

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Penn*Link

TO: School District Superintendents
School District Special Education Directors
Charter School Chief Executive Officers
Charter School Special Education Directors
Intermediate Unit Executive Directors
Intermediate Unit Special Education Directors

FROM: Patricia Hozella, Director
Bureau of Special Education

SUBJECT: Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) Eligibility Criteria and 1
Percent Cap

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires Pennsylvania to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject, using the alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities, does not exceed 1 percent of the total number of all students in the state who are assessed on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and Keystone Exam. Thus, there is a 1 percent (state-level) cap on the percentage of students who can be assessed using the alternate assessment. Previously, the 1 percent cap was on the percentage of scores from the alternate assessment that could be counted as proficient by the state.

The Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) is a statewide alternate assessment designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is intended for those who are unable to participate meaningfully in the PSSA even with accommodations. By administering the PASA to students with significant cognitive disabilities, the local educational agencies (LEAs) satisfy compliance with Federal Law 34 CFR § 300.160 – Participation in Assessments and the Pennsylvania School Code 22 PA Code § 4.51 – State Assessment System.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education (BSE) is reviewing the data submitted by LEAs statewide to determine those that have exceeded the 1 percent cap. If a LEA has exceeded the 1 percent cap, the BSE will notify the LEA and, if appropriate, will contact their administrator to review the data regarding the PASA eligibility criteria. In addition, the LEA's assigned single point of contact may schedule an onsite visit should it be warranted. The BSE will be providing information and guidance to LEAs regarding the new ESSA requirements and its impact on them relative to the 1 percent cap on participation in the alternate assessment.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact either Patrick Scanlon at pascanlon@pa.gov or John Gombocz at jgombocz@pa.gov.