

Guidance for Examining District Alternate Assessment Participation Rates

Carla Evans & Chris Domaleski
Center for Assessment

NCEO Conference: 1% Cap National Convening
October 18, 2018

ESSA Requirements

- In 2015, ESSA changed the 1% cap to be based on the **participation rate** rather than the proficiency or performance rate. It placed the 1% cap on the **state** participation rate for each subject, based on the total number of all students in the state assessed in the subject (34 CFR 200.6(c)(2)).
 - States cannot place a cap on district participation rates.
- If a state *anticipates* that it will exceed the 1% participation cap in any subject in any school year, the state may **request a waiver**.

The Problem

- The difficulty many states will likely encounter is how to use data to **accurately** and **defensibly** identify LEAs that need oversight and monitoring because of their AA-AAS participation rate.
- **Small n-sizes** of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can make annual participation rates and fluctuations in those participation rates appear more significant than they are in reality.

A Unique Context

- Small sample sizes
 - Traditional analytic methods may be biased
 - Difficult to know whether values are “expected” or “exceptional” and therefore whether the district needs additional support and oversight
- When requesting a waiver from the 1% cap, states must explain how they identified districts with “exceptional” values
 - States will need a defensible approach that takes into account uncertainty due to small n-sizes in order to accurately classify districts into categories for additional monitoring and support

Consequences of Error

- **False Positive (Type I error):** a state incorrectly identifies a district in need of monitoring and support when the district has not incorrectly assessed any students on an AA-AAS.
 - Could drain time and resources that could otherwise be directed more productively
 - Could lead to a district being erroneously flagged or concerned that they may be erroneously flagged, with the result being that it fails to take necessary action and provide appropriate services
- **False Negative (Type II error):** a state fails to identify a district in need of monitoring and support when the district does in fact need oversight due to incorrectly assessing some students using an AA-AAS
 - Could lead to some students taking an assessment not appropriately matched to their learning needs

The Brief

- What are some approaches for dealing with the **uncertainty** associated with **small student populations** (i.e., n-sizes)?
- What are some **appropriate analytical approaches** for monitoring AA-AAS participation rates?
- What are the **strengths and limitations** of various methods?
- What criteria could be established for defining **“expected” versus “exceptional”** fluctuations in district participation rates?

October 2018
Jointly published by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment

Guidance for Examining District Alternate Assessment Participation Rates

Federal policy limits the number of students that a state may assess with an alternate assessment aligned to alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) to no more than 1% of all students in the grades assessed in a state. The AA-AAS is intended only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Given that many states report more than 1% of their student population taking an AA-AAS (Thurlow & Wu, 2018), there is a need to identify effective and technically defensible practices for monitoring participation rates for alternate assessments.



<https://nceo.info/Resources/publications#2018-publications>

Organization

- Guiding Principles
- Analytic Approaches
- Implementation Guide

Guiding Principles

There is no single correct way to monitor and evaluate participation rates in an AA-AAS. Still, there are four guiding principles that characterize approaches likely to be more effective.

1. A comprehensive solution to identify districts in need of additional monitoring and support on participation rates cannot be purely empirical.
2. It is important to detect atypical or “exceptional” values.
3. There should be a method applied to deal with uncertainty.
4. The culminating decision and subsequent actions based on the evidence is:
(a) a matter of degree, and (b) related to unique context and circumstances.

Analytic Approaches

- Methods for detecting atypical values
- Methods for dealing with uncertainty

Methods for Detecting Atypical Values

Leverages three research-informed assumptions:

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities tend...

- Most often to be in three federal disability categories (intellectual disabilities, autism, and multiple disabilities);
- To enter the special education identification process during early childhood, rarely exit during their school years, and rarely show spikes in participation in AA-AAS (though it may be reasonable to expect participation to increase in higher grades); and
- To not have significant score variations from year-to-year if access to instruction does not change across years. This is especially atypical when it occurs for multiple students.

Methods for Detecting Atypical Values

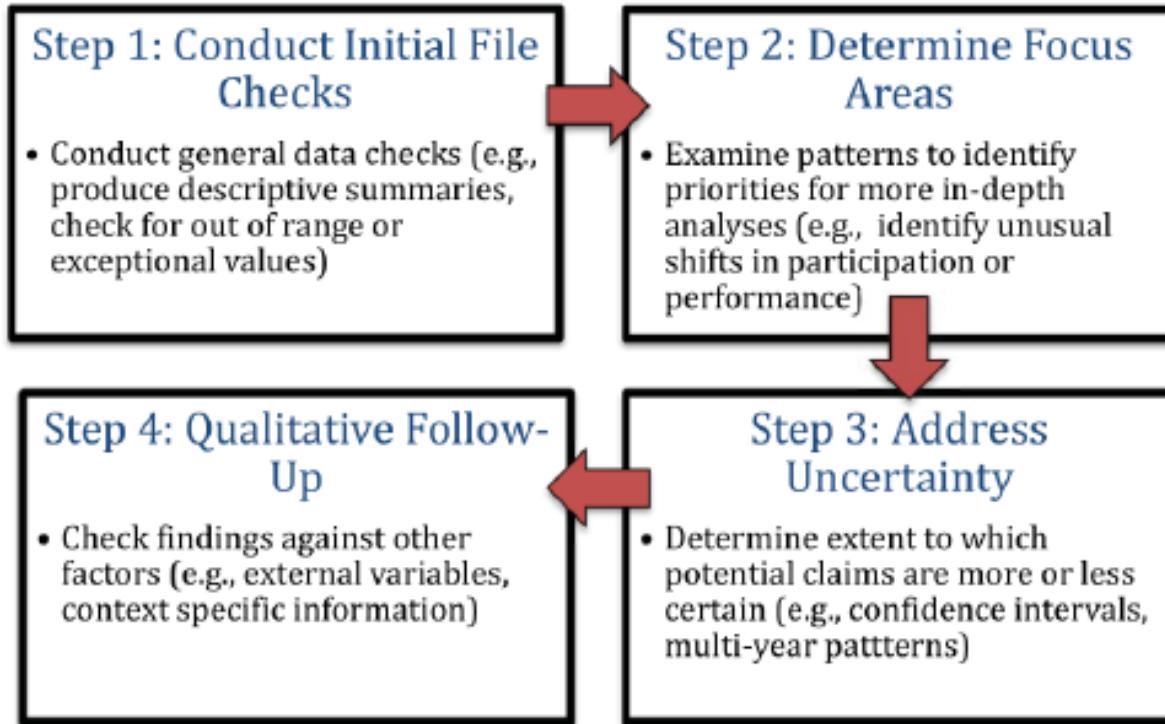
- Current or Former Year Analyses
- Multi-Year Analyses
 - Longitudinal trends
 - Cross-Sectional/Cohort trends
- Performance Trends

Methods for Dealing with Uncertainty

- Confidence Intervals
- Multi-Year Averages/Rates

Bringing It All Together: Implementation

Figure 1. Illustration of Analysis Process



There is **not** a “one-size-fits-all approach” that will work for all contexts, even though any approach used should be consistent with the guiding principles.

Judgment Process

- There may not be **one piece of evidence** that supports placing a district into a particular classification category.
- We recommend that the state evaluate the **collection of evidence** (both quantitative and qualitative) for each subject area in order to **categorize districts into monitoring and support categories** (e.g., weak, moderate, strong evidence).
 - Include collection of evidence used to categorize districts into the “strong evidence” category in their waiver application.
 - Supply this information to districts to provide feedback on areas of concern and places where additional training, support, and monitoring are necessary.

Questions?

For more information:

Center for Assessment

www.nciea.org



cevans@nciea.org

cdomaleski@nciea.org