

Chapter 4

Assessing English Learners

Assessing English Learners in the General Education Classroom

English learners are provided with access to the same core curriculum as their grade-level peers, and should also be held accountable to the same challenging academic standards. However, assessment for English learners must be differentiated to provide a variety of meaningful ways for students to demonstrate their understanding. Just as instruction for English learners should be personalized to meet their individual academic needs, assessments should be designed to consider English proficiency level and build on students' strengths and abilities to provide opportunities for success.

For example, an English learner at a beginning level of English proficiency in writing may not be able to show his mastery of a social studies standard by writing an essay explaining the cause and effects of a certain event in history. However, he may be able to show mastery of the same rigorous academic standard by creating a visual representation of cause and effects using pictures and simple labels, or through an oral interview with the teacher. In this way, the rigor of the standard is not compromised, but the means through which students demonstrate mastery are flexible and tailored to individual student needs. Grading processes for English learners are developed locally, but should be based on student mastery of academic standards, not on English language proficiency.

Additional examples of authentic, differentiated assessments for the general education classroom are provided in Appendix A.

State Testing for English Learners

English learners are required to participate in all state assessments and may be provided with state testing accommodations as documented in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Testing accommodations are designed to provide all students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Specific details regarding accommodations and accessibility for state assessments can be accessed through the [IDOE Indiana Assessment Program Manual](#).

School staff responsible for creating the ILP should determine which accommodations are appropriate for each student and document these in the ILP.

The following state testing accommodations are allowable for English learners:

- Student provided access to a screen reader or text-to-speech (cannot be used for reading comprehension portion of test)
- Test read aloud to the student by test administrator (except items testing reading comprehension, as indicated in read aloud script)
- Student tested individually or in a small group setting by a familiar teacher

- Student allowed to use a bilingual word-to-word dictionary from the IDOE-approved list (appropriate only for students who are literate in their native language)
- Student provided extended testing time for test sessions

English learners with disabilities should be provided all documented IEP accommodations in addition to their documented ILP accommodations. For example, an English learner with a disability may have access to a bilingual dictionary as an ILP accommodation and access to a calculator as an IEP accommodation; both the ILP and IEP accommodations should be provided.

Note: *Because the WIDA ACCESS assessment is designed to measure English language proficiency, language-based accommodations may not be provided. Only English learners with disabilities may be provided with testing accommodations on the WIDA ACCESS assessment as documented on their IEP.*

IREAD-3 for English Learners

Indiana law requires the evaluation of reading skills for students who are in third grade, including English learners. Good Cause Exemptions are permitted in the law to allow for flexibility in determining access to grade four curriculum. These Good Cause Exemptions may be given to students who do not pass IREAD-3 **and** meet one of the following criteria:

1. Students who have previously been retained two times prior to promotion to grade four (Students may only be retained a maximum of two times in grades K-3 combined)
2. Students with disabilities whose case conference committee has determined that promotion is appropriate
3. English Learners (ELs) whose Individual Learning Plan (ILP) committee has determined that promotion is appropriate

The school is responsible for providing reading interventions to English learners who do not pass the spring IREAD-3. The school, in consultation with EL staff and with parents, must also determine whether the student should participate in the summer retest. If the student does not pass IREAD-3 in spring or summer, the school must convene an ILP committee to determine if promotion to 4th grade is appropriate for the student.

Note that retention of English learners may not be based solely upon level of English language proficiency. If the ILP committee, with corresponding English language proficiency assessment data, determines that the lack of English proficiency is the determinant factor for the English learner not passing IREAD-3, then the school district may not retain the student.

The ILP Committee is a group of individuals responsible for determining whether an English learner who did not pass IREAD-3 should have access to fourth grade reading and literacy instruction. 511 IAC 6.2-3.1-3 (6) (C) (i) indicates that the ILP Committee must consist of:

- the student's parent
- a building level administrator, or designee;

- a classroom teacher of service
- an English learner teacher, if one exists; and
- an English learner district administrator, if one exists

According to a May 1970 memorandum from the Office of Civil Rights, “school districts have the responsibility to adequately notify national origin-minority group parents of school activities which are called to the attention of other parents. Such notice in order to be adequate may have to be provided in a language other than English.” School districts should provide an interpreter for families who are not proficient in English so that they may meaningfully participate in the ILP committee. School districts should not use the English proficiency of the student to determine the English proficiency of the parents and whether an interpreter is needed, as the parents may be more/less proficient than their students.

Former English learners who have achieved English proficiency and exited English learner status are not eligible for a Good Cause Exemption. However, WIDA ACCESS scores for the current school year are typically released in late spring, after the initial IREAD-3 testing window has closed. A student who achieves English proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS assessment in the same school year as their IREAD-3 assessment should **not be disqualified** from eligibility for accommodations on state assessments nor from a Good Cause Exemption or waiver considerations in the current academic year or during the summer testing window. The WIDA ACCESS scores are to be used for planning and programming purposes for the next school year.

Additionally, IDOE issues the following guidance regarding retention of students who do not pass the IREAD-3 prior to the student’s projected fourth grade year.

- If a student did not pass the IREAD-3 following the summer administration of his or her third grade year and is not eligible for a Good Cause Exemption, the school should assess the student’s overall academic performance in all subject areas to determine whether retention in the third grade is necessary.
- If the school determines that retention is necessary based on the overall academic performance of the student in all subject areas, the student should be reported to the state in the subsequent year as a third grader, and the student should receive third grade instruction in all subject areas.
- If the school determines that retention is not necessary based on the overall academic performance of the student in all subject areas, the student should matriculate and be reported to the state in the subsequent year as a fourth grader and receive fourth grade instruction in all subject areas. However, the student must continue to receive third grade reading instruction during the subsequent school year, and must retake the IREAD-3 until the student passes the assessment or qualifies for a Good Cause Exemption.
- The school’s remediation plan and retention policy should be incorporated in its reading plan.

Please direct any questions about IREAD-3 and other state assessment requirements to inassessments@doe.in.gov.