



## Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs™)

### Frequently Asked Questions

Draft - April 2005

#### General Information

1. **What is the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ is a standards-based, criterion referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure English language learners' social and academic proficiency in English. It assesses social and instructional English as well as the language associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies within the school context across the four language domains.

2. **Who developed the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ was contracted and developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) ([www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org)) in Washington, DC in collaboration with the WIDA Consortium. Item writers and reviewers are professional educators of ELLs throughout the Consortium partner states who participate in on-line workshops.

3. **Who is printing, distributing, scoring and reporting the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

All materials will come from MetriTech, Inc. of Champaign, IL, ([www.metritech.com](http://www.metritech.com)) and should be returned as directed.

4. **When will the ACCESS for ELLs™ be operational?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ will be operational in spring, 2005 with Alabama, Maine and Vermont the first partner states to administer it as their statewide annual assessment of English language proficiency. The schedule for the implementation of the ACCESS for ELLs™ within the Consortium is as follows:

- Spring 2005: Alabama, Maine and Vermont
- Fall 2005: Illinois
- Spring 2006: Delaware, District of Columbia, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin

5. **Who will use the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

State Departments of Education in nine of the ten states in the WIDA Consortium have determined that the ACCESS for ELLs™ will be their statewide assessment instrument for the mandated annual assessment of English language proficiency. All identified English language learners in these states will participate in this testing program.

6. **Is the ACCESS for ELLs™ available for use in private schools?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ is currently available for private schools within WIDA

Consortium member states. Private schools that agree to abide by confidentiality policies and security may order booklets directly from MetriTech (800-747-4868) and contact the Consortium regarding payment.

**7. Can non-WIDA members use the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ is currently scheduled for administration only in Consortium member states. However, the Consortium will consider making it available on a case-by-case basis. For more information, contact WIDA Project Director, Tim Boals at [timothy.boals@dpi.state.wi.us](mailto:timothy.boals@dpi.state.wi.us).

**Cost**

**8. How much will the ACCESS for ELLs™ cost?**

At present, the ACCESS for ELLs™ costs \$20 per student for Consortium member states.

**9. Who pays for the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

Currently, most Consortium states have determined that the ACCESS for ELLs™ will be purchased at the state level, primarily using federal Title III and/or Title VI money; however, a few states have determined that local districts will fund the assessment. This stipulation applies to public schools; private schools may purchase the ACCESS for ELLs™ directly from the WIDA Consortium.

**10. What does the cost of the ACCESS for ELLs™ include?**

The cost of the ACCESS for ELLs™ includes:

- printing, distributing, scoring, and reporting of the secure test;
- password to a non-secure screener test for use in initial identification and placement of English language learners;
- ongoing test maintenance, including the annual refreshment of items;
- availability to professional development opportunities, especially those related to the WIDA English language proficiency standards and the ACCESS for ELLs™
- on-line workshops that lead to certification for administration
- validation and related research

**Security and Accountability**

**11. Does the ACCESS for ELLs™ comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?**

Most definitely, for a number of reasons: ACCESS for ELLs™

- is anchored in state academic content standards and common English proficiency standards used within the WIDA states
- measures progress in attaining academic and school related English across grade level clusters and English proficiency levels up to and including full English proficiency.

- assesses each language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) separately to generate individual subscale and composite scores (including comprehension)
- meets rigorous psychometric standards for test reliability and validity for ELLs in grades K-12
- provides relevant data for local and state accountability purposes in addition to information for classroom, bilingual, and English as a second language teachers and administrators.

## **12. Why is the ACCESS for ELLs™ a secure test?**

The requirements of federal legislation, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, make it imperative that English language proficiency assessments be secure and confidentiality is maintained. Since scores on these assessments are now being used for accountability purposes, test security is absolutely necessary.

## **13. What does it mean to be “a secure test”?**

With a secure test, districts, schools, and individual test administrators must be trained in its administration and have agreed to maintain the security of test questions. Tests arrive at districts or schools, are kept under lock- and-key, and are administered following standard procedures. Tests are promptly boxed and returned to the vendor for scoring and reporting to arrive no later than the due date. No photocopies of any materials are to be made and all copies are to be returned to the vendor, Metritech, Inc.

## **Features**

### **14. What does the ACCESS for ELLs™ look like?**

There are

- Student booklets with black and white graphics
  - i. Listening, reading and writing in a single, consumable booklet where students directly respond rather than on a separate answer sheet
  - ii. A reusable prop-up book for speaking; the test administrator records students’ responses on a score sheet in the back of the student booklet
- Test administration manuals
- Coordinator manuals
- Five grade level clusters: Kindergarten, grades 1-2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12 and
- Three distinctive, yet overlapping, tiers per grade level cluster except kindergarten, which is a single form. There is a total of 13 separate booklets

### **15. How is the ACCESS for ELLs™ different from previous English language proficiency assessments, such as IPT, LAS, MAC II, LPTS, and Woodcock-Muñoz?**

The ACCESS for ELLs™ is a criterion-referenced test anchored in and representative of the WIDA English language proficiency standards. The test targets *academic*

language proficiency rather than general social English, the focus of most English language proficiency tests. In addition, items are grouped around themes rather than presented in isolation.

Unlike some of the other ELP instruments, the ACCESS for ELLs™ is aligned both vertically and horizontally; a score on one tier means the same as that on the adjacent tier and a score for one grade level cluster means the same as any other grade level cluster. This feature is critical as these assessments must document ELLs' English growth from year to year and allow schools to accurately measure the progress and attainment of proficiency of their ELLs. The prior generation of assessments, in large part, was not designed to provide this continuity.

**16. Is the ACCESS for ELLs™ aligned to standards?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ is directly aligned to the *WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners in Kindergarten through Grade 12* (2004). From the standards, test specifications were produced which provided the blueprint for test construction.

**17. What accommodations can be made for students with special needs?**

An Accommodations Committee, with representation across the WIDA member states, made suggestions in regards to the types of acceptable accommodations for ELLs with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) taking our English language proficiency test. This information is published in the Administration Manual and is also available on the WIDA website, [www.wida.us](http://www.wida.us).

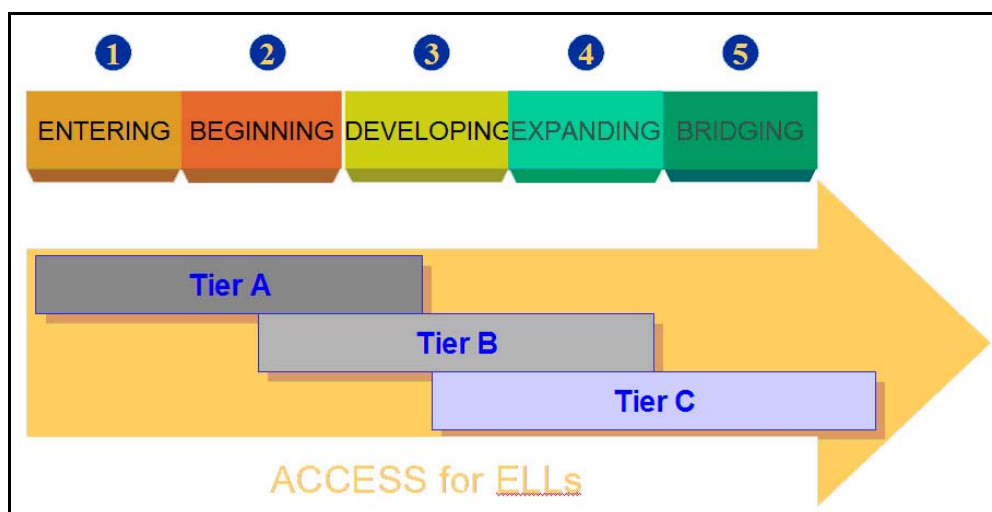
### **Use of Tiers**

**18. Why is ACCESS for ELLs™ a tiered test?**

The goal of the ACCESS for ELLs™ test is to determine English language learners' level of English language proficiency and, at the same time, provide useful feedback to stakeholders. However, there are far too many model performance indicators in the English language proficiency standards to fit into a reasonable testing session. For any particular student, some of the questions on a comprehensive test might be dismissively easy, making it boring, while others would be exactly hard, making it frustrating. It is important to avoid both possibilities in order to produce a valid test.

**19. What are the ACCESS for ELLs™ tiers?**

ACCESS for ELLs™ has three tiers—A, B and C—for each grade level cluster, with the exception of kindergarten. Tier A contain items for proficiency levels 1-3, but targets the lowest levels, 1 and 2. Tier B covers proficiency levels 2-4, focusing especially on 3 and low 4, and Tier C has items from proficiency level 3 to beyond 5, particularly focusing on the uppermost proficiency levels. (See the chart below.)



**20. How does one determine tier placement?**

The *Criteria for Tier Placement for ACCESS for ELLs™* is a guide to assist teachers in assigning students into their appropriate tier for ordering test materials. (See the attached sheet.)

**21. What if students are placed in the wrong tier?**

It is conceivable that a student may be placed in the wrong tier. If discovered prior to test administration, the more appropriate booklet should be used (MetriTech provides extra booklets to all districts). The most common mistake is underestimating a student’s capabilities and placing him or her in Tier A rather than B or C. When this happens, the student can “top out” on the test, by getting most or all items correct, making it difficult to determine the student’s true language proficiency level. **When in doubt, because a student seems to be on the border of Tier A and B or Tier B and C, place the student up; that is, choose the higher tier.**

**22. How can we avoid placing students in the wrong tier?**

This situation can be avoided by using multiple measures, including teacher input, when determining tier placement and by following the *Criteria for Tier Placement for ACCESS for ELLs™*. As of July 2005, the screener will be available as an additional tool to assist in teachers in making tier determination.

**Training for Administration**

**23. How will training for ACCESS for ELLs™ be conducted?**

WIDA sponsored administrator training for ACCESS for ELLs™ is through an online course developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics and hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh’s Desire2Learn (D2L) web-based learning platform. In addition, most WIDA states have or will also offer face-to-face train-of-trainers workshops for district administrators and coordinators. For more information about registering for online training or to find out about additional opportunities in a specific WIDA member

state, contact your state’s educational agency.

**24. When will training for the ACCESS for ELLs™ take place?**

Online training for test administrators in a given state will be available at least one month prior to the opening of its test window.

**25. How long does the test administrator training take?**

The test administrator training is in three parts:

- Test coordination and administration of the group administered sections (listening, reading and writing)—1.5-2 hours
- Speaking test administration—approximately 2 hours
- Kindergarten—approximately 20 minutes

**26. Do all test administrators need to take the online training?**

Yes. Everyone who will administer the test must do the sections of the online course and take the corresponding quizzes that pertain to the sections for the test that they will be administering. For example, if Mr. Brown will only be administering the group portions of the test, he need only take Part I (test coordination and group administered sections) of the training. If his colleague, Ms. Cho, will be administering the speaking as well, she will need to do Parts I and II (speaking).

**27. Can I do the online training course more than once?**

Yes. Once you have been registered for the online course and receive a password, you can take all or part of it as many times as you like. Many test administrators might find it particularly helpful to listen to the speaking samples multiple times prior to administering the test themselves.

**28. Do all test administrators need to take all three parts of the online training?**

Test administrators need to take only those parts of the training that are relevant for them. It is highly recommended that all test administrators take Part I.

**Test Administration**

**29. What is the administration time of the ACCESS for ELLs™?**

Language Domain	Approximate Time	Administration
Listening	25 minutes	group administered
Speaking	up to 15 minutes	individually administered
Reading	35 minutes	group administered
Writing	60 minutes	group administered

It is not a timed test; these times are approximate and vary slightly by grade level

cluster, tier, and levels of English language proficiency. A tier A first grader, for example, may finish the writing section of the test within 20 minutes whereas an eleventh grade student taking the tier C test would probably need 60 minutes to complete the writing section.

**30. Does the test need to be administered in one sitting? Does each section (language domain) need to be administered in one sitting?**

No, although the test should not be administered in one sitting, it is advisable to maintain the integrity of each section. Ideally, as listening and reading are combined in a test booklet, these two sections should be administered together. Writing, also contained in the booklet should be kept secure; to the extent feasible, this section should also be administered in one sitting. Finally, speaking, as it is an individual section, needs a separate time slot.

**31. Within a grade level cluster, can the tiers be combined for the group administered parts of the test?**

No, not at this time. This is especially true for the listening section of the test. The script for the listening section is read aloud by the test administrator; each tier has a different script; therefore, students taking different tiers could not be in a room together. Furthermore, in all language domains (sections), each tier has its own administration directions and, in many cases, the practice items that the group reviews together are not the same across tiers. WIDA strongly recommends that students taking differing tiers not be combined for administration.

**32. Will previous editions of the ACCESS for ELLs™ be released?**

The WIDA Consortium plans to make some items that are no longer in use available for teacher reference and student practice. There are currently no plans to release complete editions of tests.

**33. How do we know the ACCESS for ELLs™ is reliable and valid?**

The ACCESS for ELLs™ has been built from a theoretical base and WIDA's English language proficiency standards, a common ground for curriculum, instruction, and assessment (construct, content, and consequential validity). It has been piloted and field tested on over 10,000 students, including diverse ELLs and proficient English speakers, across the WIDA Consortium states. Initial analyses have yielded high levels of internal reliability. In addition, in order for a teacher to be certified for test administration, high inter-rater reliability is required as part of the on-line training for the speaking section.

## **Scoring**

**34. How do ACCESS for ELLs™ scores compare with those from other ELP tests?**

In spring 2005, the WIDA Consortium is conducting bridge studies to determine comparability between ACCESS for ELLs™ and four commonly used English Language Proficiency instruments (IPT, MAC II, LPTS, and LAS). A technical report on this study is tentatively scheduled for release in August 2005.

**35. How will the ACCESS for ELLs™ be scored?**

Sections of the ACCESS for ELLs™ will be scored in one of three ways.

- Speaking: The speaking section will be scored by the test administrator as the student responds. The scores for each item will be recorded on the back inside cover of the students' test booklet and returned to MetriTech to compute overall speaking scores.
- Reading and Listening: The items for these two sections are all selected response (multiple-choice). They will be machine scored by MetriTech.
- Writing: This section contains constructed response items where students respond by writing directly on the page. These items will be scored by trained raters at MetriTech.

**36. How will ACCESS for ELLs™ scores be reported?**

Students who take ACCESS for ELLs™ will receive both a scale score and a proficiency level designation in six areas: each of the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), a comprehension score (combined listening and reading), and a composite score (comprised of 15% speaking, 15% listening, 35% reading and 35% writing). There will be state, district, school, and student reports available. At the present time, we are exploring the number of languages, in addition to English, that the reports will be available in.

**Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State  
for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs™)**

**Criteria for Tier Placement for the English Language Proficiency Test**

ACCESS for ELLs™ uses Tiers (A, B, or C) to maximize accuracy and validity of the results. For placement into the appropriate Tier, English language learners must meet at least **ONE** of the criteria listed for the Tier.

English Language Proficiency Levels					
Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Attained
<b>ACCESS for ELLs™: TIER A</b>					
			<b>ACCESS for ELLs™: TIER B</b>		
			<b>ACCESS for ELLs™: TIER C</b>		
<p><b>TIER A</b> is most appropriate for English language learners who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>have arrived in the U.S. or entered school in the U.S. within this academic school year without previous instruction in English, <b>OR</b></i></li> <li>• <i>currently receive literacy instruction <b>ONLY</b> in their native language, <b>OR</b></i></li> <li>• <i>have recently tested at the lowest level of English language proficiency.</i></li> </ul>					
		<p><b>TIER B</b> is most appropriate for English language learners who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>have social language proficiency and some, but not extensive, academic language proficiency in English, <b>OR</b></i></li> <li>• <i>have acquired some literacy in English, though have not yet reached grade level literacy.</i></li> </ul>			
		<p><b>TIER C</b> is most appropriate for English language learners who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>are approaching grade level in literacy and academic language proficiency in the core content areas, <b>OR</b></i></li> <li>• <i>will likely meet the state's exit criteria for support services by the end of the academic year.</i></li> </ul>			