

English language learners (ELLs) - students whose home language is other than English - are required to participate in the assessments mandated by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, both under Title I and Title III of the Act. The manner in which these ELLs do participate is important for educators to understand. These assessments can provide useful information about students' acquisition of English as well as their academic achievement.

The two important types of assessments given to these students include:

- English language proficiency assessments - These assessments are required by NCLB Title III. ELLs are to be assessed annually while considered to be an English language learner, as well as for two additional years after they are determined to be English proficient. These assessments are in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening and separate scores are reported in these areas as well as, an overall comprehension score. These assessments help to determine when the ELL student may be able to succeed independently in classes taught in English.
- Academic achievement assessments - These are the same assessments that other students are taking for Title I purposes, in mathematics, science, English language arts/reading, and other content areas. The ELL category is one that schools are held accountable for under NCLB, so it is important for educators to monitor the achievement of these students in the academic areas in order to assure that these students are learning academics even as they are learning English.

ELLs who are in their first year of school attendance in the United States may be excluded from the state's NCLB English language arts/reading assessment for one year so long as they have taken the state's English language proficiency assessment. These same students must participate in the state's mathematics and science assessments, although their scores do not count for NCLB accountability purposes for the first year.

To make it a bit easier for ELLs to participate in the state assessments, a variety of assessment accommodations are available to them. These include:

- Extended time
- Special test site
- Use of a translated version of the assessment (either in print or presented orally), usually in content areas such as mathematics and science
- Use of scribes to record their verbal answers to the test items

The accommodations available to students vary by state, so it is important for teachers to be aware of what sorts of accommodations are permitted in your location.

The information provided by the English language proficiency and academic assessments will assist classroom teacher's help these students learn English as quickly as possible, and succeed in classes taught in English. The faster these students acquire proficiency in English, the sooner they will become independent learners able to succeed in our schools - again for them and for educators who are held accountable for helping them learn.

---

*“These assessments can provide useful information about students' acquisition of English as well as their academic achievement.”*

---