

TITLE: 2017 ACCESS Scores and Updated Guidance for ELD and Reclassification Decisions due by June 23

ISSUER: Office of English Language Learners

DATE: 6/15/2017

CONTEXT: WIDA's development of a new, more challenging version of the annual English language proficiency assessment ("ACCESS for ELLs 2.0") to meet the language demands of college and career readiness as well as the resulting "standard setting" process have changed the scores needed to attain each ACCESS proficiency level. This means that students who took the test this school year now need to demonstrate higher-level English language skills in 2017 to achieve the same proficiency level scores they received in previous years.

In light of the release of the 2017 ACCESS scores, the purpose of this memorandum is to provide updated guidance to school leaders and school-based Language Assessment Teams (LATs) on the multiple data points and sets of information to be considered during this annual process of updating ELD levels and making Reclassification decisions, due in Aspen SIS by June 23. This memorandum is also available as an on-demand webinar on [BPSLearns](#).

In terms of the language domains tested on ACCESS, Speaking expectations have increased the most, followed by Reading and Writing, with fewer changes in Listening. Generally speaking, students at upper grade levels and at higher proficiency levels will be most affected by the score changes. This varies by grade level, and through our preliminary analysis of Boston's results, we are seeing more students scoring at level 3 this year than we have in the past.¹

The following is a list of communications on the potential score declines that have been issued throughout SY16-17:

- Dec. 5 & 12, 2016: OELL/ODA communicates anticipated decline in 2017 ACCESS scores via [Around BPS](#) to all central office and school-based staff
- Feb. 27, 2017: DESE issues [memorandum](#) to all Principals and ACCESS test coordinators with overview of 2016 vs. 2017 score Concordance Table and

¹ As the 2017 ACCESS results have now been released, preliminary analysis shows there have been some unanticipated shifts in proficiency level results. For instance, the number of students scoring at ACCESS Overall Composite Levels 1-3 has increased by about 3,800 students across the district, going from 44% of our students scoring at these lower ACCESS Overall Composite Levels in 2016 (unadjusted scores) to 72% in 2017.

- webinar schedule for understanding anticipated score changes.
- May 12, 2017: OELL email communication to LATFs with end of year support/reminders, incl. reminder of revised reclassification criteria
- May 12, 2017: DESE issues [memorandum](#) to all Principals and ACCESS test coordinators with a summary of high level findings of the 2017 score changes and resources available for teachers/parents
- May 19 & 26, 2017: OELL email communication of end-of-year guidance for ELD and Reclassification Determinations to LATFs, soliciting their feedback
- May 30, 2017: OELL provides in-person written guidance on ELD and Reclassification Determinations at [final LATF Meeting](#), with reminder about potential decline in students' scores and case study of K2 ELD score regression

Prior to the results being released, DESE advised that for some students' ACCESS scores may go down. However, the magnitude of the score changes, and the differences seen for individual students, was not possible to predict. WIDA advises that it is important to remember that even though some students' test scores may *appear* to go down from last year, the students are still likely progressing in learning English. WIDA also advises that apparent score declines is likely due to a change in the ACCESS 2.0 test scoring, not the students, and that it is not unusual for students to perform lower when an assessment is new.

RELATED ACTION:

Recognizing that these data trends were not possible to anticipate, OELL and ODA, in collaboration with Planning & Analysis, have now worked jointly to be able to offer the following guidance *for this school year only*. OELL requests that all decisions be entered into Aspen SIS by June 23 to allow for data validation, review of decisions and any requested documentation, in order to meet Round 3 Assignment deadlines.

1. General Reminders for Data Points to Consider when Updating ELD Levels

Stemming from WIDA and DESE's guidance, OELL has always advised that ACCESS should be used as the foundation, but not sole determining factor in assigning ELD levels for student's instructional/service/programmatic needs for the upcoming school year. This is especially important this year given the changes in ACCESS scoring. The consideration of multiple data points is for a variety of reasons. ACCESS was administered in January/February and students will likely have made progress since then in their language acquisition; ACCESS is one day/test and time and these kinds of decisions should not be made on a single data point.

Other information that should be considered include the following:

- Use of WIDA's Can Do Descriptors and Speaking/Writing rubrics to assess current student performance (this may be especially helpful this year where



schools are seeing a difference in the student's ACCESS scores and current classroom performance)

- Review of the student's ACCESS performance by language domain should also be conducted to better understand areas in which the student may need more targeted support. For this year, for instance, a focus on the student's Writing performance may be especially informative. This is the domain in which students typically take longer to develop *and* it is one of the domains less impacted by the changes in the ACCESS scoring.
- The student's performance on PARCC/MCAS over time
- The student's scores on school-administered reading and other academic assessments, DIBELS, Illuminate, etc.;
- The student's scores on school-based diagnostic language assessments;
- The student's academic grades;
- The written observations and recommendations documented by the student's classroom teachers; and
- Consideration of other factors that might be impacting the student's language acquisition (e.g., student attendance, teacher absences, etc.)

2. Students whose ACCESS scores are *lower* than their *current* SY16-17 ELD level

OELL generally does *not* recommend regressing a student's ELD level if the student's 2017 ACCESS overall proficiency level is *lower* than the student's current ELD level. In rare circumstances and in consultation with OELL, this may be advised on a case-by-case basis, *if* the student has not performed well this school year at his/her current ELD level and the LATF provides any requested documentation/rationale to OELL.

3. Students who are currently ELD 3

The determination of the next year's ELD level for students who are currently ELD 3 can often be more challenging for Language Assessment Teams (LATs). OELL is offering the following crosswalk to be used as a foundation, but not sole factor, in guiding LAT's in this year's ELD update decision-making. Please also reference the general guidance noted above for other data points to consider in updating a student's ELD level for the upcoming school year.

Student's current grade level:	<i>In conjunction with other student information, consider moving the student to ELD 4 if 2017 ACCESS scores are...²</i>
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² This methodology has been devised based on the 3-year historical rate of the proportion of ELD 3 students at each grade level that advance at least 1 ELD level for the following school year.



Grade K2	3.3 or above
Grade 1	3.3 or above
Grade 2	3.6 or above
Grade 3	3.5 or above
Grade 4	3.8 or above
Grade 5	3.8 or above
Grade 6	3.6 or above
Grade 7	3.4 or above
Grade 8	3.6 or above
Grade 9	3.6 or above
Grade 10	3.4 or above
Grade 11	3.4 or above
Grade 12	3.1 or above

It is important to keep in mind that while we are offering this crosswalk *for this school year only* in an effort not to bring forth unanticipated, major resource constraints for the district, and that going forward, OELL will support schools by providing training opportunities throughout next school year around recalibrating expectations and aligning instructional rigor to meet the rising standards of ACCESS.

4. Revised Guidance for Reclassification Eligibility (becoming a Former EL)

For this year only, DESE has offered BPS the opportunity to allow for greater flexibility in the criteria used to determine students who are eligible for Reclassification (to be designated a Former EL).

OELL therefore, for this year only, is recommending that LATs may consider any student in grade 1 (entering grade 2 next year) through grade 12 as eligible for reclassification to Former EL status if the student: 1) attained an Overall Composite level of 4.5 or above and 2) attained a 3/C/Pass in an ELA course this school year. Central office will still be automatically reclassifying any student who attained an overall composite level of 6.0 and is in grade 1 (entering grade 2 next year) through grade 12.



LATs should still consider other data points such as teacher evaluation of classroom work, formative/interim assessments, MCAS, course grades (as well as parent/guardian consultation-- recommended but not required) to ensure that student will be able to perform ordinary classwork without any ESL instruction supports.

5. Additional Guidance and Support on 2017 ACCESS Scores, ELD Update and Reclassification Decisions

OELL and ODA welcome the opportunity to provide additional recommendations and support in understanding the 2017 ACCESS scores in the context of other information about your students. In addition:

- OELL has offered on-demand training on WIDA and English Learner strategies to support students in the classroom and on these assessments, which are available via [BPSLearns](#).
- OELL also recommends that, to strengthen communication and knowledge transfer between principals, LATFs, and classroom teachers, that LATFs be included as integral members of the school's ILT.
- Lastly, DESE has informed OELL that they will be working over the summer to calculate growth to proficiency targets so that a comparison of the adjusted 2016 scores and the 2017 scores can be made to assess if students have made sufficient progress in their English language acquisition. In addition, DESE has also informed OELL that they will be reviewing the reclassification criteria in light of the 2017 ACCESS results. As OELL and ODA are informed of any changes, we will share this communication with you.

CONTACTS: The following staff are available to answer questions and provide additional support:

- Faye Karp, BPS OELL Data Analyst and Interim TLT 1 Equity & Accountability Liaison: 617-635-9435, fkarp@bostonpublicschools.org
- Nicole Wagner Lam: BPS ODA Executive Director: 617-635-9443, nwagner@bostonpublicschools.org
- DESE Student Assessment Services (for assessment and scoring questions), 781-338-3625, access@doe.mass.edu
- DESE Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (for placement and reclassification questions): 781-338-3854, ell@doe.mass.edu
- Adleine Celestin, BPS OELL TLT 2 Equity & Accountability Liaison: 617-635-9435, aetienne@bostonpublicschools.org
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Appendix 1:

- OELL's [on-demand webinar](#) focused on this memorandum
- OELL's [ELD Update & Reclassification Guidance for LATFs](#) (presented at May 30 LATF meeting, updated in June)
- WIDA's [2017 ACCESS for ELLs Score Changes](#) website, including resources for notifying teachers, parents and students of the score changes.
- WIDA's [ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide for Score Reports](#) and the [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide for Score Reports](#)
- WIDA's [Training Module for WIDA AMS: Accessing Score Reports](#)
- DESE's "[Concordance Table](#)" or the WIDA [Score Lookup Calculator](#) can be used to determine what last year's scores would have been with the new score scale applied. Educators can then compare scores from 2016 to 2017 on the same scale and determine where students made progress.
- DESE memoranda about potential score declines: [Nov. 28, 2016](#) memorandum, [Feb. 27, 2017](#) memorandum, [May 12, 2017](#) memorandum.
- *Around BPS* communications on [Dec. 5, 2016](#) and [Dec. 12, 2016](#).

