

UPDATE: ACCESS for ELLs 2021

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📎 1 attachments (160 KB)

2021 ACCESS Planning Document (12.4.2020).pdf;

This is an important update regarding annual English language proficiency testing with the ACCESS for ELLs. You are receiving this e-mail because your district has identified you in PIMS as a point of contact for the language instruction educational program (LIEP) in your district. If you are not the appropriate person to receive this information, please forward this to the appropriate person and contact your PIMS administrator to correct the point of contact in PIMS.

Dear Colleagues,

The Department has been working hard to support districts in both honoring their federal obligation to annually assess ELs with the ACCESS for ELLs and planning to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. After careful consideration of the evolving situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, PDE has elected to extend the testing window once more to provide the maximum flexibility for districts to administer the ACCESS safely and to as many students as possible. **The new testing deadline is April 23rd**, which represents an additional four weeks beyond the previously established deadline of March 19th. All testing must be complete by April 23rd and all testing materials must be returned to DRC no later than April 30th. All testing dates will be updated on the [Pennsylvania state WIDA page](#).

As reminders:

- The ACCESS for ELLs may only be administered in-person. There is no remote administration option, and districts should not attempt to administer the test remotely.
- Districts must determine locally how/if students who are currently being educated virtually can be safely brought into a school building for testing.
- If the district has made the determination locally that its school buildings will remain closed for all students for health and safety reasons, then it is inappropriate to make an exception for ELs.
- Districts should not establish one set of criteria for bringing EL students into their buildings for testing and a different set of criteria for all other students. For example, if your district allows up to 10 students into a class at one time for instructional purposes or testing, then it could bring in up to 10 ELs for ACCESS testing. If it does not allow students into buildings for PSSA/Keystone testing, then it should not require ELs to attend for ACCESS testing.
- Districts should adequately explain to parents, in a language and mode of communication they can understand, the importance of their child(ren) taking the ACCESS, as it is the federally required annual measure of a student's English proficiency and is used to determine appropriate educational placement and ELD support services for the student.
- PDE understands that some parents may not allow their children to attend school in-person for testing even if the schools are open to students. If this is the case, code the test with a DO NOT SCORE code of DEC (declined).
- Parents and/or students may NOT be punished, disciplined, penalized, reported, or otherwise sanctioned for refusing to participate in testing due to health and safety concerns.
- For students who the district cannot contact, but who are not present for testing when and if it is scheduled, code tests with a DO NOT SCORE code of ABS (absent).
- For students who cannot come into school buildings because the buildings are closed, code the tests with a DO NOT SCORE code of ABS (absent).
- Districts that are completely virtual during the start of the testing window should have a plan to begin testing if their schools open before the close of the window.
- Districts should not return testing materials until shortly before the end of the window unless it is verifiably certain that their schools will not open for in-person learning before April 23rd.

- If schools open late in the testing window but not in time to test all students, districts should simply test as many students as possible before the close of the window. The Department will not be able to grant extensions beyond April 23rd.
- If the district remains completely virtual for the entirety of the testing window and is therefore unable to administer the ACCESS test to any students, then the tests should be coded with a DO NOT SCORE code of ABS (absent) and all materials returned to DRC between April 23rd and April 30th.
- Districts must have a plan to ensure the security of test materials at all times during testing, including contingencies for ad hoc school closings during the testing window.
- If a district did not order materials during the materials ordering window in November, then it must do so manually through the WIDA AMS. See the [WIDA Assessment Management System \(WIDA AMS\) User Guide](#) for more information about placing additional test materials orders.
- Districts may use the paper tests for students if that is a necessary accommodation due to local technology challenges.

Please review the attached planning document that may help in preparing for ACCESS testing. It presents a series of process questions that you should consider. It is meant as an aid and is therefore not exhaustive.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to any member of the EL program area team at the Department if you have questions or concerns.

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Thank you for your hard work and dedication to ensuring Pennsylvania's English learners and their families are safe and supported.

Best,

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