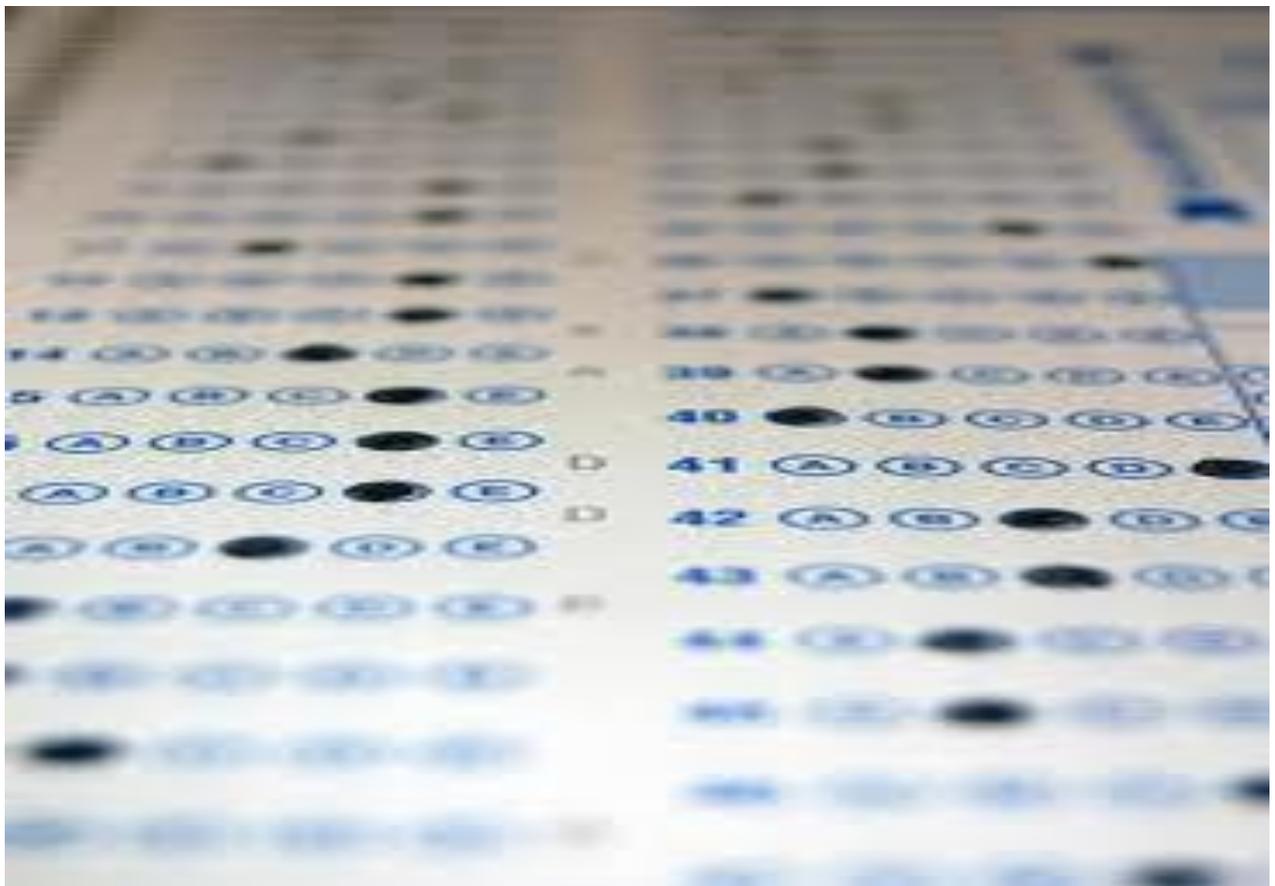


ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Section B: Assessing Students Identified As English Language Learners



**Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)
Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)
Connecticut Alternate Assessments**

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Section B

Assessing Students Identified As English Language Learners

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The Council of Chief State School Officers is a nationwide organization of the public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the U.S., the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense, and five extra state jurisdictions. CCSSO runs a project called *English Language Learner State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS)*, which developed an accommodations manual for states to use.

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The George Washington University, Center for Equity and Excellence in Education

The mission of the Center for Equity and Excellence in Education is to advance education reform so that all students achieve high standards. It provides evidence-based technical assistance and professional development and conducts research and evaluation studies for state education agencies, local education agencies, and various offices of the U.S. Department of Education to facilitate education reform and school improvement initiatives.

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INTRODUCTION

This section of *the Assessment Guidelines for Administering the Connecticut Mastery Test, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, and Connecticut Alternate Assessments* has been developed to provide support for administrators and teachers on the selection of accommodations specific to the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). An English Language Learner is any student “enrolled in public schools in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, whose dominant language is other than English and [whose] proficiency in English is not sufficient to assure equal educational opportunity in the regular school program.” (CT statute: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320848> ELLs are identified initially through a home language survey administered upon registration and subsequent English language proficiency testing. http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/curriculum/bilingual/LEP_ELL_ID_Process_Ltr_Districts.pdf

ELLs are challenged by linguistic and cultural barriers when faced with an assessment of content knowledge while they are still in the process of acquiring English, and, even more specifically, while mastering academic English. ELLs have to use their cognitive resources first to access meaning and then to respond to the content of the test. For ELLs still in the early stages of English language acquisition, the processes of decoding and encoding text in English takes longer, placing a heavier burden on both short-term and working memory during second language processing. Accommodations for ELLs, therefore, are those that are specifically designed to provide linguistic support. Without accommodations that address the linguistic and socio-cultural needs of ELLs, the results of assessments in English may not adequately reflect what an ELL knows and can do. Instead, the results may be a factor of construct-irrelevant variance, that is, variance due to the language demands in the test that are not related to the constructs being measured (Acosta, Rivera, & Willner, 2008)

Guidelines for the use of accommodations for ELLs are necessary to ensure that:

- the accommodations provided for ELLs are responsive to their unique linguistic needs;
- the accommodations allow ELL students to be able to access the content in statewide assessments and demonstrate their knowledge;
- all eligible ELL students are provided appropriate accommodations on classroom, district, and state assessments;
- the accommodations for ELLs are consistent and routinely used in classroom instruction.

Accommodations are the principal means states use to include ELLs in large-scale assessments. In general, accommodations can involve changes to testing procedures or the testing situation. In order to allow ELLs to participate meaningfully in assessments, accommodations for ELLs should address their unique linguistic and socio-cultural needs. Otherwise, these factors can

become barriers to their ability to demonstrate what they know and can do with respect to the constructs being tested. Such accommodations, however, should not alter the test construct or compromise the validity and other technical aspects of the test thereby allowing for the equivalency of accommodated and unaccommodated test scores and the pooling of such scores for reporting. Because the test construct remains the same, accommodations do not affect how scores are interpreted (Acosta, Rivera, & Willner, 2008).

This section is organized into a five-step process first described by Rivera et al. (2009) and used in the document, *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners (2011)*, developed by the English Language Learner State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards SCASS, a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The five steps are as follows:

1. Expect English Language Learners to achieve grade-level academic content standards
2. Learn about accommodations for instruction and assessment
3. Select accommodations for instruction and assessment of individual students
4. Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment
5. Evaluate and improve accommodations use

Step 1: Expect English Language Learners to Achieve Grade-Level Academic Content Standards

Education is a basic right for all children in the United States, including English language learners. English language learners (ELLs), also referred to as Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, are students whose native language is not English and who do not yet possess sufficient English language proficiency to participate fully in general education classes. Current legislation focuses on accountability for all students, including ELLs, and guarantees them the right to equal educational opportunities. ELLs' rights for equitable inclusion in instruction and assessment processes are outlined in a number of federal laws and regulations as well as certain legal decisions in conjunction with the Office of Civil Rights. These educational protections and supports for ELLs include the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act as well as the Supreme Court Cases *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) and *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Title III of the ESEA mandates that all ELLs receive quality instruction for learning both English and grade-level academic content (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). *According to the ESEA act, ELLs are required to participate in statewide assessments that measure students' English language and academic progress in order to increase accountability for ELLs' academic achievement.*

The current version of ESEA (NCLB) requires that states develop standards for English language proficiency in the context of each state's Academic Content Standards and include all students in their accountability system. ESEA provides for:

the inclusion of limited English proficient students, who shall be assessed in a valid and reliable manner and provided reasonable accommodations on assessments administered to such students under this paragraph, including, to the extent practicable, assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know and can do in academic content areas, until such students have achieved English language proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 27).

Assessing the English Language Proficiency of English Language Learners: Title III, in conjunction with Title I subgroup accountability targeting all students, added a requirement that states also must develop or adopt standards for English language proficiency (ELP) and annually assess the progress of ELLs toward these standards. These ELP standards are to be aligned with state content and academic achievement standards to ensure that ELLs are learning the type of academic English necessary for progress in the content areas of mathematics, reading, and science. Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) requires the Connecticut State Department of Education to annually review the performance of each school district that

receives funds under Title III for language instruction. Districts must meet their state-established AMAO targets for English language learners each year and notify parents accordingly.

The following are some other ESEA provisions for ELLs:

- all ELL students' English language proficiency must be tested at least once a year;
- all ELLs have to take state academic achievement tests in language arts, mathematics, and science, except that ELL students who have been in the U.S. for less than one year do not have to take the language arts test for that first year.
- ELL students as a group must meet specific annual targets of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); schools, districts, and states will be held accountable for ensuring that they meet these targets;
- curricula must be demonstrated to be effective; language instruction curricula used to teach ELL children are to be tied to scientifically based research and demonstrated to be effective;
- local entities have the flexibility to choose the method of instruction to teach ELLs;
- states must establish standards and benchmarks for raising the level of English proficiency and meeting challenging state academic standards for ELL students that are aligned with state standards (Colorado, 2007).

Lau v. Nichols (1974). The Office of Civil Rights established a policy for the provision of equal educational opportunities for ELLs, described in a 1970 memo as follows:

Where the inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students.

This memo does not tell districts what steps they must take to ensure the availability of equal opportunities for ELLs. However, the memo does state that the law is violated if:

- students are excluded from effective participation in school because of their inability to speak and understand the language of instruction;
- national origin minority students are inappropriately assigned to special education classes because of their lack of English skills;
- programs for students whose English is less than proficient are not designed to teach them English as soon as possible, or if these programs operate as a dead end track; or
- parents whose English is limited do not receive school notices or other information in a language they can understand.

The Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols (1974)* supported the premise that if students cannot understand the language of instruction, they do not have access to an equal opportunity education.

Castañeda v. Pickard (1981). On June 23, 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court issued a decision that is the seminal post-Lau decision concerning the education of language minority students. The case established a three-part test to evaluate the adequacy of a district's program for ELL students:

1. Is the program based on an educational theory recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is considered by experts as a legitimate experimental strategy?
2. Are the programs and practices, including resources and personnel, reasonably calculated to implement this theory effectively?
3. Does the school district evaluate its programs and make adjustments where needed to ensure language barriers are actually being overcome?

Equal Access to Grade-Level Content

Federal and Connecticut state mandates require that ELL students have equal access to the same grade level content standards as their general education counterparts. Educators can ensure that ELL students work toward the same grade-level content standards by using a range of instructional strategies based on students' varied strengths and needs and providing appropriate accommodations during instruction and assessments to increase accessibility. To meet this goal of meaningful, equal access, educators of ELLs must be familiar with the content standards and accountability systems at the state and district levels as well as locations of these standards and their updates. Meaningful access is also made possible by appropriately selected accommodations. Additionally, to secure successful student access to grade-level content, ESL/bilingual educators must collaborate with their general education colleagues.

Most ELLs are able to achieve grade-level academic content standards when instruction is provided by teachers who are qualified to teach in the content areas addressed by state standards and who know how to differentiate instruction for diverse learners.

Programs for ELLs in Connecticut

Programs of English language instruction help students who are English language learners (ELLs) acquire the necessary spoken and written English skills while developing and/or maintaining their learning of content. Connecticut offers English as a second language (ESL) programs as well as bilingual education programs. (Section 10-17 of the CGS)

“ESL programs (are) taught exclusively in English and strive to help ELLs to acquire a level of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing that will allow them to master the same content and meet the same academic performance standards expected of students whose first language is English. ESL program models vary among districts.”

Bilingual education programs are required by the CT Bilingual statute “in schools that have 20 or more speakers of the same native language who are identified as ELLs. These programs enable students to become proficient in English and academic content areas through the instructional use of both English and the student’s native language.” The statute limits “the time an eligible student spends in a program of bilingual education to thirty months . . . If an eligible student does not meet the English mastery standard at the end of thirty months, the local or regional board of education shall provide language transition support services to such student.”

For more information on the implementation of Language Transition Support Services (LTSS) in CT please visit: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321092>

These programs and others available provide accommodations to make instruction in English comprehensible.

For additional information visit CT SDE’s Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) Education website at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320848>

Connecticut’s Teaching and Learning Framework

For information on CT State Department of Education’s curriculum frameworks, Common Core State Standards, curriculum templates, and sample lessons and assessments visit the Teaching and Learning website at:

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&Q=320954>

Step 2: Learn about Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment

What Are Accommodations for ELLs?

Accommodations are practices and procedures that provide equitable access for ELLs during instruction and assessments and provide a valid means for them to show what they know and can do. Accommodations are designed to support each student's access to instructional or test content, interactions with content, and response to content. In the testing situation, they involve changes to testing procedures or the testing situation in order to allow meaningful participation.” Effective accommodations for ELLs address the unique linguistic and socio-cultural needs of the student without altering the test construct or providing the ELL student with unfair advantage over other students (Acosta, et al., 2008).

 Modern technology allows educators to introduce computer-based instruction and assessment accommodations that facilitate ELLs' independence in their learning. **In the age of technology-mediated educational practices, many computer-based accommodations can facilitate instruction and assessment if they are selected and utilized properly.** The purpose of accommodations for English language learners, including those that are administered through the use of computers, is to reduce or eliminate the effects of a student's limited knowledge of the English language on learning. However, while ELLs may be provided with instruction and assessment accommodations, this should not in any way reduce expectations for learning.

Accommodations provided during state assessments are most effective when the student has the opportunity to become familiar with and use the accommodations during classroom instruction and classroom and district assessments prior to the administration of the assessment. However, some instructional accommodations may not be appropriate for use in certain statewide assessments, if their use will invalidate the student's test score. For example, an ELL student may be using a Spanish/English dictionary in the classroom to look up words and their definitions; however, on states assessments, ELL students are allowed to use only word to word dictionaries and not dictionaries that include word definitions. It is, therefore, critical for educators to become familiar with the assessment accommodations for ELLs that are available and approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education (see page 15 of this document).

Accommodations should also be mapped against ELLs' language proficiency and literacy levels. ELL students vary widely on a range of background factors that impact their learning of English as a second language. Among these factors are the following: current level of English language proficiency, level of literacy in English and the native language, the type(s) of language services being received, the language(s) of instruction used in their educational program, age, and years of formal schooling in their home country and in the U.S. Generally, as ELLs become more proficient in English, their need for accommodations will decrease. Therefore, a “one-size-fits-all” approach cannot be used to meet the needs of such a diverse population.

Who Is Involved in Accommodations Decisions?

Educators of ELLs must make assessment and accommodation decisions for students based on individual need in accordance with state and federal guidelines to ensure that the accommodations do not invalidate the assessment. According to the Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (2005) most states designate more than one individual who make decisions about accommodations for ELLs, ensuring that **more than one** perspective is considered in such decisions.

The following are recommended members of a decision-making team:

- language educators (ESL or Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), bilingual teacher(s), an ELL administrator, a language acquisition specialist)
- assessment officials (test administrator(s), guidance counselor, reading specialist)
- general education teachers (classroom/content teacher(s))
- school administrators (principal, school/district official(s))
- parents (parent(s)/guardian(s))
- students, as appropriate

It is also important to encourage meaningful collaboration among classroom teachers, school administrators, assessment officials, parents, and students to guarantee effective instruction and accurate assessments for ELLs.

In making decisions about accommodations for ELLs, the following question should be asked:

Does the student really need any accommodation? A student may not be receiving an accommodation he or she really needs or may be receiving too many. Research indicates that more is not necessarily better, and that providing students with accommodations that are not truly needed may have a negative impact on performance. The better approach is to focus on a student's identified needs within the general education curriculum.

Eligibility for Newly Arrived ELLs in Connecticut

In 2010, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted a position statement that called for the provision of programs for students acquiring English as a second language that met the same academic performance standards expected of students whose first language is English. To this end, ELLs must participate in the standard grade level CMT/CAPT provided exclusively in English but with appropriate accommodations as needed.

However, ELLs enrolled for the **first time** in a U.S. school for 12 calendar months or less may be excused from the following test sessions:

1. CAPT: Response to Literature, Reading for Information, Editing and Revising, and both Interdisciplinary Writing Tests.
2. CMT: Reading Comprehension, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), Editing and Revising, and Direct Assessment of Writing.

It is important to note that federal legislation provides that newly arrived students may be excused from reading and writing tests; it does not *require* that they be excused. Careful consideration should be given to any decision to excuse newly arrived ELLs in light of the Title 1 preference for including as many students as possible in statewide assessments.

All ELLs, however, must take the following tests regardless of when they enrolled in a U.S. school:

1. Language Assessment Scales (LAS-Links) – a test of English language proficiency
2. Mathematics (Grades 3-8, 10) and Science (Grades 5, 8, 10) tests, with accommodations as needed.

Eligibility of ELLs with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

English language learners eligible for special education due to a significant cognitive disability who also meet the eligibility requirements for assessment with the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist must be assessed in accordance with the recommendations in their IEPs. In spite of the 12 month exemption option, it is Connecticut policy that the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist is completed for these students. Since the child's primary special education teacher completes the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist based on his or her observations of the student rather than the student completing the test, the student may still be rated on the skills included in the checklist without a penalty due to his/her limited English language proficiency. In this instance, tests for these students will be scored but not included in the calculation for AYP.

Good Practices for Instruction and Assessment: Allowable Supports

For both instruction and assessment, there are supports and strategies that should be allowable for all students, and therefore not classified as accommodations. These good practices, such as using a reading guide strip to help focus attention, should be available for all students if they are accustomed to using such supports. Allowable supports are those strategies and tools that may be used by all students for an instructional task of an assessment.

Connecticut Allowable CMT/CAPT Supports

- Highlighter
- Magnification Sheet
- Graph Paper
- Reading Guide Strips
- Color-Overlay

Accommodations and Test Modifications

It is important to distinguish between accommodations, test modifications and instructional modifications.

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They provide specific linguistic supports that ELLs need to access instruction and assessment. Such accommodations allow ELL students not only to access the material but also to demonstrate what they know and can do without

changing the validity of the test results. The results of assessments with accommodations allow educator to make informed instructional decisions and judgments about student work that are valid.

On the other hand, *test modifications* refer to practices that change or, lower the conceptual difficulty of the test items. Changes in the underlying constructs being measured are considered test modifications. Resulting test scores cannot be interpreted in the same way as the scores from the original test administered in the standard manner. Test modifications, therefore, invalidate the test results. In addition, providing test modifications during a state accountability assessment may constitute a test irregularity and result in an investigation into a school's or district's test practices.

Examples of test modifications include:

- having the reading test read to a student
- simplifying the test item in a way that the conceptual difficulty of the item is lowered
- giving a student hints or clues to correct responses tests.

Instructional modifications, in contrast, refer to strategies in delivering instruction to make the material accessible to the student without lowering learning expectations. For example, an ELL student who is just beginning to learn English may not be able to read a text fluently enough to grasp the meaning but might be able to do so when provided with visual supports (e.g., pictures, realia, graphic organizers). Providing instructional modifications, however, must be carefully planned to scaffold student learning while not restricting their acquisition of the skills and critical content knowledge needed to succeed at grade level. If students have not had access to critical, assessed content, they may be at risk of not meeting graduation requirements.

Step 3: Select Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Individual Students

To ensure that ELLs are engaged in standards-based instruction and assessments, every ELL team member must be knowledgeable about state and district academic content standards and assessments. Effective decision-making about the provision of appropriate accommodations begins with making good instructional decisions. In turn, making appropriate instructional decisions is facilitated by gathering and reviewing good information about the student's language proficiency and academic performance in relation to local and state academic standards.

When ELL accommodation decisions are made thoughtfully, they can advance equal opportunities for students to participate in the general education curriculum.

Accommodations for Instruction vs. Assessment. In some cases, accommodations used during instruction may not be allowed on a test because they would invalidate the results of the test. This happens when the accommodation changes the performance demand in a way that it no longer reflects what the test was designed to measure. In these instances, teachers should make sure that the student has ample opportunities to perform on classroom tasks and assessments without the use of those classroom accommodations.

If an accommodation is considered a necessary step in scaffolding grade level content instruction, having some practice without the accommodation during classroom work allows the teacher to gauge student progress independent of the accommodation and provides students with opportunities to practice not using an accommodation before the state assessment. It is also important to note that, as students' progress in their level of English proficiency, the continued use of accommodations should be reconsidered and students should be disengaged from those they no longer need.

Prior Accommodations Use

Accommodations should not be used for the first time on a state test. Instead, it is important to prepare students on their use prior to taking a state assessment:

- Plan time for the student to learn new accommodations.
-  When students are taking assessments in a technology-based setting, be sure that they know how to use the accommodation when it is provided as part of the platform.
- Plan for the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the student's use of accommodations (see Step 5).

The Decision-Making Process

Selecting accommodations for instruction and assessment is the role of a student's ELL team.

The ELL decision-making team

Recommended members of an ELL decision-making team are the following:

- language educators (ESL or TESOL teacher, bilingual teacher, an ELL administrator, a second language acquisition specialist)
- assessment officials (test administrator(s), guidance counselor, reading specialist)
- general education teachers (classroom/content teacher(s))
- school administrators (principal, school/district official(s))
- parents (parent(s)/guardian(s))
- students, as appropriate

The decision-making process for selecting state assessment accommodations should include consideration of at least the following three factors: 1) student characteristics, 2) individual test characteristics; and 3) state accommodations policies.

1. **Student Characteristics:** Accommodations should be chosen by someone with knowledge of second language acquisition and based on an individual student's characteristics and need for the accommodation. When accommodations are used appropriately, the student will be able to demonstrate most validly what he or she knows and can do.

Use the questions provided below to guide the selection of appropriate accommodations for ELL students getting assigned accommodations for the first time and for students who are currently using accommodations:

- What are the student's language learning strengths and areas of further improvement?
- How do the student's language learning needs affect the achievement of grade-level content standards?
- What accommodations will increase the student's access to instruction and assessment by addressing the student's learning needs and reducing the effect of the student's language barrier? These may be new accommodations or accommodations the student is currently using.
- What accommodations are regularly used by the student during instruction and assessments?
- Are there effective combinations of accommodations?

- What are the results for assignments and assessments when accommodations were used and not used?
- What is the student’s perception of how well an accommodation “worked”?
- What difficulties did the student experience when using accommodations?
- What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and other specialists about how the accommodation worked?
- Should the student continue to use an accommodation, are changes needed, or should the use of the accommodation be discontinued?

Of the accommodations that match the student’s needs, consider the following:

- the student’s willingness to learn to use the accommodation,
- opportunities to learn how to use the accommodation in classroom settings,
- conditions for use on state assessments.

2. *Individual Test Characteristics:* After considering student characteristics, it is important to look at the tasks students are being asked to do on the various state and district assessments. Below are more questions to ask:

- What are the characteristics of the test the student needs to take? Are the test tasks similar to classroom assessment tasks? Has the student had the opportunity to practice similar tasks prior to testing?
- Does the student use an accommodation for a classroom task that is allowed for similar tasks on the state or district tests?
- Are there other barriers that could be removed by using an accommodation that is not already offered or used by the student?

3. *State Accommodation Policies:* When selecting accommodations for state assessments, it is important to keep in mind both the accommodation policies to maintain the validity of an assessment and to know the consequences of the decision. For example, if the ELL team determines that a student should use a certain accommodation during an assessment but the student refuses to use the accommodation, the validity of the assessment is compromised. Below are more questions to ask:

- Does the accommodation maintain the validity of the assessment?
- Is the accommodation allowed for the test or the portion of the test noted as having a barrier to accessibility?
- Are there consequences for using the accommodation?

Connecticut English Language Learners Accommodations

Allowable accommodations in Connecticut specific to English language learners fall under the category of *direct linguistic support accommodations*. Direct linguistic support accommodations are those accommodations that involve adjustments in the use of language to provide students with access to the content of the test. Such adjustments can be made in English or in the student’s native language, as set forth in the CT assessment guidelines. Allowable direct linguistic support accommodations in Connecticut are of the presentation mode.

Available to ELLs is also an indirect linguistic support accommodation: *extended time*. Extended time recognizes the dual cognitive burden that ELLs experience. ELLs have to first process the task at hand, that is, they have to decode the meaning in order to access the content, and then attend to the task.

Figure 1 presents the accommodations that are available to English language learners in Connecticut.

Figure 1: Allowable Accommodations

English	Native Language
Linguistic Accommodations (Presentation)	
<p>1. Reader</p> <p>1.1. Use text reader for test items including directions (MIST application)</p> <p>1.2. Repeat test items using text reader on MIST application</p> <p>1.3. Repeat test directions using text reader on MIST application</p> <p>1.4. Words highlighted and synchronized with text reader (MIST application)</p>	<p>3. Word- to- Word</p> <p>3.1. Provide customized English to native language word –to word subject specific glossary</p> <p>3.2. Provide commercial word-to-word English to native language dictionary</p> <p>3.3. Allow electronic pocket word-to-word English to native language translator</p>
<p>2. Clarification</p> <p>2.1. Clarify/explain test directions in English (this is NOT allowed for test items).</p> <p>2.2. Allow student to restate directions in own words to confirm understanding.</p>	<p>4. Reader of Directions ONLY in Native Language</p> <p>4.1. Translate test directions orally into native language</p> <p>4.2. Request clarification in native language</p>
Non-Linguistic	
<p>5. Extended time</p>	

Documenting Accommodations for ELLs

In order to understand the status and progress an ELL student is making, it is important to document, in an ongoing way, the types of instructional and assessment accommodations the student has received in the past and the accommodations the student may still be using. Such documentation should be maintained in a manner that a teacher new to the student is able to review the history of accommodation use to inform current practice. Documentation can be maintained in a cumulative folder or as a running record.

As part of the documentation process, it is useful to interview the student after testing about the accommodation(s) provided and used, whether it was useful, and whether it should be used again. Any adjustments or difficulties experienced by the student in either how the accommodation was administered or in using the accommodation during the assessment should be noted.

Documenting Accommodations in CT

Accommodations used by English language learners during statewide assessments must be entered on the CAPT/CMT Accommodations Data Collection Website each October. The test accommodations forms may be found here:

<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/agl/index.htm>

Involving Students in Selecting, Using, and Evaluating Accommodations

It is critical for ELLs to understand their language needs and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school. Some students have had limited experience expressing personal preferences and advocating for themselves. ELLs are likely to have various cultural backgrounds, and speaking out about preferences, particularly in the presence of “authority figures,” may be a new role for them, one for which they need guidance and feedback. Teachers and other ELL team members can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations.

The greater the degree to which students are involved in the selection process, the more likely the accommodations will be used. Self-advocacy skills become critical here. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then they need to learn how to make certain that those accommodations are provided in all of their classes and wherever they need them outside of school.

Step 4: Administer Accommodations During Instruction and Assessment

Accommodations during Instruction

The student must be provided the selected accommodations during instructional periods that necessitate their use. An accommodation should not be used solely during assessments. ELL accommodations should always be chosen based on the student's individual characteristics in order to help the student overcome the language barrier relative to their English language proficiency.



As states and consortia move to providing assessments on technology-based platforms, educators and ELL teams must take care to ensure that students have opportunities to become familiar with the technological aspects of the assessment process. In addition to taking practice tests using the same testing platform, it is also important for educators to provide opportunities for all students to use technology for learning as well.

Accommodations During Assessment

Planning for Test Day

Once decisions have been made about providing accommodations to meet individual student needs, the logistics of providing the actual accommodations during state and district assessments must be mapped out. It is not uncommon for members of the ELL team to support District Test Coordinators who are given the responsibility for arranging, coordinating, and providing assessment accommodations for all students who may need them for district and state assessments. It is important to engage the appropriate personnel to plan the logistics and provisions of assessment accommodations on test day. Thus, it is essential for all ELL team members to know and understand the requirements and consequences.



Current designs of technology-based testing platforms may allow for accommodations to be provided through the application itself. When creating a student profile, an ELL team may be able to select the appropriate accommodations to enter on the CAPT/CMT Data Collection Website, allowing the individualized accommodations to be provided through a computer-based application. Providing these accommodations through the testing platform helps to guarantee that the provision of accommodations is standardized from student to student and district to district. However, it is important to monitor the provision of accommodations on test day to ensure that accommodations are delivered and the technology is working as it should.

Prior to the day of a test, test administrators and proctors should know what accommodations each student will be using and how to administer them properly. For example, if students are allowed to use a dictionary or glossary, test administrators will ensure that they are available for students at the time they need them. In addition, staff administering accommodations, such as

providing Native Language Reader of Directions for a student, must adhere to the specific procedures outlined in the Test Examiner Manuals for that accommodation so that student scores are valid.

Administering Assessments and Accommodations

The Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement (NCME, 1995) states that test administrators and others involved in assessments must:

- take appropriate security precautions before, during, and after the administration of the assessment;
- understand the procedures needed to administer the assessment prior to administration;
- administer standardized assessments according to prescribed procedures and conditions and notify appropriate persons if any nonstandard or delimiting conditions occur;
- avoid any conditions in the conduct of the assessment that might invalidate the results;
- provide for and document all reasonable and allowable accommodations; and
- avoid actions or conditions that would permit or encourage individuals or groups to receive scores that misrepresent their actual levels of attainment.

Failure to adhere to these practices may constitute a test irregularity or a breach of test security and must be reported to the District Test Coordinator immediately, who will report it to the Connecticut State Department of Education's Bureau of Student Assessment to be investigated according to state and local testing policies.

Ethical Testing Practices

Ethical testing practices must be maintained during the administration of a test. Unethical testing practices relate to inappropriate interactions between test administrators and students taking the test. Unethical practices include allowing a student to answer fewer questions, changing the content by paraphrasing or offering additional information, coaching students during testing, editing student responses, or giving clues in any way.

Standardization

Standardization refers to adherence to uniform administration procedures and conditions during an assessment. Standardization is an essential feature of educational assessments and is necessary to produce comparable information about student learning. Strict adherence to guidelines detailing instructions and procedures for the administration of accommodations is necessary to ensure that test results reflect actual student learning.

Test Security

Test security involves maintaining the confidentiality of test questions and answers, and is critical in ensuring the integrity and validity of a test. Test security can become an issue when someone other than the student is allowed to see the test (e.g., interpreter, reader). In order to ensure test security and confidentiality, test administrators need to (1) keep testing materials in a secure place to prevent unauthorized access, (2) keep all test content confidential and refrain from sharing information or revealing test content to anyone, and (3) return all materials as instructed.



Some of the same considerations for test security apply when students are taking a technology-based assessment. For example, ensuring that only authorized personnel have access to the test and that test materials are kept confidential are critical in technology-based assessments. In addition, it is important to guarantee that (1) students are seated in such a manner that they cannot see each other's terminals, (2) students are not able to access any additional programs or the Internet while they are taking the assessment, and (3) students are not able to access any saved data or computer shortcuts while taking the test.

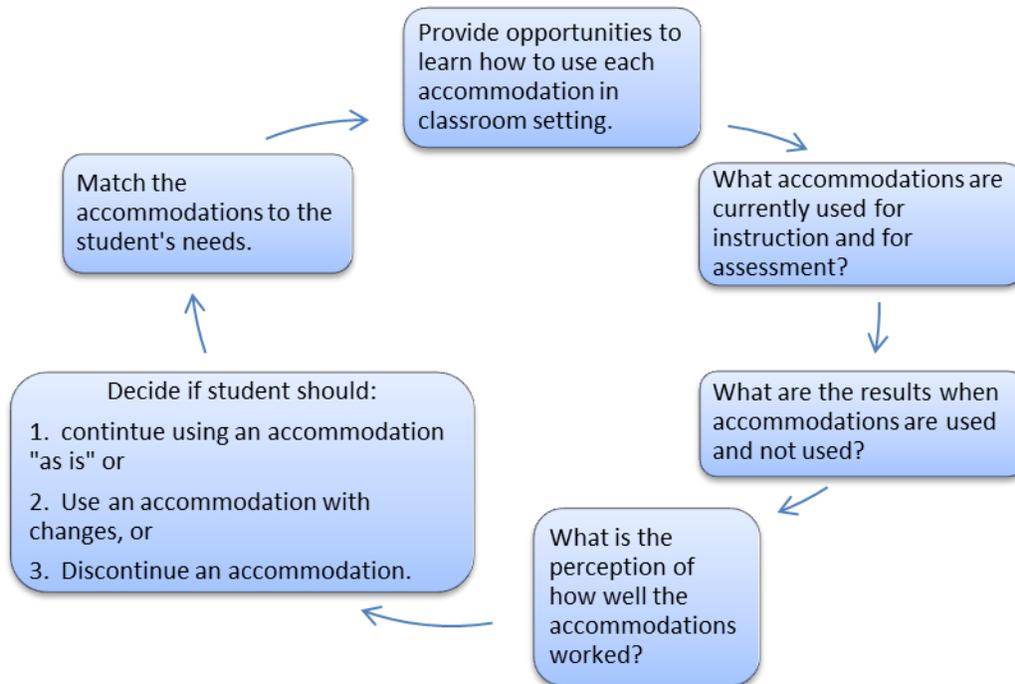
Connecticut's Test Security Policy

The CMT and CAPT Test Coordinators Manuals and Test Examiner Manuals as well as the MIST application manuals contain specific instructions that teachers **must** follow to ensure test security and validity. Therefore, it is essential that each test examiner review the entire Test Examiner's Manual prior to administering any part of the Connecticut Mastery Test, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test or the CMT/CAPT Modified Assessment System (MAS). Violation of test security is a serious matter with far-reaching consequences. Breaches of test security include, but are not limited to, copying of test materials, failing to return test materials, coaching students, giving students answers, and/or changing students' answers. Such acts may lead to the invalidation of an entire school district's student test scores, disruption of the test system statewide, and legal action against the individuals committing the breach. A breach of test security may be dealt with as a violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers, as well as a violation of other pertinent state and federal law and regulation. The Connecticut State Department of Education will investigate all such matters and pursue appropriate follow-up action. Any person found to have breached the security of the test system may be subject to sanctions including, but not limited to, disciplinary action by a local board of education, the revocation of Connecticut teaching certification by the State Board of Education [see Section 10-145b(m) of the Connecticut General Statutes], and civil liability pursuant to federal copyright law.

Step 5: Evaluate and Improve Accommodations Use

Collecting and analyzing data on the use and effectiveness of accommodations are necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of ELLs in state- and district-wide assessments. Data on the use and impact of accommodations during classroom instruction and during assessments may reveal questionable patterns of accommodation use, as well as support the continued use of some accommodations or the rethinking of others. Examination of the data may also indicate areas in which the ELL team and test administrators need additional training and support. Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and talking with students after testing sessions will likely yield data that can be used to guide the formative evaluation process at the school or district level and at the student level?

Connecticut's Accommodation Cycle:





Gathering information on accommodations may be easier in a technology-based assessment platform, when the accommodations are “programmed” into the system. However, just because information *can* be collected does not automatically suggest that it is meaningful. ELL teams, schools, and districts should decide in advance what questions should be answered by the collection of accommodation data in order to apply resources efficiently.

Information on the use of accommodations can be feasible to collect when it is coded on the test form with other student information.

Accommodation information can be analyzed in different ways. Here are some questions to guide data analysis at the school and district level and the student level.

Questions to Guide Evaluation of Accommodation Use at the School or District Level

1. Are there policies to ensure ethical testing practices, the standardized administration of assessments, and adherence to test security practices before, during, and after the day of the test?
2. Are there procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised by the provision of accommodations?
3. Are students receiving accommodations as preselected by their ELL teams and based on each student’s specific needs?
4. Are there procedures in place to ensure that test administrators adhere to directions for the implementation of accommodations?
5. How many ELLs are receiving accommodations?
6. What types of accommodations are provided and are some used more than others?
7. What are the difficulties encountered in the use of accommodations?
8. How well do students who receive accommodations perform on state and local assessments? If students are not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to the students not having had access to the necessary instruction, not receiving the accommodation, or using accommodations that were not appropriate to the needs of the particular student?

Questions to Guide Evaluation at the Student Level

1. What accommodations are used by the student during instruction and assessments?
2. What are the results of classroom assignments and assessments when accommodations are used versus when accommodations are not used? If the student did not meet the expected level of performance, is it due to not having access to the necessary instruction, not receiving the accommodations, or using accommodations that were not appropriate to her/his needs?
3. What is the student’s perception of how well the accommodations worked?
4. What combination of accommodations seems to be effective for that student?
5. What difficulties were encountered by the student in the use of accommodations?

6. What are the perceptions of teachers and others about how the accommodation appears to be working for the student?

These questions can be used formatively to evaluate the accommodations used at the student level, as well as the school or district levels. School- and district-level questions can be addressed by a committee responsible for continuous improvement efforts, while the student level questions need to be considered by the ELL team. It is critical to stress that formative evaluation is not the responsibility of just one individual. The entire ELL team should contribute to the information gathering and decision-making processes.

Appendix A: Definitions and Descriptions of Allowable Accommodations

Direct Linguistic Support Accommodations	
Accommodation (Presentation)	Accommodations (Presentation) Descriptions
English	
<p>1. Reader</p> <p>1.1 Use text reader for test items including directions (MIST application)</p> <p>1.2 Repeat test items using text reader on MIST application</p> <p>1.3 Repeat test directions using text reader on MIST application</p> <p>1.4 Words highlighted and synchronized with text reader (MIST application)</p>	<p>Reader</p> <p>ELLs may need assistance accessing instructional or test content by having test items or directions read aloud in English.</p> <p> MIST provides a text reader function for test items and test directions in English for students. MIST also allows for items and directions to be repeated as many times as necessary. Words are highlighted for students during audio.</p>
<p>2. Clarification</p> <p>2.1. Clarify/explain test directions in English (this is NOT allowed for test items).</p> <p>2.2. Allow student to restate directions in own words to confirm understanding.</p>	<p>Clarification</p> <p>Standardization: In a paper-based environment, teachers may clarify directions through restatement or simplification of language. Support is limited to the mechanical aspects of marking answers, clarifying directions, and finding the right place in the test booklet. It is not appropriate to give clues, define the meaning of a word, or explain a rationale that would help students identify the correct answers or supply additional examples to assist the student. The test examiner may read and clarify in English as appropriate, all test directions to the students. This includes the prompt for the Direct Assessment of Writing. The test examiner may not provide any other form of feedback to the student.</p> <p> With MIST, students are able to select pieces of text to have it re-read when requested.</p>

Direct Linguistic Support Accommodations	
Accommodation (Presentation)	Accommodations (Presentation) Descriptions
Native Language	
<p>3. Word- to- Word</p> <p>3.1. Provide customized English to native language word –to word subject specific glossary</p> <p>3.2. Provide commercial word-to-word English to native language dictionary</p> <p>3.3. Allow electronic pocket word-to-word English to native language translator *</p>	<p><i>Word-to-word reference material</i></p> <p>To understand instructional or test content, some students may need an English-to-native language dictionary, subject specific glossary, or translator. A word-to-word dictionary is permitted for word-to-word translations <i>only</i>. Dictionaries containing definitions <i>are not</i> allowed to be used in the testing situation. This accommodation must be entered on the CAPT/CMT Accommodations Data Collection Web site prior to testing.</p> <p>For general information about ELL students and programs, call Marie Salazar Glowski in the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement at 860-713-6750.</p> <p>Standardization: In a paper-based environment, students are provided with a standard dual language dictionary or glossary.</p>
<p>4. Reader of Directions ONLY in Native Language</p> <p>4.1. Translate test directions orally into native language</p> <p>4.2. Request clarification in native language</p>	<p><i>Reader of Directions ONLY in Native Language</i></p> <p>Sight translation involves oral rendering of test directions into a student’s native language as well as clarifying directions in a native language. This type of accommodation differs from scripted oral translation in that instead of reading from a script, the test administrator orally translates as he or she reads.</p> <p>Standardization: Native language interpreters should use even inflection so that the student does not receive any cues by the way the information is read. Interpreters need to be familiar with the terminology and symbols specific to the content and may only be individuals hired by the district. This is especially important for high school mathematics and science. Readers must be provided on an individual basis – not to a group of students. A student should have the option of asking a reader to slow down or repeat text. This cannot occur when a person is reading to an entire group of students.</p>

Direct Linguistic Support Accommodations	
Accommodation (Presentation)	Accommodations (Presentation) Descriptions
Non-Linguistic Support Accommodations	
5. <i>Extended time</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Extended Time</i></p> <p>Some students may need an extra amount of time to complete assignments, projects, and assessments.</p> <p>Time extensions beyond those stated in the Test Examiner’s Manual may be granted to a student whose limited English proficiency makes completion of the test within the prescribed time limits unrealistic. This is especially the case for student using dictionaries on the exam. Time may be extended for as long as necessary provided the student does not become unreasonably fatigued. A good benchmark is one and a half times the standard time for the subtest. All students who receive extended time must be tested separately from students being tested under standard time limits. If such factors as mental or physical fatigue or disruptive behavior present a problem, it is acceptable to plan breaks within one test sitting or to spread out the test activities over several sittings, on an individual student basis. However, each test session/test sitting must be completed in a single day. Stated differently, test sessions may not be split between two different days. This accommodation must be entered on the CAPT/CMT Accommodations Data Collection Web site prior to testing.</p>

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