1. How is the participation rate for ACCESS going to calculated for the 2020-21 school year?

*Currently, the Department is planning on administering the ACCESS assessment, as well as all federally required assessments and a general assessment to gather interim data, following established protocols for administration. In the case of ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, students who are identified in synergy as an English Learner are required to complete the assessment. A student who does not complete the assessment would be a non-participant. Participation rate is calculated by using the number of students/the number of students eligible to participate. The Department is exploring opportunities to address this through the Special Considerations module.*

1. Do you foresee any adjustments to the participation rate for students who cannot test because they are learning in a fully remote setting due to preexisting health reasons or in quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19? Will there be implications for non-completers who fall into this category?

*We are still exploring options the Department could employ and are networking with other states to collaboratively problem solve. The Department is in the process of adding additional criteria to the special considerations module as a result of COVID-19 – more information to follow.*

1. If we do have a student that we are unable to test because they are learning in a fully remote setting due to preexisting health reasons or in quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19, is there a specific way we should document this?

*The Department is working to incorporate an element within the special considerations module that would be able to capture instances such as this and provide a special consideration from participating. We are asking districts to continue with their “good faith” efforts to assess: planning, scheduling, training for administrators, etc. But we also know that this is an unprecedented year and we do not know what January, March, April will look like. This is why DOE is building capacity within the Special Considerations module to document those students unable to participate in assessment for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic, so we will have this data to call back on later and districts will have a tool to document what will probably be the most common reason for nonparticipation.*

1. Is it possible to sit in on WIDA Consortium meeting?  If so, when and how?

*The WIDA Board Meeting is an annual event every June, where WIDA Consortium SEA staff come together to discuss WIDA policies, resources, and initiatives. Unfortunately, this meeting is for SEA staff only. However, WIDA provides other opportunities for LEAs to be involved and share input. The LEA Advisory Committee meets each December, but states are permitted, on a rotating basis, to send only one LEA member. There are also opportunities to participate in item reviews and other assessment-related meetings. If you are interested in being part of the LEA Advisory Committee next time Maine’s turn is up or would like to be part of item review efforts, please let Jodi and/or April know.*

1. What are the protocols that will be in place for testing students who are partially or fully remote?  We currently have approximately 100 students in our Remote Academy. How do we know if those protocols are safe and secure?

*The return to school framework would outline the necessary procedures and guidelines regarding assessing students in person. There may be additional special services guidance that may also be applicable due to the frequency of one-on-one instructional needs. In addition, WIDA has provided an excellent resource regarding best practices for assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Maine DOE is also working on a state-specific toolkit with more to come. We envision the toolkit to be utilized for all assessments, it is not specific to ELP assessment.*

1. Do we know how those protocols change the outcomes for the assessments or impact their reliability?

*Most of the health and safety protocols (such as cleaning keyboards or testing materials) would be managed by the test administrator between administrations and would not impact the student experience. The only change that students may experience is the use of a mask during the speaking domain. WIDA has shared with us very favorable data from WIDA Screener administration that suggests that masks do not interfere with the microphone’s ability to pick up the student’s voice.*

1. Can we delay our testing window to the latest possible time (May-June, 2021)?

*The Department has extended the assessment window to allow for additional time to assess students. The revised assessment window dates are: 1/1/21 - 4/16/21.* *Maine DOE extended the timeline in response to concerns from the field, including districts with larger populations of ELs. At the same time, we recognize the importance ACCESS data plays in making programmatic decisions for the upcoming school year and are working with DRC to ensure that despite the extension, assessment reports will be available ASAP. This will however definitely involve a delay in data.*

1. If a school district is unable to get to students tested, what are the repercussions?  What if the school district decides it is wrong and refuses to administer the assessment (assume that the school district's governing body approves this move and makes whatever policy moves are necessary to do so)?

*ESSA/federal law requires the Department administer an English language proficiency assessment on an annual basis and students identified as English learners are required to participate. Currently, the US DOE has indicated a waiver from administering such assessments will not be provided to states and therefore, Maine and all states must administer. Unintended consequences of non-participation are not fully known at this time. At the state level, should our participation rate be below 95%, Maine would not be permitted to apply for a waiver from the 1% cap should Maine exceed identifying 1% of students for the alternate assessments. The US DOE could also apply a condition or further sanctions to Maine’s title I award.*

*More importantly, the ACCESS is currently ME’s only qualitative measure of English Language Proficiency. ACCESS report data is utilized at the district and school levels to inform Lau plans, LAC meetings, and as data in individual students to make the most up to date and informed, data-driven decisions possible regarding programming and services.*

*Additionally, the decision to not assess as an entire district would leave that district without a measure by which to exit eligible English learners from ESOL services, which is an infringement on the students’ civil rights.*

1. With a change in administrations at USDOE, is there a chance that the request to postpone/skip state assessments this year will be given a second look?

*We are unsure at this time but remain hopeful. Some networks are indicating this may be possible while others do not anticipate a change in approach. There is truly no definitive answer to this.*