



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

## **2018**

# **PSSA and Keystone Exams**

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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## Introduction

The focus of the Accommodation Guidelines for English Learners (ELs) is selection, administration, and evaluation of appropriate accommodations specifically for English Learners. ELs are also eligible for the accommodations for instruction and assessment outlined in the general Accommodations Guidelines.

Changes to the accommodations guidelines for the 2017-2018 school year are noted using **red font** in this manual.

### What's New for 2017-2018?

New Content	Section
<a href="#">Do you have a list of distributors?</a>	Word-to-Word Resources
<a href="#">Can word-to-word translation sheets be used?</a>	Word-to-Word Translation Sheets
<a href="#">What technology is permissible for the PSSA and Keystone assessments?</a>	Technology
<a href="#">What accommodations are allowable for ELs?</a>	ESSA
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<a href="#">Can districts use a community member, family member, or a paraprofessional as a “qualified interpreter”?</a>	Qualified Interpreters

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## Definitions

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

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

- 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
- 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
- Is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant,

#### AND

- Has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language; and
- 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.

## Administration

### 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 whose enrollment in any public school in the United States less than 12 cumulative months (not consecutive) an option of taking the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone exam. 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, 2017), and are in their first 12 months in a U.S. school and are not required to take the PSSA ELA test or the Literature Keystone exam.

All ELs are required to participate in the Mathematics PSSA or Algebra I Keystone exam and the Science PSSA or Biology Keystone exam with accommodations as appropriate regardless of enrollment date. All ELs, K-12, are required to take the WIDA ACCESS for ELs English Proficiency Test.

The Mathematics PSSA or Algebra I Keystone exam scores of ELs in their first 12 months 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-12 month ELs choose to participate in the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone exam, 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 or Literature Keystone exam.

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.

Pending approval of the State Plan under ESSA the 2018-2019 school year may have new exclusion regulations for ELs.

### **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 Literature, Biology and Algebra I Keystone Exams.

Pending approval of the State Plan under ESSA the 2018-2019 school year may have new exclusion regulations for ELs.

### **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.

## **Accommodations**

### **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. Students are most successful with testing accommodations when they have had a chance to use them prior to the test. ELL educators are encouraged to implement accommodations in instruction to make sure to address these concerns ahead of the state assessment. 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 ([See Table 1 for an example](#)).

## 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.

## What accommodations are allowable for ELs?

Three separate accommodations are allowed. All accommodations are voluntary and not mandatory.

1. **Word-to word translation dictionaries**, without definitions, pictures, or internet connection for Mathematics PSSA or Algebra I Keystone and the Science PSSA or Biology Keystone only; not for any part of the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone Exam. \*

- ***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 not use a word-to-word dictionary for the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam.

- ***Do you have a list of distributors?***

Yes. [Table 2](#) is a list of distributors (provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education). SAC is responsible for ensuring that all bilingual dictionaries meet State Assessment requirements as listed above.



- **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 or Algebra I Keystone and the Science PSSA or Biology Keystone only; not for any part of the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone 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. Web-based translators such as Google Translate may not be used.

- **Can word-to-word translation sheets be used?**

Yes. Students may use a published version of a word-to-word translation sheet if students use them as part of their regular curriculum. Students should be comfortable using word-to-word translation sheets and have used them in the past at school and/or at home. Students should not be exposed to word-to-word translation sheets for the first time when they take the test.

Students may use a word-to-word translation sheets with no definitions and no pictures for the Mathematics PSSA or Algebra I Keystone and the Science PSSA or Biology Keystone only; not for any part of the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone Exam.

- **When can students use dictionaries?**

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

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

2. **Qualified interpreters/sight translators** for Mathematics PSSA or Algebra I Keystone and Science PSSA or Biology Keystone only; not for any part of the ELA PSSA test (except for the TDA prompt of the ELA PSSA) or Literature Keystone Exam. \*

- **When can an interpreter be used?**

For any language other than English, an interpreter may be used to present the directions 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 ELs during their first three years that a student is categorized, 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, Algebra I Keystone, Science PSSA and Biology Keystone **only**. Presentation of the content of the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone Exam by an interpreter is not permitted, except for the TDA prompt of the ELA PSSA.

Note that the Mathematics PSSA and Algebra I Keystone paper/pencil and the Science PSSA, and Biology Keystone 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 or Keystone 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 TDA prompt of the ELA PSSA.*

\*On the ELA PSSA and Literature Keystone 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 Literature Keystone Exam from a non-English language into English. Interpreters may not translate any of the language multiple-choice items or the reading passage(s) and accompanying multiple-choice. Interpreters may not translate student responses to the Text Dependent Analysis essay response of the PSSA ELA test.

Interpreters may not answer clarifying questions that might 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, family member, or a paraprofessional as a “qualified interpreter”?***

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

Interpreters must receive additional training about what is allowable and not allowable on the PSSA and Keystone Exams. It is the district’s responsibility to ensure that individuals who are deemed qualified interpreters receive the appropriate training.

**Family members** (parents, siblings) may not serve as an interpreter for a child in their family, but may serve as an interpreter for outside the family unit. Extended adult family members may serve as an interpreter if the LEA determines that the individual is objective and does not have a stake in the results of the test.

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

Allowing anyone to translate any portion of the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone 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 Literature Keystone assessments is to determine how EL students can understand, or comprehend, English passages, including English vocabulary. Translating the ELA PSSA or Literature Keystone 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 Literature Keystone Exam would therefore invalidate the EL’s score.

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

The purpose of the language multiple-choice items of the ELA PSSA exam is to determine how well students have mastered English language arts skills, including how to edit and revise sentences/passages, applying English

mechanical conventions and the rules of English grammar. Translation would defeat this purpose and would invalidate the score.

3. **Spanish/English Mathematics and Science PSSA and Algebra I and Biology 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 Algebra I Keystone 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 Literature Keystone Exam, answers must ONLY be in English.

The Spanish-English Science form for Science PSSA, 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 Biology Keystone Exam, answers can be in English OR Spanish. For the regular English Science test or regular Biology Keystone 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 Algebra I and/or Biology Keystone Exam. 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.

## **Technology**

### **What technology is permissible for the online version of the PSSA and Keystone assessments?**

Desktop computers, laptops, Chrome books and iPads are permissible with the appropriate test engine software installed.

## **Exit Program**

### **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 (refer to the [2018 Accommodations Guidelines Handbook](#)).

### **How does PDE 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.

### **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.

Table 1 is an example of the PSSA Accommodations Section in the answer booklet. There are EL-specific accommodations under Presentation, Response, Setting, and Timing accommodations may also be applicable to ELs.

### **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.

**Table 1: Accommodations Section Example**

**FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL ONLY**

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

- 4. 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/text-dependent analysis prompts read aloud
  - All language questions/text-dependent analysis prompts read aloud
  - Text-dependent analysis prompts signed
  - Text-dependent analysis prompts interpreted for EL
  - 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)
- 5. 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)
- 6. 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)
- 7. Student used the following Response Accommodations** (mark all that apply, if any):
- Mixed Mode: Student completed multiple-choice items online and open-ended items in the answer booklet
  - Assessment Coordinator or designee marked multiple-choice responses at student's direction
  - Assessment Coordinator or designee scribed TDA responses at student's direction with documentation (per Accommodations Guidelines)
  - 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)
  - 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	OPTIONAL FIELD	SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FIELD																																																																																																																																																																																																																																						
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## Table 2: List of Distributors for Word-to-Word Resources

Amazon

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Hippocrene Books, Inc.

171 Madison Avenue

Suite 1602

New York, NY 10016

Phone: 718-454-2366

[www.hippocrenebooks.com](http://www.hippocrenebooks.com)

Barnes and Noble

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

New York State Education Department

Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies

[www.p12.nysed.gov/bilinged/bilingual\\_glossaries.htm](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/bilinged/bilingual_glossaries.htm)

Bilingual Dictionaries, Inc.

P.O. Box 1154

Murrieta, CA 92564

Phone: 951-296-2445

[support@bilingualdictionaries.com](mailto:support@bilingualdictionaries.com)

[www.bilingualdictionaries.com](http://www.bilingualdictionaries.com)

Schoenhof's Foreign Books

76A Mount Auburn Street

Cambridge, PA 02138

Phone: 617-547-8855

[www.schoenhofs.com/](http://www.schoenhofs.com/)

Educa Vision

755- NW 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Coconut Creek, FL 33073

Phone: 954-968-7433

[www.educavision.com](http://www.educavision.com)

Tuttle Publishing

364 Innovation Drive

North Clarendon, VT 05759

Phone: 800-526-2778

[www.tuttlepublishing.com](http://www.tuttlepublishing.com)

Harvard Cooperative Society

(The Harvard Coop)

1400 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02138

Phone: 617-499-2000

[hbooks@bncollege.com](mailto:hbooks@bncollege.com)

Velazquez Press

9682 Telstar Avenue, Suite 110

El Monte, CA 91731

Phone: 626-448-3448

[www.VelazquezPress.com](http://www.VelazquezPress.com)

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries Authorized for Use by English Language Learners on MCAS and PARCC Tests  
Fall 2015