

Native Language Assessments in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does ESSA say about the participation of English learners in state academic assessments?

English learners who have been enrolled in a school in the United States for less than 12 months can be exempted from one administration of a state's reading/language arts assessment.

For English learners participating in state academic assessments,¹ states must provide appropriate accommodations, including, to the extent practicable, assessments in the language and form that are most likely to assess English learners' knowledge and skills in academic content areas accurately and fairly until such students have achieved English language proficiency. This includes providing assessments in the native languages of English learners.

According to section 1111(b)(2)(B)(ix) of ESSA, any student who has attended school in the United States for three or more consecutive years must take the reading/language arts assessment in English, unless the local educational agency (LEA) has determined, on a case-by-case basis, that an academic assessment in another language or form would provide more accurate and reliable information about what that student knows and can do. The LEA may determine to assess that student in the appropriate language other than English for no more than two additional consecutive years after the student has been enrolled for three years, on the condition that the student has not reached English language proficiency.

2. What are the reporting requirements for recently arrived English learners (i.e., students who have been enrolled in a school in the United States for less than 12 months)?

Recently arrived English learners must be included in the administration of state assessments, and their results must be included in the state accountability system. However, states have two options with regard to the inclusion of these English learners in state assessment and accountability systems:

1. States may choose to exempt recently arrived English learners from one administration of the reading/language arts assessment, and may exclude these students' results on any of the state-required assessments from the state accountability system for one year (i.e., the first year of the English learners' enrollment); or
2. States may assess and report the performance of recently arrived English learners on the reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in each year of the students' enrollment, and, for the purposes of accountability, states may:
 - a. Exclude these students' results on the reading/language arts and mathematics assessments from the state accountability system in the first year of enrollment;

¹ ESSA requires states to administer annual academic assessments for mathematics and reading/language arts in grades 3–8 and at least once in grades 9–12, and for science at least once in each of grades 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12 (section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)).

- b. Include student growth on the assessments in the accountability system during the second year of enrollment; and
- c. Include student proficiency on the assessments in the accountability system during the third year and in each succeeding year of enrollment.

3. What is a native language assessment?

A native language assessment is an academic assessment, in a language other than English, that assesses students' knowledge and understanding of state academic content standards.

4. For which content areas can states develop native language assessments?

Native language assessments can be developed for any content area.

5. Are states required to develop native language assessments?

No. States are not required to develop native language assessments. However, section 200.6(f) in the Academic Assessment Final Regulations (consistent with section 1111[b][2][F] of ESSA) includes a new provision requiring that states make every effort to develop annual academic assessments in “languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population” (p. 36).

In their state plans, states must:

- ▶ Provide a definition for “languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population,”
- ▶ Identify specific languages that meet that definition,
- ▶ Identify existing native language assessments in the state and specify the grades and content areas for which those assessments are available,
- ▶ Identify languages other than English for which annual academic assessments are unavailable and are needed, and
- ▶ Describe how the state will make every effort to develop annual academic assessments in native languages that are present to a significant extent in the state’s participating student population (or explain why the state is unable to develop such assessments despite having made every effort).

6. What requirements must native language assessments meet?

As is required of any state academic assessments, a native language assessment must:

- ▶ Be aligned with state academic standards;
- ▶ Provide information about student attainment of state standards;
- ▶ Objectively measure academic achievement, knowledge, and skills;
- ▶ Be valid and reliable;
- ▶ Be of adequate technical quality;

- ▶ Be consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical testing standards; and:
 - In the case of reading/language arts and mathematics, be administered in grades 3–8 and at least once in grades 9–12;
 - In the case of science, be administered at least once in each of grades 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12; and
 - In the case of any subject area chosen by the state, be administered at the discretion of the state.

7. Can states use their English language proficiency (ELP) assessments as a measure of students' proficiency in reading/language arts?

No. A state's annual ELP assessment is designed specifically to measure English learners' proficiency in the English language. ELP assessments must be aligned to the ELP standards and must annually measure English learners' proficiency in the four domains of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. All English learners must take the ELP assessment annually. A state's required reading/language arts assessment, on the other hand, is aligned to its reading/language arts standards and measures students' knowledge and skills in the specific academic content area of reading/language arts. An ELP assessment measures different content and skills than a state reading/language arts assessment does; the two assessments are not interchangeable.

8. Are states required to include scores from native language assessments in their accountability systems?

Yes. For all assessments that are administered as part of a state's assessment system and are given to English learners in their native language for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science,² the results shall be included in the state's accountability system.

9. Are states required to submit documentation of native language assessments for peer review?

As part of the U.S. Department of Education's process for peer review of state assessment systems, states must submit documentation for, and receive approval of, the technical processes used to develop and administer their assessments, including native language assessments.

² As noted in the response to question #1, states may exclude recently arrived English learners' results on the reading/language arts and mathematics assessments from the state accountability system in the first year of enrollment.



The work reported herein was supported by grant number #S283B120032 between the U.S. Department of Education and WestEd with a subcontract to the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). The findings and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of CRESST, WestEd, or the U.S. Department of Education.

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