



March 15, 2017

<State Board of Education>

RE: New ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 English Language Proficiency Test Scoring Changes

WIDA has modified the score scale of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 to meet the language demands of college- and career-ready state standards. In essence, we are raising the bar for academic language proficiency.

Three factors led us to re-examine our English language proficiency (ELP) levels as expressed by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment:

1. migrating from a paper-and-pencil to an online assessment,
2. employing a revised and now centrally scored speaking assessment, and
3. responding to the influence of College and Career Ready content standards and assessments.

As states move forward in creating accountability systems under the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, we are confident that the needs of English learners (ELs) will be a priority. Some important aspects regarding the implementation of the new score scale to consider include:

- As a result of the increased rigor of WIDA's English language proficiency expectations, it is possible that some students' scores may decrease and fewer students may exit program support.
- Expectations of student performance on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment have increased because of the new score scale. Student performance changes may not necessarily be due to teacher instruction or lack of student progress.
- WIDA's new score scale may result in students requiring additional years of language program support. We are asking our consortium's state and district leaders to consider this when making considerations about reclassifying students as needing special education services and when providing resources that support students who may spend more time in language programs than expected.
- State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are advised to refrain from implementing major changes in the identification and exit criteria of ELs at this time until patterns for student performance on new content assessments and within WIDA's new scoring system are well established
- Because of the increased rigor of WIDA's English language proficiency expectations, we are asking states to monitor the progress of their *current* ELs and be extra vigilant in monitoring the academic achievement of former ELs, especially those who have been recently reclassified.
- Federal funding and reporting under Titles I and III of the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* supports states in providing appropriate language instruction to ELs.

- Even though federal accountability under ESSA is not applied until 2018-19, SEAs and LEAs must still ensure that ELs make adequate progress towards English language proficiency.

WIDA is dedicated to providing resources and information to assist state and district stakeholders in serving ELs and in responding to the change in the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 score scale. For more information and updates on this topic, please visit www.wida.us/proficiency.

WIDA thanks you for the opportunity to address these important changes to the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. If you have questions, please contact me (timothy.boals@wisc.edu).

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Boals, Ph.D.
WIDA Executive Director

