

Guidelines for Matching English Learner's Assessment Accommodations to Students' Overall Level of English Language Proficiency

The following guidelines are provided as a supplement to the English learner (EL) section of the [2020-2021 Student Assessment Handbook](#) (SAH, pp. 101-106) published on Assessment's [For Educators](#) webpage. Detailed information on the composition and role of the English learner 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 English learner testing is provided in the SAH.

This supplemental guidance is intended to provide additional information from the English learner program perspective to support school EL/TPC teams who are deciding which testing accommodations would benefit EL students and for IEP teams determining which testing accommodations are needed for English learners with disabilities (EL/SWD). As EL/TPCs make decisions based on student's level of English proficiency, the application of testing accommodations for EL students will become more consistent across the state.

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.

Testing accommodations for English learners with disabilities (EL/SWD) will be determined by the student's IEP team, which must include an ESOL educator. 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 the student has both literacy and dictionary skills in his primary language. All other accommodations appear on both the EL and the SWD allowable accommodation charts. For more information on allowable accommodations for EL/SWD, please refer to guidance provided by the Special Education program.



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 decrease.

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 and relevant sociocultural factors.

- WIDA's Receptive and Expressive Performance Definitions for each of six language development levels provide educators with information to 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 (see bulleted list above).

Finally, if an EL student is not developing language proficiency as expected, compared to like peers and research averages, the 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.

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.