
New Measures of English Language Proficiency and Their Relationship to Performance on Large-Scale Content Assessments

In response to a request from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to explore how English-language proficiency measures may be related to performance outcomes on content assessments, this project uses the results of two new large-scale assessments—the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) and the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)—to address the following question: “How does performance in four language domains on an English language proficiency assessment predict English language learner students’ performance on a state content assessment after accounting for student and school characteristics?”

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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Examine the relationship between academic English skills in separate language domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and performance on large-scale content assessments.

METHODOLOGY

- Analyze data from two data sources used in all three states:
 - ACCESS for ELLs English-language proficiency assessment.
 - NECAP assessment.
- Examine for fifth- and eighth-grade students how ACCESS scores in each language domain predict NECAP reading, writing, and math scores while controlling for student and school characteristics using multilevel modeling.

AUDIENCE & APPLICATION

- State Education Agency (SEA) officials in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- Education leaders in other jurisdictions who are concerned about the needs of ELLs.

FINAL PRODUCTS

- Issues & Answers Report published by the Institute of Education Sciences, which may be found at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009066.pdf
- Reports to state-, district-, and school-level officials.

What Are Fast-Response Projects?

Fast-Response Projects are short-term projects that respond to regional and national needs and priorities and provide research-based knowledge to inform policy and practice. They use methods such as research syntheses, mining of existing data sets, and descriptive studies.



New Measures of English Language Proficiency and Their Relationship to Performance on Large-Scale Content Assessments

Using assessment results for fifth- and eighth-grade English language learners (ELLs) in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, this report finds that students' performance in the English language domains of reading and writing (as measured by the ACCESS for ELLs English-language proficiency assessment) are significant predictors of performance on reading, writing, and mathematics assessments (as measured by the NECAP) and that the language domains of reading and writing (literacy skills) are more closely associated with performance than are the domains of speaking and listening (oral skills).

Specifically, the report finds:

- NECAP reading scores in both fifth and eighth grades were significantly and positively predicted by ACCESS reading, writing, and speaking scores after controlling for other ACCESS scores and student and school characteristics. Among the ACCESS domain scores, the strongest predictor of NECAP reading outcomes was ACCESS reading scores, followed by ACCESS writing and speaking scores.
- NECAP writing scores in fifth grade were significantly and positively predicted by ACCESS reading and writing scores and in eighth grade by all four ACCESS domain scores after controlling for other ACCESS scores and student and school characteristics. ACCESS reading and writing scores were the strongest predictors of NECAP writing outcomes in fifth and eighth grades.
- Like NECAP reading and writing scores, NECAP mathematics scores in both fifth and eighth grades were positively and significantly predicted by ACCESS reading and writing scores after controlling for other ACCESS scores and student and school characteristics. Among the ACCESS domain scores, ACCESS reading scores were the strongest predictor of NECAP mathematics outcomes for both fifth- and eighth-grade ELLs, followed by ACCESS writing scores.
- ACCESS reading and writing scores were significant predictors of NECAP reading, writing, and mathematics scores in fifth and eighth grades. ACCESS speaking and listening scores were significant predictors of NECAP scores for only four outcomes: fifth- and eighth-grade reading (speaking), eighth-grade writing (speaking and listening), and fifth-grade mathematics (listening).

Contact Information

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