

Guidelines for the Use of Accommodations, Accessibility Features, and Allowable Test Administration Procedures on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0[®] Assessment

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Overview

This document provides information to guide the participation of English Language Learners (ELLs), with and without disabilities, in the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 (the “Access 2.0”) English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment. The ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment allows educators, students, and families to monitor students’ progress in acquiring academic English across the four language domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The recommended accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable test procedures described in these guidelines are intended to provide ELLs the tools and supports they need in order to participate fairly and equitably in the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment.

This document includes information on:

- the eligibility of ELLs to receive accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable testing procedures on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment; and
- decision-making strategies to allow schools and districts to meet the accessibility needs of ELLs through the use of accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable testing procedures before and during ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 administration.

Participation by ELLs in the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Test

State and federal laws require that all ELLs participate in annual ELP assessments¹. These annual tests are designed to measure ELL students’ proficiency and progress in learning English in the four domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. No students identified as ELLs may be exempted from these tests, including students with disabilities. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)² requires that states provide appropriate accommodations where needed, in accordance with students’ Individualized Education Program (IEP). A student who has a 504 plan is also eligible to receive accommodations, and in rare cases, a student who does not have an IEP or 504 plan may be permitted accommodations, due to, for example a recently occurring illness or disability, such as a fractured arm or hand. In such cases, the student would be allowed a scribe for the test, if no other option were available.

Students who are unable to take the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment, even with accommodations, should be considered for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs ELP assessment (the “Alternate ACCESS”) is intended to serve the needs of ELLs with significantly cognitively disabled ELLs. It is available in grades 1-2, 3-5, 6-8,

¹ According to Title III of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and statutes that may exist in individual states.

² Found in the U.S. Department of Education’s July 2014 Questions and Answers Regarding Inclusion of English Learners with Disabilities in English Language Proficiency Assessments and Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.

and 9-12. (Note: There is no Kindergarten Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment.) WIDA-recommended participation criteria for Alternate ACCESS for ELLs can be found on the WIDA website at <http://www.wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx>. Check with your state education agency for your state’s specific participation criteria for this assessment.

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs ELP assessment is intended for ELLs who participate in their state’s alternate Title I content assessment; or, if they are enrolled in a grade in which the Title I content assessment is not offered, they would be likely to participate once it was required (e.g., a student in grade 2 who would be likely to participate in an alternate content assessment beginning in grade 3). The student’s IEP team should decide whether the ELL student with a disability is unable to participate in the standard ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment, even with accommodations, due to the severity or complexity of their disability; and if so, designate the student for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs in order to assess their language proficiency appropriately.

Students demonstrating academic difficulties due to learning disabilities, speech-language impairments, and emotional-behavioral disabilities may not necessarily qualify for participation in the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment, and may be better served by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. The most appropriate ELP assessment for each student must be listed either in the student’s IEP or 504 plan.

WIDA Consortium Accommodations and Accessibility Framework

The WIDA Consortium Accommodations and Accessibility Framework described in this section contains the following elements: application of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles** to the development of test directions, practice tests, and test items, and guidelines on **accommodations**, **accessibility features**, and **allowable test administration procedures**.

UDL principles include the use of multiple formats of representation, expression, and engagement wherever possible and have, to the extent possible, been incorporated by design into the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. The transition from the paper-based ACCESS for ELLs (1.0) assessment to the online ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment has afforded WIDA Consortium member states the opportunity to rethink accommodations and accessibility issues, based on what has been learned over the past ten years about the administration of English language proficiency assessments. The online version of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 contains an assessment design that will support online delivery, provide greater accessibility to *all* ELLs, and be supported by a set of appropriate accommodations for ELLs with disabilities.

Support Available Only to ELLs with IEPs and/or 504 Plans

Accommodations include allowable changes to the test presentation, response method, timing, and setting in which assessments are administered. Accommodations are intended to provide testing conditions that do *not* result in changes in what the test measures; that provide comparable test results to those of students who do not receive accommodations; and that do

not affect the validity and reliability of the interpretation of the scores for their intended purposes.

Accommodations are available *only* to ELLs with disabilities when listed in an approved IEP or 504 plan, and only when the student requires the accommodation(s) to participate in the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment meaningfully and appropriately. Accommodations may be embedded in and delivered within the online test platform or be non-embedded and delivered locally by a test administrator. Although the vast majority of accommodations are available to any ELL with a disability at the time of testing, a small number of accommodations will need to be pre-selected for students prior to testing in the WIDA Assessment Management System, as noted in the Accommodations and Accessibility matrix.

Support Available to All ELLs

While provision of *accommodations* is required by federal and state laws, the use of *accessibility features* and *allowable testing procedures* provides enhanced flexibility when provided in a manner that ensures a secure and appropriate delivery of the assessment. Educators in WIDA Consortium member states are encouraged to make available, as appropriate, *all* of the accessibility features and allowable testing procedures described in this document. The accessibility features and allowable testing procedures are intended to diminish barriers and maximize opportunities for ELLs to demonstrate their English language proficiency.

Accessibility features include tools that are available to *all* ELLs taking the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. Accessibility features may either be embedded in the online test or provided to ELLs by test administrators for online- or paper-based tests. Examples of accessibility features include highlighter, line guide, magnification, and color overlay. All accessibility features are available to *all* ELLs during testing, and do not require specific designation prior to testing in order to be made available to the student during testing.

Allowable test administration procedures are variations in standard test administration procedures that provide flexibility to schools and districts in determining the conditions under which the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment can be administered most effectively. These

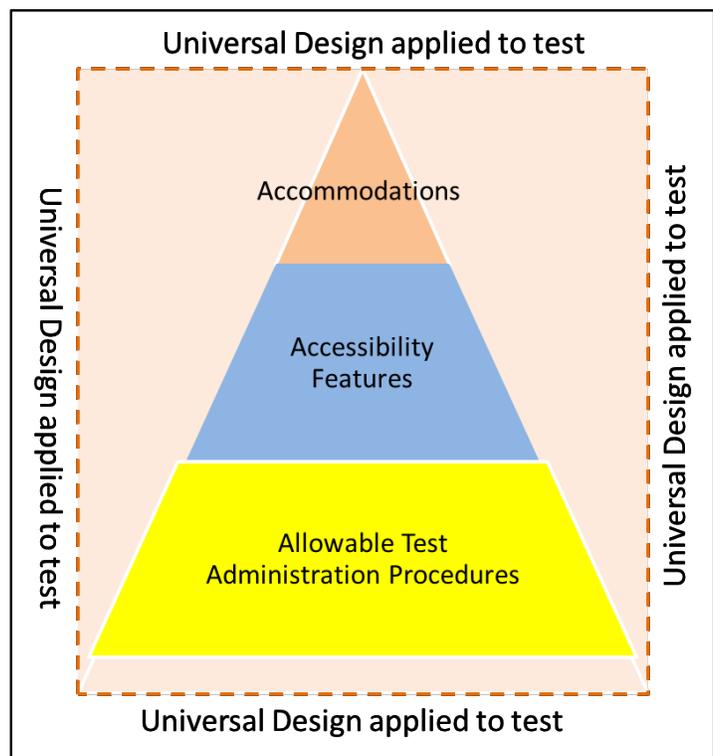


Figure 1. WIDA Consortium Accommodation and Accessibility Framework

procedures are available to *any* student, as needed, at the discretion of the test coordinator (or principal or designee), provided that all security conditions and staffing requirements are met. Examples of allowable test administration procedures include tests administered by familiar school personnel, in an individual or small group setting, in a separate room, with frequent supervised breaks, or in short segments. *For detailed information on the allowable test administration procedures, consult the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Test Administration Manual.*

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Validity

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is designed to produce valid determinations of English language proficiency when administered using any combination of the approved accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable test administration procedures listed in the matrix section of this document. Modifications or additions to the list of approved accommodations *may* produce valid test results, *but WIDA cannot guarantee this*. States and districts that limit or expand the use of the WIDA-recommended accommodations, accessibility features, and test administration procedures will likely need to conduct their own validity studies to ensure that federal ELP testing requirements are being met.

Selecting, Using, and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Accommodations, Accessibility Features, and Test Administration Procedures

Decisions about accommodations appropriate for each of the four domains of the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 ELP assessment—listening, reading, writing, and speaking — should be based on the needs of individual students, as determined by the student’s IEP team or 504 coordinator. It is important that IEP teams for ELLs with disabilities include persons with expertise in second language acquisition and other professionals, such as speech-language pathologists, who understand how to differentiate between limited English proficiency and a disability. [These decisions may not be made unilaterally by a teacher or other school employee outside of the IEP process described in IDEA, 34 CFR §§300.320 through 300.324.3] For nondisabled ELLs, the educators working with the student should document in writing the supports selected for the student. Documentation should be maintained as part of the student’s records.

³ Found in the U.S. Department of Education’s July 2014 Questions and Answers Regarding Inclusion of English Learners with Disabilities in English Language Proficiency Tests and Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.

The Following Must Be Considered When Choosing Appropriate Accommodations, Accessibility Features, and Allowable Test Administration Procedures:

1. Is the accommodation, accessibility feature, or allowable test administration procedure appropriate for ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 ELP testing⁴?

Remember that ELP tests and content area assessments in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science serve different purposes, and therefore, different accommodations may be allowed for each. Be sure that only accommodations allowed on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment are selected for the ELP assessment and are listed in the assessment section of the student's IEP. [Accommodations selected for use by students on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment must not invalidate a student's test scores. See IDEA, 34 CFR §§300.160(b)(2)(i) and (ii).]

2. What learning challenges is the student experiencing?

Observe the student's classroom performance. How might the individual student's needs be supported through the use of accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable test administration procedures to provide the student with the opportunity to learn the general curriculum, rather than a curriculum that is diluted or limited in scope? How does the accommodation address the student's unique need(s)?

3. Does the accommodation, accessibility feature, or allowable test administration procedure address the challenge faced by the student?

Try various accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable test administration procedures in different instructional and assessment settings and evaluate whether they address the student's needs; if not, revise the support(s) accordingly. The appropriate use of accommodations with ELLs with disabilities should ensure (or at least increase the likelihood) that the student's disability does not prevent the student from demonstrating their English language proficiency during the assessment.

⁴ Because ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 focuses on measuring language proficiency rather than content area knowledge and skills, some accommodations that might be appropriate for content areas tests may not be used on ACCESS 2.0 because they would invalidate the construct being measured by the test. For example, if the Listening section of ACCESS 2.0 were presented in American Sign Language (ASL) to a deaf or hard of hearing student, the test would be measuring the student's proficiency in comprehending ASL, not spoken English. Similarly, if the Reading Test were read aloud, the construct (reading English) would be confounded because ACCESS 2.0 would become a test of a student's ability to comprehend spoken English, not text. Note that your state's accommodations policy may differ for ELP and content area testing. **Accommodations policies for ELP testing and content area testing are not identical, and are not interchangeable.**

4. Does the test administrator know how to accurately apply the accommodation, accessibility feature, or allowable test administration procedure?

Ensure that test administrators have reviewed test administrator manuals and guidelines and received training on appropriate implementation of supports selected for students.

5. Does the accommodation adhere to your state policies for the accommodation of ELLs with disabilities on language proficiency assessments?

Please refer to your state's policies for English language proficiency testing for policy guidance.

Reminders: In making decisions regarding *accommodations* for the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment, educators should remember that:

- Students should *typically* receive only those accommodations that are in use for daily instruction (with some exceptions) and that they would need to participate meaningfully in the assessment;
- Accommodations should not be assigned based on the type of disability, but rather on the needs of the individual student;
- Accommodations and accessibility features should not be broadly assigned across the four domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, but considered and discussed separately for each ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 domain;
- Selection should not be based on a “more-is-better” approach in an attempt to provide every possible advantage on the assessment, nor should students be provided with unnecessary accommodations;
- Accommodations should not reduce learning expectations, be used to compensate for a student’s lack of knowledge and/or skills, or because of a lack of appropriate instruction (or access to instruction) in complex academic language associated with any content area; and
- Over time, student need for many of the accommodations, accessibility features, and allowable test administration procedures may decrease. Therefore, the need for support should be re-examined periodically.

Involve Students in Selecting and Using Accommodations and Accessibility Features

The more students are involved in selecting their own accommodations and accessibility features, the more likely they will be used. This is especially true as students reach adolescence and their desire to be more independent increases. Students will need practice using their self-advocacy skills to make certain accommodations and accessibility features are provided appropriately on assessments, during instruction, and outside of school. Teachers and other team members can play a key role in assisting students to advocate for themselves.

Introduce the Student to Accommodations

In order to determine their effectiveness, accommodations and accessibility features should be introduced to the student during routine instruction, long before the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessments are administered. Accommodations and accessibility features should never be used for the first time on a statewide assessment. It is important, therefore, to include opportunities for the following activities to occur before the assessment is administered:

- allow the student time to learn how to use the support;
- practice using the supports in a technology-based setting, if the assessment will be given using a computer or other technology, using the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Test Practice; and
- plan to evaluate and revise the support(s), as needed.

Evaluating the Use of Accommodations

Information should be collected, and the data analyzed, to determine the effectiveness of supports selected for and used by and with the student, both during instruction as well as on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessments. A data-driven decision is required to ensure that students are able to participate meaningfully in the assessment. The collection of data also allows teams to support their decisions and provide others with concrete information on the selection, use, and evaluation of supports.

Data on the use and impact of an accessibility feature, test procedure, or accommodation may support continuing the use of some accommodations, rethinking others, and may also reveal patterns within a school or district. For example, examination of the data may indicate areas in which the IEP team, classroom teacher, and ELL team members and/or test administrators need additional training and support.

Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and discussions with students after testing are likely to yield meaningful data which can be useful in guiding the formative evaluation process of selection and use of supports at the school, district, and student levels.

The following sections include guidelines for administering ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessments using specific accommodations:

Guidelines for Using the Scribed Response Accommodation

Students receiving the scribe accommodation may respond to test items:

- orally,
- gesturing/pointing, or
- using an assistive technology device or software (e.g., speech-to-text, picture/symbol communication system, etc.)

The adult test administrator serving as a scribe may either enter the student's responses verbatim in the student's answer booklet or keyboard the student's responses directly onscreen if the student is taking the online assessment.

Scribing takes place as the student dictates or produces the response, and the response is entered into the online assessment or the paper test booklet at the time of testing. If requested by the student, the scribe may read the dictated response back to the student. The student may subsequently dictate changes or edits to the scribe, and the scribe must make those changes exactly as dictated by the student, even if a change is incorrect.

For constructed responses, the student is responsible for all capitalization and punctuation by verbally instructing the scribe what letters are capitalized and where to add punctuation. The student should provide exact spelling the first time they use a key word (noun or verb relevant to the content); thereafter, the scribe would spell the word as the student first spelled it. If the student uses a non-English word or one that the scribe does not understand, the scribe should prompt the student to spell the word and write down the student's spelling of the word.

The following scribing practices are acceptable:

- The scribe may ask "Are you finished?" or "Is there anything you want to add or delete?"
- The scribe may respond to procedural questions asked by the student such as, "Do I have to use the entire space to answer the question?" The scribe may indicate "No."
- The scribe may prompt and remind the student of instructions or dictation rules, as needed, such as "Please spell that word." or "Don't forget to tell me where you want punctuation."
- If the student requests that the scribe read a response that was already dictated, the scribe must read what the student dictated previously, being careful not to cue the student to errors.
- The scribe can ask the student to slow down or repeat their dictated response.
- The student should review their response and dictate the changes/edits he/she would like done.

The following scribing practices are unacceptable:

- The scribe cannot influence the student's response in any way.
- The scribe cannot coach the student by giving specific directions, clues, or prompts.

- The scribe cannot tell the student if his/her answer is correct or incorrect, or alert the student to mistakes he/she made.
- The scribe cannot answer a student's questions related to the content. (e.g., "Can you tell me what this word means?")
- The scribe cannot suggest that the student write more or go back and check the responses.
- The scribe should not write down unrelated vocalizations ("um") by the student since he/she will be writing down what the student would write if the student could write.

Individuals who provide the scribe accommodation to a student must be trained by the school or district on test administration procedures and security requirements prior to testing. The test administrator should know how to accurately apply the accommodation. Likewise, when determining accommodations for a student, the student should have experience with the given accommodation on an ongoing basis. It is not recommended that a new accommodation be introduced to the student for the first time during administration.

Guidelines for Assistive Devices

Two categories of assistive technology may be used with the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment:

Category One: Compatible Assistive Technology

The first category includes assistive technology used by the student to interact directly with the online testing platform. These assistive technologies include standard input devices, such as adaptive keyboards, adaptive mice, and switch interfaces. Schools must confirm the functionality of the devices and software within their technology environment prior to testing by conducting a simulation using the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Practice Tests.

Category Two: External Assistive Technology

The second category includes stand-alone (i.e., separate or external) assistive technology devices or software that will not interact directly with the online test platform, and is not accessed on the same device used by the student to complete the online ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. Instead, this will be used by the student at a separate station during the assessment. Assistive technologies in this category include speech-to-text devices or software, stand-alone word processors, and other technologies not directly connected to the computer on which the student is being tested. These stand-alone assistive technologies do not need to be tested for compatibility and may be used during the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment, according to the provisions of these guidelines. However, they may require an adult test administrator to assist the student by scribing responses using the external assistive technology into the online assessment, or subsequently transcribing a student's responses generated by the stand-alone device.

Assistive technology may not use the embedded grammar- or spell-check function, connect to the Internet, or save information. If those features cannot be disabled or monitored closely by

an administrator, the device should not be used. All responses generated on an external assistive technology device must be transcribed verbatim by a test administrator to the student's computer-based test or into the test booklet.

Special Considerations Regarding the Use of Assistive Technology Devices on ELP Assessments

Because ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assesses language rather than content area knowledge and skills, some assistive technology devices and software that might be appropriate for the classroom or content area assessments may not be used with ACCESS for ELLs since they would invalidate the construct and invalidate the interpretations or inferences from the scores.

Braille and ASL Considerations

Braille

For those states whose policies allow the use of braille assessments for ELP assessment, the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is available in contracted or uncontracted braille in the domains of Reading and Writing. Braille versions of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 permit ELLs with vision impairments the opportunity to demonstrate their reading and writing of brailled English. [Caution: At this time, WIDA has no evidence that use of Braille accommodations will result in equivalent scores and alignment to the ELD Standards.] The WIDA Consortium will continue to provide the "hard copy" tactile braille assessments with the introduction of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. The WIDA Consortium has updated its accommodations guidelines to allow the use of braille writers and notetakers as response accommodations for the Reading and Writing domains.

When a student's IEP team determines that braille is the appropriate test option, the WIDA Consortium will provide the student with a Tier B version of the Reading and Writing assessment in braille. The following guidelines should be followed:

- The student must be literate in braille.
- Braille graphics will be included with the braille edition test, where appropriate.
- The student may be oriented to the braille graphic by the test administrator, either in English or in the student's native language, if requested by the student, without providing coaching, assistance, or clues to the student.
- Each student's responses on the braille Reading and Writing domains must be transcribed verbatim by a school staff member into a regular ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test booklet or it will not be scored.
- Braille and standard test materials must be included in the return shipment of test materials according to instructions provided by the test contractor.

ASL and other interpretations

Deaf and hard-of-hearing ELLs, including those for whom American Sign Language (ASL) is their first language, can generally participate in the Reading and Writing sections of the assessment with few or no accommodations. (Lip-reading may also be possible to support spoken test items on the Speaking test and audio samples on the Listening test). IEP teams should make

determinations on a case-by-case basis, although ELLs who are deaf and hard of hearing are required to participate, at minimum, in the Reading and Writing domains.

Translating test items into other languages does not provide a valid test of English language proficiency and would therefore invalidate the assessment results. Therefore, signing or making use of other translations of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test items in any domain is not permitted. Test directions and practice items that precede the actual test items, however, may be signed for the student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Glossary

| Abbreviation | What It Means | Definition |
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| 504 Plan | Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act | Describes accommodations needed by a student with a disability who is not in special education that will ensure his/her access to the learning environment and to tests. |
| ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 | Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners 2.0 | ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is an annual standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency assessment designed to measure English language learners' social and academic proficiency in English. It assesses social and instructional English used within the school context as well as the language associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies across the four language domains. |
| Accessibility Features | Tools and supports that allow all students maximum possible access to instruction and tests | Features available to all students, such as line guides, test administrator support, etc. |
| Accommodations | Supports available only for students who have an IEP or a 504 plan. | Supports that are documented in a student's IEP or 504 plan that are necessary for testing. |
| Allowable Testing | Variations in the standard testing | Available to all students if |

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| Features | procedures that allow schools greater flexibility without compromising the validity of the assessment results | requested prior to testing and approved by the test coordinator |
| Alternate ACCESS | Alternate ACCESS for ELLs | An alternate assessment to the ACCESS for ELLs for students with significant cognitive disabilities |
| Assessment | | The synthesis of various sources of information for the purpose of determining and understanding a student’s areas of strength and weakness; identifying the level of knowledge, skills and abilities in a specific content or skill area; and evaluating progress toward specific educational goals. (See <i>Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing</i> , 2014, p. 2) |
| Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) | AAC is a part of Assistive Technology. AAC equipment and services that are designed to assist students to communicate who are nonverbal or who have severe communication disabilities. | |
| Assistive Technology (AT) | specialized equipment and services provided for students who have functional access needs in the areas of speaking, vision, hearing, and motor skills. | <p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External devices that do not interact directly with the online test platform, and are not accessed using the same device used by the student to complete the online ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment; OR • Devices that are compatible (and can be used) with the device used by the student to complete |

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| | | the online ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment |
| Construct | The domain-specific proficiency that the test is attempting to measure. | In the ACCESS assessments, the constructs of reading, writing, speaking, and listening proficiency are measured. |
| EL | English Learner | A term used interchangeably with LEP and ELL. |
| ELD | English Language Development | The process of language development, as opposed to a binary proficiency determination. |
| ELL | English Language Learner | A longer form of EL which emphasizes the fact that the student is learning and additional <i>language</i> . |
| ELP | English Language Proficiency | Either a binary proficient/not proficient term, as related to non-ELLs of a similar age; or a numeric level of proficiency as determined by an ELP assessment, such as ACCESS. |
| IDEA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Pub.L. 101-476) | Requires Individualized Education Program (IEPs), among many other protections for students with disabilities. |
| IEP | Individualized Education Program | Mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA requires public schools to develop an IEP for every student with a disability who is found to meet the federal and state requirements for special education. |
| LEP | Limited English Proficient | A student who has limited proficiency in English. |

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| Reliability | The extent to which, if the test were repeated, it would produce the same result. | ACCESS is designed for reliability as much as possible. |
| Test | | A sample of behavior that is observed and scored under objective, uniform, controlled conditions. (See also <i>Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing</i> , 2014, p. 2) |
| Validity | Whether or not this test measures the construct it was designed to measure. | A concern when choosing accommodations is whether or not they impact the validity of the test. |

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