



Memorandum

TO: WIDA State Education Agency Representatives
FROM: WIDA Research and Client Relations
DATE: March 29, 2017
SUBJECT: ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Score Changes and SEA Exit Criteria

On September 23 and 27, 2016, WIDA provided a memo and follow-up webinar discussing the impact of the standard setting studies conducted earlier in 2016, the results of which were formally adopted in October 2016. In both of these communications, WIDA advised SEAs to be cautious about making any changes to exit criteria relating to ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test scores this school year. In addition, WIDA advised SEAs to consider relaxing any domain score minimum criteria, especially those involving Writing, at least for this test cycle. As the score report season is now approaching and you are likely engaged in discussions about this topic with a variety of stakeholders, we want to provide you with a set of talking points explaining the reasons for WIDA's recommendations:

1. The adoption of the new score scale has effectively raised your criteria for you without any action on your part. It will now be more challenging for students to achieve the same proficiency level scores as in the past. Consequently, some students' scores may decrease and fewer students may exit program support this year.
2. It often takes several years after adopting new assessments before student data is consistent enough to clearly understand the relationship between performance on ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and state content assessments, so it would be most prudent to wait another year or two before adjusting exit criteria. At a minimum, before changing exit criteria this year, SEAs should conduct new analyses to compare *adjusted* 2015-16 ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 results (what they would have been on the new score scale) to their 2015-16 content test results. The goal of these analyses would be to identify at what English language proficiency level ELL student performance reached parity with non-ELLs on the new content assessments, or reached the level deemed "proficient" if most non-ELLs' scores exceeded proficient.
3. Writing has routinely been the most challenging domain for students on ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and the last to develop. Therefore, WIDA is concerned that using Writing performance as a criterion for program exit may result in ELLs remaining in program support longer than needed. With the adoption of the new score scale following standard setting, all domains will be more rigorous and therefore, WIDA advises that a temporary relaxing of domain-specific exit criteria would give SEAs another year to analyze data while ensuring that students are not prevented from exiting when ready.



Next, some SEAs have asked for advice on potential policy considerations should you discover that recently exited ELL students are not performing as hoped on content area classrooms or assessments. WIDA advises that SEAs and LEAs carefully monitor recently exited students by examining their content test results along with classroom observations reported by teachers. If warranted, students may be redesignated as ELLs, receive services in accordance with local policies, and take ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 the next year.

Thank you for your attention to this important information. Please feel free to contact your WIDA State Relations Specialist regarding any of the above considerations. In addition, if you have not yet taken advantage of WIDA's offer to provide your SEA's 2015-16 data reported on the old and new score scales, we would still be willing to assist you upon request. Last, please contact your State Relations Specialist if you would be interested in using technical assistance hours for WIDA Research to perform analyses of your state's data.

