



Florida Association for Bilingual Education
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Why Florida Needs Native Language Assessments for English Learners and Bilingual Students

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What are native language assessments?

- Assessments of different subjects (e.g., math, science) in languages other than English
 - Example: a math End of Course (EOC) Geometry exam in Spanish, even though the course may have been taught in English

Why does Florida need native language assessments?

- Research says it's best for students learning English and in bilingual programs
 - English learners can show *all* of what they know and can do, not just what they know and can do in English
 - Students who are enrolled in dual language bilingual education programs are already learning content in another language, and students can show what they have learned in these languages
- Research says it's best for teachers of emergent bilingual students
 - Teachers need to know what students learning English know and can do in order to effectively teach them new content
 - Teachers need to know how much students in dual language bilingual education programs have learned through languages other than English
- The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, the federal education law, strongly recommends that states do everything to provide native language assessments. This is considered "best practice" for teachers of English learners and bilingual students.
 - Native language assessments are required by ESSA *in order to level the playing field*. Native English speakers are assessed on their content knowledge, but ELs and bilingual students are effectively tested on their knowledge of English *and* content. This is not a true representation of what they are capable of producing academically.

Summary: *Research shows that using assessments in a student's native language is a far more accurate determination of their academic progress.*

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) of 2015 is the most recent bipartisan reauthorization of the federal government's K-12 education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. ESSA contains meaningful levers for education leaders, parents, members of the business community, and advocates. Under the law, historically states and districts have underinvested in schools serving a high number of ELs. We need high-quality, specialized data to drive improvements.

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ESSA strongly recommends that all states:

- Identify languages other than English that are present to a significant extent and make every effort to develop native language assessments where they don't exist in those languages.

In recent years, most states in the US have developed and use native language assessments in content areas for English learners. For example, in its ESSA-approved plan, Washington state provides versions of math and science assessments for all grades in Chinese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Arabic and Vietnamese; Indiana offers math and science assessments in Spanish; and Texas provides elementary grade assessments in math, science, and reading in Spanish. In fact, more than 45 states use native language assessments.

Examples of Other States

- Michigan
- Texas
- Washington
- Indiana
- New York
- California
- Minnesota
- Florida???

Why does Florida *not* provide native language assessments?

Florida legislators believe that it's too expensive to create native language assessments. Yet how much money does the state waste when teachers cannot target instruction for student learning, based on what students know and can do? More than 45 other states already use native language assessments. Why can't Florida?

Florida legislators believe that there are not enough English learners to warrant native language assessments and they are not used for diagnostic purposes. This assumes that EL students are not literate in their home languages or have had prior schooling. Yet Florida has the third largest number of English learners in the US (~300,000) following California and Texas. Over the past 3 years, Florida has received students educated in their home countries and who are literate in their native language. But if not, standardized tests do not have to be done in writing.

What Can You Do?

- Contact Governor Ron DeSantis (850) 717-9337 with the message: "You inherited a flawed ESSA plan. Please fix it by including native language content area assessment."
- Contact other state level elected officials
 - State representatives
<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx>
 - State senators
<https://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>
- Contact local elected officials
 - County/city commissions
 - School boards

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