

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: September 4, 2013  
To: WIDA Consortium SEAs  
From: Carsten Wilmes, Director of Assessment  
Re: 2013-2014 ACCESS for ELLs 302 Reading Test Timing Update

After the administration of the 2012-13 ACCESS for ELLs 301 assessment, concerns were raised about the length of time provided for the Reading test (35 minutes with an additional 5 minutes for a total time of 40 minutes). Historically, ACCESS for ELLs has always been referred to as an untimed test. Initial concerns about timing were raised in 2009, specifically regarding the Writing test. After much discussion and analysis about the construct of Writing and how it is scored, we determined that Writing would be changed to a timed test; due to the fact that students are not scored on the quantity of their writing. We have found that there is little advantage to students spending much more than the hour suggested to complete the test nor does more time lead to higher test scores.

The reading test was intended to remain untimed because we felt that the construct of reading requires a slightly different skill set; for which providing students with as much time as needed would work to their benefit. However, during the process of updating the test administration materials with the new Writing timing guidelines, the Reading timing guidelines were also clarified to provide more specific test administration times. This was done in an effort to assist test administrators with scheduling and to standardize test administration for the reading test.

While we still strongly feel that students should be provided with as much time as they need to complete the reading test, we are also mindful of the student testing experience. Providing adequate time for students who are working productively on the test is important; however, situations where students are provided one to two hours for the Reading test session, even though he/she may no longer be responding productively to the test items should be avoided. This has been an ongoing discussion that we continuously try to clarify.

To address the concerns received from the field, for this year, we intend to extend the extra time provided in the Reading test from five minutes to ten minutes. This year we will update the test directions to the following:

*The Reading Test is designed to take no more than 35-45 minutes. In rare situations, test administrators may use their professional judgment in determining whether a student(s) needs additional time to complete the test. Test administrators may consider the following when determining how much extra time to provide:*

- *Are student working productively?*
- *Will extending the testing session over the recommended 45 minutes benefit students?*
- *Is the amount of extra time reasonable?*

*Note that the test administration time does not include time for convening students, taking attendance, distributing and collecting test materials, explaining test directions, or completing practice items.*

Please note that that this change does not affect students with IEPs/504 Plans who require an extended time accommodation.

Thank you for your time and please contact Carsten Wilmes if you have any questions.