WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Domain Exemption(s) for English Language Learners with Disability

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on domain exemptions on the WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessments in advance of testing English learners (ELs) with disabilities.

Federal and State Laws

Federal and state laws require all ELs to participate in annual English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. No disability completely exempts a student from participation on the annual ELP assessment. All states must administer an annual ELP assessment to students identified as ELs.

In New Mexico, this assessment is ACCESS for ELs for general education students with or without IEPs and Alternate ACCESS for ELs with the ***Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities***. However, when all appropriate accommodations have been offered and the student's disability creates a barrier to assessing a particular domain, the student may be exempted from an individual domain test.

IEP – 504 Plan

The IEP team must look at any other accommodations available to the student before exempting a student from participating in a domain(s). Decisions to exempt a student from a domain(s) should be made by all the team including the EL specialist who should be familiar with the student and an expert in the second language acquisition. Such decisions must also be made on a case-by-case basis.

Accommodations for ELs

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that a state provide appropriate accommodations for ELs with disabilities. If an EL has a disability that precludes assessment in one or more domains of the ELP assessment such that there are no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain, assess the student's ELP based on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student (34 CFR § 200.6(h)(4)).

PED Approval Process for Domain Exemption(s)

To exempt a student from participating in one of the four domains on the summative assessment (WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS), District Test Coordinators are required to receive PED approval by completing the **ACCESS Domain Exemption Request Form**. This form can be completed online in the **PED Test Coordinator portal**.

Remember, this form is for 1) ELs with a disability as documented in an IEP or 504 Plan and 2) only if a student is not able to utilize the Universal, Accessibility, and Accommodations for the ACCESS assessment, then a domain exemption can be requested.

To complete the form, you need to be familiar with the following codes that meet the needs of your student:

- ☐ **Hearing Impairment (HI).** Example: A student with profound hearing loss that is not fluent in ASL.
- ☐ **Visual Impairment (VI).** Example: A student is blind or visually impaired, yet unable to read braille.
- ☐ **Speaking Domain for Students Taking the Braille Version (VIBR).** Example: A student unable to produce functional speech (stutters) but uses an Augmentative/Alternative Communication device.
- ☐ **Non-Verbal (NV).** Example: A student with autism who is unable to communicate, and accommodations do not help the student.

In addition to selecting the exemption codes, you need to clarify what language domain(s) is affected and that the student is required an exemption from taking the language domain test. The four domain areas measured on the ACCESS assessments are:

- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Speaking

Exemption Request Form Location: Test Coordinator Portal

After PED Approval in the Test Coordinator Portal
Once the form is approved, the DTC should refer to the **WIDA ACCESS District and School Test Coordinator Manual** for details on marking a **Do Not Score code** in the **WIDA AMS (DRC)** to indicate that a student is not participating in a particular domain test. Following this process will ensure that the student who has a domain exemption receives an overall composite score based on other completed domains. For your reference, the following codes are used in **WIDA AMS (DRC)** to identify the reason for the domain exemption. For domain exemptions based on a disability, the **SpEd/504 (SPD)** should be selected.

1. Absent (ABS)
2. Invalidate (INV)
3. Refusal (DEC)
4. **SpEd/504 (SPD)**

Attention: WIDA will calculate the overall score and provide the Individual Student Report (ISR) based on the remaining domains, as approved by PED. An overall score will only be calculated for students who receive an exemption for a specific domain and the remaining domains are administered and completed.

For questions, reach out to **Omran.akasha@ped.nm.gov**.