

What you need to know: WIDA ACCESS Standard Setting 2026

What is WIDA ACCESS?

WIDA ACCESS is a suite of summative English language proficiency assessments given annually to all English learners (ELs) in grades K-12 in the WIDA Consortium. It is used to monitor students' progress in learning English for academic purposes and assesses the four language domains of Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing.

WIDA ACCESS is a standards-based assessment, anchored in the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework. It meets federal requirements for monitoring and reporting student progress toward English language proficiency under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.

The **WIDA Consortium** is comprised of 42 U.S. states, territories, and federal agencies. As part of your state's membership, you receive access to research-based language development standards frameworks, language proficiency assessments, and high-quality professional learning to support multilingual learner education. WIDA is housed at the highly ranked University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Education. Learn more at wida.wisc.edu.

What happened at the standard setting event?

In the 2025-2026 school year, WIDA released a revised WIDA ACCESS assessment and a redesigned WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten assessment. As part of this revision work, WIDA was required to conduct a standard setting in July of 2026.

Over 100 expert educator panelists gathered in Boston, Massachusetts, to determine the proficiency level cut scores that will be applied to WIDA ACCESS beginning with the 2026-2027 test administration. Proficiency levels range from 1.0-6.0 and align to the six WIDA English language proficiency levels. They help educators, students, and families understand how students can comprehend and use English in the classroom. Standard setting panelists helped WIDA determine the level of performance a student needed to achieve on WIDA ACCESS for each proficiency level.

How does WIDA ACCESS Standard Setting affect my district?

When you receive your students' scores, you may notice differences between students' reported proficiency levels and what you and their teachers expect. Because WIDA ACCESS

tells you about students' abilities at one point in time, many factors can potentially impact their scores.

When reviewing your 2027 WIDA ACCESS score reports

- Use students' scale scores, reported on a vertical scale from 100-600, to measure whether students made progress from 2025-2026 to 2026-2027. (Remember: proficiency levels are a grade-level interpretation of these scale scores.)
- Treat WIDA ACCESS scores as one of many pieces of information that can inform decisions you make about student supports. The new proficiency level cut scores may affect student scores differently depending on domain and grade level.
- Use the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors on the WIDA ACCESS Individual Student Report to identify what the scores indicate your students can do. Compare those descriptors with schoolwork, in-class assessments, and educator insights to create a complete picture of each student's English language development.

What's next?

In spring 2027, WIDA will release an updated **WIDA ACCESS Interpretive Guide for Score Reports** for educators and updated **WIDA ACCESS: Understanding Your Child's Scores** flyers for families (available in several languages).

Your state education agency (SEA) will begin analyzing the impact of the standard setting event on your state's English learners and may revisit how accountability and growth are calculated in your state. They may also choose to reexamine your state's English learner reclassification criteria.

Find contact information for your SEA on the WIDA website. Select your state from the member/state dropdown menu.

Learn more

Visit the **Learn About ACCESS Standard Setting 2026** (wida.wisc.edu/standardsetting) webpage for more information about the event and resources to help you communicate with staff in your school or district.

For more information about WIDA ACCESS scores, visit the **ACCESS Scores and Reports** page (wida.wisc.edu/assess/access/scores-reports) on the WIDA website.

Questions? Contact the WIDA Client Services Center at (866) 276-7735 or help@wida.wisc.edu.