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To: Measel, Robert <romeasel@pa.gov>

Cc: Hutton, Julia <juhutton@pa.gov>; andrea Kolb <Akolb@csc.csiu.org>

Subject: UPDATE: ACCESS for ELLs 2021

Dear colleagues,

The Department understands the challenges that districts are facing this year with ACCESS testing and the potential impact on instructional time that testing may have. The annual ELP testing is a federal requirement and, unfortunately, USED has confirmed that the testing requirement will remain in place for the 2020-2021 school year. Furthermore, the ACCESS can only be administered in person. That being the case, districts must do their best to meet the federal obligation of administering the ACCESS to every EL *in keeping with their locally established policies and procedures for health and safety*. In other words, districts must determine locally how/if students who are currently being educated virtually can be brought into a school building for testing.

Districts should adequately explain to parents, in a language and mode of communication they can understand, the importance of their child(ren) taking the ACCESS, as it is the federally required annual measure of a student's English proficiency and is used to determine appropriate educational placement and ELD support services for the student. If students do not take the ACCESS, these decisions are more difficult. Also, students who do not take the test are ineligible for reclassification.

If it is not possible to bring students in because of local policies related to the pandemic, or parents refuse to allow their students to participate in the testing due to safety concerns, then districts should simply ensure that the students' tests are coded with the do not score code "ABS" (absent) and return the testing materials before the close of the window so that they are accounted for. The Department realizes that students in these cases may not actually be absent if they are participating in virtual education, but ABS is the most appropriate code to use in this scenario. This has been taken into account at the state level. The Department also realizes and is anticipating that the current health crisis will result in unusually low participation rates across the Commonwealth.

Please review the attached planning document that may help in preparing for ACCESS testing. It presents a series of process questions that you should consider. It is meant as an aid and is therefore not exhaustive.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to any member of the EL program area team at the Department if you have questions or concerns.

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Thank you for everything that you are doing in these trying times to meet the needs of our English learners.

Best,

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