Improving Instruction for English Learners (ELs) through Improved Accessibility Decisions

Accessible Instruction and Assessment for English Learners With Disabilities

Kristi Liu, Charity Funfe Tatah Mentan, Linda Goldstone

This project is supported by a National Professional Development Grant (#T365Z160115 ) from the Office of English Language Acquisition, U.S. Department of Education. The materials do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.
Project Funding and Partners

• 5-year National Professional Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition

• Collaboration between the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) and the West Virginia Department of Education
Primary Project Goal

Improve teachers’ understanding of how to select, implement, and evaluate the use of accessibility features and accommodations by English learners, including English learners with disabilities, for instruction and assessment.
A Secondary Project Goal

Promote the importance of collaborative decision making that includes parents, key educators and service providers, and students.
Agenda

• Accessibility Paradigm Shift

• Relevance of Collaborative Partnerships

• Importance of an EL Accessibility Plan

• Discussion of Case Study/Sharing Tools
Accessibility for Students
What Do We Mean by Accessible Instruction and Assessment?

• Developing or adapting lessons so that all students, including students who are English learners, can participate fully in classroom activities.

• Keeping the standards and the lesson outcomes the same for English learners as for other students while reducing the barriers for students who are English learners’ developing English skills.

• Providing individualized supports called accommodations, especially in testing situations.
Why Do We Need to Know About Accessibility for Students?

• Access to:
  Instruction, Content, Assessments

• Some examples:
  • ASL video for a deaf student
  • Extended time for a student who is an English learner
  • Answer masking for a student with ADHD
  • Separate setting for struggling student

THIS IS A PARADIGM SHIFT!
Tiers of Accessibility

Universal Features
for all students

Designated Features
for students who need them as identified by an educator in advance

Accommodations
for students with disabilities; in some cases, ELs are also eligible

Improving Instruction
Implementing Accessible Instruction

• Depends on understanding your students’ academic strengths as well as their learning challenges.

• You can then use this understanding to provide multiple ways for students with different characteristics to engage with the material and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
Implementing Accessible Assessments

Then ask…

• Can the student use this on the assessment?

• Have we thought about both their language learning and disability needs?
The Relevance of Collaborative Partnerships

Collaborative decision-making in instruction and assessment
Why Collaborate & Partner with All Stakeholders?

Ensure that all stakeholders’ voices are heard
Equal Partnership for students Success

Equality in partnership is indispensable
Listening, clarifying, patience, compromise
Examples of Collaborative Partnerships

• Teachers collaborating to ensure all students are making progress
• Teacher and parent in collaborative partnership for decision-making in instruction and assessment
• School community partnership
• Professionals collaborating and partnering for students success, eg IEP teams
Challenges in Collaborative Partnerships

• Mutual distrust
• Lack of English proficiency
• Disrespect
• Assumptions
• Stereotyping
• Top down approach
• Lack of parity
Members of a Collaborative IEP Team Serving an English Learner with a Disability

- Special Education Teacher
- General Ed Teacher
- EL Teacher
- Related Service Providers
- Educational Agency Representative (e.g., Principal)
- Parent/Guardian (and interpreter)
- Others

Adapted from Liu & Barrera, 2013
Highlight from a training module

https://youtu.be/fglBwMsHlk8
Steps in filling out English learner accessibility decision making form

1. Gather information on the student’s characteristics and experiences
2. Identify appropriate accessibility features and accommodations for instruction
3. Do the same thing for assessments
4. Evaluate how well the accessibility features and accommodations worked for the student
Using an EL Accessibility Plan
# EL Accessibility Plan

**Student Name:** __________________________  **Grade:** __________  **School Year:** __________

Instructions: Use the EL Accessibility Plan as a guide for planning, implementing, and evaluating individualized accessibility features for English learners. You can adapt this form to meet your needs.

## 1. Student Assessment Data
Include or attach all available data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Current Year</th>
<th>Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening Data (if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Sources of Information
(E.g., parents, previous teachers, specialists)

## 3. Student Characteristics and Experiences
Include information that may affect and/or support the use of accessibility features in instruction and assessment.

### Home Language Background:
What languages are spoken at home? Are there differences in social communication and academic English proficiency?

### Educational Experiences:
What are the student’s experiences learning in English? In other languages?

### Cultural Factors:
What are the student’s and family’s experiences with schools?

### Migration Status and Mobility:
Have there been disruptions in schooling or in living arrangements? If so, how have they affected schooling?

### Disabilities:
Does the student have any diagnosed disabilities?

### Individual Characteristics, Academic Interests, & Academic Strengths:
What are the student’s interests? How does the student learn best?
Step 1: Gather Information on Student Characteristics

1. Student Assessment Data
Include or attach all available data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Current Year</th>
<th>Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Current Year</th>
<th>Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Does not meet standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Partially meets standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening Data (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other:

2. Sources of Information
(E.g., parents, previous teachers, specialists)

Meetings with:
- Mother Sachiko
- EL Teacher Julie Erikson
- SPED Teacher Sophia Truman
- IEP Review
3. Student Characteristics and Experiences
Include information that may affect and/or support the use of accessibility features in instruction and assessment.

Home Language Background: What languages are spoken at home? Are there differences in social communication and academic language proficiency?
Japanese is spoken at home; strong at speaking and listening – intermediate level Japanese reading and writing skills typical for her age.

Educational Experiences: What are the student’s experiences learning in English? In other languages?
Has consistently attended school in Japan preK-6th grade. English class at school focused on written grammar, reading and vocabulary but all instruction was in Japanese

Cultural Factors: What are the student’s and family’s experiences with schools?
School is important. Family holds high standards for Hana to do well and thinks she needs to work harder. Mother, Sachiko, has key role in supporting her education.

Migration Status and Mobility: Have there been disruptions in schooling or in living arrangements? If so, how have they affected schooling?
Moved to the U.S. one year ago and was without formal schooling for at least one month during the transition.

Disabilities: Does the student have any diagnosed disabilities?
- Learning disability in reading
- Visual impairment

Individual Characteristics, Academic Interests & Academic Strengths: What are the student’s interests? How does the student learn best?
Loves to listen to music (favorite is K-pop) and is motivated to complete her tasks so that she can listen to her music; Hana best learns in small groups and one-on-one settings
Before step 2, grab your state assessment guidelines:
Step 2: Identify appropriate accessibility features and accommodations for instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Need</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary support for words she knows in Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support processing written English texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3. Do the same thing for assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Need</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing written texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ State Tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Other (district/unit tests)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 4. Evaluate how well they worked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility Feature</th>
<th>Notes on Instruction</th>
<th>Notes on Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual electronic dictionary</td>
<td>She uses it too much and it slows her down</td>
<td>Hana needs more practice using the embedded dictionary on the computerized state tests and figuring out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helps but I don't have time to look up every word I don't know</td>
<td>It's distracting when I roll the cursor over words I don't want to look up and the definition comes up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She spends hours on her homework because she's looking up so many words</td>
<td>Mom thought she shouldn't use it on test. Afraid it will hurt her scores.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study

• What kinds of accessibility features and accommodations would help Aza learn grade-level content?
• In your context, how would you find out the accessibility features and accommodations she can have for state tests? Other tests?
• How would you facilitate effective communication and collaboration about accessibility features and accommodations for Aza?
• How would the EL Accessibility plan work for students with an IEP? What kinds of changes might make it easier to use?
Questions? Contact Kristi Liu kline010@umn.edu
Linda Goldstone golds240@umn.edu
Charity Funfe Tatah Mentan tata0006@umn.edu
LANGUAGES USED

ARABIC:
Speaking and listening skills typical of her age group; no reading or writing skills; Arabic is spoken in the home.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY:
Fluent in social English spoken by classmates. Can listen and speak easily at lunch, in hallway, on playground. In class, understands more than she can express. Low level of English reading and writing ability. Still learning a lot of academic English vocabulary.

EDUCATION

Never attended preschool in Syria prior to coming to the U.S. Attended some elementary school in refugee camp in Iraq, but not regularly.

Never used a computer or any form of technology prior to coming to the U.S.

DISABILITY

• Mild to moderate bilateral hearing loss.
  ▪ Has had hearing aids for 3 years but may not wear them in class. Self-conscious and not commonly worn.
  ▪ Hard to hear with hearing aids when the classroom becomes noisy.
  ▪ Has particular trouble hearing/understanding task-related directions.
ACADEMIC STRENGTHS/CHALLENGES

- Is strong at basic number operations and calculation in math if problems presented as numbers
- Loves school and works hard
- Likes learning with peers; likes to be seen as part of the group and not singled out for special treatment in front of the class
- Is an auditory learner
- Likes simple English books but does not necessarily read all of the words
- Processes English text slowly
- Mixes up English letters
- Art is her favorite class

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What kinds of accessibility features and accommodations would help Aza learn grade-level content?
- In your context, how would you find out the accessibility features and accommodations she can have for state tests? Other tests?
- How would you facilitate effective communication and collaboration about accessibility features and accommodations for Aza?
- How would the EL Accessibility plan work for students with an IEP? What kinds of changes might make it easier to use?
POSSIBLE INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT SUPPORTS FOR AZA

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

GROUP SUPPORTS THAT COULD BENEFIT AZA:

- Teachers wear a neck microphone during instruction in Aza’s classrooms (whole-class amplification)
- Teacher provides extra (relevant) visuals to accompany lessons and readings
- Morpheme instruction
- Teacher provides texts with simplified sentence structure and vocabulary

SUPPORTS SPECIFICALLY FOR AZA:

- FM hearing aid amplification system (teacher wears a lapel microphone that projects the hearing directly to Aza’s hearing aids)
- Paraprofessional is a periodic note taker for Aza during instruction; notes are also provided to Aza if necessary
- Preferential seating (near the front, within view of the teacher, away from doors or other sources of background noise) – check this one with Aza!
- Homeroom teacher checks Aza’s hearing aids each morning to monitor the functioning; provides Aza batteries for hearing aids if needed
- Native language translation of directions by Arabic-speaking paraprofessional during para’s availability

STATE ASSESSMENT SUPPORTS

ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS:

- Repeat/reread directions
- Scratch paper
- Spell check (for ELA writing)
- Embedded English dictionary – gives pop up definitions that can be read aloud to student

ACCOMMODATIONS:

- Breaks as needed
- Amplification with headphones
- Quiet space for testing (when possible)
- Extended time
- Needs assistance to use computer tools (such as zoom or magnification and the highlighter and navigate the assessments)
EL Accessibility Plan (available https://nceo.info/About/projects/improving-instruction/home)

Student Name: ________________________________________________ Grade: ____________________ School Year: ________________

Instructions: Use the EL Accessibility Plan as a guide for planning, implementing, and evaluating individualized accessibility features for English learners. You can adapt this form to meet your needs.

1. Student Assessment Data
Include or attach all available data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Current Year</th>
<th>Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELP
- Reading
- Listening
- Writing
- Speaking

ELA

Math

Screening Data (if applicable)

Other:

2. Sources of Information
(E.g., parents, previous teachers, specialists)

3. Student Characteristics and Experiences
Include information that may affect and/or support the use of accessibility features in instruction and assessment.

Home Language Background: What languages are spoken at home? Are there differences in social communication and academic English proficiency?

Educational Experiences: What are the student’s experiences learning in English? In other languages?

Cultural Factors: What are the student’s and family’s experiences with schools?

Migration Status and Mobility: Have there been disruptions in schooling or in living arrangements? If so, how have they affected schooling?

Disabilities: Does the student have any diagnosed disabilities?

Individual Characteristics, Academic Interests, & Academic Strengths: What are the student’s interests? How does the student learn best?


The Improving Instruction for English Learners Through Improved Accessibility Decisions project is supported primarily through a grant (XT365Z160115) with the Office of English Language Acquisition, U.S. Department of Education. The project is affiliated with the National Center on Educational Outcomes, Institute on Community Integration at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. Opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.
## EL Accessibility Plan

(Student Name: ___________________________________________  Grade: ___________  School Year: ___________)

### Instructional Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Need</th>
<th>Accessibility Feature</th>
<th>Subject(s)</th>
<th>Included in Planning Tool(s)</th>
<th>Included in Classroom Tasks</th>
<th>Does the student use it for that task every time?</th>
<th>Is it used alone or with adult assistance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ EL plan</td>
<td>□ Classroom assignments</td>
<td>☐ Yes</td>
<td>☐ Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ IEP/ 504</td>
<td>□ Quizzes</td>
<td>☐ No</td>
<td>☐ With assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ State assessment plan</td>
<td>□ Unit tests</td>
<td>If not, how often?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Other: __________</td>
<td>□ Group work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Not listed</td>
<td>□ Homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Other: __________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Improving Instruction for English Learners Through Improved Accessibility Decisions project is supported primarily through a grant (#T365Z160115) with the Office of English Language Acquisition, U.S. Department of Education. The project is affiliated with the National Center on Educational Outcomes, Institute on Community Integration at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. Opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.
EL Accessibility Plan (available [https://nceo.info/About/projects/improving-instruction/home](https://nceo.info/About/projects/improving-instruction/home))

Student Name: ____________________________________________ Grade: ________________ School Year: ________________

## Assessment Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Need</th>
<th>Accessibility Feature</th>
<th>Used in:</th>
<th>Available on ELP Assessment?</th>
<th>Available on Content Assessments?</th>
<th>Person Assisting with Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Improving Instruction for English Learners Through Improved Accessibility Decisions project is supported primarily through a grant (#T365Z160115) with the Office of English Language Acquisition, U.S. Department of Education. The project is affiliated with the National Center on Educational Outcomes, Institute on Community Integration at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. Opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.
EL Accessibility Plan (available [https://nceo.info/About/projects/improving-instruction/home](https://nceo.info/About/projects/improving-instruction/home))

Student Name: _________________________________________ Grade: ________________ School Year: ________________

Instructions: Gather feedback from teachers (including yourself), the student, and the student’s parents to evaluate how the accessibility features worked for instruction and assessments and how you can better support the student moving forward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility Feature</th>
<th>Notes on Instruction</th>
<th>Notes on Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Evaluation</td>
<td>Student Evaluation</td>
<td>Parent Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Evaluation of Accessibility Features: (e.g., How did the student perform on assignments or tests when accessibility features were used vs. not used? What combinations of accessibility features were effective vs. not effective? If the student did not perform as expected, what are possible reasons and what are potential solutions? Were the accessibility features refused by the student? If so, why?)

Next Steps: (e.g., What accessibility feature(s) or combination of accessibility features are likely to support the student’s learning? What should be tried next time? What accessibility feature(s) or combination of accessibility features may better support the student on assessments? What can the student’s teacher next year learn from this process and use next year?)