

North Carolina Alternate ACCESS for ELLs 2013-2014 Test Information and Eligibility Criteria

During the 2013-14 school year, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is including the administration of the *ACCESS for ELLs*® test as part of the required statewide testing program for eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities who are also designated as limited English proficient (LEP). The general *ACCESS for ELLs* has been administered over the past several years as North Carolina's required assessment to comply with Title III of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. However, it has been reported that the content of this test may be too cognitively and linguistically complex for a small population of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities. Local test coordinators and English as a Second Language (ESL) coordinators have made numerous requests for an alternate assessment to be made available for more appropriate administration to these students. To address this, the WIDA Consortium developed an *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*, which currently is being implemented in 16 other states. The *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* is more sensitive to English language proficiency growth of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities. Additional information on the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*, as well as sample items, can be found at <http://www.wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx>.

As opposed to the 2012-13 school year, when LEA participation in the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* was optional, participation in the alternate assessment is required for eligible students beginning with the 2013-14 school year. The following details and eligibility criteria will assist in the determination of which students are eligible for the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*:

Features - The *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* is similar to the general *ACCESS for ELLs* in that it has four assessment domains (i.e., Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking). It also has unique features, which include the following:

- The Listening and Reading Sections consist of multiple-choice questions.
- The Writing and Speaking Sections prompt the student for a constructed response.
- Separate test forms are available for each grade-level cluster.
- All sections are adaptive, meaning that test items are presented until the student reaches his/her performance "ceiling".
- All test sections are hand scored by the test administrator; each item must be scored before moving on to the next item.
- Students are provided with additional opportunities to demonstrate their English language proficiency through scripted cues in the Listening and Reading Sections and auxiliary questions in the Speaking Section. It also includes modeled tasks in the Writing Section to allow students to observe the test administrator perform the task before trying it.
- Other unique features of the test include simplified language, repetition of questions, increased graphic support, larger testing materials, and graphics.

Eligibility Criteria - The *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* is designed only for a small population of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities. To determine student participation in the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*, the following criteria must be met:

- The student has a current Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The student participates in the general education curriculum through the Extended Content Standards.
- The student has a significant cognitive disability (i.e., exhibits severe and pervasive delays in ALL areas of conceptual, linguistic, and academic development and also in adaptive behavior areas, such as communication, daily living skills, and self-care).
- The student's prior school year *ACCESS for ELLs* scores yielded NA across any and/or all domains or yielded a composite score of less than 2.0. (If scores are 2.0 or above, the student does not qualify for the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* and must continue to take the regular *ACCESS for ELLs*.)
- If the student does not have *ACCESS for ELLs* testing for the prior school year, the student's WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT™) results have a proficiency level of 1 in all applicable domains.

IEP Documentation - If a student meets the eligibility criteria for the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*, the student's IEP must reflect this.

- In accordance with NC 1503-5.1(a)(4), the parent of the child and the public agency may agree not to convene an IEP Team meeting for the purpose of making this change, and instead may develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP. The public agency must ensure that the child's IEP Team is informed of this change.
- Current IEP forms (both hard-copy and those produced by CECAS and third-party vendors) may not provide an option to choose the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*. To address this, amend *Section IV Alternate Assessment Justification* (page 7 of the IEP DEC 4) to state that the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* will be used and why this assessment is appropriate for this student. Any changes to accommodations should also be reviewed and noted.

Identification - The Alt ACCESS Report in the Consolidated Federal Data Collection (CFDC) will be available to assist in the identification of eligible students for the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*. The Alt ACCESS report identifies students in grades 3 through 12 in each LEA who meet the eligibility criteria. Report data is based on LEP data contained within the CFDC and Exceptional Children (EC) data from the Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS). The Alt ACCESS report information will be available during the October Headcount window.

Training - The Division of Accountability Services will work with WIDA to provide training to all prospective administrators of the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs*. Information on training options will be sent to Local Testing Coordinators and ESL Coordinators. Qualifications for test administrators are the same as those listed in the *WIDA ACCESS for ELLs - North Carolina Policy and Procedure Guidance for Annual Testing 2013-14* (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/policyoperations/lep/testinglep1314.pdf>).

Test Materials - The Division of Accountability Services will provide instructions on the ordering of *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* test materials.

Scoring - The current design and scoring rubric for the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs* allows for a maximum composite score of 2.0. While this scoring range does not meet the minimum score for exiting from Limited English Proficiency eligibility, it does offer this small population of students the opportunity to show growth in

learning the English language. The WIDA Consortium will continue to refine and improve this instrument so that proficient scores may be derived in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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