



## **ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs during COVID-19 Pandemic**

The priority of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is to protect the health and safety of students and staff during statewide tests. Each district and charter school has developed local health and safety precautions based on information provided by MDE and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

### **What are the ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs?**

The ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are English language proficiency assessments used to meet federal and state legislative requirements. These assessments are used to monitor English learners' progress as they develop academic language skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

### **Why do we give these tests?**

ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores provide valuable information about English language development to families and schools. Families can use proficiency level scores and descriptions to understand the progress their child is making and to engage with schools to support their child's learning.

Teachers and schools can use the scores to monitor student progress in acquiring English, plan instruction, and evaluate their language development programs. Schools also use these scores to determine if a student is ready to exit an English language program.

School- and district-level test results are used in federal and state accountability measurements.

### **When can students take the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for the 2020-21 school year?**

Students can take the tests between January 25 and April 16, 2021.

### **How are the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS administered?**

Both the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS must be taken at school, even if your student is in distance learning. Your school will follow all of the health and safety precautions they have developed while your student is in the

school for testing. MDE, in conjunction with MDH, has also provided guidance, including how to clean test materials, ensure social distancing, and provide transportation and meals as necessary.

Most students take the ACCESS online, but some eligible students take the test in a paper test book. For the Alternate ACCESS, teachers work with each student individually using a paper test book.

## **What health and safety measures are being taken at schools?**

Schools operating in-person or hybrid distance learning models are following guidance outlined in the [Safe Learning Plan for the 2020-21 School Year](#) created by MDE and MDH. Everyone in a school building must wear a cloth face covering and follow social distancing practices. Schools are expected to clean and disinfect surfaces regularly. Test materials will be cleaned before each use. Schools are also limiting the number of visitors to their buildings and monitoring all students and staff for symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed inside the school building.

If a school is operating in distance learning, they will follow the above listed safety protocols.

## **What if I am concerned about the health and safety of my student or family and do not want them to go in to the school to test?**

If your student is in distance learning and you do not want your student to go in to the school to test because of concerns for health and safety related to COVID-19, your student cannot take the ACCESS or Alternative ACCESS. If your student does not test, they will not have the opportunity to exit from their English learner program this year. There are no other consequences for your student or your family if they do not participate. If you do not want to participate, let your school know.

## **How can I get more information?**

Contact your school for more information about their health and safety procedures during statewide testing and how these test scores are used to support your student's English skills.

The [ACCESS Parent Fact Sheet](#) is available on the MDE website (under Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing) in several languages. There is additional parent information on the [WIDA website](#) in several languages (refer to number 3). Please email [mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us) if you have questions about ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS.