



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Calculation of Composite Score for Students Exempted from One or More Domains of ACCESS for ELLs

Purpose

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has adopted a process to determine eligibility to exempt an English learner (EL) student from participating in one or more domains of the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. This exemption is available to students who are unable to access all domains of the assessment due to their disability. OSSE will calculate an overall composite score from the remaining domains, creating a pathway for these students to exit EL services. This policy is effective starting with the spring 2025 ACCESS administration, impacting EL status for school year 2025-26.

Background¹

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 defines an EL as a student aged 3 years through 21 years enrolled or preparing to enroll in elementary or secondary school, whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society (ESSA Title 8, Section 8101(20)).

Federal requirements under ESSA stipulate that states, and districts within states, establish long-term and interim goals demonstrating that ELs make annual gains in their progress toward English language proficiency (ESSA Title I, Part A, Section 1111(b)(1)(F)). ESSA also requires states to identify an indicator for ELs that measures the increase in the percentage of students making progress in achieving English language proficiency (ESSA Title I, Part A, Section 1111(C)(4)(A)(ii)). Based on the current interpretations of federal law regarding long-term and interim English language growth, states must select an indicator and do the following:

1. Determine a scoring metric (EL indicator) and growth criterion to be used to measure growth;
2. Set the starting point for growth targets;
3. Set the ending point for growth targets;
4. Determine the amount of time needed for schools to get from the starting to ending targets;
and
5. Establish an annual rate of growth.

¹ Porter, T., Cook, H., & Sahakyan, N. (2019). *Less Than Four Domains: Creating an Overall Composite Score for English Learners with Individualized Education Plans*. <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Less-Than-Four-Domains.pdf>

In order to establish an annual rate of growth, ELs should be annually assessed and scored in the four recognized domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The District of Columbia assesses EL proficiency using WIDA Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs). Students who qualify for EL services are assessed in the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing annually using the proficiency test, WIDA ACCESS for ELLs, until they achieve an English Language composite score of 4.5 (or 5.0 in kindergarten), which indicates the student is proficient in English.

Students Eligible for Domain Exemption

Table 1 lists criteria for exemption from a test domain based on a student’s disability. Please note that calculation of a composite score requires that a student complete at least two domains of the ACCESS assessment, as specified in the table.

Table 1: Test exemption criteria for ACCESS domain tests

Test Exemption Criteria	Exempt Tests	Explanation
The student’s primary disability is reported as “Sensory: Hard of Hearing or Deaf.”	Listening Speaking	The student is not required to take the Listening and Speaking tests, because they are unable to listen to and/or respond verbally to test items. The student must take the Reading and Writing tests.
The student’s primary disability is reported as “Sensory: Vision Impairment or Blind.”	Listening Speaking	The student is not required to take the Listening and Speaking tests, due to the use of graphics and other visual stimuli on those domain tests. The student must take the Reading and Writing tests either in Braille, large-print, or standard format.
The student meets the criteria to receive the ELA text-to-speech or human reader accommodation as outlined in Appendix D of the <i>DC CAPE Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual</i> with evidence from student’s IEP or 504 plan.	Reading	The student is not required to take the Reading test, but must take the Listening, Speaking, and Writing tests. (Note: The school <i>may</i> , at its discretion, administer the Reading test to the student without the accommodation.)
The student is nonverbal (or selectively mute).	Speaking	The student is not required to take the Speaking test but must take the Listening, Reading, and Writing tests.
The student is unable to write due to a physical impairment or condition and the student is not yet able to use assistive technology or effectively communicate to use the scribe accommodation.	Writing	The student is not required to take the Writing test but must take the Listening, Reading and Speaking tests.

An EL student with a disability may be exempted from a particular domain test and have an assigned score when **all five** of the following criteria are met:

1. The EL student has an IEP or 504 plan that lists the accommodation(s) used by the student;
2. The EL student's disability status and nature of disability have been documented in Power School Special Programs (PSSP);
3. The OSSE Assessment Specialist applies a "Do Not Score" code of "SPD" on the ACCESS test;
4. The EL student did not participate in a domain test because they met one of the test exemption criteria shown in Table 1; and
5. The EL student was approved for the exemption using the *DC ACCESS for ELLs/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Domain Exemption Request Form* (Appendix A).

Methodology to Calculate a Composite Score

Following a review of existing methodology produced by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, OSSE decided to employ a re-weighting method to calculate composite scores with one or two missing domains. This method requires computing the average of the observed domain scale scores and applying the rounded average to the missing domain(s). After the rounded average scale score is applied to the missing domain(s), the overall composite scale score can be calculated and then assigned to the associated composite proficiency level. Of the available methods, re-weighting was determined to be the most equitable and reliable for assigning composite scores.

Application of Calculated Scores

OSSE will re-weight up to two domains to generate a composite score for a learner who has been determined to meet the test exemption criteria listed in Table 1. Re-weighted scores will be included in the calculation of the overall score for school and LEA ACCESS reports and will be saved within OSSE's data systems but will not be included on the Individual Score Reports (ISRs), also known as Parent/Guardian Reports, because WIDA does not have access to the imputed proficiency levels. Re-weighted scores will also be used to determine whether a student meets the criteria to exit EL services.

Appendix A: DC ACCESS for ELLs/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Domain Exemption Request Form



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DC ACCESS for ELLs/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Domain Exemption Request Form

OSSE has an established process for approving student exemption from completing one or more domains of the statewide English language proficiency assessment, ACCESS for ELLs or WIDA Alternate ACCESS. In the rare event that a student's disability prevents them from accessing all four domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) of the assessment, the school may use this **Domain Exemption Request Form** to request approval for an individual student to be exempted from a specified domain or domains of the ACCESS for ELLs or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment.

A minimum of **four weeks** prior to test administration, the school principal, principal's designee, or assessment coordinator must complete and upload the Domain Exemption Request Form into the [OSSE Support Tool](#). School personnel are responsible for the mandatory filing of a copy of this completed request form into the student's file.

Student Information	
Name:	State ID/Unique Student Identifier (USI):
Grade:	Date of Birth (DOB):
Assessment: <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESS for ELLs <input type="checkbox"/> WIDA Alternate ACCESS	
School Information	
School Name:	Tel. Number:
Local Education Agency (LEA) Name:	
Name of Principal or Assessment Coordinator:	Signature:
Email:	Date:
Test Administration	
Indicate the domain(s) for which you are seeking exemption: <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Writing	
Indicate which exemption criteria the student meets: <input type="checkbox"/> Primary disability is reported as "Sensory: Hard of Hearing or Deaf" <input type="checkbox"/> Primary disability is reported as "Sensory: Vision Impairment or Blind" <input type="checkbox"/> Meets criteria to receive the text-to-speech or human reader accommodation on the statewide ELA assessment and this accommodation is listed in the student's IEP or 504 plan <input type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal or selectively mute <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to write due to physical impairment or condition and unable to use assistive technology or access the scribe accommodation	

Describe the evidence that supports the need for this domain exemption:

In submitting this form to OSSE for approval, the principal or assessment coordinator assures that:

- If approved, this exemption will be documented in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan, and EL plan.
- The school team has met and considered all available accommodations before proposing this exemption.
- A copy of this form will remain in the student's file.

If approved, the exemption must be listed in the student's IEP or 504 plan.

For OSSE Use Only: (Approval/Denial of Request)

(This completed section will be returned to your school prior to testing.)

This request has been approved.

This request has been denied.

OSSE Decision Rationale:

OSSE Staff Name and Position:

Signature:

Date: