



Jan. 4, 2024

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors,

Welcome back! I hope you had a restful winter break with family and friends! As we gear up for the second half of the year, I want to share some information on Colorado's Multilingual Learners, formerly referred to as English Learners.

As you know, Colorado has experienced a significant change in the number of Multilingual Learners coming into the state. More students are arriving in Colorado with little to no formal education or who have experienced interruptions in their formal education with little to no exposure to English. CDE is thinking critically about how to support your work in meeting the needs of these students.

Below you will find information about:

- [State Assessment Support for Multilingual Learners in Spring 2024](#)
- [Colorado Assessment Requirements for Multilingual Learners Enrolled in U.S. Schools for More than a Year](#)
- [Colorado Assessment Requirements for First Year in U.S. Schools Multilingual Learners](#)
- [Newcomer Support Learning Cohort](#)

State Assessment Support for Multilingual Learners in Spring 2024

We know that Multilingual Learners who enrolled in a U.S. school for the first time after Oct. 1 and who are identified as Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) pose unique challenges for state assessments.

While these students must take ACCESS for ELLs, we want to support the appropriate content testing of these students and leverage any flexibilities that may be available.

District assessment coordinators should contact Heather Villalobos Pavia at 303-653-9749 or email villalobospavia_h@cde.state.co.us if you have First Year in U.S. SIFE students (for example, students who recently arrived from Venezuela, Columbia, Ukraine, etc.) in your schools, including your newcomer centers. Heather is also available to discuss appropriate accommodations for all Multilingual Learners.

The testing window for Colorado's English language proficiency assessment, ACCESS for ELLs, opens Monday, Jan. 8. This assessment is critical to understanding the





English language development of our Multilingual Learners so they can be provided with appropriate academic support.

Colorado Assessment Requirements for Multilingual Learners Enrolled in U.S. Schools for More than a Year

As a reminder, assessment requirements are established in state and federal statute. Here are the statewide assessments that Multilingual Learners enrolled in a U.S. school for more than one year must take:

- ACCESS for ELLs if they are identified as Non-English Proficient or Limited English Proficient enrolled in grades K-12
- CMAS English language arts, including Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) for eligible students in grades three and four; math; and science assessments; or PSAT/SAT, for all Multilingual Learners enrolled in U.S. schools for more than a year.*

Testing with accommodations is appropriate for these tests, including language accommodations such as a glossary; and for CMAS, written and oral translations for students receiving instruction in their primary language. CMAS Spanish translations are available and on-site translations are allowed for other languages.

*Multilingual Learners with significant cognitive disabilities may take CoAlt in place of CMAS and PSAT/SAT

Colorado Assessment Requirements for First Year in U.S. Schools Multilingual Learners

In Colorado, Multilingual Learners enrolled in a U.S. school for less than one year ***who are identified as Non-English Proficient (NEP)***:

- Are required to take ACCESS for ELLs.
- Are exempt from taking the English Language Arts assessment if they receive language arts instruction in English or are students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) in their former country. These students are excluded from current year achievement calculations but count as participants in ELA for state accountability.





- Should take the CSLA version of CMAS if they receive language arts instruction in Spanish currently and they consistently received language arts instruction in Spanish in their prior country.
- Are required to take state math and science assessments and are included in achievement and participation calculations for state accountability. Testing with accommodations is appropriate, including language accommodations such as glossary; and for CMAS, written and oral translations. CMAS Spanish translations are available and on-site translations are allowed for other languages.

In Colorado, Multilingual Learners enrolled in a U.S. school for less than one year **who are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP)**:

- Are required to take ACCESS for ELLs.
- Should take the state language arts assessment that best matches their instruction: CMAS ELA (instruction in English), CMAS CSLA (instruction in Spanish); PSAT/SAT; or CoAlt (if eligible). Their results are excluded from both the current and following year of achievement calculations but are included in participation calculations. In the following year, students are included in growth calculations.
- Are required to take state math and science assessments and are included in achievement and participation calculations for state accountability. Testing with accommodations is appropriate for these tests, including language accommodations such as glossary; and for CMAS, written and oral translations. CMAS Spanish translations are available and on-site translations are allowed for other languages.

Newcomer Support Learning Cohort

We have heard from many superintendents who say supporting multilingual newcomer students is a growing need in their communities. CDE launched a learning cohort opportunity for district teams this past December to identify shared needs and provide resources. Our kick-off event in Jeffco hosted over 50 district leaders spanning 13 Colorado districts – all experiencing an unprecedented influx of newcomer students and families.





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The five remaining learning cohort sessions will include site visits to highlight successful practices in districts and schools, sessions delivered from experts in the field, as well as the continued opportunity for district-to-district collaboration.

[Sign up to join CDE's Newcomer Learning Cohort](#). Once you sign up, calendar invitations will be automatically sent to you for cohort events.

The next Newcomers Learning Cohort event will meet Thursday, Feb. 1, from 9 to 11 a.m. in Boulder Valley School District's Conference Center to visit BVSD's Secondary Newcomer Program. This event will include information from the BVSD team, a tour of the Newcomer Program, and follow-up discussion with Q&A time. Teams will also be provided time to process new information and collaborate.

For more information about these opportunities, please reach out to Adrienne Cruz at mailto:cruz_a@cde.state.co.us.

Thank you for all you do to support our students in Colorado!

Warm regards,

Susana Córdova
Commissioner
Colorado Department of Education

