

Questions of Fairness in Remote Testing of K-12 English Learners: Developments, Challenges, and Recommendations

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OVERVIEW

❖ **The Context**

- English proficiency testing of K-12 English Learners (ELs) in U.S. Public Schools
- Brief overview of two assessments: ACCESS for ELLs and WIDA Screener

❖ **The Issue**

- COVID-19 impact on in-person test administrations

❖ **Developments and Challenges**

- Review of potential solutions and ethical considerations

❖ **Recommendations and Next Steps**

- A framework to evaluate the appropriateness of remote versions of tests administered to ELs

THE CONTEXT

- ❖ K-12 public schools in the U.S.
- ❖ Federal law protects English learners (ELs)
 - **Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)**; [Castañeda v Picard \(1981\)](#); [Lau v Nichols \(1974\)](#)
 - ELs must receive equal opportunities for academic advancement as their counterparts, including language support
 - English language proficiency testing of ELs is mandated by the federal government with the purpose of:
 - Identifying and placing learners needing language support
 - Monitoring progress
 - Reclassifying (exiting) ELs as proficient

THE CONTEXT (Cont.)

- ❖ WIDA is a non-profit organization based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that develops:
 - Language assessments
 - Language development standards
 - Professional learning support for K-12 language educators
 - Educational research projects
- ❖ WIDA serves ELs and the stakeholders (parents, educators) who support them, and, as such, at the core of our mission is a commitment to equity and social justice for culturally and linguistically diverse learners

The Assessments

WIDA Screener

- ELP Screening Test for K-12
- Administered on-demand to identify ELs
- Available to all 41 US states and territories in the WIDA Consortium
 - ❑ Averaging approx. 100,000 students per year
- 4 skills tested: listening, reading, speaking, writing (time: approx. 80 mins)
- Online and Paper versions
- Proctored, in-person test administrations

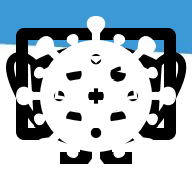


The Assessments

ACCESS for ELLs



- Summative ELP Test for K-12
- Administered annually to all ELs in the WIDA Consortium
 - ❑ Averaging approx. 2 million students per year
- 4 skills tested: listening, reading, speaking, writing (time: approx. 265 mins)
- Online and Paper versions
- Proctored, in-person test administrations



THE ISSUE

Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

School closures
Social distancing

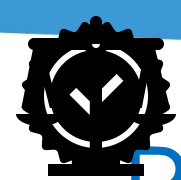
In-person test administrations
not possible

Remote learning

Stakeholders requested "at
home" assessment options

DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

- ❖ U.S. Department of Education required that states administer ELP assessments to ELs in the 20-21 school year ([DoE Fact Sheet, 05-18-20](#))
- ❖ WIDA worked with stakeholders through meetings and surveys to evaluate the possibility of developing remote testing options
 - Technical Advisory Committee
 - State Education Agency representatives
 - Local Education Agency representatives
 - WIDA Executive Committee



Risks and Concerns

Risk	Primary Concerns
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Will all EL families have devices to test on? Can schools provide devices to families without devices at home?▪ Will all EL families have Wi-Fi connection to support reliable testing?▪ Will all ELs be able to set up the test and understand test administration instructions without in-person support?
Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How does a remote testing environment affect our ability to understand what score means and what evidence do we collect to assure this?▪ How does the variety of testing conditions impact student performance?



Risks and Concerns (cont.)

Risk	Primary Concerns
Technical Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How will school districts support local technology access and setup, and how will they support troubleshooting students' technology challenges, especially for young learners and students with low English proficiency levels?
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How do we protect the security of test items and test materials in a remote administration?▪ How will remote proctoring solutions assure that only the student is responding to test questions?▪ How is remote proctoring accomplished and supported?

Decision-making process

STAKEHOLDER
INPUT

- Consider test purpose
- Evaluate if adjustments are possible/acceptable

❖ WIDA Screener

- **Purpose:** Identification of ELs
- **Test simplification possible?**
 - Reducing domains directly tested;
 - Simplifying results from PL score to binary EL recommendation status
- **Test delivery simplification possible?**
 - Cell phones



REVIEW: WIDA Screener

Criteria minimally met

Criteria violated

Criteria not implicated

REMOTE accommodations VS. Regular administration	EQUITY	VALIDITY	TECH ISSUES	SECURITY
Reduce domains tested VS. Test all four domains				
Provide EL status recommendation VS. Proficiency Level Score				
Administer test one-on-one over cell phone VS. In-person desktop/paper				

WIDA Remote Screener

Description

- **TEMPORARY** solution designed to be administered over the phone
- Both student and test administrator have printed test materials
- Approx. **10 minutes** to administer

Domains

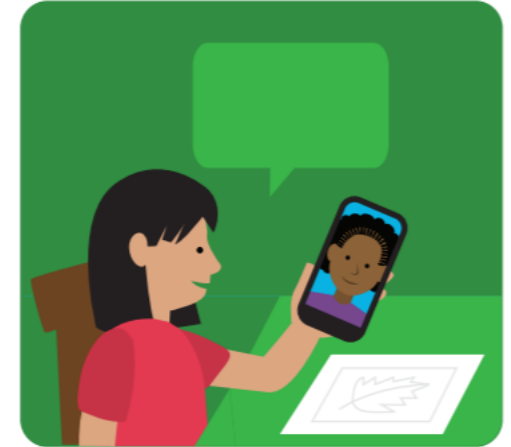
- K-1: Speaking, Listening
- G2-12: Speaking, Reading, Listening

Test Results

One of 3 recommendations:

- Recommended as an EL
- Not recommended as an EL
- Not enough information

No proficiency level scores reported



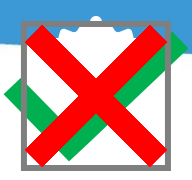
Decision-making process

STAKEHOLDER
INPUT

- Consider test purpose
- Evaluate if adjustments are possible/acceptable

❖ ACCESS for ELLs

- **Purpose:** Progress monitoring; reclassification (i.e., exit EL status)
- **Test simplification possible?**
 - Would reducing domains tested compromise validity?
 - Would any results other than PL suffice to measure progress?
- **Test delivery simplification possible?**
 - Would devices that meet tech and security criteria be available to all?



REVIEW: ACCESS for ELLs

Criteria minimally met

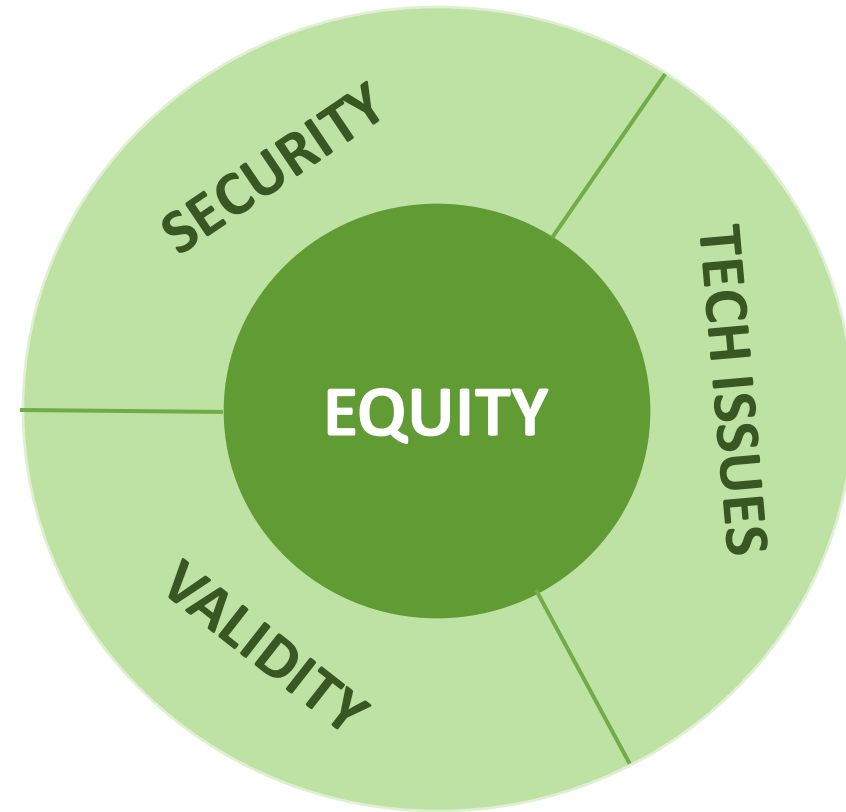
Criteria violated

Criteria not implicated

REMOTE accommodations VS. Regular administration	EQUITY	VALIDITY	TECH ISSUES	SECURITY
Reduce domains directly tested VS. Test all 4 domains				
(No alternative to measure progress other than scale score and proficiency Level				
Administer test at home VS. In-person desktop/paper				

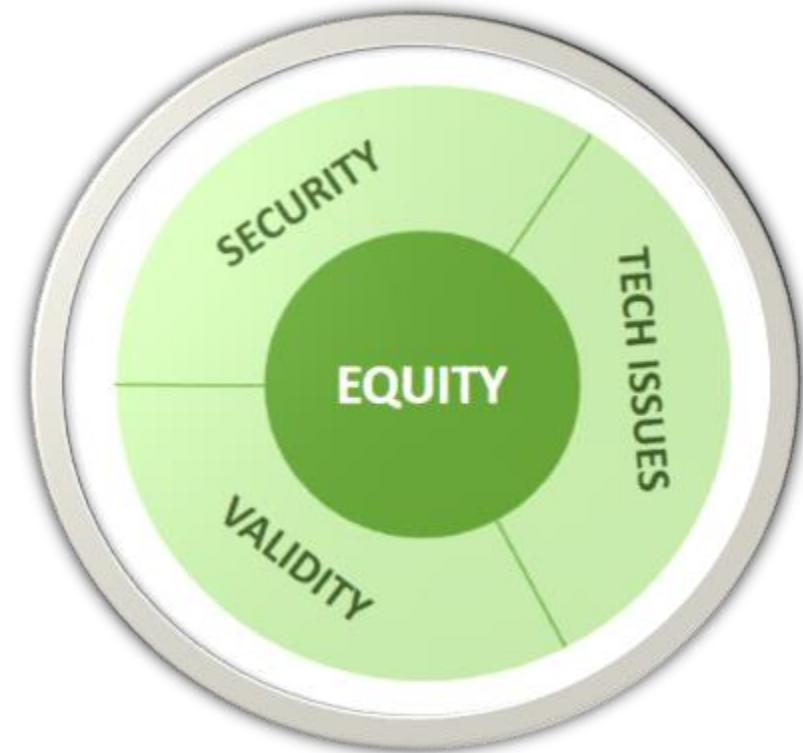
RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Equity, fairness, and social justice must be central in the decision-making process.
- ❖ The validity, security, and technical soundness of any proposed solutions are null if equity is not upheld.



RECOMMENDATIONS (Cont.)

- ❖ While equity concerns are particularly important to the populations WIDA serves, these concerns should be central in other assessment contexts.



QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!

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