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ALTERNATE ACCESS FOR ELLS

The purpose of this document is intended to help educators become familiar with features of the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment in order to make decisions regarding a student’s participation in this assessment. The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a large scale test of English language proficiency of English Learners (ELs) who have, or function as if they have, a significant cognitive disability. The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a product of a collaborative effort by the multi-state WIDA Consortium and has been developed based on the WIDA Alternate English Language proficiency (ELP) levels that were designed to increase the sensitivity of the measure for these students and give them a chance to demonstrate what they can do with language.

The [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](https://www.ed.gov/essa) (<https://www.ed.gov/essa>) requires that all students identified as ELs be assessed annually for English language proficiency, including students who receive special education services. [The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA; 2004\)](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/) (<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>) also mandates that students with disabilities participate in state-wide and district-wide assessment programs, including alternate assessments based on Alternate Achievement Standards with appropriate accommodations (in Michigan, this includes MI-Access: Functional Independence, Supported Independence, Participation), when it is documented in their Individualized Education Programs (IEP). For this reason, WIDA created the Alternate ACCESS for

ELLs to meet federal accountability requirements and to provide educators with a measure sensitive to English language proficiency growth of ELs with significant cognitive disabilities.

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an individually administered paper and pencil test. It is intended only for ELs in grades K – 12 who have, or function as if they have, significant cognitive disabilities severe enough to prevent meaningful participation in ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Students with disabilities who can demonstrate progress in their language development by taking ACCESS for ELLs with accommodations should do so. IEP Teams must consider the following general participation criteria to decide whether the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs test would be an appropriate assessment for their student:

1. The student is an EL.
2. The student has, or functions as if they have, a cognitive disability and is eligible for special education services under IDEA.
3. The student is working towards alternate achievement standards aligned with Michigan’s academic standards, and is participating in Michigan’s alternate accountability assessment, MI-Access.

The following information and guide is designed to aid districts in determining which students should take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. Contact the Office of Assessment and Accountability at (877) 560-8378 with any questions you may have. You should also visit [WIDA's website](https://wida.wisc.edu) (<https://wida.wisc.edu>) to access the [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs sample items](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/alternate-access-sample-items) (<https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/alternate-access-sample-items>).

ALTERNATE ACCESS FOR ELLS TEST OVERVIEW	
Grade-Level Clusters	K, 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12
Language Domains	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Task Format	Selected response (Listening, Reading) Constructed response (Writing, Speaking)
Standards	Social and Instructional Language Language of Language Arts Language of Mathematics Language of Science Language of Social Studies
Administration	Individual paper-based assessment
Scoring	All sections are hand-scored by the test administrator.
Accommodations	Individualized instructional supports that are used in everyday classroom instruction may be used to meet individual student needs.
Alternate English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels	Coming soon

In addition to the above information, districts should know that the testing window for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is the same as the general ACCESS for ELLs. More information can be found on the MDE's [WIDA web page](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/Services/Student-Assessment/WIDA-Assessments) (<https://www.michigan.gov/mde/Services/Student-Assessment/WIDA-Assessments>).

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES: WHO CAN TAKE THE ALTERNATE ACCESS FOR ELLS?

- IEP Teams decide whether students who are identified as ELs with significant cognitive disabilities participate in the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs or the general ACCESS for ELLs.
- The following criteria were designed to help IEP Teams determine whether the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an appropriate test for students.
- All of the participation criteria listed on the following page must be met to administer the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs to a student:

Participation Criteria	Yes	No	Explanation of Yes or No Response
The student is classified as an EL according to Michigan’s criteria and protocol. Refer to the Office of Educational Supports Entrance & Exit Protocol for more information.			
The student has, or functions as if they have, a significant cognitive disability and receives special education programs or services under IDEA (2004).			
<p>The student’s IEP Team determined the student will not participate in assessments based on general education standards (M-STEP or SAT/ACT WorkKeys) or the district’s interim benchmarks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations and modifications within the general education curriculum were considered. • The student will be working towards alternate achievement standards. • Participation decisions are not based on social, cultural, or economic factors. 			
The student is or will be participating in one of Michigan’s alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (MI-Access: Functional Independence, Supported Independence, Participation).			

*For more information, visit [WIDA’s ACCESS for ELLs web page](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access): (https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access)

IEP TEAM CONSIDERATIONS

IEP Teams should also consider a student’s previous test-taking history when making a decision about selection of the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

- a. Students with a history of taking MI-Access Functional Independence may take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs or the general ACCESS for ELLs.
- b. Students with a history of taking MI-Access Supported Independence may or may not find the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs appropriate. In order to help educators better determine this, please review the [sample items](#) found on [WIDA’s website](http://wida.wisc.edu) (wida.wisc.edu).