure for qualification of AA. Consequently, given this variable, our special education department focus will be on providing professional development for all stakeholders. We currently have the infrastructure to accomplish this goal within the 2025 – 2026 school year. Furthermore, to accomplish this task our focus will be on the eligibility criteria as well as reviewing current cases.

Ganado Unified School District

Ganado Unified School District is located in a remoted area where students are bused into school from within 50 miles radius. Our students with more severe needs make up about 10% of student population. Additionally, the GUSD is an open enrollment school, allowing families to choose Ganado for their children. For this reason we have a high number of students with disabilities making it difficult for the IEP team to determine not assessing in Alternate Assessment when there is a need. Furthermore, I would like to let you know and with all respect that we are doing our best to satisfy protocols and/or policy and procedures from ADE, however we can't overlook the needs of our students. We are on the lower end of educational success when compared to national norm. On the other hand, perhaps we are not understanding fully what 1 % cap really means and how to plan for it. So overall it boils down to our LEA needing a Training to better understand the 1 % CAP. Thank you so much for your understanding as we continue to move forward with plans to make improvements.

Gila Bend Unified District

We are a rural, low socio-economic district. Our entire school is on free and reduced lunch. We have had an influx of students over the last two years with moderate to severe disabilities. Our population is extremely small for testing. The 1% threshold would only allow me to test two students. We work diligently to get to that number but the needs of our population exceed the 1% threshold. The students have qualified for services and are receiving said services. When evaluated, they were deemed to qualify for the MSAA due to significant deficits, not just in IQ scores, but other disability factors. We attempt to train all of them as to how to take a test and as soon as they score "Meets the Standard" on the MSAA we reassign them to the AASA. But, the entire area is socio-economically low with a high incidence of drug use by parents during pregnancy and premature births.

Gilbert Unified District

The District has many highly desirable programs specifically designed for students with cognitive delays which lead to an increase in this particular population. In addition to attracting families with students who have cognitive delays, the District is also simultaneously facing a declining general education student enrollment. This unique set of circumstances shifts the testing percentages.

Glendale Elementary District

Glendale Elementary School District has students with unique and diverse special education needs. Parents choose to enroll in Glendale due to a wide-range of special education services offered to families based on the student's needs. Families come to Glendale from other countries and other states. Glendale routinely enrolls students with little to no educational history, despite the student who presents significant developmental needs. The Glendale Elementary School District is a district with declining enrollment; however, the student counts in special education are not proportional to the enrollment decline. The sustaining numbers of students with severe cognitive delays compared to the decreasing general education numbers could be causing a discrepancy in the 1% count.

Grand Canyon Unified District

Again our ESS population is 24% of our total population. We are a unique small school community in that employers here at the Grand Canyon provide reasonable low cost subsidized housing which is attractive to many families with particularly high needs. It is also a safe, friendly community which is attractive to families. I also believe we have earned the reputation for having a strong ESS program for being a small rural remote school. I honestly believed that the students identified for alternate assessment qualified under the criteria set forth. We used the following criteria

:https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2020/10/Alternate%20Assessment%20Eligibility_May%202022.pdf

Higley Unified School District

Higley Unified School District is surrounded by Charter schools, many of which are not always equipped to meet the needs of students who qualify for Alternative State Assessments. While Higley Unified School District has experienced a decrease in general education enrollment, the number of students who qualify for Alternative Assessments has not declined. In fact, it has increased. Higley Unified School District is sought out by families due to the variety of cross-categorical special education programs spanning grades K-12, nationally recognized Best Buddies Program, Unified Sports Program, and the caliber of special education teachers that are hired and retained. These specialized programs may attract students from neighboring areas, which can contribute to a slight elevation above the 1% threshold for Alternate Assessments.

Hirsch Academy A Challenge Foundation

Our school's participation rate in the alternate assessment is at 1% due to the unique needs of our student population. The participation percentage is strongly impacted by our school's smaller overall enrollment and specific student need. As a small district, even a small number of eligible students can result in a higher overall percentage. We ensure that the IEP teams make individualized, evidence-based decisions regarding assessment participation, following the state's participation guidelines.

Holbrook Unified District

The overall population of students with cognitive disabilities is increasing in the district due to an increased proportion of children with genetic and other disorders impacting cognitive skills. We are a geographically large district of 1500 square miles and we serve many small communities with limited access to medical care, impacting prenatal care and some of the increase we have seen in disabilities. The school district is relatively small in population and the increase in this student demographic, even by only a few students, significantly impacts the percentage of students participating. With overall declining enrollment across the district and a stable/increasing special education population, we continue to exceed the 1% cap. However, we feel our IEP teams are identifying eligible students appropriately.

Humboldt Unified District

Humboldt Unified serves families across Dewey/Humboldt, Prescott Valley, Castle Canyon Mesa, and nearby growing communities. As more families move into the area, many are exploring alternative educational options. However, families of children with significant cognitive delays often do not select local charter, private, or micro schools. Instead, they choose HUSD for their child's education. This trend contributes to our district's rising percentage of students taking alternate assessments. We are also seeing a notable increase in families relocating to our district, particularly from California. These families often bring students who qualify for special education under different eligibility standards—especially at the preschool level—which further increases our eligible population. This increase of transfers in population of students with special needs necessitate the need for filling out the alternative assessment eligibility forms and an increase in eligibility through HUSD's responsibility. HUSD offers a full continuum of special education services across all grade levels, from preschool through high school, and across a variety of settings, which supports our growing number of students requiring alternate assessments.

We have also seen a rise in the number of students residing in group homes within our district boundaries. These students often present with complex needs and are typically already eligible for special education services upon enrollment. At the same time, our district is experiencing an increase in the number of students either newly identified with autism or transferring in with an existing eligibility of autism from other districts and states. This shift has contributed to higher service demands and has impacted our overall special education population, especially in programs that serve students who may qualify for alternate assessments.

We have seen an overall decrease, albeit a small one, in all three areas of the alternative assessment from the previous year. I believe this is attributed to the continued training in alternative assessment qualifications.

Hyder Elementary District

We are an extremely small rural school district, with a K-8 population of around 90 students. Our total testing population was 62. Having such a small population makes it very difficult to stay at or below 1%.

Imagine Avondale Elementary, Inc.

As a very small K-5 public charter school in a mid-size suburban setting, with a low overall enrollment (447 students), Imagine Avondale Elementary accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood include minority families who speak predominantly Spanish. 93% of the overall enrollment includes minority students, and 79% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Imagine Avondale Middle competes with a mid-size neighboring district where many families report upon enrollment that they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, and choose to enroll with us.

Imagine Avondale Middle, Inc.

As a very small 6-8 public charter school in a mid-size suburban setting, with a low overall enrollment (220 students), Imagine Avondale Middle accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood include minority families who speak predominantly Spanish. 93% of the overall enrollment includes minority students, and 74% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Imagine Avondale Middle competes with a mid-size neighboring district where many families report upon enrollment that they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, and choose to enroll with us.

Imagine Charter Elementary at Camelback, Inc.

As a very small K-5 public charter school, with a low overall enrollment (365 students), Imagine Charter at Elementary Camelback, Inc. accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood include highly migrant, transient, and homeless families, including a diverse enrollment of students with disabilities. 99% of the overall enrollment include minority students, and 88% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Imagine Charter Elementary at Camelback, Inc. competes with a neighboring district that is the largest elementary school district in Arizona, where class sizes are larger, and families report they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child and choose to enroll with us.

Imagine Middle at Surprise, Inc.

As a very small 6-8 public charter school in a large suburban setting, with a low overall enrollment (248 students), Imagine Surprise Middle accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood include suburban housing in multiple zip codes, where families are enrolling from multiple school districts. 52% of the overall enrollment includes minority students, and 40% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Imagine Surprise Middle competes with a large neighboring district where many families report upon enrollment that they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, and choose to enroll with us, especially families with students who have more significant needs when transitioning from a developmental preschool to kindergarten.

Imagine Prep Coolidge, Inc.

As a very small 6-12 public charter school in a fringe rural farming community, with a low overall enrollment (526 students), Imagine Prep Coolidge accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this community include farmers, and minority families who speak predominantly Spanish. 85% of the overall enrollment includes minority students, and 73% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Because Coolidge sits in such a rural community, Imagine Prep Coolidge competes with a larger neighboring district which serves outlying areas. Additionally, many families report upon enrollment that they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, so choose to enroll with us.

Imagine Prep Surprise, Inc.

As a very small 9-12 public charter school in a large suburban setting, with a low overall enrollment (290 students), Imagine Prep Surprise accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood suburban housing in multiple zip codes, where families are enrolling from multiple school districts. 50% of the overall enrollment includes minority students, and 32% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Imagine Prep Surprise competes with a large neighboring district where many families report upon enrollment that they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, and choose to enroll with us

J O Combs Unified School District

Although our community does not have as many resources for students and families with individuals who have significant impairments as some of the larger cities, housing options in our community are currently more affordable than the surrounding larger cities. When parents are looking at buying or renting in our general area, they often contact our district to hear about our schools and programs. The district currently has a good reputation with our self contained programs for students with complex needs and as a result, families with students with significant impairments select our district to reside in, thus increasing the number of students who moved into the district with alternative assessments identified on their IEPs. Enrollment in our self contained programs for students with complex needs increased by 25.71% from the 22/23 school year to the 23/24 school year. The overall district enrollment numbers dropped 8.66% from the 22/23 to the 23/24 school year based on the Oct. 1 count. Many of those are students without disabilities, which impacted our special education populations. As a result, our percent of students with disabilities has increased in comparison to our population of students without disabilities. Our SPED percentage for the 22-23 school year was approximately 15%, 23-24 school year was approximately 15.5% and for the 24-25 school year was approximately 16.5% at our Oct. 1 count. This is higher than the state average. Additionally, there are currently 7 group homes in our community that often support students with significant needs. Our community is also surrounded by several charter schools and other schools of choice as enrollment options. As a result, approximately (69%) of students that reside within our district boundaries choose to attend schools outside of the district boundaries. In looking at student withdrawals, and requests for evaluations, it appears that most of those students who do not attend our schools are not individuals with disabilities or are not students with significant cognitive impairments that impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior and require Alternative State Assessments, therefore, our enrollment of students who participate in regular state assessments has also declined.

Joseph City Unified District

We are a rural school district with only one feeder school. We are also impacted by the low socioeconomic status in our area. We independently evaluate each student case annually to ensure that the students meet the eligibility criteria and have agreed that the students submitted meet the three eligibility criterion for alternate assessment. We are a rural school district with only one feeder school. We are also impacted by the low socioeconomic status in our area. We independently evaluate each student case annually to ensure that the students meet the eligibility criteria and have agreed that the students submitted meet the three eligibility criterion for alternate assessment.

Kaizen Education Foundation dba Discover U Elementary School

This is a small single site LEA. Our school exceeded the 1% threshold for student participation in the state's alternate assessment due to interrelated factors tied to our local demographics and community characteristics. The alternate assessment is intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and our higher-than-average participation reflects the unique needs of our student population. Our community includes a large number of low-income families who may have limited access to early intervention services or private assessments. This often results in delayed diagnoses and a greater need for comprehensive public school support services. This school's SpEd population also exceeds the state average percent of students with disabilities

Kaizen Education Foundation dba South Pointe Elementary School

This is a small single site LEA. Our school exceeded the 1% threshold for student participation in the state's alternate assessment due to interrelated factors tied to our local demographics and community characteristics. The alternate assessment is intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and our higher-than-average participation reflects the unique needs of our student population. Our community includes a large number of low-income families who may have limited access to early intervention services or private assessments. This often results in delayed diagnoses and a greater need for comprehensive public school support services.

Khalsa Family Services Khalsa Family Service

Khalsa Montessori School serves a specialized population within a small community, and as a result, has a lower overall student enrollment compared to larger districts. Due to this limited enrollment, the participation of even a small number of students in the alternate assessment can result in exceeding the 1% threshold. This occurrence is reflective of the unique needs of our student population and is not indicative of noncompliance with federal or state assessment requirements.

Kingman Academy Of Learning

We are a charter school that emphasizes small class size, parent involvement and good attendance. We have a reputation for providing our students and families with high quality education for all students as well as having a supportive, caring environment. "We are Family" is our motto and therefore parents want their students, especially their students with special needs to come here. Due to this environment we do have a high percentage of students with severe cognitive delays. We annually review each student's IEP to make sure they are taking the correct assessment to make sure all students have the right to participate in state testing at the appropriate level. We are a charter school that emphasizes small class size, parent involvement and good attendance. We have a reputation for providing our students and families with high quality education for all students as well as having a supportive, caring environment. "We are Family" is our motto and therefore parents want their students, especially their students with special needs to come here. Due to this environment we do have a high percentage of students with severe cognitive delays. We annually review each student's IEP to make sure they are taking the correct assessment to make sure all students have the right to participate in state testing at the appropriate level.

Kyrene Elementary District

The percentage of students participating in Alternate Assessments is just over the 1% threshold for each assessment. We started the year under the 1% target. Over the course of the year, we did not have many student withdrawals, but we did have several newly enrolled students who were found to be eligible for Alternate Assessments.

At the same time, Kyrene is also experiencing declining enrollment. This trend is contributing to a higher proportion of students with significant disabilities within our boundaries as compared to our overall population. We have added one Level C program classroom for students with significant disabilities each of the past two years. These demographic shifts contributed to the nominally higher percentages.

La Tierra Community School, Inc La Tierra Community School, Inc

La Tierra Community School was recently a kindergarten through 6th grade public charter school. This meant fewer students of state testing age on our campus. As a public charter school, La Tierra had plans to gradually add a middle school program with the students who were currently enrolled in the 6th and 7th grade, instead of opening enrollment to students who were not already familiar with our pedagogy and culture. During the 2023-2024 school year, La Tierra's 7th and 8th grade class was a combination class with only 20 students, which meant a fewer number of students in 3rd-8th, than if each class was a stand-alone class

Laveen Elementary District

Taking over as the districts Alternate Assessment Coordinator in July of 2023 I have worked diligently with our teams to ensure that determinations are being made based solely on eligibility criteria. We surpassed our goal percentage from last year's action plan in all three testing areas. While we continue to exceed 1% in two areas I believe these numbers to be an accurate representation of our current student population. We are a growing district with the percentage of students qualified for special education services growing at a faster rate than those who are not. Our life skills, cross categorical academics and severe programs continue to grow and are larger than ever before.

We will continue to be critical in our evaluation of students that qualify for the alternative assessment, ensuring only those students whose disability significantly impacts their intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior are taking the alternative assessment.

Legacy Traditional School – Avondale

a. Our Math and ELA percentages are well within the goal percentage. Our 5th grade cohort has several students with higher needs, therefore requiring the alternate assessment for Science.

b. Out of 281 students assessed, 1.06% of our 5th and 8th graders were administered the alternative assessment due to their eligibility under the state's guidelines for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These students have been continuously enrolled in our school for five or more years. Their long-term enrollment reflects both family confidence in our strong special education program and our commitment to supporting all learners over time. While our overall enrollment has experienced natural fluctuations, the consistency of services and relationships developed with these students and their families has allowed us to provide the appropriate instructional pathway as they reached the tested grades of 5th and 8th. Given the smaller sample size of students assessed in these grades, the proportion appears higher but remains aligned with expectations based on student needs and long-term placement. This year, we have implemented solid systems for MTSS and Child Find. Therefore, we have identified more students for special education. We create a teacher assistant team that teachers sign up to meet with if they have behavioral or academic concerns with a student. Then, the team follows up in 4 weeks to track progress on given interventions. Sometimes that is all students need and sometimes we go straight to an evaluation depending on the situation.*We have also heard from incoming special education student parents that they heard our SpEd program is better than surrounding schools, so they were advised to enroll here.

Legacy Traditional School - Deer Valley

We had a confirmed enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year of 546 students (currently at 561) Because we are not currently at capacity, we are able to enroll more students, including those with specialized needs. Additionally, our location in a highly transient area means we serve many students who have experienced frequent school changes, which can contribute to learning disruptions and delayed identification of special education needs. The high turnover in our student population—partly due to families relocating and our school only serving up to 6th grade—further amplifies these patterns. Many of our students have attended multiple schools before arriving here, which can lead to academic gaps and a greater likelihood of being referred for SPED services as their learning needs become clearer over time.

Legacy Traditional School - North Phoenix

Legacy Traditional Schools - North Phoenix serves students in grades 6-8. The campus opened to serve students for the 2020-2021 school year.

We currently have a confirmed enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year of 608 students. We are also located in a high transient area. We see high turnover rates due to families relocating. This rate of turn over directly results in students withdrawing and enrolling in a new school. There is a lack of consistency in their educational history. This can at times result in wide achievement gaps and/or later identification of Special Education students due to not staying in the same school for a long enough period for ample academic achievement and/or progress toward goals. In addition, since the campus opened in the 2020-2021 school year, our special education population has increased

Liberty Elementary District

In the 2022–2023 school year, our percentage of students participating in the MSAA exceeded the 1% threshold as follows: MSAA ELA at 1.65% and MSAA Math at 1.69%. For the 2023–2024 school year, we have made measurable progress toward compliance with the 1% cap. The current participation rates are: MSAA ELA at 1.4286%, MSAA Math at 1.4479%, and MSAA Science at 1.5209%. This reflects a reduction of 0.1959% in ELA and 0.212% in Math compared to the previous year, demonstrating a positive trend toward meeting the 1% requirement.

A contributing factor to our 2023–2024 percentages is the age progression of our student population. As our students advanced in grade levels, we had eligible students in both 5th and 8th grades who were assessed with the MSAA Science test, a factor that was not applicable in the prior year. This inclusion contributed to our overall participation percentage in the Science assessment.

While we continue to evaluate our identification and assessment processes to ensure students are appropriately placed, the special circumstances of our unique student population and their academic trajectories necessitate careful consideration when interpreting our participation rates. Our data shows that we are making consistent efforts to reduce the percentage of students assessed with the MSAA and remain committed to ongoing improvement and compliance with federal guidelines.

Maine Consolidated School District

Maine Consolidated School District (4199) has a unique situation that leads to a higher-than-average percentage of students eligible for alternate assessment. The district is a single school district with fewer than 80 students participating in state assessments. Specifically, in the 2023-2024 school year, 79 students participated in the Arizona's Academic Standards Assessment (AASA) for Math, 77 for ELA, and 23 students participated in the AASA-Science. Given the small total number of students, having just one student qualify for the alternate state assessment results in a percentage that appears disproportionately high. In a larger district, one student out of several hundred or thousand would result in a much lower percentage. However, due to the small size of Maine Consolidated School District (4199), even one student qualifying for the alternate assessment pushes the percentage above the typical 1% threshold. Thus, the district's high percentage of students eligible for alternate assessment is not due to a large number of such students, but rather because the overall student population.

Mammoth-San Manuel Unified District

Mammoth San Manuel Unified has identified that new students enrolling into the school district with significant cognitive disabilities as well as existing student with significant cognitive disabilities promoted to 3rd grade contributed to exceeding the 1% cap. Given the very small school district student population of 462 and where only 264 students fall in testing years, it only takes a very small number of children eligible for alternative assessment to exceed the 1% cap. The influx of new students coming to the school district who have significant cognitive disabilities may be due to the relatively low cost of housing within this rural community and/or due to a recent temporary construction project of considerable size is being completed here. It may be that the low cost of housing enables families with disabled children to afford to have one parent stay home fulltime to provide parental supervision.

Identification of students for participation in Alternative Assessment was determined to have been appropriately determined according to state regulations. However, the documentation of the determining factors was found to be a weakness within the IEP team process. Inconsistencies were found in the documentation of the justification for participation within the Alternative Assessment Eligibility Form.

Marana Unified District

As of 1/25/2024, there were 132 students in grades 3rd-8th and 11th, combined, enrolled in our Intellectual Disabilities Cluster Programs (“ID Programs”). This represents 1.97% of the District’s total enrollment in those grades. These programs constitute our most intensive and restrictive instructional setting for students with significant cognitive disabilities, although not all students meet eligibility requirements and participate in alternate testing.

While our alternate assessment population has increased over the past few years, our overall student population (district wide) has remained relatively constant. This school year, we had a larger cohort of 11th-grade students, which may have also contributed to the higher percentage of students participating in alternate assessments at the tested grade level.

District-wide, we have seen an increase in the number of students enrolled in our Intellectual Disabilities (ID) programs who require a higher level of support. Between 2022 and 2024, the number of students in these programs has increased by approximately 20, contributing to a higher percentage of students who qualify for alternate assessments.

Our exceptional student services programs for students with disabilities are seeing a large increase in its population as well.

Each team looks carefully at the qualifications to make sure only those who need to qualify do so.

Maricopa Unified School District

Maricopa Unified School District is a rapidly growing district, and we welcome new students from out of district and out of state. Because of the location of Maricopa, when families enroll, their students either go to our schools or to one of our local charter schools. We do not have a significant number of students who open enroll in other districts due to our location. Further, the majority of our students who enroll in charter schools do not have IEPs. Both of these factors increase our concentration of students who require alternative assessments

Milestones Charter School

Milestones Charter School is a small, one district school that serves students in grades K-8th. Our enrollment in all grades does not exceed 200 students, with less than that being assessed in grades 3-8. The decision to recommend the alternate assessment is always based on a team decision through the IEP. Our school has a highly touted special education department that focuses on small group support, inside and outside of the general education setting, with accommodations and modifications for students in need. We have a small teacher to student ratio that allows for parents to feel comfortable entrusting their child's education with us, especially when their child has special needs in areas related to cognitive impairment, academics, social emotional needs, adaptive skills, communication, and motor/sensory support. Word of mouth has spread within the surrounding community that our small school offers support in the above areas and students with severe cognitive impairments are treated fairly and as equals with their grade level peers which parents are striving to find for their child. We focus on the child, their individual needs, and the areas in which they will need to learn life skills outside of the classroom to further their learning. Therefore, with a positive word of mouth, we have experienced parents' desire to enroll their students with low cognition and adaptive skill deficits into our school. Thus, requiring the need for such students to be recommended for the alternate assessment.

Mingus Union High School District

Since 2020, we have had a 30% increase in enrollment of students with IEP's. With the increase in enrollment, we have seen an increase in the number of students who meet the requirements to take the MSAA.

Mohave Accelerated Elementary School, Inc.

Demographic data show a high percentage of families in our area live below the poverty line, and our community has limited early intervention programs and access to developmental screening. This lack of early support often results in students entering the school system with more pronounced learning and adaptive behavior needs. As a result, a greater number of students in our district meet the criteria for the alternate assessment.

Mohave Valley Elementary School District

Staff turnover at the following levels: Principal, Special Ed. Administrator, District Test Coordinator, and special education teachers. This effected communication and understanding of IEP components. New staff may have different views or understandings. District enrollment has increased in the number of special education students as well as non special education students. The district enrollment of special education students is 15% of the overall enrollment. We are an "A" district. A Harvard study found that our district was 1 of 6 districts to show growth in math proficiency over the last 3 years, and we were 1 of 4 districts in the nation that showed ELA growth in the nation. This will affect our enrollment. The number of charter schools and online schools has increased. They don't always have plans to teach students with higher needs.

Mohawk Valley Elementary District

Mohawk Valley School is a small, rural school. During the 2023-2024 school year, Mohawk Valley School had an increase in students found eligible to participate in the Alternate Assessment.

Currently, there are less than 150 students enrolled at Mohawk Valley School. A self-contained classroom was implemented during in 2023-2024 to address increasing student needs and the Star Autism Curriculum was implemented to enable the district to meet the needs of all students enrolled at Mohawk Valley School.

Students are not denied or discriminated against at Mohawk Valley School. There are no private or charter schools or alternative programs within the district boundaries or a reasonable distance of Mohawk Valley School.

Murphy Elementary District

The district experienced a decrease in enrollment for students who take the general state assessments, while maintaining enrollment for special education students taking the alternative assessment. Our district also experienced an influx over the last two years of students enrolling who have higher cognitive needs, requiring the alternative assessment. This ultimately impacted our overall percentages of students taking the alternative assessment.

Osborn Elementary School District

The students who qualified were legitimately qualified for the Alternate Assessment. Our district does have a specialized residential home for students with disabilities which included students that pushed us over the 1%.

Pan-American Elementary Charter

After reviewing the criteria for student selection more carefully, our current IEP team realizes that we have been selecting students to take the MSAA who are not qualified because they did not meet all 3 of the verifiable criteria, and therefore should not have been identified as students having the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Specialized programs for students with Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities are tailored to meet student needs throughout the day with their specially designed instruction as determined by each IEP team. Although our IEP teams are guided to follow procedures, including consideration of alternate assessment for each student, we realize that our IEP teams need more training about the process of determining students who qualify to take the MSAA exam. In the past, our teams have not considered the 1% cap when making this determination.

Parker Unified School District

Parker Unified School District (PUSD) is in the small, rural community of Parker, Arizona. We are in La Paz County. According to Data USA, the population in Parker is 3,380 (not including Colorado Indian Tribes on the Reservation). Parker demographics include: Hispanic 45%; Native American 22%; White 31%; and Other 2.0%. According to the Student Ethnic Distribution List, 52% of our students are Hispanic, 28% are American Indian, 13% are white, and 7% are Other.

Payson Unified District

In the Payson Unified School District, our special education population continues to fluctuate because enrollment has steadily declined, as parents make alternative school choices instead of enrolling their child in a public school. Considering the historical census from July 2022 to May 2024, our special education population decreased from 415 students districtwide to 404 students districtwide. In October of 2022, our population was at 393 students, before ascending to 417 students in May of 2023. In July of 2023, our population peaked at 418 students, before descending to 404 students in June of 2024. Currently, as of April 2025, our student population receiving special education services is 357 students. Districtwide special education population fluctuations are important to consider in the broader scope of our 1% Threshold goal because it conveys that there are alternative factors to consider when establishing why PUSD continues to be above the 1% Threshold expectation. When reflecting upon the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) criterion, we considered the factors that led students to qualify for the MSAA during annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) reviews/meetings. Adapting a narrowed focus on special education population data, we considered the following factors that led to MSAA eligibility districtwide. Our Level C student population has increased as we see a rise in students who qualify for the MSAA, including a special education population that is steadily increasing in the areas of Autism, Developmental Delay, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disabilities. ◦ Autism 10.6% ◦ Developmental Delay 14% ◦ Mild-Moderate-Severe Disabilities 5.2% 11.5% (42 students) of our student population receive services at Level C ◦ Of those students, 19 students, Grades 3-12, qualify for the MSAA based on eligibility criteria. Of that 11.5% Level C student population, we have seen an increase of students' Least Restrictive Environment being Level C from grades 3-5. ◦ Students in grades 3-5, Level C, are receiving targeted grade-level curriculum at a significantly modified level in a small-group to one-on-one setting that allows for extensive remediation and repetition of foundational academic skills. Students need ample time to gain content knowledge. In addition, based on our previous Action Plan from 2022-2023, we found that MSAA eligibility increased as psychologists became a routine contributing member of the IEP team during the annual review of a student's MSAA eligibility. During the annual review of the MSAA criterion, data indicated that more students became eligible for the MSAA based on review of current evaluation data, the need for a Level C instructional environment, goals and objectives based on the general curriculum that are appropriately challenging for the student, and the consistent need for substantially adapted curriculum and materials, instructional methods and strategies, and abundant time to gain skills that can be utilized across content areas. Finally, PUSD continues to have a high-need special education population living in an unstable environment as inflation impacts families' socioeconomic status, impacting their access to affordable food, housing, school fees/items, and healthcare. Students often come to school needing behavioral and social-emotional support beyond equitable access to a general education curriculum. IEP teams have been consistently determining that students need extensive social-emotional support to access the general curriculum often proposing highly structured, higher adult-student ratios, and 1-1 and small group specially-designed instruction resulting in Level C being the student's Least Restrictive Environment. This need is prevalent in the elementary grades and steadily increasing in the upper grades.

Peach Springs Unified District

During the fiscal year 2024, Peach Springs had approximately 70+ students participate in the state testing for ELA and Math and 40+ students participate in the Science test. When a school has a small population, it only takes a couple students with significant cognitive impairments to exceed the participation rate. Peach Springs is a rural community and has been extremely impacted by drug and alcohol addiction. Most of the student population does not live with their biological parents. Many students have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. Family members, neighbors, and foster families are raising a large population of our students. Resources are limited to families and the turnover rate for professionals in the education and medical fields are very high. This makes it challenging for families to receive adequate care that supports the development of students in need. Peach Springs Unified School District houses a “Life Skills” classroom that students with significant cognitive disabilities participate in if their IEP team has determined it to be an appropriate placement. This is one of the only programs in the community where students can receive the individualized instruction and therapies they need. The number of students in the Life Skills program is disproportionate to the general education population.

Pendergast Elementary District

The Pendergast Elementary School District has an enrollment of 8,216 students from preschool to 8th grade and a total Special Education Population of 1,240 (1,114 K – 8 th). The Special Education Population for students Kindergarten – 8 th grade equals 13.9% of district enrollment. PESD has four specialized programs supporting students with cognitive and behavioral needs, and these programs represent the majority of Alternative Assessment Eligible Students. PESD has an increase in enrollment of students with low-incidence disabilities is requiring PESD to expand specialized programming to support the increase of students with extreme medical, physical, and cognitive needs. As a result, PESD exceeded the 1% Threshold in MSAA Science. In reviewing student evaluation data for students identified for Alternative Assessment within PESD after notification of exceeding the 1% Cap in MSAA Science, some inconsistencies with determination data and documentation of eligibility were noted.

Phoenix Elementary District

Our October 1 count in 2022 increased for students with IEPs, as well as in 2023 and 2024. While our student count of students with IEPs has increased annually, our district total count of general education student enrollment has decreased annually. Reasons for this may include that we enroll students eligible for Alternate Assessment due to being the only public school in the downtown area that provides services to students with significant cognitive impairments. Many private and charter schools do not offer the specialized programs for students with these needs. The census for our district supports that the projection of student enrollment will continue to decline in the downtown Phoenix area based on less family homes, and an increase in multi-unit smaller dwellings, and temporary housing.

Pinon Unified District

Pinon Unified School District #4 is located in a remote/rural area of the Navajo Reservation where the nearest school district is about an hour away with a local community school that consists of grade preschool to kindergarten. PUSD is the only school of choice that has grades preschool to 12th grade; therefore, enrolls a very high percentage of students with special needs. Hence the high percentage of students who take the alternative assessments

Prescott Unified District

Prescott Unified School District is one of the larger school districts within Yavapai County that has a variety of special education programs for students with various disabilities and needs. Therefore, we have a higher number of students who enroll from out-of-district to receive the special education services provided. This includes various programs for students that may qualify for that Alternative Assessment. During the 2023/2024 school year, the open-enrollment for students with disabilities under IDEA did not have a cap or close after a certain number of out-of-district students to ensure staffing, resources, and services are available for students within district boundaries. Without a cap or end to open enrollment in all special education programs, students who may qualify for the Alternative Assessment were able to enroll at any time, increasing the percentage. Due to inconsistencies in Professional Development related to Alternative Assessment eligibility, many case managers (special education teachers) were not consistently trained in the eligibility requirements and 1% threshold

Quartzsite Elementary District

Our overage is due to several key factors: We are a small district, and as a result, even a few students participating in the alternate assessment can cause our percentage to exceed the 1% cap. Some students were misidentified for alternate assessment participation due to inconsistent understanding of eligibility criteria during IEP team meetings. We have identified this as an area in need of targeted professional development. Additionally, a portion of the students counted in our participation data are no longer enrolled in the district, as they have moved to other school districts. Their inclusion in the original count has contributed to an inflated participation rate that does not accurately reflect our current student population.

Ray Unified District

One circumstance that has caused our cap to be over the 1% is that we have a very small LEA. We are a one school district so all special education students with all levels of disabilities attend the same school in our community. Because of our small school size, our students who qualify with significant disabilities greatly increase our percentage. All the students in our program who qualified to take the Alternate Assessment experience a significant disability. Given the severe nature of the disabilities affecting our Alternate Assessment students at this time, it will be difficult to lower this number.

Red Mesa Unified District

RMUSD experiences low student enrollment primarily due to its small community population, frequent student withdrawals, and high absenteeism. Located within the Navajo Nation, the district serves a region with a generally low population, which naturally limits enrollment numbers. Student withdrawals are common, often driven by changes in parents' or guardians' employment status. Additionally, high absenteeism further affects enrollment stability, frequently because family-related challenges such as a lack of parental support or health-related issues.

Due to the constant changing of staff and administration, the ESS department, IEP team, and other teaching staff have not received any training regarding eligibility criteria for Alternate Assessment.

The ESS department and the IEP team have not received any training on progress monitoring to review and reassess students who are taking the Alternate Assessment.

Round Valley Unified District

RVUSD had a significant drop in general enrollment as parents are choosing homeschool and micro-school options for their students. There has NOT, however, been a drop in students with special needs, which by default, increases our overall percentage of students in our special education programs, as well as that of those who meet the criteria for MSAA.

Sacaton Elementary District

There are some special circumstances that affect our unique population here in Sacaton.

A great number of our students are in foster care, living with relatives, receiving care from tribal social services, or in group homes. We also have a high transition rate as students enroll and unenroll between districts in proximity to the reservation. Our population of special education students is 20 percent or less, however between our two campuses and Level D Private Placement, we have four self-contained special education classrooms.

While our overall enrollment has declined, our special education has maintained; many districts close to us do not have self-contained programs to support the high level of needs our students have. We are also seeing an increase in students who have never been in school and are aged first grade and up. This has caused an additional increase in our special education percentage and our alternative assessment percentage comparatively.

After meeting with staff, the decisions were made for inconsistent reasons and staff needs further support. There has been a significant amount of turnover in leadership in our district causing inconsistent expectations to be given to staff.

Staff Training and Implementation: As with districts across the country, we too have struggled with staffing. From the superintendent to the site-based staff, we have had a great deal of turnover, long term substitutes, and new teachers begin. This year alone, we have 4 new special education teachers out of 7 special education positions.

Our entire department is continuing to receive individual training on IEP development. We are reassessing all students who have the alternative assessment in their IEPs at each meeting. The ESS Director is working with staff to understand the checklist for alternative assessments and reviewing them with the entire IEP team at each upcoming meeting.

Saddle Mountain Unified School District

Our district continues to experience growth, resulting in the enrollment of approximately 75 new special education students. This trend reflects the rapid expansion of our community, which spans over 500 square miles and continues to undergo significant residential development. As new housing developments emerge, we are seeing consistent daily enrollments that contribute to increased participation across all assessments, including alternate assessments. Although our district is classified as rural, it is located just 50 miles west of Phoenix. There are no specialized institutions, residential facilities, or magnet programs within the district or surrounding area that would typically draw a disproportionate number of students requiring alternate assessments. However, we are aware of anecdotal reports suggesting that families may be relocating to our district due to a favorable reputation in special education, possibly promoted through informal online platforms such as parent blogs, though these sources have not been officially verified. The overall rise in student enrollment has contributed to a corresponding increase in the number of students qualifying for alternate assessments based on significant cognitive disabilities. These factors, in combination, have resulted in our district exceeding the 1% threshold.

Safford Unified District

Safford USD is unique within our county in that we serve students with the most significant cognitive disabilities within our own schools, rather than referring them to a regional consortium. In fact, we have families who specifically move to Safford so that it is considered their home district and they can be served in a public school setting where their child(ren) have the opportunity for inclusion. As a result, we have a broader range of student needs and must ensure that all students, including those with severe cognitive delays, are assessed in a way that is both appropriate and equitable. In the past three school years, the number of students eligible for special education has increased from 516 students in FY23 to 616 in FY25 according to October 1 Data. This increase of 100 students has included an increase in students with more significant disabilities from 31 to 49. Safford has not found all 49 eligible for the Alternate Assessment, but there has been an increase in the enrollment of students who deserve to be considered.

Sanders Unified District

There were changes in administrative staff, which caused a training gap. This impacted on the participation rate at our LEA. Additionally, students transferred into our district because of increased community interaction with the school district causing awareness of services. Concurrently, there was lowered access to related services in the local hospitals and clinics. Parents enrolled their child and sought special education services in our LEA due to more limited medical services in local hospitals.

A number of students have enrolled in the district this year with high needs. They withdrew in previous years due to issues with the previous ESS operations. This increased the number of students needing alternative assessments. IEP reviews will be necessary for the future.

Santa Cruz Valley Opportunities in Education, Inc.

Our school is a small institution located in a highly rural area, with no alternative educational options within a 20-mile radius aside from the local public school district. Many families choose our school because they feel their child requires a more personalized learning experience. As a Montessori school, we provide an individualized approach to education, featuring small student-to-teacher ratios that cater to diverse learning needs. Due to this model, we naturally attract families of students who require specialized support, including those in Special Education programs, gifted programs, and students with 504 plans. As a result, our Special Education population is notably high, with 28% of our students receiving Special Education services. This demographic factor significantly contributes to our school exceeding the 1% participation threshold for alternate assessments.

Santa Cruz Valley Unified District

The district's special education population has grown in the number of student that are eligible which has increased the alternate assessment participation. Students that are in programs that are in a more restrictive (e.g. life-skills and/or self-contained) have automatically assigned to take the alternate assessment. IEP teams are not consistently reviewing student's evaluation data such as academics, IQ, or adaptive behavior to make assessment determinations.

Santa Cruz Valley Union High School District

SCVUHSD is a very small rural school district with a very small special education population of approximately 60 students, and a whole school student count of approximately 400 students. There is an even smaller percentage of that special education population that is eligible for the MSAA.

Sedona-Oak Creek JUSD #9

Our district's test results were 1.24%, but this percentage was calculated by including both 8th- and 11th-grade students. Given our district's small size, it is not feasible to reduce this number further while still ensuring appropriate assessment placement for students with significant cognitive disabilities. However, following a comprehensive review of Sedona Oak Creek's current special education practices upon beginning in January 2025, it is clear that outdated procedures, limited staff training, and inconsistent application of eligibility criteria have contributed to an inflated number of students being placed on the Alternate Assessment during the 23/24 and 24/25 SY.

Self-Development Academy-Phoenix

We are a small district with one site. Due to our small numbers and special educational needs, having a small number of students participate in the alternative testing put us over the 1% threshold.

Seligman Unified District

During the fiscal year 2024, Seligman Unified District had approximately 80 students participate in state testing. When a school has a small population, it only takes a couple students with significant cognitive impairments to exceed the participation rate. Seligman is a rural community with limited access to early childhood and professional care. The number of students with extreme cognitive and medical challenges being referred has increased over the last 5 years. Seligman's unemployment rate is larger than the state's average. Many families are impacted by economic challenges and do not have the means or the support to access the level of care their students need outside of the school environment.

Show Low Unified District

The school district is relatively small and we have had a number of students move into our boundaries who qualify for alternate assessment. We have seen an increased number of new enrollments due to the economy and homelessness. Of the new enrollments, a high percentage are already identified as special education students. As students move in, the SPED director carefully reviews the data and IEP's that come with the students. When a student that is eligible for alternate assessment moves in, the team reviews the IEP as well as new data they have collected to ensure that the eligibility is accurate and necessary. We have also found that our specialized programs are attracting out of district applicants that want to attend our schools for these programs. Some of these students meet eligibility for alternate assessments, and that has impacted our percentage. For all new students, both move ins and open enrollment, all students will be thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and eligibility of alternate assessments before the required student identification time period.

Skull Valley Elementary District

During the Covid 19 outbreak a few years ago, most schools closed due to direction from the CDC, Arizona State, and the United States Government. Skull Valley did not close. As a result, students with special needs, students needing preschool, and students without parents home during the day brought their kids to Skull Valley School District. The epidemic changed the way Skull Valley School functions today.

Skyline Gila River Schools, LLC

- Gila River is a small school that services a large native American population, accounting for 98% total.
- Our feeder schools are very unique, all three reside on the Gila River Indian Reservation. Only one of them is considered a public school district, which follow both state and federal requirements for special education. That means the documentation we receive, if any, is very minimal. It is not individualized nor does it include all the required components. The majority of the time we either have to start over almost from scratch, or revise all the documents to ensure they are in compliance with state and federal guidelines.
- The other significant consideration with this particular campus, since it serves the Gila River Indian Community, is that this community observed COVID for almost 3 years. Many students did not return to campus in March 2021 as the other schools did. When you consider students that were in kindergarten or first grade during 2020-2021 and did not actually go back to the brick and mortar school until 2023, they missed a significant amount of education. We are currently receiving students from our feeder schools that are significantly below where they should be. With that being said, we have a history of this school receiving students 2-3 grade levels below. With the COVID issue, those students are now 3-4 grade levels below entering our school at 6th grade. This is an issue that we are currently working to address in other areas outside of special education, but the impact on this campus is significant.

Skyline Schools, Inc.

Our special education department prides itself on telling the proper story to the students' needs. We create service plans based on needs rather than eligibility categories.

Skyline Prep High School is an alternative school, as identified by ADE and the State Board of Charter Schools. We are a Title 1 school servicing a low-income area of South Phoenix. Looking through the average enrollment for the 11th grade cohorts over the last 4 years, there was a significant decline for FY24 at 40 students.

FY23 (59)

FY22 (59)

FY21 (48)

Additionally, it has been communicated from the campus leaders that feedback from students are they want to go to a bigger high school. They want to have access to many additional programs that Skyline Prep does not have. These may include other sports, clubs, or classes that we do not offer or have a way to offer. This particular cohort of 11th grade students had quite a few outside the norm that left sometime during their high school enrollment. We had a few return after stating their reasons for return to Skyline Prep:

Staff did not know their name

Students did not get the attention needed

Staff did not address their IEP

There were many more fights

Peers did not treat them well

They were on the sports teams but didn't get to play

Sonoita Elementary District

Sonoita Elementary School District #25 is a single-site LEA with less than 120 students in grades K-8 and less than 90 students in grades that participate in state testing. Due to our small enrollment, the district exceeds the 1% cap for the Alternate Assessment. Our MSAA participation is not increasing; the same students have taken the MSAA since they were in third grade. We have reevaluated the students to ensure the MSAA is an appropriate assessment based on their cognitive ability.

St David Unified District

St. David is a very small district and we do have a high special education percentage of students overall. We have tried to address the higher percentage and believe that because we are rural and that many grandparents and extended families move here that have had less early childhood or parenting support and are lower income, all of which seem to correlate with a higher number of referrals in the district. The number of students that will meet the alternate assessment requirements is minimal for our district. Our SPED staff carefully looks at the needs of each child to make that determination and right now there is only one student within our population that is eligible. The grade levels that participate in this state testing are grades 3-8 and again, we do have a fairly large number of SPED population in this range. We saw an increase in these SPED numbers following Covid, and those larger numbers are in our middle school now.

St Johns Unified District

Justification (Explain special circumstances that affect your participation rate)

We are a rural community that has a county with the highest percentage of families on government assistance. We are a poor community. Unfortunately, with low income comes a higher rate of more significant disabilities. We can't control IQ scores, though I have seen one or two increase years later. We can work on academic achievement for those students with low IQs., so that they do not meet the criteria for the MSAA. Last year we were more vigilant about looking at IQ scores more closely so that borderline IQ scores did not get reviewed for the MSAA. Our district has 3% of students with significant disabilities.

Stanfield Elementary District

Upon examining all profile data for students enrolled with Stanfield Elementary School District that participated in the Alternate Assessment, they all met the cognitive/adaptive criteria, received a modified curriculum, and intensive special education services. As a result, the students' skill levels were significantly discrepant from the grade-level standards for each student rendering participation in the general assessment inappropriate. The Stanfield Elementary School District is a small, rural farming/dairy community that is required to serve the population that enrolls within our system and makes every effort to meet their educational needs. There are also no other school options for parents (private or charter schools) in our school district boundaries. We also have one highneeds therapeutic foster home that takes in children that have significant disabilities via DCS that are eligible for the alternate assessment due to their cognitive and adaptive scores which adds to our population that wouldn't naturally be within our school boundaries. Each year, our percentage is dependent on the student enrollment for those that qualify for the Alternate Assessment. We are not able to reject students that enroll in our district in order to keep our alternate testing population at 1%. Our district is also seeing a significant decline in general student enrollment but a significant increase in students enrolling with severe disabilities.

Success School

Our LEA serves a unique community that includes specialized residential and treatment facilities for children with significant disabilities. As a result, our district becomes a natural placement for students requiring intensive supports, leading to a higher proportion of students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Our school has self-contained special education classrooms, structured autism support programs, and partnerships with behavioral health agencies. These services draw families from surrounding areas seeking comprehensive supports not offered in their home districts. Consequently, our LEA enrolls students who meet eligibility criteria for alternate assessments.

Although our overall student population has remained relatively stable, we have observed a modest decline in general education student enrollment due to demographic shifts in the community, such as economic migration and changes in housing availability. This change in the denominator affects the percentage calculation, even when the number of students taking alternate assessments remains consistent

Sunnyside Unified District

Social Economic status- Our district has a higher number of students experiencing homelessness and group homes being in our boundaries that may potentially increase the rates. Due to the increase in housing developments within our community boundary we have seen an increase in enrollment and registration within the district. In many cases looking at the cost for rent or houses within our boundary, it appears to be lower than many other district neighborhoods and this may also contribute to more students who have more extensive needs moving into our boundaries. With the growing population surrounding SUSD there has also been an influx in DDD group homes within the boundaries that require SUSD to enroll and support them that increase the rate of students with more significant disabilities who are now being enrolled within the district.

The Paideia Academies, Inc

The Paideia Academies have more students with significant cognitive disabilities than most schools, which affects how many take the alternate assessment. We also have special programs that bring in students with higher needs from other areas. At the same time, fewer students are taking the general state tests, which makes our percentage of students in MSAA look higher, even though the actual number of students needing the alternate assessment hasn't changed.

Tolleson Elementary District

The Tolleson Elementary School District serves a population that spans from preschool - 8th grade. The District is a Title One District with approximately 86% of our families qualifying under this criteria. The Special Programs Department has done extensive training on the criteria to qualify for the alternate assessment. IEP teams are diligent to analyze the criteria at every IEP meeting to ensure the student qualifies. Even with this training and ongoing monitoring, the District remains slightly about the 1% cap. We attribute this to an increase of children enrolling in our district with moderate to severe disabilities and who meet the criteria for the alternate assessment. Tolleson Elementary School District grew minimally in overall population this past school year but according to the District's October 1 Count, the special education enrollment grew from 359 in 2022-2023 school year, 384 in 2023-2024 to 444 in 2024-2025. This meant that the percentage of children with special needs grew from approximately 13% to 14.6%. In addition, the district experienced more children moving into our district with needs that require extensive specially designed instruction due to the students' cognitive abilities. We are unaware of what the reason is for this increase of move in children with more severe needs however, we are working diligently to tailor our supports and services to ensure we are meeting the children where they are when they get to us and provide as much support as possible to help them grow and meet with IEP goals.

Tolleson Union High School District

After reviewing our list of eligible students, we determined we appropriately tested all students and have evidence that supports that each student meets the eligibility criteria. We continue to experience an increase in student mobility in and out of our district and our programming for students with disabilities, as well as an increase in high needs group homes in our district boundaries and students entering through the BID process in foster care. We are experiencing an increase in students with significant needs/disabilities which has resulted in an increase in our students attending private placement schools. Our district also allows for open enrollment at all of our schools which leads to greater variability with students transferring into the district. This year our district population of students with disabilities continued to increase from last year. Being a union high school district, our students take the alternate assessment just one time in 11th grade. The size of the cohort can vary from year to year which results in slight variations of the percentage tested. Lastly, as a high school district, students with significant cognitive disabilities have been identified prior to entering high school. We are not overidentifying students but simply serving the students that feed into our schools.

Toltec School District

Justification calculations were not available this year. The primary reason for an increased participation rate in the alternative assessment is due to the district experiencing an increase in enrollment of special education students with substantial needs. Currently, the district has an enrollment of 1284 students and 347 of those students are receiving special education services which equates to 27%. This is above the 11%-15% range of special education students to general education students for Arizona.

Tombstone Unified District

Tombstone Unified School District #1 is in a rural area, and we accept all open enrollments. Two of our neighboring schools do not have high schools so students attend Tombstone School District. We are in a rural area and our School District covers over 610 square miles.

Tuba City Unified School District #15

Our district encompasses and serves rural communities across northern Arizona with a preschool program that serves students with a disability. TCUSD#15's alternate assessment participation rate is over 1% in consideration of the following factors: Incoming children of our preschool program and their identified with lower cognitive ability and our district population. Their determination for alternative assessment is consistently based upon a profile of lower cognitive ability (<70 standard score) and commensurate adaptive scores when evaluated. The preschool children enrolling with moderate to severe disabilities and who meet the criteria for the alternate assessment in our district would attribute this increase. IEP teams review eligibility of all students and make these informed decisions based upon evaluation of test scores in tandem with classroom data and observation. Lastly, the percentage of low incidence disabilities is higher within the Tuba City Unified School District because of open enrollment and only school within 500 square miles that provides services to students with these significant needs.

Vail Unified District

Vail Unified School District continues to grow as a district and community. Within the last several years, we have added a new master community and two complexes that are devoted to rental homes and units. As we have experienced physical growth, our reputation continues to expand outside of our boundaries. Known for our inclusive practices, we often field calls from families outside of Arizona that have researched school districts, and Vail is often one of the recommended within Arizona. The growth of Vail has increased the number of families with students with disabilities we serve, with our number of students growing exponentially. In June of 2019, our total number of students who received special education was 1686. In June of 2021, our total number of students who received special education services was 1723. In June of 2022, our total number of students was 1859, and by our fall 2023 census, our total number of students was 1920. The population growth in our community and the advertisement of our inclusive practices have led to an increase in the number of students we serve with special education needs, which additionally contributes to our growing number of students participating in the alternate assessment.

Valley Union High School District

Valley Union High School serves a small student body, which impacts the number of participants in statewide assessments. The limited population means that participation in exams such as the MSAA is minimal and can vary from year to year. With such a small testing pool, even minor fluctuations can cause significant shifts in the reported participation rates. As a result, percentage-based data may not fully reflect the school's overall commitment to assessment participation and compliance, but rather the statistical impact of a small sample size.

Vernon Elementary District

The population at Vernon Elementary School is growing and with that growth comes a growth in our students with cognitive disabilities. The school district itself is a small community of students so an increase of students with disabilities, even a small increase, impacts the overall percentage of students participating. Our IEP team at Vernon Elementary is currently identifying students with disabilities appropriately. This unfortunately puts us over the 1% threshold.

Wellton Elementary District

WES is a small, single-school district with approximately 214 students enrolled from Kindergarten to 8th grade, with 122 of these students being in grades 3-8. Any more than 1 student taking the alternate assessment puts us over the 1% cap. In recent years, the number of enrolled students who take general assessments has declined.

West Gilbert Charter Elementary School, Inc.

As a very small K-8 public charter school in a fringe rural community, with a low overall enrollment (296 students), Imagine West Gilbert Elementary, Inc. accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. The demographics of this neighborhood include farming families and communities including a diverse enrollment of students with disabilities. 66% of the overall enrollment include minority students, and 55% are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school, but still close to home. Imagine West Gilbert Elementary, Inc. competes with a neighboring district that covers 1200 square miles in Arizona and is one of the largest employers in Buckeye. Many families report they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, and choose to enroll with us, especially families with students who have more significant needs when transitioning from a developmental preschool to kindergarten.

West Gilbert Charter Middle School, Inc.

As a very small online, K-8 public charter school, with a low overall enrollment (79 students), Imagine West Gilbert Middle School, Inc. accepts all students with disabilities when there are openings at a specified grade level. 72% of the overall enrollment include minorities. Additionally, school choice gives families the opportunity to enroll in schools outside of the district home school in an online platform where parents can support their children with more significant disabilities in the home environment while receiving a FAPE online. Families report they prefer smaller student to teacher ratios for their child, have been unhappy in their home school district, and choose to enroll with us.

Western School of Science and Technology, Inc.

Demographic Changes: Our enrollment data shows an increase in students with IEPs. Policy and Training Needs: Staff turnover and the need for consistent technical assistance at the Tier 2 level.

Whiteriver Unified District

Teacher Turn-over: WUSD experienced teacher turnover in our Structured Teaching Classes (STC). Additional training and mentoring is needed in the identification and determination of students eligible for MSAA.

Inconsistent numbers: Between total enrollment and those who actually take the state assessment, there is a fluctuation (dropped students, transfers in and out), skewing the ratio.

Staff Training Variability: Several of our teachers are from out of the country and may require additional training and support in using the required Arizona Department of Education Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form and understanding the eligibility process as documented in the student's IEP.

Willcox Unified District

Our LEA is in a rural area with several smaller K-8 districts in our area. Many of these smaller schools do not have the staffing available to properly serve students with significant special needs. For this reason, families choose to enroll their students in our school district where we can serve all students. For this reason we are seeing more students enrolling in our district who are eligible for alternate assessments.

Williams Unified District

All of the students who took part in the alternative assessment had either an Intellectual Disability, or Autism with a significant need documented in IQ and Adaptive Behavior evaluations or Autism rating scales. We have more students than one would expect enrolled within our district that have significant disabilities. This is in part because of the rural nature of the district. Parents have reported that they choose to live in a rural community, oftentimes on a larger plot of land. When they researched schools in the area they chose Williams because they heard positive information about Special Education Programs in the Williams Unified School District. With our larger population of students that have Intellectual Disabilities, or Autism that significantly impacts students' academic progress we see an impact on our Alternative Assessment participation rate due to significant student needs.

Window Rock Unified District

WRUSD alternative assessment participation rate is over 1% due to lack of understanding by our ESS team. Each IEP team within WRUSD reviewed the state and district assessment page in e-IEPPRO, but the team did not fully consider the student work samples, IEP data, and standardized scores when completing the alternative assessment paperwork.

Winslow Unified District

We are a rural district that has been able maintain and sustain a population that meets the criteria for MSAA testing. Being a Title 1 district, a majority of the students we service are underprivileged. Our district has amazing classrooms/programs to support students with significant cognitive disabilities, which encourages families from surrounding areas to enroll their children or keep their children enrolled in our district. Our Alternate Assessment percentage has been steady the last few years, ranging from 1-2 percent.

Yarnell Elementary District

DEMOGRAPHICS: Yarnell, AZ is a small town located in Yavapai County, AZ. Yarnell has a population of approximately 600 people. Yarnell SD is a very small rural school districts w/ one public school (Model Creek School) established within its district boundaries. Median age of residents is 65 years and average income approximately 37,000/year. The Yarnell School District serves its student population of PS-Grade 8. Each teacher typically teaches dual grade levels in one classroom. So, this means PS/K, 1st/2nd, 3/4, 5/6 and 7/8 etc.... (each pair of grades) is taught by ONE teacher in one classroom.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS: Any student that enrolls in Yarnell School District is not turned away. As with any public school, large or small, Yarnell SD provides FAPE to all children who qualify for special education regardless of disability and/or needs. In addition, Yarnell general population fluctuates and student numbers vary each year. The IEP team for any sped. qualified student with a disability considers all pertinent criteria for determining the student's eligibility for Alternate Assessment including required components:

Results of Individual Cognitive Ability Tests

Results of Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment

Results of individual and group administered achievement tests

Results of informal assessments

Results of district-wide alternate assessments

Results of language assessments (EL)

Examples of curriculum

IEP goal progress

Extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade appropriate curriculum

Examples of curriculum and instructional objectives/work samples

Teacher collected data and documentation

PLAAFP

Yuma Elementary District

Yuma Elementary School District (YESD) has exceeded the 1% threshold of students participating in the alternative assessment. For the upcoming school year, we have set a goal to reduce this participation rate to 1.75%. As of March of last school year, YESD had 1,700 students receiving special education services. Of these students, 26% receive a high level of support (Level B, C, or D) as determined by their IEP teams. These students qualified for special education services and demonstrated low cognitive, academic, communication, and adaptive functioning during evaluations. YESD has also observed a trend of increasing enrollment in private schools since the implementation of new ESA (Empowerment Scholarship Account) rules. While YESD's overall student enrollment has plateaued, the number of students with disabilities within the district continues to rise. This is largely due to private schools within our boundaries—serving approximately 2,000 students—being unable to provide the same level of specialized services and support. Of those 2,000 private school students, only 26 have identified disabilities. This stark contrast significantly impacts YESD's alternative assessment percentages, as public schools like YESD continue to serve the vast majority of students with the most intensive needs. YESD remains committed to accepting and supporting all students, regardless of their abilities. Our district offers specialized programs, trained therapists, and robust support systems designed to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities—services often not available in private settings.

Yuma Union High School District

After careful analysis there are no real trends that would lend itself to the 1% overage in the participation rate of the alternate assessment. YUHSD considered migrant population, foster care and McKinney-Vento. Additionally, there are no changes in enrollment, community or programs or unique circumstances to report.

YUHSD finds there are more incoming freshmen eligible for the alternate assessments root cause undetermined. The team concludes elementary schools are finding more students eligible for participation in the alternate assessment.