



WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS: Less Than 4 Domains

Missing Domain Scores Due to Disability

When taking the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments, multilingual learners¹ (MLLs) with disabilities are sometimes unable to participate in one or more of the language domain tests (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing) due to the lack of allowable accommodation, as specified in the WIDA and Rhode Island State Assessment Program (RISAP) accessibility and accommodations manuals². With procedures introduced in SY2025-26, the absence of one or more domain test scores will not prevent a participant from receiving an overall composite score, which is used to evaluate MLLs' progress toward English language proficiency, as well as to inform placement in and exit from MLL programs and services. The procedure described in this document replaces the use of the Less Than 4 Domains calculator.

Domain Exemption Eligibility

An MLL with a disability that precludes them from participating in one or more domain tests of the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments **and** for whom there is no allowable accommodation for the affected domain(s) may be exempt from the affected domain test(s). On an annual basis, IEP teams must conduct an accommodations review. The review process should include the allowable accommodations [checklists](#) found on WIDA's Accessibility and Accommodations webpage. Please note that these checklists are updated regularly and may include additional allowable accommodations year by year. The accommodations review process is in addition to annual WIDA Alternate ACCESS eligibility review³. Finally, the availability of universal tools and administrative considerations should verify that none of the allowable accommodations will afford a student's participation in the affected domain test(s).

After completing the accommodations review process, the IEP team makes an exemption determination, and the exempted domain(s) are entered into the student's MLL Census record. MLL Census records are included in monitoring, and RIDE may reach out for clarification on domain test exemptions. The student must then be assessed on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student.

The following sections of this document provide:

- 1) criterion to determine whether MLLs with disabilities that affect their participation in one or more domains are eligible for exemption from the affected domain test(s) on the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments,
- 2) examples and explanations to clarify rationale for domain test exemption, and
- 3) required steps for recording domain test exemption in the MLL Census.

¹ RIDE uses multilingual learners (MLLs) to refer to the same population in federal policy as English learners (ELs).

² See Resources, page 5

³ See ride.ri.gov/instruction-assessment/assessment/dlm-assessments for alternate assessment eligibility guidance.

Criterion to determine domain test exemption eligibility

For a student to be eligible for exemption from one or more domain tests on the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments, the student must meet the criterion below.

The IEP team has documented on the assessment accommodations page, in alignment with the functional needs from the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), that the student has a disability which affects participation in one or more of the relevant language domains and that **there are no allowable accommodations** that will enable the student to participate in the affected domain test(s) on the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments.

The student continues to receive support around their communication needs. Communication goals should be reflected in the IEP PLAAFP and Goals; any assistive technology (AT) equipment should be described under the “Supplementary Aids/Services; Modifications; Accommodations” section.

Examples, Explanations and Considerations

The table below highlights examples of domain test exemption eligibility due to disability. While it is by no means exhaustive, this resource is meant to clarify rationale for exemption eligibility.

Table 1. Domain Test Exemption Examples

Domain	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Rationale	The student has documented deafness or severe hearing impairment and does not use technology to hear (cochlear implant, hearing aid, etc.).	The student has a documented disability that affects their ability to produce speech and has not yet learned to use a communication system. This scenario exempts the student from the speaking domain test until the student has a communication system.	The student has a documented disability that affects their ability to read, such as blindness or severe vision impairment and the student does not yet read braille or use an assistive technology device or program.	The student has a documented disability that affects their physical ability to write, and the student does not yet use an assistive technology device or program.
Explanation	Documented deafness or severe hearing impairment exempts the student from the listening domain test only as there is no allowable accommodation that can afford assessment.	IEP teams must include evidence that the lack of speaking is due to a diagnosed disability (i.e. oral motor impairment) and not due to the silent period of language acquisition.	The scenario described above exempts the student from the reading domain test until the student learns to read braille and/or uses an allowable assistive technology device or program.	The scenario described above exempts the student from the writing domain test until the student uses an assistive technology device or program.

(table continued on next page)

Table 1. Domain Test Exemption Examples (continued from previous page)

Domain	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Considerations	ASL or another sign language is an option for giving or clarifying instructions. However, using ASL or another sign language for test items, passages, or response options is not allowed.	Selective mutism must be formally diagnosed and does not automatically qualify a student for domain test exemption. In a case where a student with selective mutism has an IEP or 504 plan, preferential test setting, such as testing at home, is an allowable accommodation. Therefore, domain test exemption would not be approved. It is widely recognized that some MLLs will delay speaking in various settings until they feel more confident with their English skills. Where behaviors associated with language development mimic those often associated with certain disabilities, careful determination is necessary⁴.	In a case where braille allows a student to participate in the domain, an exemption due to disability would not be approved.	In the case where a student acquires use of assistive technology, they would no longer be eligible for domain test exemption. In most cases, students receiving human scribe accommodation as documented in their IEP or 504 Plan should be receiving this service regularly in a classroom setting. Therefore, domain test exemption would not be approved. In the case of a temporary physical inability to write due to a broken arm, for example, refer to the RISAP manual for the emergency accommodation form.

IEP teams may wish to document domain test exemption rationale for individual students in a similar fashion in their team meeting minutes. District and school administrative staff, educators, and support staff, including those responsible for IEPs, 504 Plans, and supports for MLLs with disabilities, should be familiar with the [WIDA's Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#) and reference it as they prepare for testing.

⁴ [English Learners with Disabilities: Shining a Light on Dual-Identified Students: Challenges and Strategies for Accurate Identification](#)

Required steps for requesting domain test exemption

The process is as follows (new SY2025-26):

1. LEAs enter domain test exemptions in Section 3a of relevant student records in the MLL Census.
2. RIDE reports domain test exemptions recorded in the MLL Census directly to WIDA.

Section 3a of a student’s MLL Census record provides a field for LEAs to enter disability-related domain test exemption(s) as determined by their IEP team. Visit the MLL Census application through the [RIDE SSO](#) and follow the link “[view or submit domain test exemption(s)]” in Section 3a of the relevant student’s record. Next, complete the electronic Domain Test Exemption Form. Refer to **Figures 1** and **2** below.

Figure 1. Domain Test Exemption Form (new SY2025-26)

Domain Exemption History

Domain Exemptions					Submitted By	Submitted On	Status	Status Date
Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	None				

Submit Domain Exemption(s)

Securely Submit a request for Disability-Related Domain Exemptions

This form should be used for MLLs with disabilities for whom it is determined on an individual basis and documented on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or 504 plan, that their disabilities preclude assessment in one or more domains on the general or alternate English language proficiency assessment and there are no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain(s).

Students may be exempted from testing in one or more language domains of the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS assessment when all appropriate test accommodations have been offered and the student's disability still remains a barrier to them accessing the content in that domain. Exemption decisions are discussed at IEP meetings and typically recorded in the state/district assessment section of the student's IEP or 504 plan.

For any student who was missing 1 or more domain scores and qualified for a disability-related domain exemption on ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS, please provide a statement regarding why the student is precluded from participating in the domain with accommodations. Relevant info from **each of the following pages from the student's IEP or 504 plan, such as IEP meeting data, participant roles, and rationale for the exemption**, should be described in the comment box on the exemption form.

IEP Plan	504 Plan
Cover page	Equivalent pages
State Assessment page	
IEP Team Attendance page	

Meeting notes or minutes may provide additional evidence if needed.

Please do not email these documents. This online form will be reviewed by a member of RIDE's IDEA team for approval. Documentation of disability-related domain exemptions should be kept in the student's file for monitoring and to be submitted to RIDE upon request.

If the exemption request is not approved, the IEP team will need to determine necessary accommodations on ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS to document them through an IEP Amendment.

Exempt Test Domain(s) (Select all that apply.)

☐ Listening

☐ Reading

☐ Speaking

☐ Writing

☐ None - Request to clear previous exemptions

Formal Documentation of Exempt Accommodation(s)

Select

Comment:

By submitting this form, I affirm the following:

- The information provided can be verified at the request of RIDE.
- I reviewed the domain exemptions information on the assessment accommodations page of the IEP or 504.
- This student requires an exemption from testing in 1 or more ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS domains due to having a disability for which no accommodations could be made to afford assessment in that domain.

Submit Exemption

Note that exempted domain tests recorded via the electronic form above appear in the Domain Test Exemption(s) field:

Figure 2. Section 3a- Domain Test Exemption(s) Field

SECTION 3a: ACCESS Testing

Alternate ACCESS (this field is updated nightly)	Pre-Order: Accommodations (Braille, Large Print or Paper)	Tier
NO	None	
Domain Exemption(s)		
[view or submit domain exemption(s)] [exempted domain tests appear here]		

[Required steps for recording domain test exemption \(continued\)](#)

By electronically submitting the Domain Test Exemption Form, LEAs affirm any exemptions recorded:

1. are due to a disability which qualifies for exemption on WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS;
2. are documented in a student's IEP or 504, and
3. satisfy the criterion above.

Form submission further verifies that exemption is necessary due to a disability for which no allowable accommodation could be made to afford assessment in the affected domain(s). Domain exemption recorded in the MLL Census is included in special education monitoring. RIDE may reach out for clarification on domain test exemptions. The process described above replaces the use of the Less Than 4 Domains calculator.

[Cautionary note on reporting untested domain\(s\)](#)

In cases where domain test(s) unadministered due to disability are not recorded in the MLL Census via RIDE's process, the participant will receive an incomplete score report. Incomplete score reports limit application of assessment data for instructional and placement purposes. **Domain test exemptions should be recorded in the MLL Census before the applicable testing window opens.** Any domain test exemptions that are not up to date in the MLL Census by the end of the regular testing window may impact accountability calculations.

[Resources](#)

[WIDA Assessment Accessibility and Accommodations](#)

(source for Accessibility and Accommodations Manual, Accommodations Checklists and more)

[RIDE Assessment Manuals and Materials](#)

(source for RISAP Accommodations and Accessibility Features Manual)

[Guidance for Determining Eligibility for Alternate Assessments 2024-25](#)

(link to access: RISAP IEP Team Guidance on Determining Eligibility for Alternate Assessment for 2024-25; May, 2024 Memo: Guidance on Cognitive Evaluations and the Eligibility Training Course Dates for Fall, 2024)