



Dear families and community members,

In the United States, there are approximately 5 million English Learners (ELs) enrolled in public schools. These students make up roughly 10 percent of U.S. K-12 students. To ensure the educational success of ALL students, our school systems must improve how they support and serve families and students from many different cultural backgrounds and who speak many different languages.

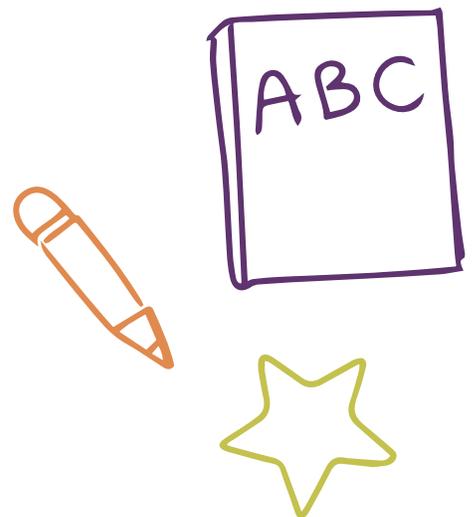
This guide aims to help you understand why and how students who are ELs take standardized tests—an important part of addressing this challenge. The guide provides an overview of federal education policies and explains how testing has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope this information helps you work with your child's school to make sure your child receives the best education possible.

## What Tests Does My Child Have to Take?

When your child enrolled in your district, they were tested to find out if they needed extra support to learn in English. Depending on the score from that “screener” and other information you provided during enrollment, your child may be identified as an English Learner (EL). As an EL, your child is required to take two types of annual exams: an English language proficiency (ELP) exam (only for EL students) and academic exams (for all students).

Students who are identified as ELs through their school district are required to take an ELP test annually. ELP tests show your child's progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. These tests are given each winter or spring. Different states have different tests, and even states that have the same test may have different rules for what scores a student needs to exit EL status (that is, to be classified as English proficient).

Additionally, all K-12 students are required to take annual academic exams. Annual academic exams are used to measure your child's knowledge and skills in English language arts, mathematics, and science. Federal law requires schools to test students every year from Grade 3 to Grade 8 and once in high school, but many states and districts also require additional tests. Information from these exams must be publicly reported for each student group, including ELs, students in special education, each racial/ethnic group, and students experiencing poverty.



You can find out which ELP and academic exams your child takes in the table at the end of this guide.

## Why Is My Child Required to Take Annual Tests?

ELP test results are used to make sure ELs receive the right support services, ensure they are making progress in learning English, and determine when they no longer need language development support. The scores from all the ELs in your school also help school leaders know how well the school is helping ELs. All ELs must take ELP tests, even if you have opted your child out of EL services.



Federal law requires states to give academic tests each year. Scores are used to ensure states are adequately serving students, measure how students are doing, and hold schools responsible for student outcomes and state goals.

## Why Is This Important?

Starting in the 1990s, the federal government has required schools to develop academic and English proficiency standards and to test whether students are meeting them. This is the result of advocacy efforts led by civil rights organizations that pushed for more school accountability—that is, to make sure schools are held responsible for the outcomes of their students, including ELs and other marginalized student groups. Access to ELP and academic test data allows school leaders, as well as parents and community leaders, to recognize service gaps and advocate for additional resources and support.

## How Has the Pandemic Affected Academic and ELP Tests?

Due to the pandemic, the federal government did not require states to give their annual tests for the 2019–20 school year. In 2020–21, the federal government required schools to give all their academic and ELP tests. However, the pandemic may have caused many students to go untested. Students who were not attending school in person, for example, may not have taken the tests. Therefore, it may be more difficult than usual for schools to interpret the results from 2020–21 tests and to ensure EL students receive the language support they need.

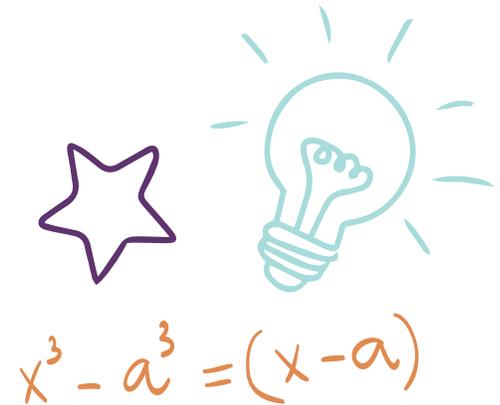
Additionally, because so many students were not attending school in person, newly enrolled ELs were identified using a remote screener. Many experts worry this tool may not have been as reliable as the standard screening assessment.

In the 2021–22 school year, because most schools across the country have returned to in-person schooling, screening, academic, and ELP testing is more likely to occur as usual, if public-health requirements permit.



## What Does This Mean for Your Child?

Even without the usual screening, annual ELP tests, and academic tests, schools received instructions from their states and the federal government to help them use other kinds of assessments to place your child in EL services, if needed, and to measure how your student is doing. Schools were also required—as they are every year—to inform you about your child’s EL status, the services your child is receiving, and what your child needs to do to exit EL status. If you have not received this information or do not understand it, you have the right to ask the school to translate it into a language you understand. You may also want to schedule a meeting with your child’s teacher or principal to ask questions and to express any concerns you have about your child’s education. The answers you receive may help you decide if there are changes in your child’s education that you would like to see.



As you engage with your child’s school, consider asking:

- 1 What tests did my child take in 2020–21? What do the results say about how well my child is learning English, English language arts, math, and science?
- 2 What support services did my child receive in 2020–21 or is my child receiving now? How did teachers use test scores to decide what services were needed?
- 3 What does the school report card say about how well the school is supporting ELs in learning English and academic subjects?
- 4 How can I access this information in my native language?
- 5 How do I request an interpreter or translator from my child’s school so I can understand this information better?

## English Language Proficiency (ELP) and Summative Academic Assessments by State

State	ELP Assessment	Academic Assessment
Alabama	ACCESS for ELLs	ACAP Summative and Scantron
Alaska	ACCESS for ELLs	Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS)
Arizona	Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA)	AzM2 – Statewide Assessment for ELA and Math
Arkansas	English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21)	ACT Aspire
California	English Language Proficiency Assessment for Californians (ELPAC)	Smarter Balanced
Colorado	ACCESS for ELLs	Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS)
Connecticut	LAS Links	Smarter Balanced
Delaware	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced
District of Columbia	ACCESS for ELLs	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)
Florida	ACCESS for ELLs	Florida Standards Assessments (FSA)
Georgia	ACCESS for ELLs	Georgia Milestones
Hawaii	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced
Idaho	ACCESS for ELLs	Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) Comprehensive Assessment
Illinois	ACCESS for ELLs	PARCC
Indiana	ACCESS for ELLs	ILEARN
Iowa	ELPA21	Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP)
Kansas	ELPA21	Kansas Assessment Program (KAP)
Kentucky	ACCESS for ELLs	Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP)
Louisiana	English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)	Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP)
Maine	ACCESS for ELLs	Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MECAS)
Maryland	ACCESS for ELLs	PARCC
Massachusetts	ACCESS for ELLs	Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)
Michigan	ACCESS for ELLs	Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP)
Minnesota	ACCESS for ELLs	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)
Mississippi	LAS Links	Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP)
Missouri	ACCESS for ELLs	Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)
Montana	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced

## English Language Proficiency (ELP) and Summative Academic Assessments by State

State	ELP Assessment	Academic Assessment
Nebraska	ELPA21	Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS)
Nevada	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced
New Hampshire	ACCESS for ELLs	New Hampshire Statewide Assessment System (NHSAS)
New Jersey	ACCESS for ELLs	PARCC
New Mexico	ACCESS for ELLs	PARCC
New York State	New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT)	New York State Assessments
North Carolina	ACCESS for ELLs	North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests
North Dakota	ACCESS for ELLs	North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA)
Ohio	ELPA21	Ohio's State Tests
Oklahoma	ACCESS for ELLs	Oklahoma School Testing Program
Oregon	ELPA21	Smarter Balanced
Pennsylvania	ACCESS for ELLs	Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)
Rhode Island	ACCESS for ELLs	Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)
South Carolina	ACCESS for ELLs	SCReady
South Dakota	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced
Tennessee	ACCESS for ELLs	TNReady
Texas	Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)
Utah	ACCESS for ELLs	Readiness Improvement Success Empowerment (RISE)
Vermont	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced
Virginia	ACCESS for ELLs	Standards of Learning (SOL)
Washington State	ACCESS for ELLs	Smarter Balanced
West Virginia	ELPA21	West Virginia General Summative Assessment
Wisconsin	ACCESS for ELLs	Wisconsin Forward
Wyoming	ACCESS for ELLs	Wyoming Test of Proficiency and Progress (WY-TOPP)

*This guide was prepared by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (NCIIP). Its authors are Delia Pompa and Jazmin Flores Peña. This project was supported by Seek Common Ground.*

*For more information on English Learner testing and school accountability, feel free to contact us at [info@migrationpolicy.org](mailto:info@migrationpolicy.org).*