ACCESS for English Language Learners (ELLs)

What is the ACCESS test?

Assessing Communication and Comprehension in English State to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs™) is a standards-based English language proficiency test for students in Grades K-12 designed to measure English language learners' 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 of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Who takes the ACCESS test?

All English Learners in grades K–12 are required to participate annually in an English language proficiency assessment.

How are English Learners identified?

English Learners are identified through a process that begins by having families complete a Home Language Survey. Once the survey is completed, a family interview is then conducted to determine if the student is potentially an English Learner. If it is determined that the student may be an English Learner, they are then administered an English language proficiency screener.

When will my child take the ACCESS test?

The ACCESS test is administered to English Learners on an annual basis. You should consult SDP's Assessment Calendar as well your child's school calendar for specific dates when the ACCESS test will be administered at their school.

What do teachers do with my child's ACCESS test results?

Teachers use ACCESS test results to monitor student progress toward English proficiency, intentionally plan scaffolds to support students in accessing grade-level content, make decisions about rostering and support, and reclassify students from language instruction programs.

What types of questions are asked on the ACCESS test?

Students are tested in the four language domains: **Reading**, **Writing**, **Speaking**, and **Listening**. There are three types of response modes: 1) Multiple Choice (Listening and Reading); 2) Orally Constructed Response (Speaking); and 3) Written Constructed Response (Writing).

What types of scores are reported on the ACCESS test?

The ACCESS test provides three types of scores: Raw scores, scale scores, and proficiency level scores. **Raw scores** are the actual number of correct items or tasks. This score is the starting point, but because it doesn't take item difficulty into account, it doesn't help educators understand student performance. For this reason, raw scores are not included on ACCESS for ELLs score reports. **Scale scores** take item difficulty into account, so educators can use them to examine groups of students, or student performances over time. **Proficiency level scores** provide an interpretation of scale scores. There are six English language proficiency levels: 1–Entering, 2–Emerging, 3–Developing, 4–Expanding, 5–Bridging, and 6–Reaching.

Is the ACCESS test timed?

The ACCESS test is not timed. The test developers estimate that the Reading section can take up to 60 minutes, the Listening section can take up to 65 minutes, the Speaking section can take up to 50 minutes, and the Writing section can take up to 90 minutes, for a total of 265 test minutes. However, students are not required to finish the assessment within that time frame, and they are given additional time as necessary to complete the exam.

Does the ACCESS test affect my child's grades?

This test does not affect students' grades. However, ACCESS composite scores (also referred to as "English proficiency levels")—which range from 1.0 to 6.0—inform rostering decisions or placement in appropriate courses/classes.

How does my child take the ACCESS?

The ACCESS can be administered digitally or via pencil and paper. Regardless of which version your child is taking, all students must take the ACCESS test in person at their school.

Where can I find the results from the ACCESS?

Any child who takes the ACCESS test will have their Individual Student Report sent home by their school. For further support in understanding your child's Individual Student Report, you can consult with your child's EL teacher.

Who can I contact with further questions about the ACCESS?

If you have further questions about the ACCESS test, please reach out to your child's school. The contact information for your child's school can be obtained from SDP's School Profiles website.

Where can I find additional information on the ACCESS?

School District of Philadelphia Office of Assessment: philasd.org/era/assessment

Pennsylvania Department of Education's ACCESS homepage