Minnesota Department of
Education

Questions and Answers about the ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

What are the ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

The ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are English language proficiency assessments used to meet federal and state legislative requirements. These assessments are used to monitor English learners' progress as they develop academic language skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Why do we give these tests?

ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores provide valuable information about English language development to families and schools. Families can use proficiency level scores and descriptions to understand the progress their child is making and to engage with schools to support their child's learning.

Teachers and schools can use the scores to monitor student progress in acquiring English, plan instruction, and evaluate their language development programs. Schools also use these scores to determine if a student is ready to exit an English language program.

School- and district-level test results are used in federal and state accountability measurements.

Who must take these tests?

All English learners in grades K–12 in public schools are required to participate annually in an English language proficiency assessment. With very few exceptions, all English learners take the ACCESS for ELLs.

Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan may be eligible for accommodations. Paper accommodations include large print and braille test booklets.

Some students with significant cognitive disabilities may be eligible to take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs instead of the ACCESS for ELLs. *See the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Participation Guidelines*. (Go to Districts, Schools and Educators > Statewide Testing > Minnesota Tests.)

How are tests administered?

Most students take the ACCESS for ELLs on computer, but there are exceptions depending upon grade and domain (reading, writing, listening, or speaking).

Teachers work one-on-one with students to administer the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs using paper materials.

How can students prepare for the tests?

Students do not need to study for the ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. Teachers will provide an opportunity for students to practice taking the test using sample test questions so students are familiar with what they need to do on the day of testing.

What does it take to pass the tests?

Students do not pass or fail the ACCESS for ELLs or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. Since the tests measure an English learner's ability to understand and produce English language, each student receives a language proficiency score from 1–6.

What skills are assessed by the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?

The ACCESS for ELLs measures English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking based on the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards. View the WIDA English Language Development Standards (Go to WIDA > Standards & Instruction > English Language Development (ELD) Standards).

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs measures reading, writing, listening and speaking skills based on Alternate Model Performance Indicators (AMPIs). View the AMPIs (Go to WIDA > Assessment > Alternate ACCESS for ELLs).

How can I see the ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs results for my child, school, and district?

Your school will receive an individual student report for your child and will provide this information to you. This report shows your child's performance on the assessment and includes scores for each language domain as well as composite scores.

School and district results are available in the Minnesota Report Card section of the Data Center on the MDE website. Go to the Minnesota Report Card section of the MDE website. (Go to Data Center > Minnesota Report Card.)

For more information, contact:

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