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National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs

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Resources About Assessment and Accountability for ELLs

A Resource Guide from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA)

Assessment determines what students know and can do. **Accountability** then holds states, districts, schools, and students responsible for what students know and can do. Together, assessment and accountability form a system ensuring that results can be reported back to the community-at-large. The terms “assessment” and “test” are used interchangeably throughout this guide to refer to any situation in which students must respond to items or tasks in order to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills in a specific area.

- [Part I: Introduction to the Issues](#)... a brief overview of the topic and relevant issues.
- [Part II: Bibliography and Weblibliography](#)... an annotated list of significant books, articles, and web resources about the topic.
- [Part III: Web and Library Pathfinder](#)... a guide to finding further information on the topic via the Internet or a library.

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National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs

[Resources About](#) » [Assessment & Accountability](#) » [Part I](#) »

Resources About Assessment and Accountability for ELLs

A Resource Guide from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA)

Part I: Introduction to the Issues

Prepared by Judith Wilde, Ph.D.

In the past, ELL students have been exempted from much of the required testing and thus have been “lost” in the educational system with no means for participating in a meaningful manner. Without assessment and accountability systems, there can be no structured, appropriate instruction for ELLs and no responsibility for their progress through the educational system. This guide addresses the issues of assessment and accountability, including historical issues, current trends, and technical aspects.

CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[Educational Assessment in the U.S.](#)

[Purposes of Assessment](#)

[Technical Qualities of Assessment](#)

[NCLB, ELLs, and Assessment](#)

[Educational Accountability](#)

[Purposes of Accountability](#)

[NCLB, ELLs, and Accountability](#)

[Legislative Considerations for Assessment and Accountability](#)

[Key Issues for Assessment and Accountability](#)

Introduction

Assessment is a broad term that involves the collection and maintenance of various types of data about what students know and are able to do. Students can demonstrate their knowledge and abilities with their performance on norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, classroom-based assessments of various types, and/or performance-based tasks.

Accountability has two purposes: (1) it refers to a review of assessment results to ensure that students are meeting the state standards and (2) it refers to holding schools, districts, and states responsible for students’ learning. Under NCLB, state

and local educational agencies must ensure that ELL students are making progress in English language proficiency ([Title III, NCLB §3122\(a\)\(3\)\(i\)](#)), are attaining English language proficiency ([Title III, NCLB §3122\(a\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#)), and are meeting state content and achievement standards in reading/language arts, math, and science ([Title I, NCLB §1111\(b\)\(2\)\(B\)](#)).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Educational Assessment in the U.S.

Testing as we know it, using large-scale standardized techniques, originated in the U.S. in the mid-19th century as a way to measure the effectiveness of schools in Boston. An additional role for testing arose during World War I: the Army Alpha was the first group intelligence test used to identify people for programs or institutions. Shortly thereafter the Stanford Achievement Tests became the first large-scale group intelligence test battery. Various achievement tests followed, most of which were designed to assess the competencies of individual students and evaluate the effectiveness of specific curricula. The creation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the enactment of the original Title I legislation led to the first formal uses of assessment to monitor education programs ([Hamilton, 2004](#)).

Minimum competency testing, begun in the 1970s, was the first signal to students and teachers about what should be learned and taught in the classroom – the first time that tests began shaping instruction. The next move came with *A Nation at Risk* ([National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983](#)), which described American students' educational performance as poor and led to wide-ranging reforms that included an increased reliance on testing, an expansion of the kinds of stakes attached to test scores, and school-level incentives to encourage instruction that would result in higher test scores.

The concern over student performance led to a call not for just “minimum competency,” but rather for high, rigorous standards for all students and tests that would be aligned with those standards and would encourage teachers to teach to them and students to learn to them. There was a strong belief that aligning tests, standards, and curricula, and linking them to formal stakes would enhance teachers' motivation to instruct and students' motivation to learn. As stated by Hamilton, “All of these trends reflect a gradual but steady shift from the use of tests as measurement instruments designed to produce information to a reliance on tests to influence policy and instruction. This dual use of tests has continued to the present day” ([2004, p. 27](#)).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Purposes of Assessment

The purposes of testing, and the types of tests used in K-12 schools and classrooms can be defined in several ways.

1. We can define large-scale tests as opposed to classroom-based tests. Large-scale tests generally are administered to groups of students at one sitting, are typically developed by large publishing companies (sometimes under contract with a state), tend to be selected response (e.g., multiple choice or true/false), and are used to measure summative student performance. According to the National Research Council Committee on the Foundations of Assessment (2001), there are three broad purposes for large-scale tests: (1) assessment to assist learning, (2) assessment of individual achievement, and (3) assessment to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of educational programs.

Classroom-based assessments generally are developed by teachers for use in their own classrooms, include both selected response and constructed response items (e.g., essay, fill-in-the-blank), and are used to measure formative student performance. Classroom-based assessment usually is used by the teacher to determine whether students have learned the material from a given unit of material.

2. Tests also can be divided by the type of comparison that can be made: scores from norm-referenced tests (NRTs) can be used to compare a specific group of students against a large (usually nationally selected) group of students while scores from criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) measure how much of what students were supposed to learn they actually did learn.

NRTs typically are used to sort people into groups based on their assumed skills in a particular area (for instance, those in the top 10% of skills). They are useful when selecting participants for a particular program because they are designed to differentiate among test-takers. In addition, NRTs can provide general information that will help to match classrooms for overall achievement levels before assigning them to a particular program.

CRTs must be aligned closely to the curriculum (which must be aligned closely to the district or state content standards) in order to ensure that what is being tested is what has been taught. CRTs should be used before the content is taught, then repeated after the content is taught, thus ensuring that students' knowledge is based on what was taught; i.e., that they did not know the content before instruction.

3. Tests can be defined by the type(s) of items involved, and how they are scored. For instance, standardized assessments are so named because administration, format, content, language, and scoring procedures are the same for all

participants – these features have been “standardized.” Items generally are selected response or the newer extended multiple-choice which require a student to select the correct response option and then to justify why it is correct. Scores typically reported are normal curve equivalents (NCEs) or other standard scores, categories of grouped scores, percentiles, raw scores, percentage correct, and/or grade equivalents ([Wilde, 2004](#)).

On the other hand, alternative assessments are types of measures that fit a contextualized measurement approach, meaning that they can be incorporated easily into classroom routines and learning activities. Their results are indicative of the participant’s performance on the skill or subject of interest. “Alternative assessment” often subsumes authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, and other similar forms that actively involve the participant. Scoring these generally involves using a rubric, takes more time, and often is described as more subjective than merely right/wrong scoring of standardized assessments.

4. Finally, tests can be divided by what they are measuring. For purposes here, we can define achievement tests and language proficiency tests. The two represent mutually exclusive constructs; language proficiency tests cannot be used to measure language arts achievement, just as language arts achievement tests cannot be used to measure language proficiency.

Academic achievement refers to students’ concepts, skills, and knowledge in the core content areas of reading and/or language arts and math as well as science and history or social studies. In order to be successful in academic areas, students must have (1) the opportunity to learn the material and (2) the opportunity to demonstrate that they know the material – both of which are affected by the language of the student and of instruction. Academic achievement is specifically classroom-based, taking place within schools.

Language proficiency definitions vary by state but generally refer to both productive (speaking, writing) and receptive (reading, listening) skills, as first recommended by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1992. Students can acquire English through multiple sources such as school, playground, church or synagogue, television and radio, as well as neighborhood children. It is important that language proficiency assessments measure not only a conversational level of English, but also the academic English necessary to function on grade level, in both productive and receptive skills, in all-English-language classrooms.

[\[back to top\]](#)

Technical Qualities of Assessment

Meaningful assessment is essential. To ensure that an assessment is meaningful, three factors must be considered: reliability, validity, and fairness. In addition, the

test must be testing what students really are expected to learn. While psychometricians still argue about the relative importance of each of these concepts and what constitutes “good” reliability, validity, and fairness, some general explanatory statements can help to clarify these assessment qualities .

Reliability is the stability or consistency of an assessment. For instance, two assessments of a student’s grammatical knowledge, administered at the same time, should show similar results; two reviews of a teacher’s qualifications should result in similar conclusions; and if a student is tested today on adding 2-digit numbers, and then is tested again in two months without receiving any further instruction, then the scores on the two tests should be similar. An instrument must be reliable if it is to be used to make decisions about how well a participant is performing or how well a staff development program is succeeding.

Validity asks whether the interpretation, uses, and actions based on assessment results are appropriate ([Messick, 1989](#)). Validity is now considered to be a unitary measure, that is, it evaluates one overall concept. Previously, it had been considered as four separate concepts: face validity (does the test “look” appropriate?), construct validity (do the test items define a construct [e.g., reading] that makes sense and that we can agree to?), content validity (does the test cover enough of the content of the topic to be considered reasonable?), and concurrent validity (does the test give similar results to other tests of the same area?). However, Messick and others now have shown that these “types” validity all work together and all are necessary for an appropriate assessment.

It is especially important to consider the communicative competence of learners when creating a valid test. In addition, the specific purpose of the assessment must be considered. An assessment may be valid for one purpose, but not for another – as an example, a standardized, norm-referenced test of language arts may be a valid measure for determining various skills related to language, but is not a valid measure of language proficiency.

Fairness refers to testing that considers the language, gender, culture, and overall abilities of the test-takers; it is affected by how items are developed, the scoring procedures used (as well as the training of scorers and the calibration of scores), access to good instruction, and so on. Fairness also should ensure that biases are not evident in the testing procedures or test items.

Accommodations are alterations in testing materials or procedures (e.g., presentation format, response format, timing or scheduling format, test setting, and/or language in which the test is written) that enable students with limited English proficiency to participate in assessments in a way that allows their abilities to be assessed, rather than their lack of English skills to “cause” a lower score. Without accommodations, the assessment may not accurately measure the student’s knowledge and skills – the assessment may not be valid, reliable, or fair.

Finally, while *alignment* is not necessarily referred to as a technical quality of an assessment, it certainly is a key to the success of students within any educational system. Alignment refers to the match across content standards, teacher training and professional development, classroom curricula, and tests used with the students. The process of developing content standards, and then assuring the professional development for teachers, classroom curricula, and assessments lead to the attainment of those standards may take some time, but is essential. If the assessment(s) for a content area do not test what is taught, and what is taught does not reflect the standards the state has developed, then no matter how much the students learn, they will not be able to demonstrate that they have gained the skills and knowledge required under the state standards.

[\[back to top\]](#)

NCLB, ELLs, and Assessment

Thus far we have considered educational assessment of all students. There are specific issues with regard to assessing ELL students, some of which have been alluded to but without detail. This section looks at the topics already mentioned, but with the specific “eye” of the ELL community.

For ELL students, there are three purposes for assessment, as defined within NCLB:

- Identification as limited English proficient,
- Annual progress in English language proficiency (including attainment of English language proficiency), and
- Achievement in the content areas.

When students arrive at a new school, the school must determine their English language proficiency. Generally, this follows a 3-step process: (1) parent, family member, or guardian completes a Home Language Survey that identifies students living in a household in which a language other than English is spoken, (2) student responds to a test of English language proficiency if the Home Language Survey indicates this is appropriate, and (3) student is placed in an appropriate classroom based on the outcome of the assessment and discussion with educational staff, student, and family. The appropriate classroom environment may be a bilingual approach in which the student learns in two languages (home language and English) for some period of time, an ESL approach in which the student learns in English with additional supports available, or an English-only classroom in which the student learns in English while s/he learns English.

How states measure limited English proficiency is determined by the state – the definition of the term, the test used, and the cut-score for proficiency. The general

definition is provided with Title IX of NCLB:

The term limited 'English proficient,' when used with respect to an individual, means an individual —

(A) who is aged 3 through 21;

(B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;

(C) (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;

(ii) (I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or

(iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and

(D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual —

(i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3);

(ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or

(iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society [\(§9101\(25\)\)](#).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Educational Accountability

The term “accountability” is central to efforts in standards-based reform. Although it has been defined in various ways, it typically refers to an individual or group of

individuals taking responsibility for the performance of students on achievement measures or other types of educational outcomes (e.g., dropout rates) ([National Center for Educational Outcomes, 2006](#)).

There generally are two types of accountability: (1) student accountability that assigns responsibility to the student and is designed to motivate students to do their best and (2) system accountability that assigns responsibility to the educational system or individuals within that system and is designed to improve educational programs ([NCEO, 2006](#)).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Purposes of Accountability

The focus of accountability within the current legislation is Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in content areas of reading/language arts, math, and (beginning in 2007-08) science. AYP is based on the principle that states must improve the achievement of all student groups, including ELLs, and must reduce the gap in achievement for ELLs and other specific groups ([Lazarin, 2006](#)). Within Title I, NCLB states that 95% of each student group of sufficient size must participate in the accountability and assessment system; that schools, districts, and states must meet AYP; and that parents must be notified of the status of their student and their student's school. Within Title III, NCLB states that schools, districts, and states must add progress in and attainment of English language proficiency to AYP mandates – the three together (AYP, progress in English, and attainment of English) make up the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs).

The U.S. Department of Education has been moving toward NCLB's requirements for several years. Beginning in the 1990s, a major transition in education was the grounding of standards-based reform and emphasis on "best practices" research. States were required to implement academic content and student performance standards for all students, a system of aligned assessments of student performance, and a single statewide system to hold schools and district accountable for students' performance. Further, states had to develop accountability systems and define adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools and districts ([Erpenbach & Forte, 2005](#)). NCLB has retained these standards and the assessments requirements but strengthened the accountability requirements by specifying one specific AYP methodology. Although AYP can be customized for/by particular states, the same fundamental rules and timelines apply universally ([Erpenbach & Forte, 2005](#)).

As part of the accountability requirements, each state must report educational data each year in their *Consolidated State Performance Reports* (CSPR). The CSPR data are collected electronically and cover virtually all students within the

educational system. There are a few additional items that specific offices within the U.S. Department of Education might ask separately from, and in addition to, these. For instance, there is an annual Title I data collection effort and a biennial Title III data collection effort. However, these additional reporting requirements soon will be subsumed fully within the CSPR.

[\[back to top\]](#)

NCLB, ELLs, and Accountability

The educational “spotlight” of accountability within NCLB is on closing achievement gaps between various groups of students. In order to do this, each state must have a single statewide accountability system that applies to all local educational agencies and public schools ([§1111\(b\)\(2\)\(A\)](#)). There are three areas that relate to accountability, each with its own focus on ELL students and their families.

First, to ensure that there are test scores to measure the achievement gaps, NCLB requires that testing and other data be disaggregated by student group and that at least 95% of each student group (i.e., 95% of ELL students, 95% of Title I students, 95% of each racial/ethnic group, etc.) be tested for academic achievement. All states’ definitions of who should be tested and when are somewhat different, but generally there are three options available:

1. Students in a general education curriculum should participate in the standard state-wide achievement testing program;
2. Students in a program or with a plan based on their limited English proficiency, an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or a Section 504 plan should participate in the standard state-wide achievement testing program with valid and reliable testing accommodations that meet their specific needs; and
3. Students who are unable to participate in the standard state-wide testing program due to significant disabilities should be tested using the state’s alternate assessment.

Second, NCLB requires that specific AYP targets and timelines be created and met. The first wave of students, those enrolled in schools in 2002, must be at least proficient in the content areas and the English language by 2014. Each state has defined “proficient,” each state has developed achievement targets that schools and districts must meet each year, and each state has defined how these targets lead to proficiency by 2014 – as well as how and when future groups of students will reach proficient levels ([§1111\(a\)\(2\)\(B-F\)](#)).

Finally, NCLB requires that schools notify parents of their achievement levels (in a language and form that they will understand) and that schools, districts, and

states publicly report their achievement levels ([§1111\(h\)](#)). States must have plans for helping schools that are not meeting AYP, and there must be corrective measures in place for schools that do not meet AYP in consecutive years ([§1116](#)).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Legislative Considerations for Assessment and Accountability

Though it does not specifically mention different types of assessments, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* is clear in referring to multiple assessments (usually by mentioning “assessment *s*” [emphasis added]). Some examples from Title I and Title III of NCLB include:

- Assessments must include multiple up-to-date measures of student achievement, including measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding ([§1111\(3\)\(C\)\(vi\)](#)).
- States must ensure that high quality assessments are used, including those that are valid and reliable ([§1001\(1\)](#), [§1111\(b\)\(2\)\(A\)\(i\)](#), [§1111\(b\)\(2\)\(D\)\(ii\)](#), [§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(C\)\(iii-iv\)](#), [§1112\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)](#), and [§3121\(a\)\(3\)](#)).
- Schools must use multiple up-to-date assessments ([§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(C\)\(vi\)](#)).
- Schools also may use other academic indicators such as State or locally administered assessments ([§1111\(b\)\(2\)\(C\)\(vii\)](#), [§1116\(a\)\(1\)\(B\)](#), and [§1111\(b\)\(4\)](#)).
- Assessments should be available in various languages ([§1111\(b\)\(6\)](#) and [§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(C\)\(ix\)\(III\)](#)).
- ELL students should be tested with assessments of English language proficiency ([§1111\(b\)\(7\)](#), [§3121\(a\)\(3\)](#), [§3121\(d\)\(1-2\)](#)) and assessments of various content areas ([§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(A\)](#), [§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(C\)\(v\)\(I\)](#), and [§1116\(b\)\(3\)\(A\)\(ii\)](#)).

Several sections of both Title I and Title III of NCLB refer to assessing students’ achievement in core content areas; specifically, districts and states are responsible for

- ensuring that core academic subjects are assessed in manners that are

appropriate for all students ([§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(C\)\(ix\)](#) and [§1116\(b\)\(3\)\(A\)\(ii\)](#));

- ensuring valid and reliable assessments of academic achievement standards ([§3121\(d\)\(2\)](#) and [§3121\(a\)\(3\)](#)); and
- states “shall make every effort to develop” assessments in other languages ([§1111\(b\)\(6\)](#)).

Finally, there also are several references within Title I and Title III of NCLB to assessments that are

- high-quality ([§1001\(1\)](#), [§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(A\)](#), and [§1112\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)](#));
- aligned to state content and achievement standards ([§1111\(b\)\(2\)\(A\)](#));
- improved ([§3115\(c\)\(2\)\(A\)](#)); and
- valid and reliable ([§1111\(b\)\(2\)\(D\)\(1\)](#), [§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(C\)\(ix\)\(III\)](#), and [§3121\(a\)\(3\)\(B\)](#)).

Most references to accountability are within Title I ([§1116](#)), defining AYP and the sanctions for not meeting AYP; there currently are no specific sanctions for not meeting the Title III AMOs. Since the inception of NCLB, however, the U.S. Department of Education has added some “flexibilities” for two primary issues related to ELL students. The first flexibility allows states to include students within the LEP category for two years after they attain English proficiency and no longer receive services. These students must be monitored to ensure their continued success and their scores are included with current ELL students for AYP calculations. The second flexibility allows districts to test ELL students with a language proficiency assessment rather than the English reading/language arts assessment during their first year in an American school. This English language proficiency measurement can be counted toward the 95% of students that must be tested, but the score on that assessment is not included in the AYP calculations for reading/language arts achievement.

For schools that are not making AYP, NCLB requires that states develop a system of intensive and sustained support and improvement ([§1117](#)). This section describes the system, its functions, and its composition and priorities. The section also provides states with a means for acknowledging and rewarding the success of schools that meet AYP and close the achievement gap between student groups.

Finally, NCLB also acknowledges the need to involve parents in the important

decisions about the education of students ([§1118](#)). NCLB provides additional funds for schools that have a written parent involvement policy. The policy must show that parents are involved in meaningful and formal decision-making and activities at local schools.

[\[back to top\]](#)

Key Issues for Assessment and Accountability

It is beyond the capacity of this brief Resource Guide to identify, define, and explain the several issues that are of key interest in the assessment of, and accountability related to, ELL students. However, it is important to provide a brief listing with some information about these issues because they are central to the education of ELL students.

- What is “language proficiency”? The construct of language proficiency is difficult to define. There is no nationally accepted definition, although organizations such as TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) have developed standards that are widely accepted, as have the [Enhanced Assessment Consortia](#), and individual states. Language proficiency must include both social language skills and academic language skills; must include both productive (writing, speaking) and receptive (reading, listening) modes; and must include fluency as well as knowledge of specific components such as grammar.
- How is language proficiency tested? Since the construct of language proficiency is difficult to define, tests that measure language proficiency are difficult to develop. They must measure all four modes of language. They must test language proficiency, not language arts achievement or reading achievement. Testing is typically one-on-one or in small groups and therefore tends to be time-consuming and expensive. Students generally are tested for identification and placement when they enter school, and then must be tested annually to determine their progress in attaining English. Each state selects its own measure of language proficiency, each state determines what cut-off scores are necessary to be determined proficient, and each state determines whether there are additional criteria (e.g., academic achievement) for reclassification to fluent English proficient.
- What is “academic achievement”? According to NCLB, all students must be tested in grades 3-8 and once in high school for achievement in math and language arts/reading; beginning in 2007-08, all students must be tested at least once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school for achievement in science. Students must reach a rating of at least “proficient” in each content area. These are the areas that make up Annual Yearly Progress (AYP).

- How is academic achievement tested? Tests of academic achievement generally are administered in groups, and tend to be multiple choice and short answer, sometimes with a writing sample as well. Each state selects its own measure(s) of academic achievement and each state determines what cut-off scores are necessary to be determined “proficient” or “advanced.” The key issue in this area is the true “how” – most states test academic achievement in English. This is problematic for limited English proficient students as they may know the content being tested, but be unable to understand the questions or respond in a fashion that demonstrates their knowledge. Merely providing a test in a student’s home language does not solve the problem either. Students may not have the formal register or the academic language in their home language; students must be tested in a language through which they have received instruction in the content area. For most students, a test *in* English is a test *of* English.

Can students be tested fairly? NCLB states that tests for ELL students should be “the same academic assessments used to measure the achievement of all students” ([§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(i\)](#)) and that ELL students should be “provided reasonable accommodations ... including, to the extent practicable, assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data” ([§1111\(b\)\(3\)\(ix\)\(III\)](#)). In response to this, researchers have suggested alternate assessments for students at the beginning levels of English proficiency (c.f., [Gottlieb, 2003](#)), using accommodations for students who have some English language proficiency (e.g., [Abedi, 2006](#); [Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2003](#); [Pennock-Roman & Rivera, 2006](#)), and administering the full English-based test to fully English proficient students. While acknowledging the need to test students, identifying truly fair means for doing so has been problematic for many states.

[\[back to top\]](#)

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[\[back to top\]](#)

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National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs

[Resources About](#) » [Assessment & Accountability](#) » [Part II](#) »

Resources About Assessment and Accountability for ELLs

A Resource Guide from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA)

Part II: Bibliography and Webliography

Books & Articles

Abedi, J; Courtney, M; and Leon, S. (2003). **Effectiveness and validity of accommodations for English language learners in large-scale assessments** (CSE Report 608). Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation, CRESST. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE022215](#)]

Abedi, J., Courtney, M., Mirocha, J., Leon, S., & Goldbert, J. (2005). **Language accommodations for English language learners in large-scale assessments: Bilingual dictionaries and linguistic modification** (CSE Report 666). Los Angeles: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation, CRESST. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE023416](#)]

Both of the above studies looked at accommodations for ELL students that aim to help "level the playing field" with regard to English language comprehension. These studies focused on four issues concerning the use of accommodations: effectiveness, validity, differential impact, and feasibility. Both studies included 4th and 8th grade ELL students. Major findings: (1) some of the strategies used were effective in increasing the performance of ELL students - effectiveness may vary across the grade level; (2) there was no significant impact on non-ELL grade 4 students.

Council of Chief State School Officers (1992). **Recommendations for improving the assessment and monitoring of students with limited English proficiency**. Alexandria, VA: Author. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE018668](#)]

This publication outlines a set of recommendations that include principles and ideal practices to be used in educational programs for limited English proficient students. Specifically, the recommendations

provide guidance for improving and making more uniform procedures for screening and assessing LEP students for the purpose of classifications, placements, and reclassification. In addition, the report contains recommendations concerning state-level data-collection efforts focused on LEP students.

Education Commission of the States (2002). **No Child Left Behind Issue Brief: A guide to standards-based assessment.** Denver: Author.

A brief overview of the issues for districts and states related to standards-based assessment. Topics include the role of assessment, challenges, and differences between standards-based assessment and more traditional assessments.

Gong, B.; Blank, R. K.; & Manise, J. G. (2002, January). **Designing school accountability systems: Towards a framework and process.** Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE021251](#)]

This document presents three different views of accountability design to address states needs. One view presents an elaborated framework, with questions, criteria, and comments, intended to provide a structure for helping states move through the process of designing a school accountability system. The second view presents a concise checklist of characteristics to help states evaluate the consistency and coherence of existing programs. The third view provides examples of actual state experience with design features that might be considered and why.

Gottlieb, M. (2003). **Large-scale assessment of English language learners: Addressing educational accountability in K-12 settings.** (TESOL Professional Papers #6.) Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

As an outgrowth of concerns expressed by TESOL's task force on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization, this paper expands upon issues surrounding the large-scale assessment of English language learners. The first section provides working definitions of terms and reasons behind the renewed emphasis on testing and assessment. The second section aspires to reshape how ESL and bilingual education professionals measure the language proficiency of English language learners within a standards-based

system. The third section outlines the parameters that constitute large-scale assessment. The paper concludes by offering means by which to include these students within school, school district, and statewide assessment efforts.

Gottlieb, M. (2004, February). **English Language Proficiency Standards for English language learners in kindergarten through grade 12: Frameworks for large-scale state and classroom assessment—Overview document.** Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

This is the first published document of an enhanced assessment system that was developed and implemented by a consortium of states with funding from federal Title VII monies. It describes the development of the consortium's English language proficiency standards, the frameworks for large-scale and classroom assessment, and the alignment among the systems. The frameworks can be used for planning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. It provides guidance for others who may want to develop their own accountability system.

Gottlieb, M. (2006). **Assessing English language learners: Bridges from language proficiency to academic achievement.** Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This text examines the unique needs of English language learners and describes strategies for implementing instructional assessment of language and content, addressing how to equitably and comprehensively assess the language proficiency and academic achievement of English Language Learners. Contents include rubrics, charts, checklists, surveys, and other ready-to-use tools; professional development activities; an integrated approach to teaching standards, language, and content; and guidance on how best to address standardized testing and grading.

Joint Committee of the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education (1999). **Standards for educational and psychological testing.** Washington, DC: AERA.

Revised significantly from the original 1985 version, the new *Standards* reflects changes in federal law and measurement trends

affecting validity; testing individuals with disabilities or different linguistic backgrounds; and new types of tests as well as new uses of existing tests. The *Standards* is written for the professional and for the educated layperson and addresses professional and technical issues of test development and use in education, psychology, and employment.

Lazarin , M. (2006). **Improving assessment and accountability for English language learners in the No Child Left Behind Act** (Issue Brief # 16). Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE023336](#)]

Since the enactment of NCLB, educators and policy-makers are grappling with the challenge of improving Latino and ELL student achievement as a means of improving overall student academic outcomes. This issue brief is intended to help inform future dialogue on assessment and accountability. The brief examines the progress and manner in which states have implemented the federal law's accountability and testing provisions with respect to ELLs. The paper provides an overview of the law's key assessment and accountability provisions affecting ELLs. It reviews the manner in which these provisions have been implemented, and then presents policy recommendations informing present and future implementation of the law as it pertains to ELLs. The National Council of La Raza believes that NCLB is an important step in the right direction, but that its implementation has not lived up to the law's promise. The steps outlined in this brief are suggested to realign NCLB's implementation with its stated goal of leaving no child behind.

Leung, C. & Lewkowitz, J. (2006). **Expanding horizons and unresolved conundrums: Language testing and assessment.** *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 211-234. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE023342](#)]

This article focuses on issues that are integrally linked to the pedagogic and curriculum concerns of English language teaching. The first section addresses the issue of test authenticity, which underscores much of language testing enquiry. The article considers developments in the field's understanding of this notion and suggests that relating test authenticity to target language use may be necessary, but insufficient without considering authenticity as it is operationalized in the classroom. The second section, acknowledging concerns with standardized psychometric testing, broadens the discussion to issues of validity, ethics, and alternative assessment. First considered is the intellectual climate in which the debate on

such issues has developed and the relevance of these deliberations to pedagogy and curriculum. Then the paper discusses some of the key issues in current classroom based teacher assessment that are related to and can inform student second language competence and teacher professional knowledge and skills. The article closes by projecting how the current globalization of English may affect the understanding of authenticity and how this understanding is likely to affect testing and assessment practices worldwide.

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). **A Nation at Risk**. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE022912](#)]

Secretary of Education T. H. Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in Education on August 26, 1981, directing it to examine the quality of education in the United States and to make a report to the nation and to him within 18 months of its first meeting. In accordance with the Secretary's instructions, this report contains practical recommendations for educational improvement and fulfills the Commission's responsibilities under the terms of its charter. The Commission's charter contained several specific charges that were given particular attention. These included assessing the quality of teaching and learning in public and private schools, colleges, and universities; comparing U.S. schools and colleges with those of other advanced nations; studying the relationship between college admissions requirements and student achievement in high school; identifying educational programs that result in notable student success in college; assessing the degree to which major social and educational changes in the last quarter century have affected student achievement; and defining problems that must be faced and overcome to successfully to pursue the course of excellence in education.

National Research Council (2001). **Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment**. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

This work explores how expanding knowledge in the scientific fields of human learning and educational measurement can form the foundations of an improved approach to assessment. These advances suggest ways that the targets of assessment—what students know and how well they know it—as well as the methods used to make inferences about student learning can be made more valid and instructionally useful. Principles for designing and using these new

kinds of assessments are presented, and examples are used to illustrate the principles. Implications for policy, practice, and research are also explored.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 , Public Law 107-110 (2002, January 8). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE021695](#) and [BE0216967](#)]

Copies of all sections of the law are available separately. It is helpful to have at least the sections for Title I [[BE021695](#)] and Title III [[BE0216967](#)] since these include the requirements for assessment and accountability of ELL students. The entire legislation is also available online via the U.S. Department of Education ([in html](#)) and via NCELA ([in PDF](#)).

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (2006, April). **Improving data quality for Title I standards, assessments, and accountability reporting: Guidelines for states, LEAs, and schools (non-regulatory guidance)**. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Spurred by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, virtually every educational reform program now includes an accountability component that requires sound data collection and reporting. Improving the data quality has thus emerged as a high priority for educators and policymakers across the country. The list of programs for which data quality is relevant is extensive, and the scope of the issues involved is vast. This document provides guidance, checklists, and ideas for many programs, but does not attempt to cover the entire range of data quality issues. This set of guidelines addresses those associated with the annual Report Card required of all States, local educational agencies, and schools receiving Title I, Part A funds.

Rivera, C. & Collum, E. (2006). **State assessment policy and practice: A national perspective**. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

This book presents three significant studies, each examining a different aspect of states' strategies for including English language learners in state assessments: (1) an analysis of state assessment policies regarding accommodations for English Language Learners; (2) a survey and description of test translation practices; and (3) an

examination of state practices for reporting participation and performance of English language learners in state assessments. With the rise in population of ELLs and the subsequent stepped-up legislative focus on this student population over the past decade, states have been challenged to include English language learners in state assessment programs. Until now, the little data available on states' policies and practices for meeting this challenge has been embedded in various reports and professional journals and scattered across the Internet. This volume offers a focused examination of states' assessment policies and practices regarding English language learners.

Sireci, S.G. & Zenisky, A.L. (2006, June). **Testing Linguistic Minorities (Linguistically Diverse Populations)**. Presentation at the annual conference of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Available electronically via <http://www.ccsso.org/content/PDFs/Session129Zenisky.ppt>

This PowerPoint file accompanied a presentation a presentation at CCSSO's Annual Conference on Large-Scale Assessment, from staff at the Center for Educational Assessment (University of Massachusetts Amherst). The presentation reviews psychometric issues in testing students with limited proficiency in the language in which the test is written; summarizes studies that looked into the effects of test modifications on ELL students' test performance; and provides suggestions for future research and practice in this area.

Vialpando, J. & Linse, C., with Yedlin, J. (2005). **Educating English language learners: Understanding and using assessment**. Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE023194](#)]

This guide addresses the development of an effective assessment program for schools serving ELLs. Emphasis is on charter schools, but the information would be of use to any K-12 school in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam, or Trust Territories with ELLs. Each chapter begins with basic tenets, background, and theoretical underpinnings, and contains numerous charts and tables designed to make information easily accessible to educators and parents.

Wilde, J. (2004). **Definitions for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: Assessment**. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. [NCELA Resource ID: [BE021263](#)]

The purpose of this document is to explore the world of assessment within the context of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. The definitions provided are intended to help those with little knowledge of assessment to understand the essentials of practice and theory. The information is meant for assessment users so they can interpret the purpose of tests and test scores appropriately and explain them to others. It is not meant to provide in-depth knowledge. Topics addressed include norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and alternative tests; testing language proficiency; scoring mechanisms; and technical qualities such as reliability, validity, and fairness. The document also provides background for other National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) documents in the "Definitions for No Child Left Behind" series: *Scientifically-Based Research, Research and Evaluation that Work within NCLB Standards, and Criteria for Evaluating Evidence-Based Research*.

[\[back to top\]](#)

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National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs

[Resources About](#) » [Assessment & Accountability](#) » [Part III](#) »

Resources About Assessment and Accountability for ELLs

A Resource Guide from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA)

Part III: Web and Library Pathfinder

The following resources have been chosen to help you learn more about issues concerning assessment and accountability for English language learners. The include links to centers, offices, and other institutions, as well as guided links to a variety of databases and web-based resources.

[Selected Web Resources](#)

[News Sources](#)

[Free Databases](#)

[Subscription Databases](#)

Selected Web Resources

American Federation of Teachers

The [American Federation of Teachers](#) (AFT) was founded in 1916 to represent the economic, social and professional interests of classroom teachers. It is an affiliated international union of the AFL-CIO. The mission of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, is to improve the lives of its members and their families; to give voice to their legitimate professional, economic, and social aspirations; to strengthen the institutions in which they work; to improve the quality of the services they provide; to bring together all members to assist and support one another; and to promote democracy, human rights and freedom in the union, in the U.S., and throughout the world. The AFT Web site has multiple reports and publications of interest, including "[Questions and answers about No Child Left Behind: English language learners and NCLB testing requirements.](#)"

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center

Formed by a partnership between WestEd and the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), the [Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center \(AACC\)](#) is part of a federal technical assistance system that includes four other Content Comprehensive Centers, the Regional Education Laboratories, and research and technical assistance centers focusing on the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. The WestEd/CRESST partnership offers the Regional Comprehensive Centers and

states a national perspective on research-based resources and access to established collections of effective models, processes, research syntheses and reviews, toolkits, software systems, products, and strategies to fulfill specific state assessment and accountability needs.

Buros Institute of Mental Measurements

For over 60 years the [Buros Institute of Mental Measurements](#) has worked to serve the public interest and advance the field of measurement. Founded in 1939 by Oscar K. Buros, the Institute is dedicated to monitoring the quality of commercially published tests. In addition to promoting appropriate test selection, use, and practice, the Buros Institute works to encourage improved test development and research through thoughtful, critical analysis of individual instruments and the promotion of an open dialogue regarding contemporary measurement issues. Buros produces a number of test and assessment resources, including “[Test Reviews Online](#),” which is discussed below (under “Subscription/Fee-Based Databases”).

Center for Applied Linguistics

The [Center for Applied Linguistics](#) (CAL) is a private, nonprofit organization working to improve communication through better understanding of language and culture. CAL promotes and improves the teaching and learning of languages, identifies and solves problems related to language and culture, serves as a resource for information about language and culture, and conducts research on issues related to language and culture

Center on Education Policy

The [Center on Education Policy](#) (CEP) is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center helps Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. CEP does not represent any special interests. Instead, it tries to help citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create the conditions that will lead to better public schools.

Council of Chief State School Officers

The [Council of Chief State School Officers](#) (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

Education Commission of the States

The [Education Commission of the States](#) (ECS) is an interstate compact created in 1965 to improve public education by facilitating the exchange of information, ideas and experiences among state policymakers and education leaders. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization involving key leaders from all levels of the education system, ECS creates unique opportunities to build partnerships, share information and promote the development of policy based on available research and strategies. The ECS staff includes educators, policy analysts, communications and technology experts, researchers, and support staff, who provide state leaders with the services and products they need to make informed education policy decisions.

National Center for Educational Outcomes

The [National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) (NCEO) provides national leadership in the participation of students with disabilities in national and state assessments, standards-setting efforts, and graduation requirements. NCEO was established in 1990 to provide national leadership in designing and building educational assessments and accountability systems that appropriately monitor educational results for all students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. LEP Students (<http://education.umn.edu/NCEO/LEP/default.htm>) are addressed in one of NCEO's special topics areas, which contain topic-specific resources.

National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing

The [National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing](#) (CRESST) conducts research and development that improves assessment and accountability systems. Spanning both K-12 and adult learning, the center also conducts a substantial number of major program evaluations, develops research-based assessments, uses technology as an effective assessment tool, and helps schools and districts respond to the many accountability demands of the No Child Left Behind Act. Publications include reports, policy briefs, newsletters, and other resources.

National Council of La Raza

The [National Council of La Raza](#) (NCLR) works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations (CBOs), NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas – assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, [education](#), employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its Affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

Public Education Network

[Public Education Network](#) (PEN) is a national association of local education funds

and individuals working to advance public school reform in low-income communities across our country. PEN seeks to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for all children. PEN believes community engagement is the missing ingredient in school reform, and that the level of public involvement ultimately determines the quality of education provided by public schools.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

The global professional association, [Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages](#), Inc. (TESOL), headquartered in the United States, has more than 13,500 members in over 140 countries and is recognized as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) of the United Nations Department of Public Information. Its mission is to ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages. TESOL produces publications (serials, books, and professional papers), an extensive Web site, and an annual conference.

[\[back to top\]](#)

News Sources

[OELA Newsline](#) is the electronic news digest for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA)

— Read related articles in [OELA Newsline](#).

[Google News](#) gathers stories from more than 4,500 English-language news sources worldwide, and automatically arranges them to present the most relevant news first. Topics are updated every 15 minutes.

— Read related articles in [Google News](#).

[Yahoo! News](#) identifies over 7,000 news sources in 35 languages and offers continuously updated articles from Yahoo! News combined with crawled news sources around the Web.

— Read related articles in [Yahoo! News](#).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Free Databases

The following databases offer free access to their contents. Wherever possible, we have constructed searches that guide you to resources related to immigration and education issues.

[NCELA Resource Collection](#)

The NCELA Resource Collection database contains over 20,000 items relevant to the education of English language learners and language instruction educational programs.

— Look for related items in the NCELA Resource Collection database on [assessment](#) or [accountability](#).

[ERIC: The Education Resources Information Center](#)

Sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education, ERIC is the world's premier database of journal and non-journal education literature.

— Look for items catalogued with the term "[student evaluation](#)."

— Look for items catalogued with the [terms](#) "student evaluation" and "English (second language)."

— View ERIC descriptors (keywords) related to the term "[student evaluation](#)".

[Google Book Search](#)

Google Book Search identifies and catalogues books provided by publishers and library partners. With Google Books, you can identify a resource, buy it online from a variety of vendors, find reviews, related books and information, and locate books in a library.

— Look for related items catalogued in [Google Book Search](#).

[Google Scholar](#)

Google Scholar indexes peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts, and articles, from academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities, and other scholarly organizations. With Google Scholar, you can search diverse sources, find paper, abstracts, and citation, locate a complete paper, and conduct research in a variety of areas. In many cases, Google Scholar will provide links to library holdings.

— Look for items catalogued in [Google Scholar](#).

[\[back to top\]](#)

Subscription Databases

The following subscription/fee-based databases are useful in conducting controlled and higher-level research. Please contact your local library to determine if you have access to them.

Academic Search Premier

Academic Search Premier indexes over 8,000 publications, with full text for more than 4,450 of those titles. PDF backfiles to 1975 or further are available for over a

hundred journals, and searchable cited references are provided for more than 1,000 titles.

Dissertation Abstracts

Dissertation Abstracts is a definitive subject, title, and author guide to virtually every American dissertation accepted at an accredited institution since 1861.

Education Full Text/Education Abstracts/Education Index

Produced by H. W. Wilson, these databases include contain over 600,000 items in education related research. The databases provide comprehensive abstracting and indexing for over 475 core international English-language periodicals, yearbooks, and monographic series covering all areas of education from preschool to postgraduate.

Test Reviews Online

Test Reviews Online is a Web-based service of the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements. Test reviews are available to individual users exactly as they appear in the Ninth through Sixteenth Mental Measurements Yearbook series. In addition, monthly updates are provided from their latest test review database. For a small fee, users may download reviews for over 2,500 tests that include specifics on test purpose, population, publication date, administration time, and descriptive test evaluations.

JSTOR

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to create and maintain an archive of important scholarly journals, and to provide access to these journals as widely as possible. JSTOR offers researchers the ability to retrieve high-resolution, scanned images of journal issues and pages as they were originally designed, printed, and illustrated.

PsycInfo and PsycArticles

Produced by the American Psychological Association, these databases index over 2 million items from selected U.S., Canadian, and European psychology journals, as well as comprehensive international book and chapter information.

Social Sciences Index and Social Sciences Abstracts

Produced by Cambridge Scientific, Sociological Abstracts contains over 800,000 items in sociology and related disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences.

WorldCat

Produced by OCLC, WorldCat is a worldwide union catalog created and maintained collectively by more than 9,000 member institutions. With millions of online records built from the bibliographic and ownership information of contributing libraries, it is the largest and most comprehensive database of its kind. WorldCat will not only identify an item, it will tell you which libraries have it. (Note: Google

Scholar and Google Books will also conduct a WorldCat search as part of their query.)

[\[back to top\]](#)

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