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January 28, 2021

Dear Superintendents:

As you may already be aware, Florida has led the nation in the successful reopening of our schools to in-person instruction. However, we have also understood that the decision to choose the learning modality that best meets the individual needs of students is very personal and the ultimate decision should be left to families.

Providing families with opportunities to make educational decisions for their child(ren) has been a mainstay of Florida even before the pandemic. In light of this, Florida's families have been provided the continued option to choose the learning modality that is best suited for their child's academic success and family. This includes fully virtual, innovative and in-person learning modalities.

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) is committed to ensuring that students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) are accurately identified and then provided the services they need to thrive in our educational system. The results from ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 ("ACCESS test") are a critical part of this process and, as a result, FDOE requires that all students classified as ELLs be annually assessed.

- The results of the assessment help to identify a student for ELL services;
- The results also help determine when to exit a student from ELL services; and
- The results also help teachers modify instruction to help ELLs succeed in the classroom.

The ACCESS test does not have a remote option. ELL students who are receiving in-person instruction will receive the ACCESS test during the upcoming assessment window. School districts must also open up testing centers to administer the ACCESS test to ELL students who are using the innovative and virtual modalities.

- As you invite these ELL students who are learning from home to take the ACCESS test at a testing center, please tell them about the safety protocols that you will implement for these students.
- For example, in addition to cleaning the testing center before each testing session, wearing masks, washing hands and social distancing, let them know if you are opening testing facilities on evenings and weekends.

JACOB OLIVA
CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Additionally, as you are likely aware, FDOE just recently extended the testing window until May 28, 2021, for administering the ACCESS test to ELL students, consistent with the other increased testing windows already provided thus far during the 2020-2021 school year. Testing has occurred on school campuses, safely, since fall and even summer 2020 in school districts, and we hope that these increased testing windows continue to provide the kinds of flexibility that you are looking for to implement safety protocols.

In fact, as of Friday, January 22, 2021, more than 840,000 statewide assessments have been safely administered since summer of 2020. The fact is Florida's districts and schools have proven this can be done safely since last summer.

Here is a summary of the flexibility that has been provided thus far:

- The Fall 2020 FSA and NGSSS EOC testing window was extended by seven weeks.
- The Fall 2020 ELA Retake testing window was extended by 11 weeks.
- The Winter 2020 FSA and NGSSS EOC testing window was extended by four weeks.
- The Spring 2021 FSA Algebra 1 EOC and ELA Retake testing window was extended by seven weeks.
- The ACCESS for ELLs testing window was extended by 10 weeks.

FDOE highly recommends that all ELL students participate in the ACCESS test. Even so, **the decision to participate 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.

To that end, it is critical that your families be advised that the results of this assessment inform the services their school district provides to their child(ren). Absent these assessment results, their services will lack critical guidance and may fail to address the needs of these students.

Over the past year, the FDOE has issued a series of Emergency Orders to ensure that ELLs receive a high-quality education and to steer resources and services to students whose education has been disrupted by the pandemic. The Emergency Orders have guaranteed the full panoply of services for all students—especially our students most vulnerable to academic regression like ELLs—required by law.

Additionally, we have required schools to determine if ELL student regression has occurred and required districts to conduct ELL Committee meetings, as needed, to implement additional interventions and strategies to help our students succeed and thrive academically.

Safely administering the ACCESS test to ELL students in all learning modalities is an important part of making sure that that all children receive the supports they need during this emergency. Thank you for doing your part.

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To learn more about the ACCESS for ELLs assessments, including Florida statutory requirements and U.S. Department of Education guidance, please visit FDOE's ACCESS for ELLs webpage at <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/access-for-ells.stml>.

Sincerely,



Jacob Oliva
Chancellor of Public Schools

cc: School District ELL Coordinators
School District Assessment Coordinators