

ACCESS for ELLs™ and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Overview and Planning Considerations

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This document is an overview and may be used as a starting point for district staff to become familiar with the ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs and to begin the planning process for administration.

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ACCESS for ELLs General Questions

1. What is the ACCESS for ELLs?

ACCESS for ELLs is an English language proficiency assessment designed to measure English Learners' social and academic language proficiency in English. It was administered for the first time in Minnesota in spring 2012.

2. Where can I find important ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs test administration dates?

Check the Minnesota page on the [WIDA site](http://www.wida.us) (<http://www.wida.us/membership/states/Minnesota.aspx>) for the most current information.

3. What test materials need to be ordered during the ordering window?

District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) will order the appropriate number of ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs test materials during the ordering window on the [Client Area](https://www.metritech.com/wida/login.aspx) (<https://www.metritech.com/wida/login.aspx>) of the MetriTech website. ACCESS for ELLs test materials are ordered by grade-level cluster and tier. Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is ordered by grade-level cluster only. EL staff should collaborate with DACs to ensure the appropriate assessments are selected for each student.

4. Who takes the ACCESS for ELLs?

All students who are LEP-identified in MARSS in Kindergarten through grade 12 including students who are also identified as special education students. LEP-identified students who have significant cognitive disabilities, for which ACCESS for ELLs is not an appropriate measure of the student's English language proficiency, even when the student is provided allowable and appropriate accommodations, may be considered for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. Please see the participation guidelines in the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs section of this document for more information.

5. What if a special education student's disability limits their participation in a certain component of the ACCESS for ELLs?

Special education students should participate in as many domains of ACCESS for ELLs as possible. For example, if the student is verbal and can respond, even minimally, to basic questions posed to him or her in English, he or she should participate in the speaking portion of the test. For all domains, the ACCESS for ELLs is stopped when the test administrator determines that the student has reached the limits of his or her language proficiency. If it is impossible to administer the test in a given domain due to the student's disability, the "Special Education Deferred" box for that domain should be filled on the answer document. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, please see the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs section of this document for more information.

6. How are the grade-level tests banded?

The ACCESS for ELLs is banded into five grade-level clusters:

- Kindergarten.
- Grades 1-2.
- Grades 3-5.

- Grades 6-8.
- Grades 9-12.

Within each grade-level cluster (except Kindergarten), ACCESS for ELLs consists of three forms: Tier A (beginning), Tier B (intermediate), and Tier C (advanced). This keeps the test shorter and more appropriately targets each student’s range of language skills.

Note that a student cannot score higher than a 4.0 on a Tier A test, and can score no higher than 5.0 on a Tier B test in the domains of Reading and Listening.

7. What are the components of the ACCESS for ELLs?

Kindergarten
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individually administered. • Not tiered; all students take the same test. • All domains (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing) are tested twice, once within the expository section and once within the narrative section. • Speaking and Listening are presented together, alternating between a listening task followed by a speaking task. • All sections are adaptive, meaning items are presented until the student reaches his/her performance "ceiling". • Scored locally by the Test Administrator (TA).
Grades 1-12 Listening, Reading, and Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and Reading sections consist of multiple-choice questions. • Writing section prompts the student for a constructed response. • WIDA recommends administering in groups of up to 22 students. • Separate test forms for each grade level cluster and tier; students from different clusters or tiers must be separated into different sessions. • Scored by WIDA's partner, MetriTech, not by the local Test Administrator (TA).
Grades 1-12 Speaking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individually-administered. • Not tiered; all students in the same grade level cluster take the same test. • Adaptive, meaning items are presented until the student reaches his/her performance "ceiling". • Scored locally by the Test Administrator (TA); each item must be scored before moving on to the next.

8. How should the ACCESS for ELLs be scheduled for kindergarten students?

The kindergarten assessment is thematically centered around two sections, each based on a particular type of text, either narrative or expository.

- Individually administered.
- Designed to take an average of 45 minutes per student.
- The narrative section should be administered first, then the expository.
- *If scheduling requires that a test administration be divided into two sessions, the break between administrations must occur between the administration of the narrative*

and expository sessions and last no more than two consecutive school days (e.g. Monday narrative, expository by Thursday).

9. How should the ACCESS for ELLs be scheduled for grades 1-12?

The Listening, Reading, and Writing sections of ACCESS for ELLs can be administered in a group. WIDA recommends a group administration of no more than 22 students. The Speaking section is individually administered. Although ACCESS for ELLs is not a timed assessment, WIDA recommends the following administration sessions:

- Listening and Reading can be scheduled together in one session lasting about 75 minutes.
- Writing should be scheduled in one session lasting about 75 minutes.
- Speaking takes approximately 15 minutes per student.
- Note: the sessions can be scheduled in any order and can be done on separate days, but a single test section cannot be split into separate sessions.

10. Who can administer the ACCESS for ELLs?

Test administrators for all components of ACCESS for ELLs (speaking, listening, reading and writing) must complete the online training modules on the WIDA website and be certified as a Test Administrator (TA) for the component they will be administering. In addition, test administrators for the Speaking component should also hold a current instructional license (teachers or administrators licensed in any area).

11. What is important to know about the required online training for ACCESS for ELLs Test Administrator (TA) certification?

The online training can be completed separately in one, two, or three different areas of ACCESS for ELLs test administration:

Training Module	Estimated Time to Complete
Group Test (Listening, Reading, and Writing)	40 minutes
Speaking Test	55 minutes
Kindergarten Test	30 minutes

The choice of which areas to train in should be determined by the responsibilities assigned for testing by the district or school assessment coordinator. Those who complete the online training, will be certified as a TA in all areas for which they have successfully completed a quiz with a score of 80% or higher. The Speaking and Kindergarten test modules and successful completion of the corresponding quizzes are required to be retaken every year. However, it is recommended that test administrators review all the training modules prior to administration.

The online training takes approximately two to four hours, depending on which areas must be completed. The online training may be completed in one sitting, or in as many sessions as necessary.

District Assessment Coordinators can monitor their district staff training certification results in the online course by clicking on "My Quizzes", followed by the "District View" tab. If you

are a District Assessment Coordinator and do not see this tab in the training course, please call the WIDA Help Desk at 1-866-276-7735 or email help@wida.us to request it.

Note that new TAs may also need additional time to become familiar with the testing materials and to practice.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs General Questions

12. What is Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an assessment developed to measure the English language proficiency of English learners in grades 1–12 who have significant cognitive disabilities. English learners eligible to take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) in MARSS and receive special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

13. For whom is the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs appropriate?

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is intended for ELs in grades 1-12 with significant cognitive disabilities severe enough to prevent meaningful participation in the ACCESS for ELLs assessment, even with accommodations. In Minnesota, the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs would be considered for English learners who have been identified as eligible to take the Title I alternate assessment—the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)—in mathematics, reading or science. The MTAS is not administered before grade 3, however, so decision makers may not have MTAS eligibility as a criterion to consider when selecting the appropriate English language proficiency assessment for a student.

14. In what ways does Alternate ACCESS for ELLs differ from ACCESS for ELLs?

Alternate ACCESS:

- Is not available for Kindergarten students.
- Does not address the language of social studies.
- Is not tiered (i.e. there are no tiered options).
- Results in English language proficiency levels of A1, A2, A3 (subsets of level 1), 1, 2, and up to 3 for writing.
- Has tasks based on alternate model performance indicators (AMPis).
- Is entirely administered individually.
- Is entirely scored by the Test Administrator.

15. Who should determine which assessment dual identified English Learners will take?

IEP team members and EL staff should collaborate to apply the criteria outlined in the [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration Manual](http://wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx) (<http://wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx>) and in this document when determining how an EL with a disability will participate in statewide English language proficiency testing. Participation decisions must be made annually.

What are the initial steps in the decision-making process to determine if the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is appropriate for a student?

- **Ensure that the student is identified as an English learner:** Students must be identified as LEP in MARSS in order to take an English language proficiency assessment.
- **Determine that the student has a significant cognitive disability:** Students who have been identified as eligible to take the MTAS in mathematics, reading or science meet this criterion. For students in grades where an MTAS is not administered, decision makers must answer the following questions affirmatively in order to establish that the student has a significant cognitive disability:
 - Does the student have cognitive functioning significantly below age expectations?
 - Does the student's disability have a significant impact on his or her ability to function in multiple environments, including home, school and community?
 - Does the student need explicit and intensive instruction and/or extensive supports in multiple settings to acquire, maintain and generalize academic and life skills in order to actively participate in school, work, home and community environments?
- **Consider whether the ACCESS for ELLs (the assessment taken by the majority of English learners) is appropriate for the student:** IEP team members and EL staff must first consider student participation in the ACCESS for ELLs, with or without accommodations, before considering student participation in the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. If it is determined that the ACCESS for ELLs is not an appropriate measure of the student's English language proficiency, even when the student is provided allowable and appropriate accommodations, decision makers should document:
 - The reasons why the ACCESS for ELLs is not an appropriate measure of the student's English language proficiency
 - The selection of the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs as the appropriate English language proficiency assessment for the student

16. What factors should not drive the consideration for participation?

- Disability category (for example, do not determine that all students with Autism Spectrum Disorder will take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs)
- Participation in a specialized curriculum or separate placement (for example, do not determine that all students receiving instruction in a resource room will take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs)
- Current level of English language proficiency
- The expectation that the student will receive a low score on the ACCESS for ELLs
- Language, social, cultural or economic differences
- A concern for accountability calculations

17. Who should administer the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

Test administrators for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs should be licensed personnel who have passed the certification for Alternate ACCESS for ELLs administration, annually. It is recommended that the TA has familiarity with the student taking the assessment.

18. How should Alternate ACCESS for ELLs be scheduled?

Unlike ACCESS for ELLs, the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is individually administered for all sections (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking) of the test. It is recommended that each test section be administered in a separate testing session. The different test sections can be administered on different days, with no minimum or maximum break between administrations, as long as the entire assessment is administered within the testing window. Each section of the test is estimated to take approximately 20 minutes.

Questions to Consider for ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration

All LEP-identified students in MARSS will need to take the ACCESS for ELLs or if more appropriate, the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. This means that the greater number of students there are to test, the more time, space, training, and personnel needs there will be. The questions below are meant to help districts consider important aspects of the ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs and plan for their administration.

19. How many students need to be assessed per tier in each grade level cluster, or with Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

- a) Kindergarten? (no Alternate ACCESS for ELLs option)
- b) Grades 1-2?
- c) Grades 3-4?
- d) Grades 5-8?
- e) Grades 9-12?

20. Who and how many staff will administer the ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs (and will require training)?

- a) English Learner teachers?
- b) General Education/Content teachers?
- c) Paraprofessionals? (for Listening, Reading, and Writing only - not Speaking component or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs)
- d) Other?

21. How will staff be trained?

- a) What will be covered in the training (logistics, online training, etc.)?
- b) Will ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs training be incorporated into the district test administration trainings for other assessments?
- c) Who will deliver the training?
- d) Where will the training(s) be held?
- e) When will the training(s) be held (during school, after school, live vs. online training)
- f) Which module of the ACCESS for ELLs online training will each Test Administrator need to be certified for?
- g) Which Test Administrators will need to be certified with the online training for Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

22. Where will ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs be administered?

- a) During which class period for group or individual administration?
- b) In which space for group or individual administration?

23. Considering the number of students needing to be assessed and the requirements of each grade and component, on which dates will the test administration occur during the testing window?

- a) Kindergarten?
- b) Grades 1-12?
- c) Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?
- d) Make-up dates?

24. How will information about the ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs be communicated to all stakeholders?

- a) Principals and administrators?
- b) ESL and General Education/Content teachers, paraprofessionals?
- c) Special Education staff? (for Alternate ACCESS for ELLs)
- d) Parents?
- e) Students?

WIDA Resources

Below are resources available on the WIDA website. It is not a complete list of available resources but does highlight some important ones. It is recommended that district staff review these resources in preparation for administration of the ACCESS for ELLs. Once on the page, see the **DOWNLOADS & PRODUCTS** on the right as well as the text available on each tab. Some materials are secure documents and will require the WIDA district login and password to access.

25. [ACCESS for ELLs](http://www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS/#about) (<http://www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS/#about>)

- Training Toolkit PowerPoints.
- Sample Items.
- ACCESS for ELLs Guidelines for Accommodating English Language Learners with Disabilities.
- District & School (Grades 1-12) Test Administration Manual.
- Kindergarten Test Administration Manual.
- *Test Session Master Schedule*: District or school assessment coordinators may find it helpful to use this to list all test sessions scheduled for that school. Remember that tests can only be administered to students in the same grade level cluster and tier in each session.
- *Test Session Roster*: This document contains a blank roster to assign students to each test session.
- Tier Placement Tutorial and Protocol.

- General Instructions on Creating Training Accounts (for District Assessment Coordinators).
26. [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs](http://www.wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx) (<http://www.wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx>)
- Alternate ACCESS Test Administration Manual
 - Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Participation Guidelines [use in conjunction with [Procedures Manual for Minnesota Assessments](http://www.mnstateassessments.org/genResources.html) (<http://www.mnstateassessments.org/genResources.html>)]
 - Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Sample Items
 - WIDA Alternate Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) Draft

ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Contacts

Organization	Name	Email	Phone	Links
Minnesota Department of Education	Cheryl Alcaya English Learner Assessment Supervisor	mde.testing@state.mn.us	(651) 582-8419	Minnesota Department of Education Statewide Testing
	Tracy Cerda English Learner Assessment Project Manager		(651) 582-8692	
	Leigh Schleicher English Learner Education Supervisor; State Title III Director	leigh.schleicher@state.mn.us	(651) 582-8326	Minnesota Department of Education English Learner Education
	Anh Tran English Learner Education Specialist	anh.tran@state.mn.us	(651) 582-8508	
	Ruslana Westerlund English Learner Education Specialist	ruslana.westerlund@state.mn.us	(651) 582-8574	
WIDA Consortium	WIDA Help	help@wida.us	Toll Free 1-866-276-7735	www.wida.us
MetriTech	MetriTech	wida@metritech.com	1-800-747-4868 (ask for WIDA Support)	www.metritech.com