



## Considerations for ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration in 2021 Including Special Considerations for Assessing Remote Learners

**ACCESS testing should be conducted when and if state and local health guidelines, as well as district policies and practices for COVID-19 allow students and staff to be in school buildings. All processes must follow health orders for gathering safely.**

### Purpose of the ACCESS for ELLs Assessment

ACCESS for ELLs is a secure large-scale English language proficiency assessment given to Kindergarteners through 12th graders who are English learners (ELs) (NEP or LEP). As required by both state (C.R.S. § 22-24-105) and federal (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)2(G)) laws, ACCESS is administered annually to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. Assessment results are used to identify the types of language supports and services that should be provided to students to help them succeed in the classroom. It provides English language proficiency data to inform redesignation, to contribute to growth determinations, and to inform instruction.

Current communication from the US Department of Education (USDoe) indicates that they are not inclined to approve assessment waivers for spring 2021. The Colorado Department of Education continues to monitor both the status of COVID-19 and any policy changes communicated by USDoe.

### Extended Test Window

To provide additional flexibility for Colorado districts and schools as they continue to prepare for this year's ACCESS for ELLs test administration, CDE extended the ACCESS for ELLs testing window for spring 2021. The ACCESS for ELLs testing window is currently expected to open on January 11, 2021, and close on Friday, March 12, 2021. Some districts may need to start later than January 11 due to local health conditions. Recognizing the unique challenges to this year's administration as schools continue to implement district policies and local health guidelines that may reduce the number of available test days for cohorts of students who may be on alternating day in person schedules, restrict group sizes within test sessions, limit the availability of test administrators, and increase the time needed between test sessions to ensure sanitization of test materials, this extension means that the five-week window will now be a nine-week window. Due to these and other factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic, districts are strongly encouraged to start

### Purpose of this document

This document is a guide to help districts plan for safely administering the 2021 WIDA ACCESS for ELLs assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Use this information in addition to WIDA's Test Coordinator Manual, Test Administration Manual, Assessment Best Practices during COVID-19 documents, and Colorado created training resources to help draft a plan for this year's test administration. ***This document does not provide medical advice and does not replace or amend any guidance provided by your local health department or district.***

### In-Person Testing:

After consultation with WIDA members, including Colorado, their technical advisory committee, and test partners Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), WIDA decided **to not offer remote ACCESS testing**. In addition to health and safety concerns, factors considered included challenges to standardized assessment procedures, demand placed on families of test-takers, logistical workload placed on districts to distribute and collect testing materials, risks to item security, operational delivery, and costly change management procedures. The final determination was that remote ACCESS administration on a large scale under COVID-19 conditions would not yield valid and reliable results.



testing as early as health conditions allow and not wait until the end of the window. The additional materials order window is scheduled to close on March 5, 2021. The materials return deadline is now March 17, 2021; however, given the many variables and unknowns, CDE continues to encourage schools to return completed paper materials as soon as possible, particularly in grades K-3. Revised dates for the Student Biographical Data (SBD) validation window and receipt of results will be determined and announced when they become available. ***Additional adjustments may be announced as the department continues to monitor the effect of the current public health situation on districts and schools.***

## Test Administrators

Districts should identify ACCESS test administrator before the test window begins. Increasing the number of people trained to administer ACCESS may help with flexible scheduling needs.

## Communicating Test Information to Families

The ACCESS administration communication plan should address helping families understand the purpose of the test, testing expectations, locations, dates, and times. This plan may need to be augmented for students who are receiving instruction remotely due to COVID-19.

- ***Students and staff will not be asked to come into the building to test if it conflicts with state and local health orders.***
- ***Families should be reassured that their health needs will be respected. This may include a student not testing due to student or family health concerns.***
- The communication method should provide families with meaningful access to the information. This may include the use of multiple communication methods (phone, text, email, parent portal, website, etc.) and the use of the student's home language in conjunction with English.
- The communication plan should include response methods families can use to connect with district/school staff.
- Documentation of communications and other efforts to provide ACCESS testing opportunities to all English learners is recommended.

## Scheduling

ACCESS 2021 testing schedules may differ from previous years to address COVID-19 conditions. Testing should be coordinated through the district assessment coordinator and the assessment must be given at a district-approved testing site. Security of testing materials must be maintained with a documented chain of custody. Be sure to implement district policies and practices as well as state and local health guidelines when working with cohorts of students, determining group sizes within test sessions, and limited availability of test administrators. As always, be sure all students can hear the test administrator and any recorded audio played during testing.

- Test schedules should include considerations for make-up testing and contingencies in case of building closures.
- When identifying testing rooms, consider the number of students who can be tested safely at the same time.
  - The speaking domain requires additional space between testers so that each student's responses do not interfere with other testers.



- Reference the Test Administrator Manual for information on which grades and domains can be tested together.
- When creating a testing schedule, determine whether students will complete one domain a day or more than one.
  - If completing more than one domain in a day, determine how breaks will be scheduled and whether a snack will be provided during the break.
- If scheduling a group of students for the same test session, establish contingencies for how to test late arriving students.
- Schedule time between test sessions to allow for sanitizing materials, equipment, and other touched surfaces.

## Health and Safety

***When planning for assessment administration, the health and safety of both students and staff should be the first priority.***

When possible, avoid having test administrators share materials. Manuals as well as the Grades 4–12 Online Test Administrator Script are available in the WIDA Secure Portal and can be printed as needed throughout the testing window. Test materials available in the WIDA Secure Portal include:

- Test Administrator Manual
- District and School Test Coordinator Manual
- Grades 4–12 Online Test Administrator Script

Some physical materials (Test Administrator Scripts, Speaking Test Booklets, and Alternate ACCESS Test Booklets) can be disassembled and put into sheet protectors or clear plastic bags that can be wiped down after each administration. Materials with security barcodes that were disassembled should be taken out of protection and the pages clipped together before returning them.

DO NOT MODIFY ANY STUDENT TEST BOOKLET THAT WILL BE RETURNED FOR SCORING.

### ***Safety Precautions***

State and local health guidelines and district practices must be followed throughout the administration of ACCESS including, but not limited to:

- Students and staff will not be asked to come into the building to test if it conflicts with state and local health orders.
- Staff and students with COVID-19 symptoms should remain home.
- When setting up a testing room, allow for as much space between students as possible (current CDPHE guidelines recommend spacing of 6 feet or more for students in grades 6-12).
- If possible, set up a clear divider between the student and the test administrator.
- Consider using fans in combination with opening doors and windows to increase ventilation. When implementing this, be mindful of possible interference with the students' ability to hear instructions and test security considerations.



- Use a projector to display test booklet pages and other materials that students do not need to touch. When implementing this, be mindful of possible interference with the students' ability to see the test content and test security considerations.
- Wash hands before and after each test administration.
- Have students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer as they enter and exit the testing room.

Test administrators and students must follow state and local mask requirements. Additional protective measures may be followed, such as wearing gloves and conducting temperature checks.

## Kindergarten Materials

The activity board can be wiped down as needed. Other kindergarten materials, such as the cards used for kindergarten tests and activity pages in the back of the storybook, can be laminated, placed in clear plastic bags, or wrapped in plastic wrap. Allowing for materials to be wiped down or get a new plastic covering.

Other ideas around Kindergarten ACCESS (and Alternate ACCESS as applicable) testing:

- Allow Kindergarten students to point with the eraser end of their pencil to indicate answers instead of using their hands.
- Have students bring their own pencils for testing or provide pencils that students can keep.
- Minimize close interaction by placing all testing materials on students' desks before they arrive. Have students leave materials on their desks when they finish testing.
- Avoid sharing materials in situations where a test administrator or a student can turn pages in a booklet and allow the student to do so independently. Alternatively, particularly with young students, keep the booklet with the test administrator and do not have the student assist with page-turning. If the test administrator must write in a student test booklet, for example, to transcribe a student response during a kindergarten, use scratch paper instead during test administration. After testing, update the booklet and securely destroy the scratch paper.
- Set up a clear divider between the student and the test administrator.

## Technology

If testing at new or multiple testing sites, connect with district technology staff to ensure testing is within the required technology systems.

If students test on shared devices, follow safety and sanitizing procedures. Connect with IT staff about the best way to sanitize devices; do not assume all electronics can be sanitized in the same way as other surfaces.

## Considerations for Students who are Receiving Instruction Remotely (Remote Learners)

According to state (C.R.S. § 22-24-105) and federal (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)2(G)) laws, local education providers are responsible for providing the state-approved annual English language proficiency assessment to all of its English learners. *In a good faith effort, districts should be planning to meet these requirements, including for those students who are receiving instruction remotely, to the extent practicable and that state and local health and safety requirements and guidance can be met. Please keep in mind that family health needs and concerns should also be taken into consideration.*

Schools are currently following a variety of instructional models: in-person, hybrid, and/or remote, which may vary by the age of the students. Younger students, who comprise the majority of ACCESS testers, especially



those with special needs such as English learners, are more likely to be receiving some in-person or hybrid instruction. For these students, ACCESS testing may more resemble a typical year.

Older students are more likely to be receiving all of their instruction remotely. ACCESS testing for these students will require more consideration. If it is safe and consistent with state and local health guidelines to bring the students in on a smaller scale than a completely open school, consider doing so. Districts may already be doing this for local testing, in which case, those processes may be followed as applicable.

If the school or district is able to safely bring students in for ACCESS testing, test administrators might need special access to buildings. Ensure that test administrators know the arrangements. Coordinate as necessary with school and district administrative staff, district and school IT staff, building security staff, and janitorial service staff.

### ***Unique Scheduling Considerations for Remote Learners***

- Identify any unique considerations that may be made for remote learner scheduling, including those that may apply to neighborhood or home schools, grade level, family structure, or accommodation type (IEP extended-time, scribe, etc.).
- Test schedules may include considerations for make-up testing and contingencies in case of building closures.
- Identify district guidance or policies around special circumstances, including whether families will have an opportunity to select their testing times/locations and whether testing may be available outside of regular school hours. Note: Test administration practices as specified in the test administration manual still need to be followed.
- Determine where students who arrive at testing locations early will wait. Also consider what directions will be provided to parents/guardians who want to wait on-site for their students.

### **Transportation**

For remote learners coming to a district location for ACCESS testing, districts will need to decide whether the district will provide transportation for the student to and from the testing site or if transportation will be a parent/guardian responsibility.

- If the district provides transportation for the student to and from the building, identify who needs to be contacted and how the transportation will be arranged.
- If parents/guardians bring a student to the testing site and they want to wait on-site while the student tests, consider where they will wait safely.
- If parents/guardians bring their student to the testing site and do not want to wait on-site, determine the protocol that will be used to contact the parent when the student has completed testing.

### **Coding of Students who were Not Able to Test Due to COVID-19**

Despite good faith efforts, there will be some students, and perhaps entire schools, who are unable to participate in ACCESS this year due to COVID-19. Coding information for these students will be provided to District Assessment Coordinators in January.