

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

Co-sponsors: Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair  
Dr. Steve Gallon III, Vice Chair  
Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall  
Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller  
Ms. Christi Fraga  
Dr. Marta Perez  
Ms. Luisa Santos

**SUBJECT: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT FOR FLORIDA'S CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECENT ACTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS TEST TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Board policy 5410, Student Progression Plan, states that “*The Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Learners (ACCESS for ELLs 2.0)* is the annual summative English language proficiency assessment that is administered to all Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade English language students. The assessment is aligned with WIDA English Language Development Standards and assesses each of the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. ACCESS for ELLs 2.00 monitors students’ progress in acquiring academic English.” In-person testing is required for all English Language Learners (ELL) during the time period originally designated for the administration of the ACCESS test in Florida from January 25, 2021 to March 19, 2021. WIDA has expressed concerns about the validity of take-home exams and the student’s ability to access technology and it will not administer the test remotely.

Many grassroots organizations, advocates, ELL students and their families have begun articulating their concerns with state education commissioners and boards overseeing English language testing in Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, among others. Some states have responded with comprehensive guidelines for districts and families about voluntary participation in WIDA ACCESS testing. On January 28, 2021, the Chancellor of Public Schools in Florida, Jacob Oliva, sent a letter to all Superintendents with very positive flexibility for the administration of the ACCESS test. A brief summary of the actions in Chancellor Oliva’s letter include the following:

- The decision to participate in the ACCESS test ultimately rests with the parents and/or guardians. FDOE will fully respect the decisions that families make should they choose not to send their children to take this assessment.

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- The ACCESS for ELLs testing window was extended by 10 weeks, until May 28, 2021.
- School districts must also open testing centers to administer the ACCESS test to ELL students who are using innovative and virtual modalities.
- As ELL students are invited to take the ACCESS test at a testing center, safety protocols will be implemented for these students.
- ELL students and their parents and/or guardians must be informed if these testing sites will be opening on evenings and weekends.
- Safely administering the ACCESS test to ELL students in all learning modalities is an important part of making sure that all children receive the support they need during this emergency.

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During these very challenging times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our students are still participating in My School Online. With over 61,704 (2019-2020 M-DCPS Statistical Highlights), English Language Learners in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, many of our ELL students may lack access to dependable technology, their parents may not speak English in order to support the learning, and students may not have been able to socially interact with their teachers and their peers during the pandemic, which has certainly not helped them in developing language skills. The extended window period for the ACCESS testing for ELL students will be very beneficial to our students.

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Therefore, this agenda item seeks for The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, to formally submit a letter to Chancellor Jacob Oliva supporting the actions in his correspondence to School Superintendents on January 28, 2021, and request that the Superintendent provide the Board a follow-up by March 9, 2021, of all the actions taken by M-DCPS in support of ELL students taking the ACCESS test, and a final report of the number of ELL students who did not participate in the ACCESS test by June 11, 2021.

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This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, formally submits a letter to Chancellor Jacob Oliva supporting the actions in his correspondence to School Superintendents on January 28, 2021, and request that the Superintendent provide the Board a follow-up by March 9, 2021, of all the actions taken by M-DCPS in support of ELL students taking the ACCESS test, and a final report of the number of ELL students who did not participate in the ACCESS test by June 11, 2021.

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