

Hon. Richard Corcoran  
Commissioner of Education

Hon. Jacob Oliva  
Chancellor, Division of Public Schools

Hon. Melissa Ramsey  
Vice Chancellor for Strategic Improvement

Hon. Cari Miller  
Vice Chancellor for Literacy Achievement

January 21, 2021

Dear Commissioner Corcoran, Chancellor Oliva, and Vice Chancellors Ramsey and Miller:

We, the members of the SALA advisory committee, respectfully ask that you waive the requirement for English language learners (ELLs) to take the ACCESS for ELLs test effective immediately. As such, we request that you direct all Florida public schools to inform parents of students classified as ELLs who are receiving their education remotely that taking the 2020-2021 ACCESS for ELLs tests is voluntary. In addition, those students who elect not to take the tests will not be disciplined, punished, or otherwise sanctioned for opting out of the tests, nor will they negatively impact a District's compliance with English language proficiency testing.

Taking this action joins together with other states that have already made participation voluntary, including Colorado, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

As has been documented by META (and co-signing organizations) and LULAC, testing in person will have a disproportionate impact on ELLs and their families. Moreover, their attendance on site may also have devastating effects for students already attending in person due to lack of space to maintain necessary social distancing. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must protect our ELLs in Florida from what the White House Corona Virus Task Force has deemed "elevated test positivity."

We also recognize that the validity and reliability of scores on the ACCESS for ELLs tests will likely be affected as a result of obligating ELLs to test at the school site. In other words, forcing all ELLs to take this test on site can be expected to yield bad/inaccurate data.

Please see <https://esolflorida.org/testing> for articles that have already been published, the letter to the Florida Commissioner of Education signed by the Florida Association for Bilingual Education (FABE), the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), Sunshine State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (SSTESOL) of Florida, and other organizations, additional resources, and calls to action.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to serve on this committee, and we appreciate the ability to make this request on behalf of ELLs and their families across the state of Florida.

Respectfully,

SALA Advisory Committee

*Ryan W. Pontier*, Ph.D., Florida International University, LULAC Florida

*Ester de Jong*, Ed.D., University of Florida

*Arnhilda Badía*, Ph.D., Former State Representative

*Arlene Costello*, Ed.D., President, SSTESOL of Florida

*Melba Brito*, Administrative Director, Department of Bilingual Education and World Languages,  
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*Alberto Carvalho*, Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

*Zayra Climes-Lenchus*, Parent

*Shirley B. Johnson*, NAACP Florida

*Francois Leconte*

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