



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Accommodations  
Guidelines for  
English  
Language  
Learners (ELs)**

**2017**

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Keystone and  
PSSA Exams

This manual answers some of the commonly asked questions about accommodations for English Language Learners (ELs) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) students.

***Who are English Language Learners (ELs)?***

A limited English proficient student (LEP) or English Language Learner (EL) is one who

1. was not born in the United States or whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or
2. is a Native American or Alaska Native who is a native resident of the outlying areas and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on (the student's) level of English language proficiency; or
3. is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant,

and

1. has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language; and
2. has difficulties that may deny (the student) the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society.

***Who should administer the PSSA or Keystone Exams to ELs?***

District and school personnel should decide the best way to administer the PSSA or Keystone Exams to ELs. Most important is to try to reduce student anxiety as much as possible to help students feel comfortable on the day of the test. Having a teacher familiar to the students administer the test often reduces test anxiety and is an allowable accommodation for ELs. Test administrators must be familiar with the accommodations allowed for ELs.

***Who determines which accommodations to use?***

Each school must involve the appropriate school personnel in the determination of appropriate accommodations for ELs. The ESL/bilingual teacher, the ESL/bilingual education coordinator, other classroom teachers, the test administrator or coordinator, a parent, the principal or counselor and the student (when appropriate) may be involved in this determination. Identifying the appropriate accommodations should be a collaborative process and should include content area teachers consulting with ESL/bilingual teachers.

For dually-identified students, the IEP team should be aware of EL-specific needs and should cooperate in identifying EL-specific accommodations. This determination must be done at least annually on an individual basis and must not be done for groups of ELs.

***How do the PSSA and Keystone Exams track ELs?***

A copy of the 2017 student demographic information page of the PSSA is included in this document. Note on the demographics sheet, number 5, that an EL falls under one of five categories. For each EL, the appropriate category must be bubbled in.

1. EL and enrolled in a U.S. school **after May 6, 2016** (previous enrollment in Puerto Rico is not considered as enrollment in US schools).

2. EL and enrolled in a U.S. school **on or before May 6, 2016** (previous enrollment in Puerto Rico is not considered as enrollment in US schools).
3. Exited an ESL/bilingual program and in the first year of monitoring.
4. Exited an ESL/bilingual program and in the second year of monitoring.
5. Former English Language Learner and no longer monitored.

Note that categories 3 and 4 are former ELs; these exited and monitored students are not part of the group that is administered the ACCESS for ELs English Proficiency Test.

### ***Are ELs required to take the PSSA?***

In 2007 the USDE released guidance on participation of LEP students (ELs) in state assessments. This flexibility allows ELs students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools an option of taking the Reading PSSA. A student's enrollment in a school in Puerto Rico is not to be considered as enrollment in a U.S. school.

Those ELs who fall into the first category (EL and enrolled in a U.S. school **after May 6, 2016**), are considered to be in their first year in a U.S. school and are not required to take the PSSA ELA test.

All ELs are required to participate in the Mathematics PSSA and the Science PSSA with accommodations as appropriate. *All ELs, K-12, are required to take the WIDA ACCESS for ELs English Proficiency Test.*

The Mathematics PSSA scores of ELs in their first year of enrollment in U.S. schools as defined above will **not** be used to determine performance (the percent proficient or higher) for federal accountability status. Their participation will be counted for federal accountability purposes.

Should first-year ELs choose to participate in the ELA PSSA assessment, their performance will **not** be included but their participation will be counted for federal accountability purposes. Should they choose not to participate, their lack of participation will not count against the school or district. Students who are expected to exit EL services in the current school year should be encouraged to take the ELA PSSA.

The USDE guidance also provides flexibility in determining who can be included in the EL subgroup. Because EL students exit the EL subgroup once they attain English language proficiency, schools and districts may have difficulty demonstrating improvements on state assessments for these students. The USDE allows schools, districts, and states to include in the EL subgroup those students *who have exited an ESL/bilingual education program within the past two years.*

When completing the demographics page, school personnel should take care to code it appropriately. The two-year monitoring period begins from the date the student exits the ESL program as defined by the district's multiple exit criteria in its ESL Program Plan.

# FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL ONLY

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS SECTION

This section must be completed for all non-precoded students.

**1. Gender:**

- Female
- Male

**2. Race/Ethnicity (indicate only one):**

- Hispanic of any race
- American Indian or Alaskan Native (*not Hispanic*)
- Asian (*not Hispanic*)
- Black or African American (*not Hispanic*)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (*not Hispanic*)
- White (*not Hispanic*)
- Two or more races (*not Hispanic*)

**3. Student's current enrollment status initially started after October 1, 2016 (mark all that apply, if any):**

- in the school of residence
- in the district of residence
- as a Pennsylvania resident

**4. Mark all of the following that apply, if any:**

- Student has an IEP (*not Gifted*).
- Student has exited an IEP program within the past 2 years.
- Student participates in Title I program.
- Student receives Migrant Education Program services.
- Student is classified as economically disadvantaged.
- Student is home-schooled and assessed at parental request.
- Student attends this school as part of a foreign exchange program.

**5. Student's English Language Learner (ELL) status is as follows (indicate only one, if any):**

- ELL and enrolled in a U.S. school **after** May 6, 2016 (*previous enrollment in Puerto Rico is not considered as enrollment in U.S. schools*).
- ELL and enrolled in a U.S. school **on or before** May 6, 2016.
- Exited an ESL/bilingual program and in the first year of monitoring.
- Exited an ESL/bilingual program and in the second year of monitoring.
- Former English Language Learner and no longer monitored.

**6. Student is currently in ESL instruction and has the following Title III status (indicate only one, if any):**

- Title III served
- Title III not served

BIRTH DATE				PAsecureID															
Month	Day	Year																	
<input type="radio"/> Jan																			
<input type="radio"/> Feb																			
<input type="radio"/> Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<input type="radio"/> Apr	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<input type="radio"/> May	2	2		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<input type="radio"/> Jun	3	3		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<input type="radio"/> Jul		4		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<input type="radio"/> Aug		5		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<input type="radio"/> Sep		6		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
<input type="radio"/> Oct		7		7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
<input type="radio"/> Nov		8		8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
<input type="radio"/> Dec		9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

### OTHER ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

- Student is court/agency placed (*not foster care*).  
*Refer to the "Attribution Map" on PDE's website ([www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)) for detailed guidance on determining a student's status as court or agency placed.*
- Student was absent without make-up for one or more sections of English Language Arts.

***Are ELs required to take the Keystone Exams?***

Yes. Following the previously discussed exceptions as outlined, eligible ELs will take the Keystone Exams for federal accountability purposes.

The same subject area participation guidelines outlined in the previous question for the ELA, Mathematics and Science PSSA tests are applied to the Keystone Literature, Biology and Algebra I Exams.

***What accommodations are available for ELs?***

School personnel should consider the following in determining the appropriate accommodations:

- The student’s familiarity with the accommodations to be used. Current accommodations used in day-to-day instruction and assessment are appropriate. New accommodations unfamiliar to students should **not** be introduced to students for the first time when they are taking the PSSA or Keystone Exams.
- An annual review of the student’s progress in English language proficiency and academic achievement. Knowing this information will help teachers, supervisors, parents, and administrators determine which accommodations are still appropriate given the student’s current knowledge.

All accommodations should be documented in the student’s file and recorded on the accommodations section of the PSSA or Keystone Exams.

***What accommodations are allowable for ELs?***

Three separate accommodations are allowed:

1. Word-to word translation dictionaries, without definitions, pictures, or internet connection for Mathematics PSSA, Keystone Algebra I and the Science PSSA or Keystone Biology only; **not for any part** of the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam.
2. Qualified interpreters/sight translators for Mathematics PSSA or Keystone Algebra I and Science PSSA or Keystone Biology only; **not for any part of the ELA PSSA test (except for the writing prompts of the ELA PSSA writing section)** or Keystone Literature Exam.
3. Spanish/English Mathematics and Science PSSA and Keystone Algebra I and Biology Exams.

*All of these accommodations are voluntary and not mandatory.*

***If students have already exited an ESL or Bilingual Program, can they still receive these accommodations?***

No. Once a student has exited an ESL or Bilingual Program that student is eligible for the same accommodations available to non-EL students.

The following page is an example of the PSSA Accommodations Section in the answer booklet. There are EL-specific accommodations under point 7. Response, Setting, and Timing accommodations may also be applicable to ELs.

**ACCOMMODATIONS SECTION**

This section must be completed for assessed students only, if applicable.

**7. Student used the following Presentation Accommodations** (mark all that apply, if any):

- Braille format
- Large-print format
- Computer Assistive Technology—does not apply to online testing (*PDE must approve the program and all functions*)
- Some language questions/writing prompts/text-dependent analysis questions read aloud
- All language questions/writing prompts/text-dependent analysis questions read aloud
- Writing prompt/text-dependent analysis questions signed
- Writing prompt/text-dependent analysis questions interpreted for ELL
- Amplification device
- Magnification device
- Color overlay
- Other (*noise buffers, whisper phone, etc., as indicated in Accommodations Guidelines or a unique accommodation as approved by PDE*)

**8. Student used the following Setting Accommodations** (mark all that apply, if any):

- Hospital/home setting
- One-on-one setting
- Small group setting
- Other (*as indicated in Accommodations Guidelines or approved by PDE*)

**9. Student used the following Timing Accommodations** (mark all that apply, if any):

- Extended time
- Frequent breaks
- Changed test schedule
- Other (*as indicated in Accommodations Guidelines or approved by PDE*)

**10. Student used the following Response Accommodations** (mark all that apply, if any):

- Assessment Coordinator or designee marked multiple-choice responses at student's direction
- Assessment Coordinator or designee transcribed student responses (*per Accommodations Guidelines*)
- Keyboard, word processor, or computer—does not apply to online testing (*per Accommodations Guidelines*)
- Braille/Note taker (*per Accommodations Guidelines*)
- Augmentative communication device
- Computer Assistive Technology—does not apply to online testing (*PDE must approve the program and all functions*)
- Multiple-choice items completed online; open-ended items completed in the answer booklet
- Other (*special paper, etc., as indicated in Accommodations Guidelines or a unique accommodation as approved by PDE*)

Student responses from Braille, large-print, or electronic formats **MUST** be transcribed into a standard-print answer booklet.

Please refer to the *Accommodations Guidelines* at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov) for further clarification regarding the use of all accommodations.

LOCAL STUDENT ID									
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

OPTIONAL FIELD
<input type="radio"/> Option 1
<input type="radio"/> Option 2
<input type="radio"/> Option 3
<input type="radio"/> Option 4

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FIELD												
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

How does the Pennsylvania Department of Education ensure that test items are accessible to ELs?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is committed to providing the broadest array of accommodations possible without jeopardizing the validity and integrity of the test. Allowing accommodations is only one way PDE tries to make the tests more accessible. Even before an item appears on the test, that item has already been screened for linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and other forms of bias. After items have been field tested, PDE staff and educator committee representatives review any items that may have performed less well than expected in order to determine whether the items should be rejected.

What kinds of dictionaries can be used and who provides them?

Districts may provide students with word-to-word translation dictionaries without definitions or pictures if students use them as part of their regular curriculum. Students should be comfortable using word-to-word dictionaries and have used them in the past at school and/or at home. *Students should not be exposed to word-to-word dictionaries for the first time when they take the test.* Students may use a word-to-word dictionary with no definitions, no pictures, and no internet connection for the Mathematics PSSA, Keystone Algebra I Exam and the Science PSSA and Keystone Biology Exam, but **not** for the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam.

Can electronic word-to-word dictionaries be used?

Electronic dictionaries that provide word-to-word translations may be used by ELs for the Mathematics PSSA, Keystone Algebra I, Science PSSA, and Keystone Biology but **not** for the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam, but again no devices that provide definitions or pictures can be used. Devices with internet access must have the access disabled or be limited to the above definition.

When can students use dictionaries?

Word-to-word dictionaries may be used by ELs on any portion of the Mathematics PSSA or Keystone Algebra I exams and the Science PSSA and Keystone Biology exams.

Word-to-word dictionaries **may not** be used on any portion of the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam.

Can an interpreter be used?

For any language other than English, an interpreter may be used to present the instructions to an EL for any or all of the PSSA assessments (Mathematics, ELA, and Science) and Keystone Exams (Algebra I, Literature, and Biology) **during the first three years that a student is categorized as an EL in US schools.** For the same group of ELs, an interpreter may be used to present the content of the test (test questions, answer choices, labels, descriptions of scenarios, and other test material) for the Mathematics PSSA, Keystone Algebra I, Science PSSA and Keystone Biology **only.** Presentation of the content of the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam by an interpreter is not permitted, with the exception of the essay prompts on the writing section of the ELA.

Note that the Mathematics PSSA and Keystone Algebra I paper/pencil and the Science PSSA, and Keystone Biology paper/pencil are available in printed Spanish-English side-by-side versions. (See below for a more detailed description.) It is recommended that this version be used with students who require translation into Spanish. Note also that the Spanish language version may be read

aloud to the student by the test administrator, if the student's level of literacy requires this. The online Keystone Exams are not available in Spanish translation.

Is there a difference between an interpreter and a translator?

An interpreter works with oral language and a translator works with written language. Another term in use is "sight translator," a person who reads text in one language and renders it into spoken form in another language on the spot. The work that is performed for the PSSA is essentially a *sight translation*. This document uses the word *interpreter* to designate the person who performs the sight translation, translating orally the meaning of the allowable parts and subjects of the PSSA and Keystone Exams and/or clarifying directions, orally, to ELs. On the allowable parts and subjects of the tests, the interpreter also interprets students' non-English oral responses into written English.

What is the role of the interpreter?

Interpreters may have access to the mathematics and Algebra I tests and the science and Biology tests three days prior to test administration to aid in preparation for translating the assessment. Interpreters may access the assessment only in a secure setting; the assessment may not leave the building and although note-taking is permitted as a translation aid, it is strictly prohibited for the notes to be removed from the building or shared with anyone in a way that would violate the security of the test, and the notes must be securely destroyed after testing has concluded. Interpreters must sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. Interpreters must be of legal age to sign the *Confidentiality Agreement*. Directions for all assessments are provided to districts prior to the testing window.

Interpreters may work with one student or small groups of students depending on the test setting. They are permitted to:

- Translate the directions on the ELA, Mathematics, Science, Algebra I, Literature, and Biology exams.
- Translate words or phrases (including test questions) for the Mathematics, Algebra I, Science, and Biology assessments at the students' request.
- Interpret students' non-English oral responses into written English for the Mathematics, Algebra I, Science, and Biology assessments. Interpreters must not change the meaning of the response or make any corrections in the response.
- Translate essay prompts for the writing section of the ELA.

On the ELA and Keystone Literature assessments, only test directions can be translated. Interpreters may not translate any of the reading questions. Interpreters may not translate the reading passage(s). Interpreters may not translate student responses to open-ended items on the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam from a non-English language into English. Interpreters may not translate any of the Writing multiple-choice items and/or the stimulus passage(s) that accompany the multiple-choice items. Interpreters may not translate student responses to the essay prompts on the writing section of the ELA from a non-English language into English or the Text Dependent Analysis essay response in sections 3 and 4 of the PSSA ELA test.

Interpreters may not answer clarifying questions that may be asked about test questions and/or test content. The only clarifications that may be offered in English or in the native language are clarifications of the test directions. Translations should be as accurate as possible. They should be literal where appropriate. Where a literal translation might create confusion (for example, if the English version contains an idiom), the meaning should be rendered faithfully but no elaboration or explanation should be provided.

How do districts find qualified interpreters and what makes them “qualified”?

Districts should determine the criteria for qualified interpreters. Districts must document the process and/or criteria used to select interpreters. Keep in mind that the use of qualified interpreters and word-to-word dictionaries is voluntary, not mandatory.

Districts should try to provide these accommodations to the extent practicable and to the extent that they are typically used with students during the school year. For a description of these accommodations, see the guidelines available on the PDE website.

Can districts use a community member as a “qualified interpreter”?

Yes, however, the district must certify that the community member is a qualified interpreter through a local process using local criteria and the community member must follow interpreter guidelines as outlined in the above question describing the role of the interpreter. The interpreter must sign a Test Security Certification.

Community members might need additional training about what is allowable and not allowable on the PSSA and Keystone Exams. It is the district’s responsibility to ensure that community members who are deemed qualified interpreters have this training.

Why can’t interpreters translate the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam?

Allowing anyone to translate any portion of the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam for ELs and/or for students with IEPs or 504 plans is controversial because one purpose of the reading test is to ensure that students have the ability to *decode* text. Translating or interpreting the text orally defeats that purpose.

Another purpose of the ELA PSSA and Keystone Literature assessments is to determine how wEL students can understand, or *comprehend*, English passages, including English vocabulary. Translating the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam for the student into another language would defeat this purpose.

Both of these aspects of sight translation would alter the tests in such a way that the translated tests would assess different skills from the ones that the tests have been constructed to assess. Using sight translation as an accommodation for the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam would therefore invalidate the EL’s score.

Why can’t the interpreters translate the ELA PSSA writing multiple-choice section for students?

The purpose of the writing section of the ELA PSSA exam is to determine how well students have mastered English language arts skills, including how to edit and revise passages, applying English mechanical conventions and the rules of English grammar. Translation would defeat this purpose and would invalidate the score.

Will these accommodations be allowable every year?

There is a growing body of research on accommodations for ELs. PDE will update this policy as new research about accommodations is published. PDE will inform administrators of any changes prior to the administration of the PSSA and Keystone Exams.

Is a Spanish Version available for Mathematics, Science, Algebra I and Biology paper exams?

Yes. A Spanish version of each Mathematics PSSA, Science PSSA, Algebra I, and Biology Keystone paper/pencil exams is available for students who have been enrolled in schools in the United States for fewer than three years. The local educational agency may make a determination to assess students with this accommodation when the student is enrolled in US schools for fewer than three years and has not yet reached a level of English language proficiency sufficient to yield valid and reliable information when assessed in English.

It is recommended that Spanish language students be literate in their native language for this accommodation to be beneficial. However, the Spanish-language version of the assessment may be read aloud to an eligible EL student who can benefit from receiving the assessment in Spanish (for example, an EL with prior education in Spanish who is also dyslexic).

How do we order the Spanish-English Version?

This booklet must be requested from Data Recognition Corporation during the online enrollment period. To place orders after the online enrollment period call DRC Customer Service at **1-800-451-7849**. Only students who have a need for this assistance are to receive this accommodation.

What does the Spanish-English Version look like?

For Mathematics, Grades 4-8, and Science, Grades 4, 8: The Spanish-English Mathematics form is issued in side-by-side Spanish-English format with identical test questions presented on opposing pages in the two languages: Spanish on the left and English on the right.

A corresponding student answer booklet, in which students mark their answers in English or Spanish is also provided for the Mathematics test. For the Spanish-English Mathematics test, answers can be in English OR Spanish. For the regular English Mathematics test, answers can ONLY be in English.

For Mathematics, Grade 3: Students will be issued a Spanish-English Mathematics form that will allow answers to be marked in the test booklet. The Spanish and English versions of the test do not appear on facing pages; rather, for test questions, one language appears above the other on the page. **For this dual-language test form, student responses may be in English OR in Spanish.**

The paper/pencil Keystone Algebra I Exam: The Spanish-English Keystone Algebra I form is issued in side-by-side Spanish-English format with identical test questions presented on opposing pages in the two languages: Spanish on the left and English on the right.

A corresponding student answer booklet in which students mark their answers in English or Spanish is also provided for the Spanish-English Algebra I Exam. If an open-ended response test question requires two facing pages, both Spanish language pages will be presented side-by-side, followed by both English language pages. For the Spanish-English Algebra I test, answers can be in English OR Spanish. For the regular English Keystone Algebra I Exam, answers can ONLY be in English. For the Keystone Literature Exam, answers must ONLY be in English.

The Spanish-English Science form for PSSA Science, Grades 4 and 8, and the Keystone Biology Exam is issued in side-by-side Spanish-English format with identical test questions presented on opposing pages in the two languages: left-facing pages present questions in Spanish and right-facing pages present the same questions in English.

A corresponding student answer booklet, in which students mark their answers in English or Spanish, is also provided for the Science section. For the Spanish-English Science test and Spanish-English Keystone Biology Exam, answers can be in English OR Spanish. For the regular English Science test or regular Keystone Biology Exam, answers can ONLY be in English.

Who is eligible to take the Spanish Version?

Only students who have been enrolled in schools in the United States for fewer than three years may take the Spanish-English Mathematics PSSA and/or the Spanish-English Science PSSA, or the Spanish-English Keystone Algebra I and/or Biology Exam. Actual dates for making this determination are provided on the PSSA Student Demographics Section. The local educational agency may make a determination to assess this group of students with this accommodation when the student has not yet reached a level of English language proficiency sufficient to yield valid and reliable information. Students receiving this accommodation should be literate in Spanish and/or be familiar with the subject matter as taught in Spanish for this accommodation to be beneficial. However, the Spanish-language version of the assessment may be read aloud to an eligible EL student who can benefit from receiving the assessment in Spanish (for example, an EL with prior education in Spanish who is also dyslexic).

Former ELs who have exited the program, including those who are being monitored for up to two years are **not permitted** to receive this accommodation.

Where can I find more information on other PSSA & Keystone accommodations?

For more information on PSSA and Keystone accommodations, please see accommodations guidelines posted on the PDE website.

Contact information:

For more information on PSSA and Keystone accommodations, please contact the Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction, Division of Instructional Quality, at 717-787-4234, or visit PDE's Assessment site.

For more information on English Language Learners, please visit PDE's English as a Second Language website.