



Information for Families: ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Statewide Assessments

Dear Families,

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) requires that statewide assessments are administered annually to English learners. They are designed to provide the state, districts, and schools with a snapshot of student learning of the WIDA English Language Development Standards.

What are the ACCESS for ELLs (ACCESS) and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs (Alternate ACCESS)?

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

Why do we give these assessments?

ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS scores provide valuable information about English language development to families, schools, districts and MDE. 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 2021–22 school year?

Students can take the assessments between January 31 and March 25.

How are the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS administered?

Both the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS must be taken in person, even if your student is enrolled in an online program. For students temporarily learning online, they will take statewide assessments when they return to school. Your school can provide more specific information about the health and safety measures they are taking to ensure students and staff stay safe and healthy during test administration.

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

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

If your student is enrolled in an online program and you do not want your student to test in person because of concerns for health and safety related to COVID-19, you can choose not to have your student take the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS. If your student does not test, they will not have the opportunity to exit from their English learner program this year. If you do not want them to participate, let your school know.

How can I get more information?

Contact your school for more information on how these test results 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 if you have questions about ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS.