

Supplemental Guidance for English Learner Test Participation Committee's Selection of Assessment Accommodations for English Learners

Purpose

The following guidance is provided as a supplement to the information on English learners and their accommodations in the [GaDOE 2020-2021 Student Assessment Handbook](#) (SAH) posted on the GADOE Assessment [For Educators](#) webpage. Detailed information on the composition and role of the EL Testing Participation Committee (EL/TPC), assessment coding and accommodation eligibility, use of EL test scores in accountability, accommodation guidelines, and other applicable assessment information for EL testing is provided in the SAH.

This supplemental guidance is intended to provide additional information from the EL program perspective to support school EL/TPC teams who are selecting testing accommodations for English learners (ELs). It is expected, that as EL/TPCs select linguistic accommodations for content assessments appropriate to the student's level of English proficiency, this process will become more consistent across the state.

English learners with disabilities

Please note that IEP teams selecting testing accommodations for English learners with disabilities (EL/SWD) on both content and language assessments must follow guidance established in the [GaDOE 2020-2021 Student Assessment Handbook](#). Only English learners with disabilities (EL/SWD) with an established IEP or 504 Plan may receive accommodations on the WIDA ELP Screeners and ELP assessments (ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS). Those accommodations are listed on the WIDA Table of Allowable Accommodations in the [GaDOE 2020-2021 Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#) and in WIDA's [2020-2021 WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Supplement](#). These accommodations should be documented in the student's IEP or Section 504 Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP).

In addition to the SWD allowable accommodations, the IEP team may also choose the Word-to-Word Dictionary accommodation from the EL Accommodation Chart when it would benefit students with both literacy and dictionary skills in their primary language. All other EL allowable accommodations are also SWD allowable accommodations. For more information on allowable accommodations for EL/SWD, please refer to guidance provided by the Special Education program in the [GaDOE 2020-2021 Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#).



Selecting accommodations for ELs

English learners who do not have a disability are expected to participate in classroom, formative, and summative academic assessments. Testing accommodations for EL students are designed to address unique linguistic needs during the normal process of developing English language proficiency (ELP). When appropriately assigned, testing accommodations offer an EL the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge in a content area, regardless of his/her level of English proficiency; therefore, providing schools and teachers an accurate picture of the student's content area achievement. Testing accommodations must not provide ELs an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

Testing accommodations addressing the EL student's level of English proficiency should be selected from the accommodations listed on the EL/TPC table of allowable linguistic accommodations which are documented annually by an EL Test Participation Committee (TPC). See [GaDOE 2020-2021 Student Assessment Handbook – SAH](#). These accommodations should be used on a routine basis during classroom instruction and assessments as explained in the SAH. Use of unfamiliar testing accommodations during state content achievement tests may have an impact on an EL student's performance.

The chart of *Allowable Accommodations for English Learners* (SAH, pg. 105) not only lists twelve allowable testing accommodations for EL students, but also provides recommendations regarding the benefit of each accommodation based on the overall composite English language proficiency (ELP) level of the student as measured by the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs® assessment. These recommendations are based on a **gradual release model**. In general, as a student develops proficiency in the English language, the need for multiple testing accommodations decreases. In the gradual release model, the EL/TPC team removes accommodation scaffolds and allows the student to demonstrate his learning. The goal is to allow students to perform at their greatest potential with as little support as possible. Students who become fully proficient in English will be able to participate in assessments without accommodations, just like their English-only peers.

A **gradual release model** is based on the following considerations:

- Accommodations are designed to give access, not advantage.
- Accommodations should reflect individual student need.
- Accommodations are not intended to be provided indefinitely.
- As English language proficiency (ELP) levels increase, the need for testing accommodations decreases.

As a member of the WIDA consortium, the EL/TPC decisions in Georgia should be grounded in a deep understanding of the WIDA English Language Development Standards (ELDS) framework resources (<https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld>). Accommodation decisions should consider individual student ELP data as well as academic proficiency data, student characteristics, and relevant sociocultural factors.

- WIDA's Receptive and Expressive Performance Definitions for each of six language development levels provide educators with information about what ELs can do independently at each ELP level.

- The ACCESS for ELLs® assessment results provide data on student's ELP in each of four language domains: Listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Students' previous state assessment results and the accommodations provided should inform the EL/TPC decisions.
- Students' recent district formative or benchmark data, such as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) RIT growth, DIBELS, SRI, & Lexile score in relation to grade level expectations should inform EL/TPC decisions.
- Student's sociocultural needs may be a factor to consider in the accommodation choice.

It is expected that the EL/TPC will choose accommodations that benefit the EL students at their level of English proficiency. All allowable accommodations are not required, given that the accommodations must be appropriate to the specific student's need. Decisions should be justifiable based on student performance data.

Newly arrived ELs

Please see the [GaDOE 2020-2021 Student Assessment Handbook](#) pg. 102 for guidelines on testing English learners in their first year in U.S. schools and pg. 103 for information on how their scores are used for accountability calculations.

Exited ELs

Students who have exited EL status and are in the two-year monitoring phase are classified as EL=1 or EL=2 and are eligible to receive standard testing accommodations. However, it is **unlikely** that an EL who has developed full English proficiency as defined by the state and by the school district will need testing accommodations, unless he is an EL/SWD. Please see the [GaDOE 2020-2021 Student Assessment Handbook](#).

Long-term ELs

Finally, if an EL student is not developing language proficiency as expected, compared to like peers and research averages, the school team should refer the student to the school's Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and/or Response to Intervention (RtI) process for further evaluation. The state recommends that schools consider EL students' longitudinal ELP development and not merely one year of ELP data.