



ACCESS FOR ELLs[®]

Guidelines for Accommodating English Language Learners with Disabilities

Under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, states must measure the development of the English language proficiency skills of their English language learners (ELLs) in grades K-12 on an annual basis within the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Members of the WIDA Consortium will use ACCESS for ELLs to fulfill this requirement. Therefore, **the primary purpose of ACCESS for ELLs is to measure English proficiency growth** tied to the criteria of the WIDA Consortium’s English language Proficiency Standards, which are aligned to the academic content area standards of every WIDA state.

ACCESS for ELLs serves additional purposes depending on the needs of states and local schools, including as a tool for determining academic program and assessment placements and assisting with program exit decisions. In addition, WIDA states that currently have alternate academic assessments for beginner ELLs will use ACCESS for ELLs to determine if individual ELLs should participate in the alternate assessment or the regular statewide academic assessment with accommodations. This is an important purpose of most English proficiency tests and a sound reason to ensure that scores are validly illustrating a student’s level of proficiency. To do otherwise could potentially target individual ELLs for an academic assessment for which they are not yet ready or misidentify them as being ineligible for accommodations they might otherwise receive.

The WIDA Consortium encourages the participation of all English language learners in the ACCESS for ELLs testing program and feels that it is an appropriate assessment for all but the most severely disabled. The ACCESS for ELLs has “built in” certain standard features of the test that might lessen the need for accommodations. For example, ACCESS for ELLs is not a timed test. ELLs may take longer than the average stated time in each section. The thematic orientation of the test and the heavy reliance on graphic support are features that should lend themselves to enhanced comprehension, not only for ELLs in general, but many students with special needs. However, testing accommodations may be appropriate for some students.

Testing accommodations are changes in the way a student is given a test or asked to respond to test questions. Testing accommodations are meant to offset challenges caused by a disability, without changing the test measures. Testing accommodations provide students with disabilities the same opportunity to improve and demonstrate their English language proficiency as students without disabilities. To maximize fairness and validity while maintaining the integrity of the ACCESS for ELLs test, WIDA has provided the following guidelines for considering appropriate accommodations for English Language Learners with disabilities.

The following guidelines are divided into each of the four domains of the test—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—with indications of whether a particular accommodation is appropriate for the domain (Yes), inappropriate and therefore not recommended (No), or Not Applicable (N/A) because the “accommodation” is already incorporated into the test design (e.g., responding orally on the Speaking Test) or is irrelevant for the domain (e.g., use of a scribe for the Speaking Test which requires no writing).

Accommodation	Assessment Domains			
Test Directions	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
<i>Test “directions” refers to all text in the Test Administrator’s Script that is provided to explain logistics of the test, including all practice items. Directions include only what is scripted in the Test Administrator’s Script. For Speaking and Listening, the directions end just before the test administrator reads “Part A.”</i>				
Translation of directions into native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sign directions to students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Explanation of directions in English and/or native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Repeat directions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use directions that have been marked by teacher	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

Presentation Format	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
<i>“Test” refers to test items (including introductory text and graphic support), but not scripted test directions (defined above).</i>				
Translation of test into native language	No	No	No	No
Translation of test into sign language	No	No	No	No
Oral reading of test in English	No	No	Yes	No
Oral reading of test in native language	No	No	No	No
Use of bilingual dictionary	No	No	No	No
Use of highlighters ¹ (yellow only) by student in test booklet only; must not be used in answer area	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Use of marker to maintain place	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Large Print	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Low vision aids or magnification device	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audio amplification device or noise buffer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student reads questions or responses aloud to self	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Student reads questions or responses aloud and records with tape recorder	No	Yes	No	No

Setting Format	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
<i>Test may be administered...</i>				
By school personnel familiar to student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
By special education personnel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
By school personnel in non-school setting (e.g., home or hospital)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
In a separate room	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
In a small group	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With preferential seating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individually	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
In study carrel	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

¹ The use of yellow highlighters may be available to all students in some states. Please contact your state educational agency if you have any questions about the use of highlighters.

In space with special lighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
In space with special acoustics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With special furniture for student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With equipment or technology that the student uses for other tests and school work (e.g., pencils adapted in size or grip, slant board or wedge)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Timing/Scheduling	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
<i>Flexibility with timing of test is permitted for students who require extra time or have limited attention spans as documented on their IEPs.</i>				
More breaks as needed by student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Short-segment testing (refers to administration of very brief sections of the test at a time, such as three or four items related to a common theme)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extend testing time within same school day	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extend testing sessions over multiple days	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Response Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
<i>Certain devices or practices may be used to facilitate testing for students who have difficulty with bubbling or writing in the correct area of the test booklet.</i>				
Braille writers	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
Computer, word processor, or similar assistive device (spell check, grammar check, and dictionary/thesaurus must be turned off)	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
Tape recorders for recording student responses	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
Scribes: all student responses must be transcribed verbatim, including spelling, punctuation, and paragraph breaks	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Responses in native language	No	No	No	No
Answer orally, point to answer	Yes	Yes	No	N/A

Other Administration Considerations for All Students	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
<i>Certain practices can reduce testing anxiety for students. For example, test administrators may...</i>				
Provide verbal praise or tangible reinforcement to increase motivation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administer practice test or examples before the administration date of the assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Other Accommodations Not Recommended by the WIDA Consortium at this Time (See next page for more information)	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Braille edition of assessment	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Signing questions or answers	No	No	No	No

Additional Information about Braille

If an IEP team determines that it is in the best interest of a student to make the test available in Braille, the following guidelines are recommended to ensure the integrity of the assessment:

- The student must be Braille proficient so as not to confound English language proficiency with proficiency in Braille;
- Braille graphics must be included as this is a graphic dependent test;
- If the Braille graphics are also verbally described by the test administrator, such descriptions should be made in the student's native language so as not to confound with English language listening skills;
- The student's responses should be transcribed verbatim, including spelling, punctuation, and paragraph breaks, by a school staff member into a regular ACCESS for ELLs test booklet for scoring; and
- The writing assessment should be transcribed verbatim into the test book by a school staff member.

While not recommended for the majority of blind students, in the rare instance that it is an appropriate test accommodation, please contact MetriTech, Inc. at 1-800-747-4868.

Additional Information about Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Deaf and hard of hearing students, including those for whom American Sign Language (ASL) is their first or primary language, can generally participate in the reading and writing sections of the test with few or no accommodations necessary. Lip-reading with spoken responses for those students who possess these abilities may be possible for the listening and speaking parts of the test. IEP teams should make such determinations on a case-by-case basis. **Translating the listening and speaking prompts into sign language is equivalent to translating into another spoken language, such as Spanish or Arabic, and therefore is prohibited as it changes the construct and invalidates the test.**