

Information for Parents: English Language Learners and State Assessment

New Jersey Department of Education

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* of 2015 requires that all students, including students identified as English language learners (ELLs), participate annually in state assessments. ELLs are students who are eligible to receive support at school with the English language. The purpose of state assessments is to measure student progress to ensure that **all** students are achieving at appropriate levels. State assessments are part of the accountability system that holds schools accountable for the achievement of **every** child.

English language learners participate in the **PARCC content assessment** and the **ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 English language proficiency assessment**. Both are secure tests that aid in school- and district-level evaluation of student performance. The PARCC assessment measures language arts and math knowledge and skills, and the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment measures English language proficiency. Participation in these assessments is important for ELLs so that schools and districts can determine how well all students are learning what New Jersey students are expected to know. The test results also help schools identify strengths and weaknesses and they provide language proficiency data to enhance instruction that students will need in order to make progress.

Although participation of all ELLs in the state assessment system is critical to improving instruction, it is important to remember that state assessments are only one measure of student achievement. They measure whether students have achieved what is expected for their grade and English language proficiency level. They should be used in conjunction with the many forms of assessment used by your child's teachers to get a full picture of your child's achievement and progress in academic areas and other areas of need.

All ELLs must take the PARCC assessments. The only exception applies to ELLs who entered school in a U.S. state or Washington, D.C., as well as a language assistance program after July 1 of the academic year in which the assessment will be administered. These students do not have to take the English language arts/literacy (ELA/L) portion of PARCC (grades 3-8) tests, but must take the math assessment. The exemption from the ELA/L test does not apply to high school students. ELLs from Puerto Rico are eligible for this exemption. Additionally, based on their level of English proficiency, ELLs may take advantage of accommodations during the administration of the PARCC. Accommodations for ELLs are any changes to testing conditions that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a testing situation. These do not change the actual test itself. Your child's teachers determine whether accommodations will be provided to a student during testing on a case-by-case basis as determined by an individual student's needs. In addition to the PARCC assessments, most ELLs also take the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. The following resources will provide you with more details regarding your child and state assessments:

For general information on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 go to:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/bilingual/ells/20/>

For information regarding the participation of ELLs in state assessment go to:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/bilingual/policy/PARCCCELLsFAQ.htm>

For general information on New Jersey's state assessments go to:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/>

For information on ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 translated in a different language:

Spanish: www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=1914

Arabic: www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=1904

Chinese: www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=1906

Haitian-Creole: www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=1910