

**The WIDA Accessibility  
and Accommodations  
Framework:  
Considerations Influencing  
the Framework's  
Development**





In 2015–2016, WIDA introduced a new online version of its Grades 1–12 annual summative ELP assessment, ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. Similar to other Next Generation Assessment Consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education grants issued in 2010 and 2011 (Michelman, 2013), WIDA and subgroup of the WIDA Consortium member SEAs used its four-year Enhanced Assessment Grant, *Assessment Services Supporting ELs through Technology Systems (ASSETS)* to design new online English language proficiency assessment test forms and considerations (ASSETS Consortium, 2012).

Fueled by the transition to technology-enhanced assessments and new conceptualizations around the more flexible approaches to curriculum design and test development, WIDA has taken advantage of the transition to online testing to enhance its test design and delivery. ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 was designed to increase student engagement through a more dynamic testing experience, include built-in accommodations and accessibility features appropriate for a range of student needs, provide logistical flexibility as a result of simultaneous administration of multiple grades and proficiency levels, and increase ease for test administrators who will no longer need to administer and score the Speaking test one-on-one and who will not need to order by tier (ASSETS, 2012). As part of this process, WIDA has coordinated with consortium member SEAs to develop an accessibility and accommodations framework, which can be used to reframe the approach to accommodations and accessibility used with ACCESS for ELLs 2.0.

### Description of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework

In accordance with the newly passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and 2014 U.S. Department of Education guidance around the inclusion of ELLs with disabilities on ELP assessments, SEAs must develop guidelines for accommodations to maximize inclusion of children with disabilities and English learners participating in assessments ensure they do not invalidate ELP assessment scores (U.S. Congress, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2014, pp. 4–5).

The WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework (shown in Figure 2) consists of the application of effective linguistic scaffolding and Universal Design principles to the development of test items, use of administrative considerations, and purposeful design and delivery of universal tools and accommodations. Modifications, by definition, are not allowed to ELLs during ELP testing since they would change the construct being assessed. The components of this framework are described below in Table 1.

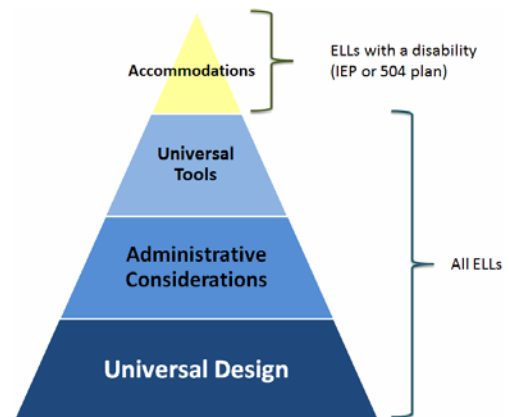


Figure 2. WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework

Table 1. WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework Components

Term	Who	Definition	Examples
<b>Modifications</b>	Not allowed to ELLs during ELP testing	Adjustments to test presentation, engagement, and response options that would change the construct being measured, creating nonstandard test administrations, and altering the interpretation of student test scores. While sometimes allowed during classroom instruction, in testing situations, modifications change what is being measured, create nonstandard test administrations, and have an effect that alters the interpretation of student test scores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read-aloud of test items on the Reading domain</li> <li>• Oral or written translations of test items into a language other than English</li> <li>• Signing of test items, passages, and/or response options (answer choices)</li> <li>• Use of a bilingual word-to-word dictionary</li> <li>• Responding to test questions in a language other than English</li> </ul>
<b>Accommodations</b>	Accommodations are available <i>only</i> to ELLs with disabilities when listed in an approved IEP or 504 Plan, and only when the student requires the accommodation(s) to participate in an assessment meaningfully and appropriately.	Allowable adjustments to the test presentation, response method, timing, and setting in which assessments are administered, <sup>1</sup> which reduce construct-irrelevant barriers due to a disability. Accommodations may be embedded and delivered within the online test platform, or nonembedded and delivered locally by a test administrator. These adjustments have the potential likelihood are meant to <i>reduce construct-irrelevant variance due to disability</i> without providing an unfair advantage to a specific subgroup. Accommodations are intended to provide testing conditions that (a) do <i>not</i> result in changes in what the test measures, (b) provide comparable test results to those students who do not receive accommodations, and (c) do <i>not</i> affect the validity and reliability of the interpretation of the scores for their intended purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpreter signs test directions in American Sign Language</li> <li>• Manual control of embedded audio</li> <li>• Large Print test</li> <li>• Scribed response</li> <li>• Student uses assistive technology to respond to test items</li> <li>• Extended Speaking test response time</li> <li>• Extended testing time within a school day</li> </ul>
<b>Universal Tools<sup>2</sup></b>	Allowed to all students taking the assessment; assigned based on preference or need.	Selectable embedded features or hand-held instruments used to carry out a particular purpose. Universal tools may either be embedded in the online test or provided to ELLs by Test Administrators for online or paper tests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio aids</li> <li>• Highlighter</li> <li>• Line guide</li> <li>• Color contrast</li> <li>• Screen magnifier</li> <li>• Notepad</li> <li>• Keyboard shortcuts/equivalents</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Other researchers are suggesting new categorizations for accommodations. In the *APIP Primer*, Russell et al. (2011) have reframed the four categories by which accommodations have been traditionally sorted into three categories: test presentation, engagement, and response options.

<sup>2</sup> In Summer 2016, WIDA clarified its framework and adjusted the term *accessibility tools* to the term *universal tools*. (The word *universal* reflects Plain English more effectively than *accessibility* and aligns well with the common-used term *Universal Design for Learning*.)

Term	Who	Definition	Examples
<b>Administrative considerations</b>	Allowed to any student taking the test, as needed, at the discretion of the Test Coordinator (or principal or designee), provided that all security conditions and staffing requirements are met.	Adjustments to the standard test administration considerations described in the Test Administration Manual. These allowable variations provide flexibility to schools and districts in determining the conditions under which ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 can be administered most effectively, provided that all standardized testing and security requirements are met. Some of the items listed here as test administration considerations might be listed in a student’s IEP to support the provision of accommodations. (Previously, many of these test administration considerations had been limited only to students with disabilities.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read, repeat, explain, or clarify test directions</li> <li>• Individual or small group administration</li> <li>• Administration of test in a separate room</li> <li>• Use of familiar school personnel to administer the assessment</li> <li>• Providing frequent supervised breaks</li> <li>• Allowing students to take the assessment in short segments</li> </ul>
<b>Universal design and linguistic scaffolding in test items</b>	All students taking the assessment, built in by item developers	Integration of accessibility principles into the test item development process, resulting in <i>a priori</i> decisions focusing on a greater variety in test item presentation, student interaction opportunities, and student response options, all of which can be used to expand and maximize measurement of a test’s intended construct.	Test items with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple modalities, including supporting prompts with appropriate animations and graphics</li> <li>• Embedded scaffolding</li> <li>• Tasks broken into “chunks”</li> <li>• Modeling using task models and guides</li> </ul>

### Rationales for the Development of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework

The WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework is part of a broader trend in the accountability and assessment field toward technology-enhanced assessment and an application of universal design principles during test item development. WIDA transitioned to this new Accessibility and Accommodation Framework because of the increasing body of evidence indicating consistent reliability challenges associated with the limitations of relying on accommodations as the primary strategy for ensuring that all students are able to access the test construct. While the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework aligns with the multi-tiered accessibility approach being used by the content assessment consortia, two additional elements were included in the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework to meet the additional use cases requests by WIDA Consortium member SEAs. The remaining sections of this paper will provide more information supporting these rationales.

### Challenges Associated with the Traditional Approach to Accommodations

A decade ago, the accommodation guidelines used with ACCESS for ELLs were developed in alignment with then-current practices in SEA accommodation guidelines for students with disabilities. As shown in Appendix B, the more than forty accommodations allowed with ACCESS for ELLs were organized using the traditional categorization scheme, sorting them into presentation, response, timing/scheduling, and setting accommodations.

Nevertheless, a growing body of research has revealed systematic implementation flaws associated with manner in which accommodations were being assigned and implemented during paper-based testing: inaccurate match between teachers' accommodation decision making and students' needs even within same school/district (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Kimbrough & Mellen, 2012; Rogers, Christian, & Thurlow, 2012; Shafer Willner, Rivera, & Acosta, 2007) and the lack of monitoring around their implementation (Shafer Willner, Rivera, & Acosta, 2010). Increasingly, more researchers questioned the use of accommodations as the primary strategy for ensuring student equity needs were being met (Shafer Willner & Rivera, 2012). A major problem with the traditional approach to accommodations has been that they were designed *after* (*post-hoc* to test development), not as part of test item construction (NCEO, 2011). Additionally, during the past decades, many states have realized that some of the supports should be made available to all students since, increasingly, there were not considered accommodations, that is, linked to a disability. [This shift in state policies for accommodating students with disabilities is captured in the 2014 ACCESS for ELLs guidelines (WIDA, 2014). It notes, "The use of highlighters may be available to all students in some states. Please contact your state educational agency if you have questions about the use of highlighters" (p. 4).]

In the years after the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S Congress, 2001), many SEAs had begun to consider how accommodations might be more precisely defined in relation to the barriers students faced during testing. Over the past decade, many WIDA SEAs' guidelines for accommodating ELLs on state content assessments transitioned away from the traditional four categories of accommodations in order to more precisely reduce the linguistic barriers ELLs faced during testing. The shift to a narrower number of ELL accommodations was fueled by the 2006–2008 U.S. Department of Education LEP Partnership research and resulting technical assistance. Between 2008 and 2012, at least half of SEA ELL accommodation guidelines were refined to improve their *ELL-responsiveness* (including the accommodation guidelines of WIDA member SEAs of AK, CO, DC, DE, KY, IL, MD, MN, NC, TN, VA). These refinements resulted in reframing most of the timing/scheduling and setting accommodations (except extended time) into a group of nonaccommodations called *test administration considerations*, allowable variations in testing conditions and test delivery that would support test administration (Shafer Willner & Rivera, 2014). As a result, to many of ELL educators who would be serving as ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Test Administrators, the WIDA Accessibility & Accommodation Framework reference to test administration considerations reflected an approach to accommodation that they had already been using with their students.

While the previous paragraph provides an example that focuses on linguistic accommodations, not disabilities accommodations, at a deeper level, it provides a window into the spread of Universal Design principles into the design of state content area assessment accommodation guidelines. The introduction of the concept of nonaccommodation/test administration considerations into ELL accommodation guidelines for state content assessments was borrowed from a trend that had begun to emerge in the state area content assessment accommodation guidelines for students with disabilities (Shafer Willner, Rivera, & Acosta, 2008). On p. 19, the Shafer Willner et al. explained,

In Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Washington policies, test administration practices—especially those involving timing/scheduling and setting adjustments—are not restricted to ELLs or students with disabilities, but are available to all students. A Massachusetts SEA staff member explained that general test administration strategies are not

considered accommodations when “they are used solely for administrative convenience and not granted to the student as a result of his or her special status as LEP and/or disability” (D. Wiener, personal communication, September 11, 2007). Similarly, a staff member from the North Dakota SEA indicated, “We differentiate between an accommodation that is allowed for a unique population of students that has a specific learning need and is protected in legislation, such as LEP, students with disabilities or students on a 504 plan, and those strategies and practices that may enhance students’ success in testing and are available to all students” (M. Rasmussen, personal communication, March 19, 2008).

In a supporting document developed for the North Dakota state policy, Report on evidenced based accommodations for ELLs, Wilde and Finkelstein (2006) explicate a narrower approach to the assignment of accommodations to ELLs:

Not everything that might help students when taking academic achievement tests is an accommodation. For instance, the following are examples of strategies that might help students, but are not considered “accommodations” when they are used as described here.

- If a strategy is allowed for, or given to, all students, it is not an accommodation, but is a regular testing practice in the state or district.
- If a strategy improves the scores of all students, it is not an accommodation, but may be a regular testing practice in the state or district.
- If a strategy “works” to accommodate students receiving special education services, it may or may not serve as an accommodation for students with limited English proficiency, and vice versa. In general, an accommodation for one group of students should not be used with another group of students unless research has shown its appropriateness for the second group of students. If a strategy gives a clear advantage to a specific group of students as they take a test, it is not an accommodation since the purpose of an accommodation is to ensure that students have an equal (not advantaged) chance to show what they know and can do.
- Just because a strategy may be intuitively appropriate, does not mean it “works,” or that it is valid, reliable, and fair (Wilde & Finkelstein, 2006, p. 14)

#### **Further Clarification of What Adjustments Might Be Defined as an Accommodation**

In 2014, the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* had been updated to highlight issues of fairness surrounding the use of accommodations during testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014). In particular, the authors noted that assessments must minimize barriers for the widest possible range of individual and relevant subgroups and take into account characteristics of all intended test takers. Therefore, it is imperative that test developers conduct research to examine whether items function differently for different groups of similarly scoring test takers. However, research on accommodations used with ELP assessments is still in its infancy. In fact, as pointed out most recently, the research base on use of accommodation of ELLs with disabilities on ELP assessment is virtually nonexistent (Guzman-Orth, Laitusis, Thurlow, & Christensen, 2014).

Thus, as data and research practices are laid in place for ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, it is important for WIDA to have a clear way to examine the potential impact of ELP assessment accommodations provided to students with disabilities. For many years, the Interaction Hypothesis provided an early approach for researchers to use when examining potential impact of accommodations (Sireci, Scarpati, & Li, 2005). This hypothesis proposes that students within a particular subgroup (e.g., students with

disabilities) will benefit to a greater degree from accommodations than students who are not members of that particular subgroup (e.g., students without disabilities). In 1994, Phillips introduced the importance of examining the “differential boost” potentially provided by accommodations. This perspective suggests that students without disabilities might benefit from the use of accommodations (i.e., show improved performance), but that the difference in terms of benefit would be differentially (and significantly) larger for students with disabilities than that obtained by students without disabilities.

Yet it is important to clearly delineate what is and is not an accommodation. In 2002, soon after passage of NCLB, Lewis, Patz, Sheinker, and Barton created an accommodation litmus test to differentiate between modifications and accommodations. In it, accommodations were classified as adjustments<sup>3</sup> to that provide a “differential boost” to the test scores of a specific subgroup of students (but not to the scores of nonmembers of that subgroup). In contrast, those adjustments that should be not classified as accommodations would have comparatively little difference in impact on the test scores of members and nonmembers of the specific subgroup.

This notion is further nuanced in the 2014 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* which does focus on the importance of reducing bias towards groups: “*Differential item functioning* (DIF) is said to occur when equally able test takers differ in their probabilities of answering a test item correctly as a function on group membership” (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014, p. 51), but also on the addition of accessibility

Accessibility can best be understood by contrasting the knowledge, skills, and abilities that reflect the construct(s) the test is intended to measure with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are not the target of the test, but required to respond to test tasks or test items. (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014, p. 52)

The WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework incorporates the above view of accessibility and, to delineate the elements in its framework, uses an expanded version of the Lewis et al. (2002) accommodation litmus test. In 2015, WIDA staff, in collaboration with members of the WIDA Consortium Accessibility, Accommodation, and Equity Subcommittee reclassified the previous WIDA *ACCESS for ELLs* Accommodation Guidelines (2014) list of more than 40 presentation, response, timing/scheduling, and setting accommodations; differentiating between *modifications*, *accommodations*, and *accessibility supports for all students*. ELP assessments target a very specific accountability subgroup of students (ELs) as its entire participation population. As a result, ELP assessments may have elements that are allowed to all (EL) students taking the test which, on a content assessment, would be considered as accommodations or designated supports. In other words, there are adjustments that are framed as accommodations or designated supports on content assessments, that are just part of the universal design of an ELP assessment.

The WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework defines modification and accommodations similarly to Lewis et al (2002) and Sireci et al. (2003) referenced above, but adds a component to reference universal tools and test administration considerations. In the WIDA approach, *the supports provided for all students* are defined as adjustments that have only a slight, if any, impact on the test scores of nonmembers of the specific subgroup and would not modify what the test items are designed

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<sup>3</sup> The terms “adjustments” and “changes” are generic terms used when defining accommodations in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (2014).



to measure, nor the way test scores are interpreted. This approach is consistent with both the Differential Boost Hypothesis and widely referenced research and reviews of literature around accommodations for students with disabilities (e.g., Cawthon et al. 2009; Laitusis, Buzick, Stone, Hansen, & Hakkinen, 2012; Sireci, Li, & Scarpati, 2003). Cawthon et al. note

A fair accommodation must thus in some way “speak to the nature of the disability,” addressing the barriers created by the interaction between the student’s disability and the test item format (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Capizzi, 2005, p. 5)...In order to empirically measure the effect of an accommodation on test scores, some researchers have come to rely on the idea of “differential boost” (Phillips, 1994). In this framework, a fair accommodation increases the test scores of students with disabilities more than those of students without disabilities, providing a differential boost to students with disabilities (Elliott & Marquart, 2004). This differential boost represents the interaction hypothesis: that a fair accommodation will result in an interaction between accommodation status and disability status (Sireci, Scarpati, & Li, 2005, p. 2)

### **Accessibility Solutions for Improving Students with Disabilities’ Access to Test Constructs**

The transition from paper-based to computer-delivered test formats<sup>4</sup> and the ability to embed accommodations within the computer interface and/or within technology-enhanced items has opened a window of opportunity to fundamentally rethink how assessments (and accommodations) could be designed, assigned, and implemented to meet the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities.

The use of computer technology in test development offers test developers the advantage of being able to design items with increased flexibility and possibilities for individualization; it enables the construction of “multiple, flexible supports into tests at the item level” (Harms, Burling, Way, Hanna, & Dolan, 2006, p. 1). Use of a computer-delivered test format would have the potential for eliminating the development and provision of “multiple versions of test materials” and the “provision of additional test proctors with specialized skills...such as the ability to speak the student’s first language” (Russell, Hoffman, & Higgins, 2009, pp. 2–3) and reducing demands on educators to develop and implement accommodations during test administration (Dolan & Hall, 2006).

Consequently, the decades-long trend towards a narrower definition of what is considered an accommodation in state testing guidelines was taken one step further during the large-scale Next Generation Assessment Consortia transition from paper-based to online testing. As part of U.S. Department of Education-funded work, accessibility researchers proposed a new approach to accessibility which could be used with technology-enhanced (i.e., online) testing: To focus on accommodation issues from the beginning of item design and to move beyond development of a single, one-size-fits-all test and test platform. The goal of this approach would be to ensure that the default test items can meet the needs of a broader range of students, thereby leaving fewer students “in the

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<sup>4</sup> As mentioned earlier, the widespread transition to online versions of large-scale assessments was fueled by the U.S. Department of Education grants issued in 2010 and 2011 (Michelman, 2013). WIDA and subgroup of the WIDA Consortium member SEAs used its 2011 Enhanced Assessment Grant, *Assessment Services Supporting ELs through Technology Systems (ASSETS)* to design new online English language proficiency assessment test forms and considerations (ASSETS Consortium, 2012).

margins,” unable to access the test construct (Meyer & Rose, 2005; Russell & Kavanaugh, 2011; NCEO, 2011; Thurlow, Quenemoen, Thompson, & Lehr, 2001).<sup>5</sup> Test item developers could . . .

tailor the item to access a construct that operates within each individual student [and shift] the focus from making post hoc changes to making a priori decisions about the variety of ways in which item content can be presented, how students interact with the content and how they respond in order to maximize the measure of the intended construct.” (Russell et al., 2011, p. 12)

Simply put, to minimize the adverse effects that accessibility challenges may have on test validity, test developers could identify potential accessibility challenges during the early stages of item development. Once accessibility challenges were identified, item and test developers could embed tools and accommodations directly into digital item files to provide multiple methods of presenting information so that the test items have an equal opportunity to create the intended contexts for students with different access needs.<sup>6</sup> Tools could also be provided to encourage matching these supports based on each student’s individual need. Russell and colleagues’ theoretical approach moved into ELP assessment during the transition to online testing.

Thus, the transition from the paper-based testing to the online testing has afforded the opportunity to rethink the concept of accommodations which, until this point, have been limited only to specific subgroups and developed and implemented well after test item development (Russell, Hoffman, & Higgins, 2009, Shafer Willner & Rivera, 2011; Shafer Willner, 2012). This transition to technology-enhanced assessments has provided the opportunity to apply accessibility principles, not only during test item development, but also to move the assignment of *accessibility supports for all students* beyond specific subgroup status (e.g., ELL status, IEP status) to address each student’s potentially multiple (and diverse) needs (as noted in the Access by Design framework, Fedorchak, 2010).

To acknowledge the shift in how accommodations are included as part of the initial design of items, the foundation of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework, universal design, references the multiple modalities of support that have been incorporated into default item design.<sup>7</sup> Examples of additional support that are unique to ELP assessment include supporting prompts with appropriate animations and graphics, embedded scaffolding, breaking tasks into “chunks,” and modeling using task models and guides. The degree to which item writers have expanded accessibility available to all ELLs taking the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is exemplified by the greater availability of read aloud, not only to accompany test item directions, but also as part of the Listening, Speaking, and Writing test items. For example, on the Writing test for ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, read aloud of test item text (in the form of embedded human audio) is available as a default option to all students taking the test, to ensure that

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<sup>5</sup> In a sense, this focus on improvement of default test items is analogous to the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) approach. The goal of MTSS is to strengthen the default instruction offered to all students during Tier 1 instruction; in contrast, within Response to Intervention (RTI), for example, there is a greater focus on follow-up support provided as part of Tier 2 and Tier 3 decisions.

<sup>6</sup> This approach is analogous to a similar trend towards the use of universal design in instruction. During lesson planning, the teacher first plans how to meet individual student needs, rather than beginning with a whole group approach and adding on customizations.

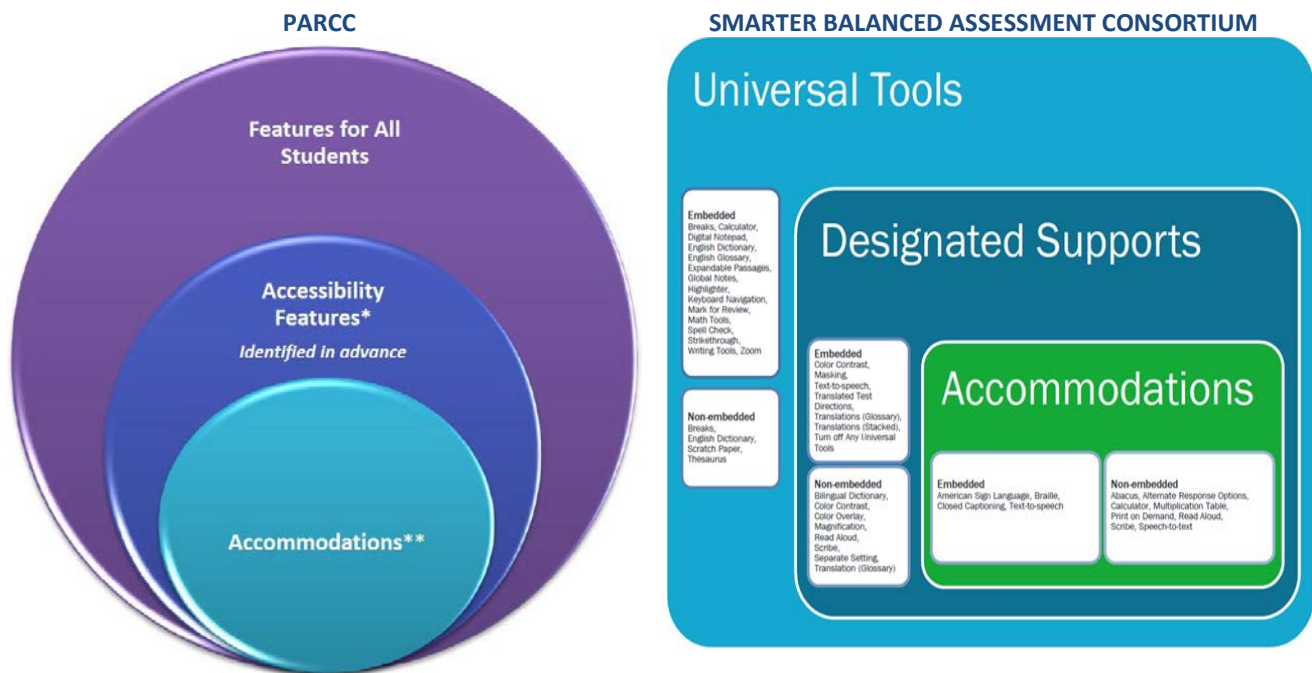
<sup>7</sup> WIDA’s acknowledgement of the embedded support added within the default version of test items is in contrast to other next generation assessment consortia’s accessibility frameworks which only provide a mapping of the additional accommodation, accessibility features, and universal features.

students are being measured on their writing, not their abilities to read the test item text that outlined the test item task they need to complete.

Conceptually, the addition of multiple modalities of language scaffolding during test development dovetails with Universal Design principles which call for educators to proactively design learning experiences from the outset in order to provide students with multiple pathways to participation and success through broader and multiple avenues of communication—e.g., nonverbal communication, pictorial and graphic support, arts integration, and technology/multimedia creations and communication (Myers & Rose, 2005). In effect, improvements in the range of multimodal support being built into default versions of online test items results in items being developed with greater access built into them *from the outset* and in development of alternate items that are interchangeable with default/standard test items (while measuring the same assessment target).

### Content Assessment Consortia’s Tiered Solutions to Accessibility

At the time of the initial design of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework in 2013–2014, two-thirds of WIDA Consortium member SEAs were members of either the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium or the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), the content area consortia that had been funded through U.S. Department of Education Race-to-the-Top Assessment grants. The two content area consortia use similar approaches to accessibility.



\*Available to all participating students

\*\*For students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities

Figure 3. PARCC and Smarter Balanced Accessibility and Accommodations diagrams

The PARCC Accessibility Framework (PARCC, 2015), Figure 3, offers three tiers of support to students:

- **Accessibility Features for all students** (a tool, support, scaffold, or preference that is available through the online platform, or may be externally delivered by a test administrator or other adult on the PARCC summative assessments). Students should determine whether they wish to use the feature on an item-by-item basis, based on the features they use during instruction and in daily life
- **Accessibility features** (available to all students, but will be selected and “turned on” by a school-based educator prior to the assessment, based on each student’s Personal Needs Profile [PNP]). Examples of embedded accessibility features include answer masking, audio amplification, color contrast, highlight tool, magnification/enlargement, pop-up glossary, spell checker, and text-to-speech for mathematics, scribing or speech-to-text responses for the mathematics assessment, word-to-word English/native language dictionary.
- **Accommodations** (specific assessment practices and considerations for students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities that change the presentation, response, setting, and/or timing and scheduling of assessments that are intended to provide equitable testing conditions). Examples of embedded accommodations include additional assistive technology, braille English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy and mathematics tests, tactile graphics, and text-to-speech or video of a human American Sign Language interpreter for the mathematics assessment (PARCC, 2013, p. 21).

Similar to PARCC, SMARTER’s 2015 Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations guidelines also contain three tiers of support, although it uses slightly different framing:

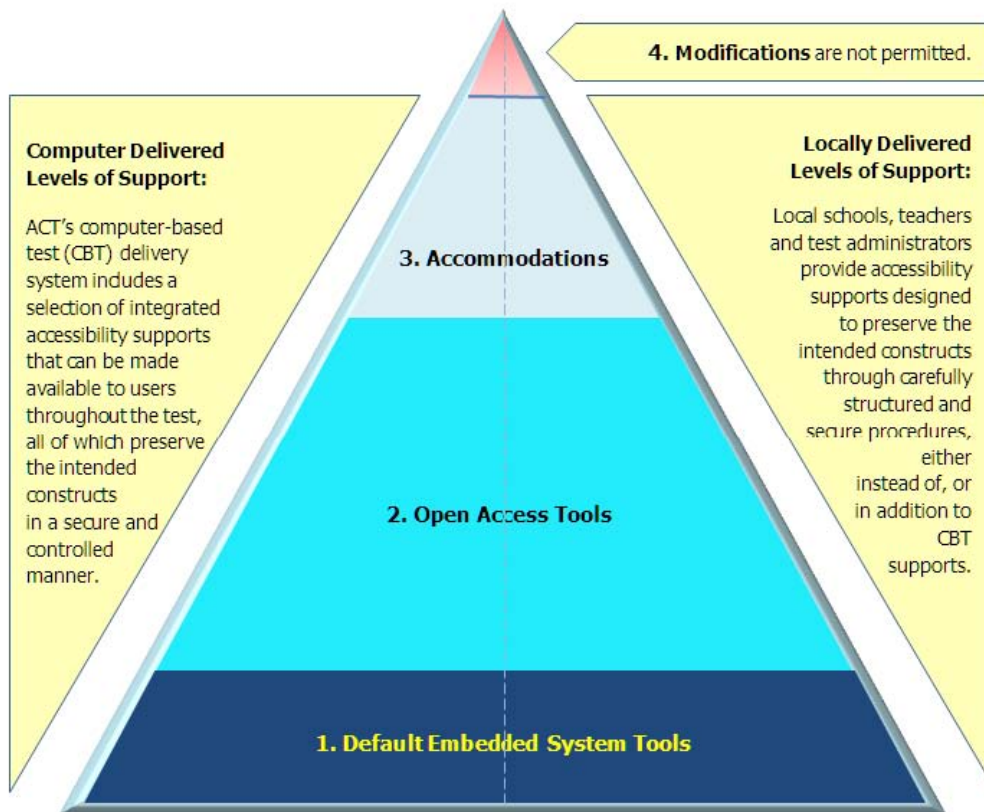
- **Universal Tools** are access features of the assessment that are either provided as digitally delivered components of the test administration system or separate from it. Universal tools are available to all students based on student preference and selection. Examples include breaks, calculator, English glossary, expandable passages, highlighter, keyboard navigation, spell check, writing tools, and zoom.
- **Designated Supports:** Features that are available for use by any student (including English language learners, students with disabilities, and English language learners with disabilities) for whom the need has been indicated by an educator or team of educators (with parent/guardian and student input as appropriate). Eligibility: Available only to students for whom an adult or team (consistent with state-designated practices) has indicated the need for these supports (as well as those students for whom the need is documented). Examples of embedded supports include color contrast, masking, text-to-speech for mathematics stimuli and ELA items, but not ELA passages, translated directions for mathematics items, translated glossaries for mathematics items, and stacked translations for mathematics items. (For Smarter Balanced, what many refers to as “ELL accommodations” are not considered to be accommodations, but designated supports.)
- **Accommodations:** Changes in considerations or materials that increase equitable access during the Smarter Balanced assessments by generating valid assessment results for students who need them and allowing these students to show what they know and can do. Available only for students on an IEP or 504 Plan. Examples of embedded accommodations included American Sign Language for ELA listening and mathematics items, Braille, close captioning for ELA listening items, text-to-speech for ELA reading passages.

The WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Framework does not contain a category for predesignated embedded tools that would be analogous to the Smarter Balanced designated supports and the PARCC designated accessibility features. After conducting a crosswalk between the WIDA accessibility supports (including accommodations) and those provided by Smarter Balanced and PARCC, it became apparent that WIDA had only two possible supports that might need predesignation: color contrast and color overlay. WIDA staff consulted with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) staff (who had used color contrast and color overlay in their previous online tests, both by requiring predesignation and later, by allowing students to determine whether they would use these supports). MDE found that as long as the students have access to sample items, they will use that time to “play” with the different colors on the screen. MDE determined to require predesignation created an extra layer of paperwork. Furthermore, they observed that in addition to students who have acuity issues or might need computer glare reduced, some students who did not have disabilities used the color contrast and overlay tools to be more engaged with the test. Another potentially predesignated support that WIDA might have chosen was text-to-speech. However, because WIDA is given to students whose first language is not English, test item developers deemed current text-to-speech quality as being far inferior to those found in recorded human voice.

While WIDA agrees with the tiered approach used in PARCC and Smarter Balanced accessibility frameworks, both of their diagrams indicate that the tiers have nested relationships. This structure implies that accommodations are a subset of designated features/designated supports, which were a subset of accessibility features and universal tools. As explained earlier in this section, psychometrically, accommodations should not be considered to be subsets of *supports for all students*.

#### **ACT’s Tiered Triangle Solution to Accessibility**

Some WIDA member SEAs use the ACT for their summative content area testing (e.g., AL and SC). Consequently, as part of its crosswalk work, WIDA also examined the accessibility framework being used with the Grades 3–8 ACT Aspire. The Grades 3–8 ACT test had recently added an accessibility framework developed by Gaye Fedorchak, whose ACCESS by Design framework was used to as the basis for much of Smarter Balance’s initial approaches to accessibility and accommodation. As shown below in Figure 4, the ACT Accessibility and Accommodation diagram captures the different tiers of accommodation and additional supports, without nesting the supports within each other. Therefore, WIDA diagrams were designed to be conceptually closer to the ACT diagram.



Width of the triangle above shows the proportionate number of students who use that set of accessibility tools.

Figure 4. ACT Accessibility and Accommodation Framework: ACT Aspire Grades 3–8 and High School Test

#### Additions to WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework and Diagram Based on SEA Use Cases

Several additional use cases unique to WIDA impacted the design of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework and diagram. To meet these use cases, two additional categories (test administration considerations and universal design built into test items) were added to the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework.

##### Use Case: Acknowledgement of Universal Design Built into Standard Version of Test Items

For WIDA, the deeper underlying goal of the new approach to accommodations was not to create a new set of add-on tools and accommodations, but to ensure that the standard version of test items can meet the needs of a broader range of students, thereby leaving fewer students “in the margins,” unable to access the test construct (Meyer & Rose, 2005; Russell & Kavanaugh, 2011). Therefore, the WIDA diagram not only included reference to accommodations and universal tools, but also to the universal design built into test items.

##### Use Case: Continued Availability of Support to ELLs

Referencing the universal design built into test items also met another important need for member SEAs. A number of WIDA Consortium member SEAs indicated that it was important to ensure that the support that had been available to ELLs with IEPs during the previous ELP assessment would continue to be available in ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. Some states who were not members of content assessment consortia continued to use a traditional approach to accommodations categorization on their content assessment. For these states, it was important for IEP teams to understand the differences between the

accommodations offered for ELP assessments and those offered for content area assessments. With ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, particular attention has been paid to ensuring that student access to the ELP construct is not limited due (a) to student language proficiency or (b) the language expectations that are appropriate for that grade/grade cluster. Thus, an IEP team might discover that on an ELP assessment some of the "ELL/linguistic accommodations" which might be needed for a content area assessment are embedded in the design of the ELP assessment, providing universal access to all ELLs taking the test.

#### [Use Case: Ability to Crosswalk the WIDA ELP Assessment Accommodations with State Content Assessment Accommodations](#)

Several WIDA consortium member SEAs indicated they would be creating their own statewide crosswalk documents to show the commonalities among the accommodations allowed for the different assessments students would be participating in during 2015–2016. The purpose of the state developed crosswalk documents was to assist IEP Teams in quickly identifying accommodations identified in students' IEPs and matching them to available assessment accommodations. WIDA consortium member SEAs requested that the new WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework would align with the organization of accommodations used with state content area assessments to facilitate the development of these crosswalks. It was clearly understood that the content assessment frameworks were not to be duplicates, since the tests examined different constructs.

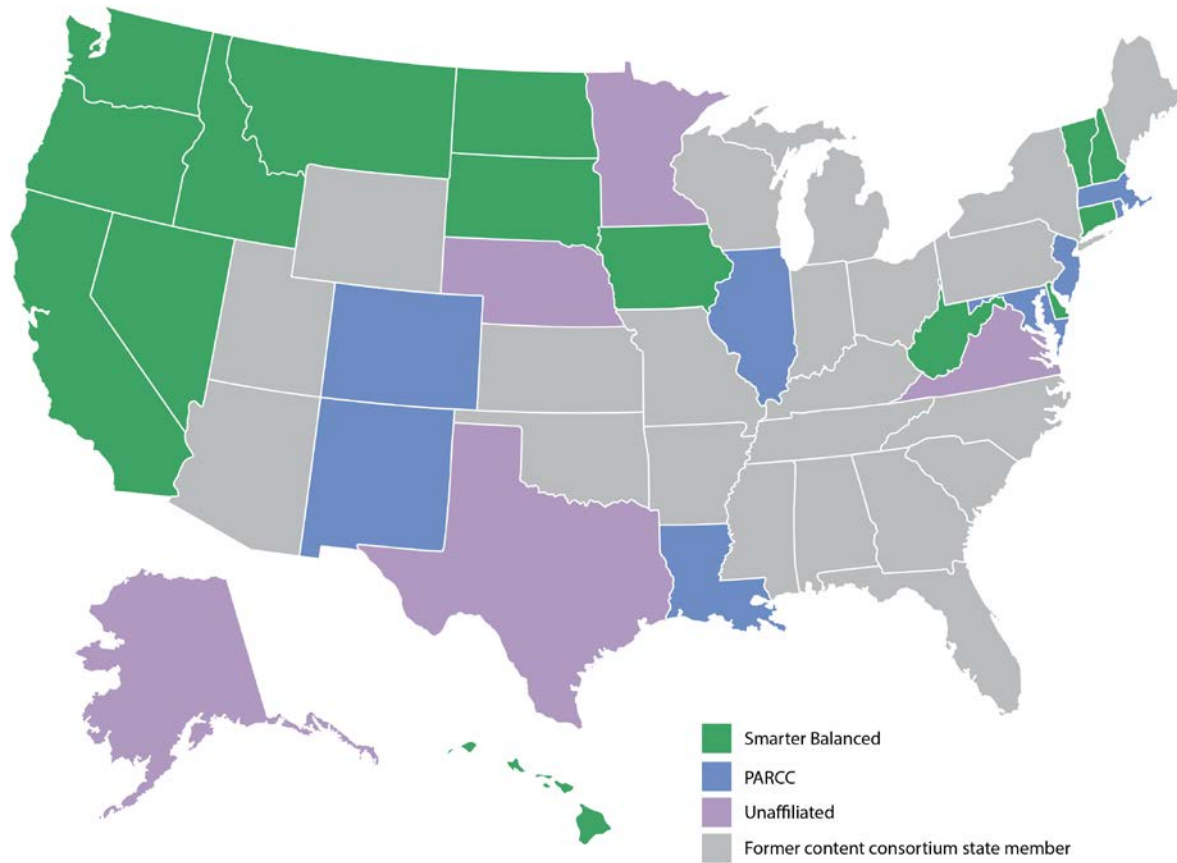
To meet these three use cases, the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework needed to be flexible enough for each WIDA consortium member SEA to use according to its own policy framework. Rather than impose a single approach to accessibility, the WIDA approach was designed to be flexible. It is the WIDA consortium practice for WIDA to provide its member SEAs with *recommendations* on accommodations; however, the development of *policy* is the domain of each member SEA. WIDA's "local control" approach allows SEAs to take the WIDA guidelines and recommendations and develop policies and practices that best match their own unique educational, legal, historical, and political contexts. This avoids a basic mistake of a consortium attempting to apply policies that may work well for one state to another state with a different context. The consortium can create a common set of recommendations, while leaving room for the state to create its own local policy (which they would then use in accountability determinations with the U.S. Department of Education.)

#### [Wide Variability in How WIDA Member SEAs Approached Accessibility](#)

However, ensuring that the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework could be used in accommodation guidelines crosswalks was complicated by the variability in how WIDA member SEAs approached accommodations policies used with their content area assessments in mathematics and English language arts. Some of the WIDA member SEAs that had remained unaffiliated with the content area assessment consortia (e.g., Georgia) continued to use a more traditional approach to accommodation guidelines using the four traditional categories of accommodations, while those affiliated with consortia had transitioned over to the tiered accessibility framework.

As shown in Figure 5, as of November 2015, 10 WIDA member SEAs had signed or were predicted to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (DE, HI, ID, MT, ND, NH, NV, SD, VT, U.S. Virgin Islands); 8 WIDA member SEAs were either governing board or hybrid members of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) (CO, DC, IL, MA, MD, NJ, NM, RI), 14 WIDA SEAs had been members of one of the two

content assessment consortia, but have reverted to their own state assessment providers (AL, FL, KY, GA, IN, ME, MI, MO, OK, NC, PA, TN, UT, WI), and three WIDA SEAs had remained unaffiliated with the content assessment consortia throughout the process (AK, MN, VA). Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico are more recent WIDA member SEAs who also have not joined content assessment consortia.



November, 2015

Figure 5. Content Assessment Consortia Membership

Because of the variability in SEA’s accommodation policies, the new WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework needed to explicitly indicate that the accommodations available with ACCESS for ELLs were still available in one form or another with ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 – even if aspects of the new ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 framework for accommodations were different from the one used with ACCESS for ELLs. Thus, it would be important to make specific reference to (former) accommodations. WIDA chose to reference these nonaccommodations by referring to them as test administration considerations and emphasizing that they were part of a general trend of improving usability for all ELLs taking the test. Similarly, WIDA chose to underscore the improvements that had been made to the default form of test items, through the application of linguistic scaffolding and universal design principles.



## Consolidation of Accessibility and Accommodations Across ACCESS for ELLs

During the first year of its online assessment, WIDA transitioned from post-hoc accommodations to use of an accessibility and accommodations framework with just one assessment, ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. The following year, the next logical step was to extend this conceptual approach to all WIDA assessments. Consolidation of accessibility and accommodations documents improved efficiency for both WIDA staff and its customers through the development of the *WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Supplement* which pertains to all assessments in the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs suite (ACCESS for ELLs: Computer Based Administration and Paper Based Administration, Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, and Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs).

The project involved a consolidation of the multiple accessibility and accommodation documents available on the WIDA webpage, trimming language when possible, and ensuring consistency in guidance across assessments. The completion of this project affected many departments at WIDA, as trainings, professional development, the website, assessment data file layouts, and assessment manuals all contain information on accessibility and accommodations. The longer-term conceptual implication of this project was to build WIDA staff awareness of the importance for building accessibility into all WIDA products. Not only did this project better position WIDA to meet all language learners' needs, it positioned WIDA to better address important elements found in federal legislation such as ESSA and IDEA.

## Final Thoughts

The ongoing transition from the ACCESS for ELLs paper-based testing to ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 online testing has afforded WIDA the opportunity to . . .

- Expand the quality and range of multi-modal accessibility support integrated within the design of standard test items provided to all students,
- Expand the range of accessibility support available to all students taking the test to address student strengths, preferences, or weaknesses—regardless of whether or not the student has a designated disability, and
- More precisely target accommodation support based on defined IEP need.

In the end, use of this framework will allow the diverse needs of more ELLs to be met during testing and provide more students with the opportunity to participate in a fairer, more valid, more reliable assessment.

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## Appendix A

### WIDA Accessibility and Accommodation Framework

Appendix A contains descriptions of the *test administration considerations*, *universal tools*, and *accommodations* available to English language learners (ELLs) in grades 1 – 12 who are taking either the online or paper versions of the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. The test administration considerations, universal tools, and accommodations listed in this document are based on (a) accepted practices in ELP assessment; (b) existing accommodations policies of WIDA Consortium member states; (c) consultation with representatives of WIDA Consortium member states who are experts in the education and assessment of ELLs and students with disabilities; and (d) the expertise of test developers at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

#### Administration Considerations (Available to All ELLs)

The following list of test administration considerations (which are available to all ELLs) is arranged according to the form of support provided: presentation, response, test environment/setting, and timing/scheduling.

#### Presentation

- Read test directions by Test Administrator
  - For the online test, test directions appear on the screen in the directions and practice items
  - For the paper test, test directions refer to the text in the Test Administrator’s Script that provides instructions to the student before testing and describes the logistics of taking the test, but does not include any information specific to test items or passages
- Repeat test directions by Test Administrator
- Explain/clarify test directions in English by Test Administrator
- Clarify test directions in student’s native language by Test Administrator (per availability and local policy)
- Provide verbal praise or tangible reinforcement to a student
- Verbally redirect student’s attention to test, in English or in student’s native language
- Allow student to take the paper test based on policy outlined by the state education agency

#### Response

- Student reads test aloud to self (but must not disturb or interfere with other test takers)
- Test Administrator monitors placement of responses onscreen or in test booklet
- Student provides hand written response to the online Writing test instead of a keyboarded response, based on the student’s inexperience, unfamiliarity, or discomfort with keyboarding
  - This is only applicable for the online Writing test for grades 4–12
  - The student would view the writing prompt on the computer screen and handwrite his or her response in a paper Writing Response Booklet [*Note: Student will still participate in the online test for other test domains (Listening, Reading, and Speaking)*]

#### Test Environment/Setting

Test administered

- By school personnel familiar to student (if trained and certified to administer ACCESS

for ELLs 2.0)

- By school personnel other than student's teacher, including special educator (if trained and certified to administer ACCESS for ELLs 2.0)
- Individually or in a small group (check state policy on size of group)
- In a separate room
- With preferential or adaptive seating
- In study carrel
- In a space with special lighting
- In a space with special acoustics
- With adaptive or specialized furniture or equipment
- Using tools to minimize distractions or maintain focus (e.g., stress ball); for paper test administration only, use noise-reducing headphones or instrumental music played through an individual student's headphones or ear buds

#### Timing/Scheduling

- Frequent or additional supervised breaks
- Test administered in short segments (i.e., administer brief section of each test at a time)

### Universal Tools (Available to All ELLs)

Universal tools<sup>1</sup> are available to all ELLs taking ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, and may either be embedded in the online test or provided to ELLs by Test Administrators for online or paper tests. Universal tools do not need to be preselected for online testing via the student record in the WIDA Assessment Management System. For a complete description of accommodations see the recommendations provided in the *ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Accessibility and Accommodation Descriptions* available at <http://wida.us/accommodations/descriptions>.

Online Test Administration	Paper Test Administration
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Audio aids<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tools include amplification devices, noise buffers, or white noise machines (provided by the school or student)</li></ul></li><li>2. Highlight tool<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool which the student can use to mark specific text on the screen with a yellow color</li></ul></li><li>3. Line guide<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool which the student can use to guide his or her eyes while reading text on the computer screen</li></ul></li><li>4. Screen magnifier<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool which the student can use to increase the screen size by 1.5x or 2.0x. This magnifier is intended to enlarge small areas of the screen so that a student can get a closer look at a visual image such as a picture or graphic</li><li>• Students and teachers should explore the use of enlargement tools on practice items in order to determine whether to use the screen magnifier or select the paper large print test</li></ul></li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Audio aids<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tools include amplification devices, noise buffers, or white noise machines (provided by the school or student)</li></ul></li><li>2. Highlighters, colored pencils, or crayons<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool which the student can use to mark specific text in the test booklet</li></ul></li><li>3. Place marker or tracking device<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool which the student can use to guide the his or her eyes while reading text</li><li>• Place marker or device must be blank/empty</li></ul></li><li>4. Low-vision aids or magnification devices<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool which the student can use to increase the size of graphics and text in the test booklet</li></ul></li><li>5. Color overlay<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A tool (such as a color acetate transparency) which the student can place over the test booklet page</li></ul></li></ol> <p style="text-align: right;">(continued on the next page)</p>

<sup>1</sup>In Summer 2016, WIDA simplified the term *accessibility tools* to the term *universal tools*.



Online Test Administration	Paper Test Administration
<p>5. Sticky Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tool which the student can use to make notes to assist in responding to Writing items. This tool is only available on the Writing test</li> </ul> <p>6. Color contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tool which the student can use to select from a variety of background/text color combinations: white with black text, pink with green text, yellow with blue text, light grey with brown text, orange with blue text, dark grey with green text, light green with purple text, and dark green with red text</li> <li>• Will remain selected until turned off</li> </ul> <p>7. Color overlay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tool which the student can use as a separate (nonembedded) color/acetate transparency that can be placed across computer screen; works best with white background and black text; or</li> <li>• A tool which the student can use as an embedded option that allows students to change the background color that appears behind text, graphics, and response areas. Five colors are available: pink, yellow, blue, green, and orange</li> <li>• Will remain selected until turned off</li> </ul> <p>8. Keyboard shortcuts/equivalents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides alternatives to using a mouse for navigating through test and to use online test tools</li> </ul> <p>9. Scratch/blank paper (including lined or graph paper)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit with test materials or dispose according to state policy</li> </ul>	<p>6. Equipment or technology that the student uses for other tests and school work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools include adapted pencil (altered size or grip), slant board, wedge, etc.</li> </ul> <p>7. Scratch/blank paper (including lined or graph paper)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit with test materials or dispose according to state policy</li> </ul>

### Accommodations (Available to ELLs with IEPs or 504 Plans)

Accommodations include allowable changes to the test presentation, response method, timing, and setting in which assessments are administered. Accommodations are intended to provide testing conditions that do *not* result in changes to what the test measures; that provide comparable test results to those students who do not receive accommodations; and that do *not* affect the validity or reliability of the interpretation of the scores for their intended purposes.

Accommodations are available *only* to ELLs with disabilities when listed in an approved IEP or 504 Plan (and ELL/LEP Plan if required by state policy), and only when the student requires the accommodation(s) to participate in ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 meaningfully and appropriately.

Accommodations may be embedded and delivered within the online test platform or be delivered locally by a Test Administrator. The accommodations, manual control of item audio (MC), repeat item audio (RA), or extended Speaking test response time (ES), must be preselected in order to be activated within the test items at the time of testing for online administration. Check with your state policy on how, where, and which accommodations data should be uploaded. The two letters in parentheses following the name of each accommodation are the code to be used when entering accommodations data.

The following accommodations are **allowed** for use with ACCESS for ELLs 2.0:

<p><b>Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpreter signs test directions in ASL (SD)</li><li>• Manual control of item audio (MC)</li><li>• Repeat item audio (RA)</li><li>• Read aloud Listening test response options by human reader (LH)</li><li>• Repeat Listening test item response options by human reader (RL)</li><li>• Read aloud test items by human reader (IH)</li><li>• Repeat test items by human reader (RI)</li><li>• Large print version of test (LP)</li><li>• Braille version of test (BR)</li></ul> <p><b>Test Environment/Setting Accommodations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Test may be administered by school personnel in non-school setting (NS)</li></ul> <p><b>Timing/Scheduling Accommodations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extended Speaking test response time (ES)</li><li>• Extended testing time within the school day (ET)</li><li>• Extended testing of a test domain over multiple days (EM)</li></ul>	<p><b>Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scribed response (SR)</li><li>• Word processor or similar keyboarding device to respond to test items (WD)</li><li>• Student responds orally using external augmentative and/or alternative communication device or software (AC)</li><li>• Student responds using a recording device, which is played back and transcribed by student (RD)</li><li>• Student responds using a braille writer or braille notetaker (BW)</li><li>• Student uses assistive technology to respond to test items (AT)</li></ul>
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## Appendix B

### ACCESS for ELLs Accommodations

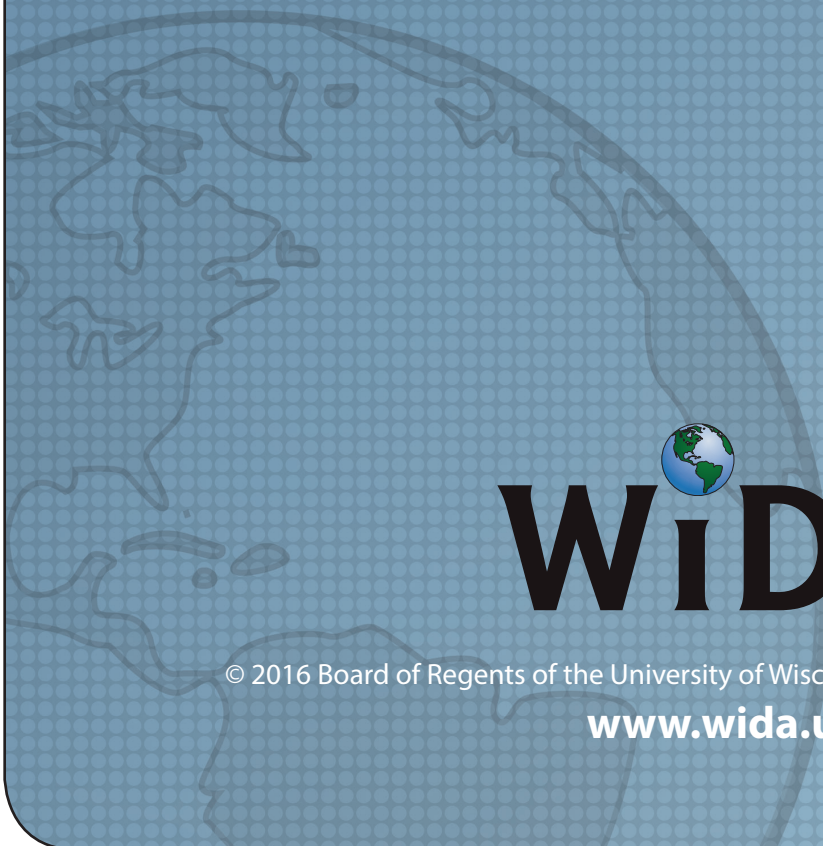
Accommodations FOR ELLs WITH DISABILITIES	Assessment Domains				
Test Directions	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Test "directions" refers to all text in the Test Administrator's Script that is provided to explain logistics of the test, including all practice items. Directions include what is scripted in the Test Administrator's Script. For Speaking, the directions end just before the test administrator reads "Part A," and for Listening, the directions end just before the test administrator presses Play.</i>					
Translation of directions into native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Signing directions to students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Explanation of directions in English and/or native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Repeating directions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Use of directions that have been marked by teacher in the <i>Student Response Booklet</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	TD

Accommodations FOR ELLs WITH DISABILITIES	Assessment Domains				
Presentation Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>"Test" refers to test items (including introductory text and graphic support), but not scripted test directions (previously deined)</i>					
Translation of test into native language	No	No	No	No	-
Translation of test into sign language	No	No	No	No	-
Oral reading of test in English	No	No	Yes	No	PF
Oral reading of test items in native language	No	No	No	No	-
Use of bilingual dictionary	No	No	No	No	-
Use of highlighters (yellow only) by student, in test booklet text only; must not be used in answer area <sup>6</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	-
Use of marker to maintain place	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	PF
Large Print (Student responses must be transcribed into a standard test booklet)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LP
Low vision aids or magnification device	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LV
Audio amplification device or noise buffer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	AA
Student reads questions or responses aloud to self	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	PF
Student reads questions or responses aloud and records with tape recorder	No	Yes	No	No	PF
Oral reading of <i>Recording Script</i>	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF

Setting Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Test may be administered...</i>					
By trained school personnel in nonschool setting (e.g., home or hospital)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
With preferential seating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
In study carrel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF

In space with special lighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
In space with special acoustics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
With special furniture for student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
With equipment or technology that the student uses for other tests and school work (e.g., pencils adapted in size or grip, slant board, or wedge)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF

Timing/Schedule	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Flexibility with timing of test is permitted for students who require extra time or have limited attention spans as documented in their IEPs.</i>					
More breaks as needed by student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TS
Short-segment testing (refers to administration of very brief sections of the test at a time, such as three or four items related to a common theme)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TS
Extended testing time within same school day	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TS
Extended testing sessions over multiple days	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	TS



  
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