

# Revising ACCESS: Updates to the Speaking and Writing Tests

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Hi, I'm Sharon. And I'm Jason. We're back with video three, and now we're revising ACCESS series to share changes coming to WIDA ACCESS in the 2025-26 school year.

In this video, we highlight updates to the speaking and writing tests. As a reminder, the 2020 Edition of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework is shaping updates to ACCESS. If you haven't already done so, please check out videos one and two in this series.

Now let's talk about the speaking test. In revised ACCESS, the basic structure of the speaking test tiers will be the same. Tier A has tasks targeting the end of proficiency levels one and three, and tier BC has tasks targeting the end of proficiency levels three and five. There's also a Pre-tier A designed for newcomer students to be shorter and target only proficiency level one. A very small percentage of students taking WIDA ACCESS online are placed into speaking Pre-tier A. Historically, the proficiency level one task has been the same between Pre-tier A and tier A. You're probably familiar with this design. In the revised ACCESS speaking test, the Pre-tier A and Tier A task targeting proficiency level one will no longer be the same.

Pre tier A will retain the current design in which students are prompted to identify what they see and the pictures presented to them. In the revised ACCESS speaking test, the task designed for Tier A proficiency level one will target the higher end of level one to meet the expectations of the 2020 edition of the standards. In the new tier A proficiency level one tasks, Nina will model the new response expectations, and then Ms. Lee will prompt students in grades one through five to tell me what you see happening in this picture. Students in grades six through 12 will be prompted to describe what is happening in this picture.

As you can tell, we're giving students more opportunities to show what they can do and receive credit for it. This revision to the speaking test design, we'll elicit more language from students that reflects the expectations at the end of proficiency level one.

Additionally, the WIDA speaking scoring rubric for grades one through 12 access now includes guidance for scoring the new tier A proficiency level one task.

Now, let's talk about the writing test. The implementation of the 2020 edition of the WIDA ELD standards did not require any changes to the format of the writing test. However, raters at DRC will use a redesigned writing scoring rubric to score students' responses to the writing test. A new writing scoring rubric was needed because the 2020 edition of the ELD standards includes different sets of proficiency level descriptors for each grade level cluster.

The redesigned writing scoring rubric features score points that range from zero to seven. These score points still represent raw scores and not proficiency levels. Additionally, the rubric no longer includes plus score points as many raters found them to be confusing. The updated rubric is specifically designed for the first draft impromptu writing generated when responding to the test. If you'd like to learn more about the new writing scoring rubric and the ways in which educators provided feedback on the development of this rubric, please read the report we published in 2024.

We hope you've enjoyed learning about the updates we're planning for the speaking test and the scoring of the writing test in response to the 2020 edition of the WIDA ELD standards. Please stay tuned for more resources. As we look forward to sharing updates with you, please bookmark our revising ACCESS page on the WIDA website to stay up to date.