ACCESS for ELLs Post-Assessment Survey

Introduction

In May 2012, Massachusetts joined the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium and adopted new English development proficiency standards, as well as the ACCESS for ELLs tests to measure how well students who are English language learners (ELLs) have achieved the WIDA standards. The ACCESS for ELLs tests were administered for the first time in January and February 2013. Students in kindergarten through grade 12 who were reported as ELLs were tested in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. In Massachusetts, 71,435 students from 1,636 schools and 391 districts participated in the 2013 ACCESS for ELLs test administration.

The ACCESS for ELLs tests replaced the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), which had been administered annually since 2005. Although many features of the ACCESS for ELLs tests are similar to MEPA, the new tests require schools to implement test administrator training, schedule testing, and administer the tests. Shortly after the ACCESS for ELLs tests were administered (between March 1 and March 20), the Department conducted a post-administration survey of principals, ELL program directors, and others in order to

1. assess the impact of the changes in testing ELL students;
2. determine the need for revision of policies and testing procedures in subsequent test administrations; and
3. assist in preparing schools to administer tests in future years.

Survey Results

Participation

Survey Respondents
A total of 508 school and district staff responded to the survey from 204 of the 347 districts with ELL students who participated in ACCESS for ELLs testing. Results were reported only for the 407 respondents who completed the survey, representing 204 school districts. The majority of survey respondents (55 percent) directly administered the test; ELL directors represented 17 percent of respondents; principals, 14 percent; and school-based test coordinators (responsible for scheduling and organizing testing), 14 percent.

Of district-level respondents,
- 81 were from districts with 20 or fewer students;
- 76 represented schools with 100–500 students; and
- 31 respondents were from districts with more than 500 students.

The largest number of school-level respondents (61) represented schools with between 50 and 100 students. Eighteen represented schools with 100–300 students, and 7 represented schools with over 1500 students. School- and district-level respondents reported the number of student participants as follows:
### Overall Test Administration Experience

Sixty-three percent of the respondents found the overall experience of administering the ACCESS for ELLs for the first time manageable. Twenty-seven percent indicated that they found it moderately difficult, while 5 percent found it very difficult. The remaining 5 percent found it easy.

![Pie chart showing overall test administration experience](image)

**Challenges of ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration**

The most challenging aspect of the ACCESS for ELLs administration for most respondents (38 percent) was scheduling test sessions so the test administration could be completed within the testing window. This was closely followed by that of administering the Speaking test in a one-to-one setting. Twelve percent did not indicate any aspect that they found difficult. Eight percent found it difficult to follow the instructions in the test administration manuals. Two percent reported that they found monitoring test administrator training challenging.
Most Challenging Aspects of ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration | Respondents (%)  
--- | ---  
Scheduling test sessions | 38.0  
Administering the Speaking test one-to-one | 31.6  
Following instructions in the Test Administration Manual and other documents | 7.9  
Understanding instructions for giving each test | 4.2  
Monitoring test administrator training | 2.2  
Completing each student's test booklet | 2.0

Approximately 3 percent of respondents reported that administering the Kindergarten test one-to-one was significantly challenging. None of the listed topics were challenging to 11.9 percent of respondents.

Translating Test Instructions into the Students’ Native Languages

Schools were permitted to translate test instructions only (not the actual test) into a student’s native language. Twenty-two percent stated that instructions were translated for a few students, while two percent stated that instructions were translated for most or all of their students. Seventy-six percent stated that they did not translate instructions for any students.

Training and Support Resources

The ACCESS for ELLs District and School Test Administration Manual (TAM) and the ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration Manual—Massachusetts Supplement that were sent to schools with test materials were used most frequently to orient school and district staff in organizing and administering ACCESS for ELLs tests. Ninety-five percent of respondents found these helpful. Online test administrator training modules were listed as useful by 89 percent of respondents. About half of respondents used the WIDA Help Desk or the MetriTech Help Desk, or the ESE website, or contacted the Department by phone, and most indicated that these supports were helpful. The table below shows how respondents rated the helpfulness of training and support resources.
## Training and Support Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training and Support Resources</th>
<th>Helpful (%)</th>
<th>Not Used (%)</th>
<th>Not Helpful (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration Manual (TAM) and MA State Supplement to the TAM</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online training modules</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test coordinator training provided by the state in September/October 2012</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIDA website</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MetriTech Help Desk</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESE Website</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIDA Help Desk</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting ESE by phone or email</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Test Administrator Training and Certification

All test administrators were required to complete online test administrator training and certification for the section(s) of the test they would administer. Three online training modules were offered:
- Module 1: Overview (a 15-minute training session)
- Module 2: Group-Administered Tests—Listening, Reading, and Writing (about 1 hour)
- Module 3: Speaking Test Module (about 2 hours)
- Module 4: Kindergarten Test Module (about 2½ hours)

Sixty percent of survey respondents indicated that organizing and monitoring this training was challenging, but manageable. Thirty-four percent reported that management of the test administrator training was fairly easy. Six percent reported that it was extremely difficult.

Slightly more than 50 percent of respondents said their district provided professional development time for this training, while 79 percent of respondents said test administrators used either their own time for this activity, or used a combination of their own and district-provided time.

## Opinions on Frequency of Training and Recertification

Forty-four percent of the survey respondents indicated that the Speaking test certification should be required annually, while thirty-two percent believed it should be required every two years. Thirty-four percent felt that the Kindergarten test certification should be required annually, and thirty-one percent thought it should be required every two years. A majority (64%) thought that
training and certification for the group-administered tests (Listening, Reading, and Writing in grades 1–12) should be required every two years or every 5 years, with 20 percent indicating annual training. The table below shows how frequently respondents thought test administrators should be trained and recertified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Test</th>
<th>Never (%)</th>
<th>Annually (%)</th>
<th>Every 2 Years (%)</th>
<th>Every 5 Years (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking test</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten test</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-administered tests</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Reactions to ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration**

- Most respondents appreciated the lengthened test administration window (five weeks).
- Many said the test was time-consuming, especially the Speaking and Kindergarten tests, though some wished for even more time to complete test sessions, especially the Reading test. Many said that with increased familiarity, scheduling and individual testing times may be reduced next year.
- The majority of respondents felt that most students were able to complete the Reading (58 percent) and the Writing (70 percent) tests in the time allowed. Many indicated that the time allotted for these tests was insufficient for some students.
- Listening test: a majority of respondents indicated that one reading of each test item was insufficient, either for most students (42 percent), or for students with disabilities (32 percent). Twenty-six percent felt that one reading of each item was sufficient for most students to understand the question and select an answer.
- Speaking test: 90 percent of respondents indicated that the graphics and text in the Speaking test either aided (76 percent), or did not affect (14 percent), the students’ performance on the test; however, 9.7 percent indicated that it negatively affected the students’ performance, and 0.3 percent indicated that the graphics and text prevented some students from being able to participate in the Speaking test. The latter may have referred to students who were blind or vision impaired.

**Students with Disabilities**

Seventy-six percent of respondents reported that ELL students with disabilities were educated in their school/district. These respondents reported the following:
- Allowing the Listening test to be read aloud a second time to students with disabilities made the test more accessible to those students.
- Schools need to be more aware that ELL students with disabilities in kindergarten–grade 2 who need accommodations should have them listed in their IEPs. If Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is adopted next year, districts should be informed early in the school year to amend IEPs to include students designated for alternate assessments.
- Accommodations allowed for students with disabilities taking ACCESS for ELLs tests should be described in IEPs and 504 plans. Care should be taken in listing accommodations for ACCESS for ELLs tests since, these accommodations may differ from MCAS accommodations.
Other Comments

Respondents were asked to provide additional general comments. The majority of comments were neutral or positive; for example, “It was a pleasant and informative experience, while challenging at times.” Some respondents felt that the test was too difficult for their students because the passages were lengthy, and the Listening test required the students to remember too much information to answer the questions. Most other comments repeated information already gathered elsewhere in the survey.

Conclusions

The key findings of the survey were that:

- ACCESS for ELLs test administration was considered manageable, for the most part, though some found it moderately difficult;
- The greatest challenge was scheduling test sessions to accommodate one-to-one testing for Speaking and Kindergarten;
- Certification of test administrators was achieved by almost all who attempted it (94 percent);
- Most believed that certification for the Speaking and Kindergarten tests should be required annually, with the group–test administration module required every two years.

Other comments and concerns include the following:

- Timed testing for ELL students with disabilities prevented many from completing the tests.
- More clarification was requested on test accommodations.
- There was interest in exploring the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs next year for ELLs with significant disabilities.

Thank you to those who took time to respond to this survey. The Department will analyze this information together with information compiled in telephone logs and emails to the Department to determine future policies and procedures for the ACCESS for ELLs test administration.