

## Revised Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) 2.0 English Language Proficiency Score and Additional Criteria

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is the new proficiency score for ACCESS 2.0?

For a student to be considered proficient on ACCESS 2.0, a student must have at least a 4.5 overall composite score and **any three of the four** domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) must be at or above 3.5.

#### Why did MDE change the proficiency score on ACCESS 2.0?

There were a few reasons. First, WIDA conducted a round of standard setting that resulted in a more rigorous scoring system on ACCESS 2.0, meaning that the scores on the 2017 administration of ACCESS would not be comparable to scores from previous years. Second, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to set standardized entrance and exit criteria for English learners (ELs). This means Minnesota must adopt a standardized ACCESS proficiency score that all schools and districts must adopt. For these reasons, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) gathered a group of stakeholders, including English language development (ELD) professionals, assessment staff, and community advocates, to re-evaluate the ACCESS proficiency score.

#### Is this in conflict with WIDA's concept of proficiency?

No. Each state is responsible for adopting a proficiency score, and Minnesota is not alone in re-evaluating the ACCESS proficiency score. MDE followed the same process that Dr. Gary Cook (WIDA's director of research) used to help Minnesota determine proficiency in 2012 when Minnesota first adopted WIDA standards and assessments. The methods used to determine a proficiency score are outlined in [National Evaluation of Title III Implementation Supplemental Report – Exploring Approaches to Setting English Language Proficiency Performance Criteria and Monitoring English Learner Progress](https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/implementation-supplemental-report.pdf) (<https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/implementation-supplemental-report.pdf>).

## **The new proficiency score looks like a lower standard. Is it really a lower standard?**

No. Numerically, the composite score of 4.5 is lower than the previous requirement of a composite score of 5.0. However, due to WIDA's recent standard setting process, students must have a stronger command of academic English to reach a composite score of 4.5 on the ACCESS 2.0 than a composite score of 5.0 on the ACCESS 1.0. Despite the numerically lower score, there may still be a lower proficiency and exit rate in 2017 than in years past as a result of the increased rigor of the scoring system.

## **Do I have to use this proficiency score in spring 2017 to exit students?**

Though it is not mandatory that schools and districts use this proficiency score in the spring of 2017 to make exiting and reclassification decisions, MDE strongly recommends using this new proficiency score for two reasons. First, using the former proficiency score of a 5 composite with no domain lower than a 4 on the new scale would keep many students in English learner (EL) services despite them demonstrating a mastery of content standards and succeeding in content classrooms. Second, districts and schools will be **required** to use this proficiency score starting with the ACCESS scores that students receive in the spring of 2018.

## **If a student meets the proficiency score, do they automatically exit EL services?**

Not necessarily. Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.59, states that an English learner is a student who is determined by a test (ACCESS) **and** "by developmentally appropriate measures, which might include observations, teacher judgment, parent recommendations, or developmentally appropriate measures" to have insufficient English to participate fully in the content classroom. Therefore, if a student meets the proficiency score, yet there is still evidence that their academic English is still not sufficient to fully participate in the content classroom, teachers may use a set of additional criteria to retain students in EL services. To be clear, students should be retained in EL services only in exceptional circumstances when there is clear and documented evidence that the student still requires EL services. Parents and EL students themselves must be consulted and have a voice in this decision.

## **When should I use additional criteria, such as teacher judgment or parent input, when exiting students?**

For the spring of 2017, MDE's recommendation is to use additional criteria when a student has met the proficiency score but one of the domains remains below a 3.5.

## **What additional measures should the district look at to decide to exit and reclassify a student?**

If a student has met the new proficiency score, but one domain is below a 3.5, you should evaluate the student's lowest domain to determine whether or not that student still needs EL services in order to be successful in the content classroom. For the spring of 2017, MDE suggests looking at grades, student work, formative language assessments, classroom observations, and parent recommendations. Any evidence gathered that will be used to retain a student in EL services must be kept and documented in the student's cumulative file.

## **Can I exit a student using the additional criteria even if they have not met the ACCESS proficiency score?**

No. Students must meet the ACCESS proficiency score in order to be exited.

## **Why does the proficiency score only address three out of four domains?**

Several stakeholders voiced concerns that students with a disability affecting one of the domains may be retained in EL services even though other, more targeted services may be more appropriate for that student. For example, a student with dyslexia may be unable to meet the domain requirement in reading on the ACCESS 2.0 test regardless of his or her command of academic English. Several stakeholders also took issue with students being retained in EL services because one domain was consistently just below the 4.0 requirement on the old proficiency score, despite these students otherwise succeeding in the content classroom and demonstrating a strong command of academic language.

## **How do we communicate this to families?**

WIDA has provided some translated materials about the changes in the ACCESS 2.0 scores. See [2017 ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Score Changes on the WIDA website](https://www.wida.us/Assessment/ACCESS%202.0/proficiency.aspx) (<https://www.wida.us/Assessment/ACCESS%202.0/proficiency.aspx>).