



## Massachusetts WIDA ACCESS Test Administration Manual 2025-2026

WIDA ACCESS Computer- and Paper-Based English Language Proficiency Assessments for Grades 1–12, WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten, and WIDA Alternate ACCESS

November 2025

This document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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### Introduction

The Massachusetts WIDA ACCESS Test Administration Manual is intended to support school administrators in preparing for and administering the WIDA ACCESS tests, the state's annual summative English language proficiency assessments. Information contained in this manual reflects Massachusetts specific policies and procedures, which may differ slightly from what can be found in WIDA manuals. It is intended to accompany the MA ACCESS Checklists found on the Massachusetts state page of the WIDA website.

Massachusetts will administer the WIDA ACCESS tests in January-February 2026 for the purpose of measuring the English language development skills of students who have been reported to the Department as English learners in grades K-12.

Providing quality instruction and assessment is critical to the success of English learners in our schools. As English learners strengthen their English language skills, they are likely to become more successful academically. Therefore, it is important for students to learn English as rapidly and efficiently as possible. The focus on academic language in the WIDA ELD standards and in the WIDA ACCESS tests is intended to accelerate the understanding by EL students of how English is used in the core academic subject matter.

Massachusetts has been a member of the WIDA consortium since 2012 and has adopted the consortium's WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards. The WIDA consortium offers computer-based (online) ACCESS tests for grades 1–12, paper-based assessments for students in grades 1–12 with disabilities, a paper-based kindergarten assessment, the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades K–12, and accommodated forms based on the WIDA ELD standards for students with disabilities.

Thank you for participating in this vital component of the statewide assessment system and for the work you do in your schools with English learners.

### Contact Information and Resources

# Test Administration Information and Assistance with Technology-related Problems

Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) Help Desk Hours: 8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday

Email: WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com

Telephone: 855-787-9615

Fax: 763-268-3007

#### **WIDA Standards and Test Administrator Training**

WIDA Help Desk:

Hours: 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday, April–November 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday, December–March

Web: wida.wisc.edu

Email: <a href="mailto:help@wida.wisc.edu">help@wida.wisc.edu</a> Telephone: 866-276-7735

Fax: 608-263-3733

#### **Policy Information**

MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Student Assessment Services Office Web: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access

Email: <a href="mailto:access@mass.gov">access@mass.gov</a> Telephone: 781-338-3625

Questions regarding Student Information Management System (SIMS) data should be directed to the <u>district's SIMS contact</u>. Select **SIMS Contact** from the Function menu and click **Get Results**.

Questions regarding RETELL, WIDA standards training, WIDA professional development, and the identification, services, and reclassification of English learners (ELs) should be directed to the Office of Language Acquisition at el@mass.gov or 781-338-3584.

### Testing Schedule and Administration Deadlines

Test administrators complete online training and certification, where applicable.	September 2025–February 2026
Confirm in school/district records which students need to take the WIDA ACCESS tests	EL students reported in October SIMS or added between December 18, 2025, and February 20, 2026
Online test set-up	November 25, 2025–close of testing window 2026*
Schools receive test materials	January 5–6, 2026
Order additional materials, if necessary	January 5–February 20, 2026
Administer WIDA ACCESS tests	January 5–February 27, 2026
Schedule UPS pickup of testing materials	March 2, 2026
Deadline for UPS pickup	March 3, 2026
Pre-reporting data validation by schools/districts	March 30–April 3, 2026
Results and data files available in AMS (electronic)	April 27, 2026
Results reported to schools and districts (printed)	May 15–18, 2026
Post-reporting data validation by DESE	Closes May 20, 2026
Revised results posted electronically in AMS	June 9, 2026

<sup>\*</sup>Please do not add students or change student information prior DESE's second Pre-ID upload on December 18, 2025. Test set-up should be completed prior to administering the WIDA ACCESS tests. All students must complete testing prior to the close of the testing window (February 27, 2026).

# Tasks to Complete for the 2025–2026 WIDA ACCESS Test Administration

1. Identify appropriate staff for the roles of district ACCESS test coordinator, school ACCESS test coordinator, and educational technology director.

Communicate any inaccurate or outdated school or district contact information with your <u>District Directory Administrator</u> to update your <u>ESE District Profiles</u>. This task should be completed by October 1 and updated throughout the year as necessary.

The responsibilities of individuals in each WIDA ACCESS test role are described below.

#### ACCESS test coordinators will be responsible for:

- the overall coordination of WIDA ACCESS test administration activities in the school or district
- assisting in setting up user accounts in the <u>WIDA Assessment Management</u> <u>System (WIDA AMS)</u>
- becoming familiar with the <u>online training course(s)</u> for computer-based and/or paper-based testing
- confirming and/or updating student information in WIDA AMS prior to computer-based testing
- ensuring that test administrators and technology coordinators have completed the necessary WIDA training courses and appropriate preparation for their roles

Qualifications for test administrators can be found in the <u>Identification and</u>
<u>Placement Guidance</u> document found on the <u>Massachusetts state page of the WIDA website</u>.

**ACCESS technology coordinators** (educational technology directors) will be responsible for:

- system and testing device set-up for students taking the computer-based test
- completing the <u>Site Technology Readiness Checklist for Deploying WIDA</u>
   Online Assessments
- reviewing the DRC Insight Technology User Guide
- resolving local systems issues in collaboration with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), the WIDA ACCESS test contractor

# 2. Oversee participation and ensure that EL students are reported accurately in SIMS.

Students in grades K–12 **must participate** in WIDA ACCESS testing for their grade in the four domains of listening, reading, speaking and writing, if they:

- were reported as EL in October 2025 SIMS and have not exited prior to January 5, 2026
- enrolled in school and were identified as EL after the October 2025 SIMS submission and on or prior to February 20, 2026
- are a foreign exchange student coded as #11 under DOE013 "Reason for Enrollment" in SIMS and are identified as an EL
- are in Early College Promise (student has graduated and is in second year grade 12 in SIMS)

Students reported as EL in October 2025 SIMS who have **exited EL status** before the beginning of the testing window (before January 5, 2026) are not required to test. The EL designation for students who exited EL status prior to testing **must be removed** in the district's March 2026 SIMS submission.

EL students are required to be tested if they enroll on or before February 20, 2026, and they can be tested until the end of the testing window, February 27. If an EL student enrolls during the testing window and will be taking the paper-based WIDA ACCESS tests, they must be designated for a test tier (A or B/C). See #4 below for guidance on determining tier placement. The final day to order additional paper-based testing materials is February 20, 2026. Students who enroll during the testing window and will take the online test must be placed in a test registration in WIDA AMS.

Students who enroll in a school after October 2025 SIMS and are identified as non-EL should be reported as non-EL in March 2026 SIMS. Such students are not required to take WIDA ACCESS in 2026.

Questions regarding SIMS submissions should be directed to the <u>district's SIMS</u> <u>contact</u>. The district SIMS contact can also provide assistance if your district's SIMS report has already been submitted.

### 3. Manage exemptions from testing.

All ELs, including first-year ELs (defined as EL students entered in SIMS for the first time *after* March 2025), must participate in WIDA ACCESS, with few exceptions. A very small number of ELs with certain disabilities who are unable to participate in the full suite of the four domain tests (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing) due to the lack of an available accommodation for their disability may be excused from specific test domains described below. Test administrators will enter "SPD" for the exempted domains in the Do Not Score tab in WIDA AMS or will bubble "SPD" for the exempted domain on the test booklet if the student is using a paper booklet. Exemption criteria are found below.

# Students Not Required to Participate in Some or All Domains of the WIDA ACCESS Tests

- EL students meeting criteria for the MCAS ELA special access read-aloud or text-to-speech accommodations listed in their IEPs or 504 plans are not required to take the ACCESS Reading test but must take the Listening, Speaking, and Writing tests. (SPD Reading) Students in grades K-2 will take the Reading test.
- EL students whose primary disability is reported as Sensory: Hard of Hearing or Deaf
  are not required to take the Listening and Speaking tests if they are unable to speech read
  or listen to and/or respond verbally to test items. However, they must take the Reading
  and Writing tests. See pages 23-24 of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations
  Manual for more information. (SPD Listening and/or Speaking)
- EL students whose primary disability is reported as Sensory: Vision Impairment or Blind and do not read braille may take the ACCESS online or paper Writing test with inperson human reader and scribe accommodations, but they are not required to take the Speaking, Listening, or Reading domains if accommodations are not suitable. (SPD Speaking, Listening, Reading) Students who read braille will take all four domains beginning in 2026. See page 24 of the WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual for more information.
- EL students who are nonverbal or selective mute as indicated in their IEP and who do
  not use alternate and augmentative communication (AAC) devices are not required to take
  the Speaking test but must take the Listening, Reading, and Writing tests. (SPD Speaking)
  Students who use AAC devices will take the Speaking test. Due to complexities of using a
  headset with microphone along with the AAC device, the IEP team may consider
  administering the paper-based test rather than the computer-based test.

A reweighted overall score will be provided for students having up to two domains with SPD codes as described above; this score can be used to determine the student's progress toward proficiency and eligibility for exit. Literacy scores are not necessary for making progress and exit determinations for students with SPD codes in Reading or Writing. For more information, see the <a href="DESE ACCESS Score">DESE ACCESS Score</a> <a href="Imputations">Imputations</a>.

Do Not Score This Domain for This Student (online or paper-based test) If a student was not tested in one or more domains, select the appropriate Do No Score code. See the Knowledge Article "What are the Do Not Score Codes? How do I mark Do Not Score Codes?" in WIDAAMS. In Massachusetts, only ABS or SPD should be selected.

Absent (ABS): Student was absent for one or more domains of the test (including due to illness or medical condition) and did not participate in testing prior to the end of the testing window. Mark ABS for each domain not taken. If the absence for a student with a medical condition that prevents them from testing affects participation rate, please fill out a <u>Test Discrepancy</u> form, select "scoring appeal," and provide a reason for your request in the description box. Students refusing to test should be marked ABS. Massachusetts does not use the Declined (DEC) code found in WIDA AMS.

- Deferred Special Education/504 (SPD): Student did not take one or more domains of the test because of a disability for which no accommodation is available that would allow the student to participate (see above). Mark SPD for each domain not taken.
- Invalidate (INV): Schools should not mark tests with the INV code. If an INV code is needed, fill out an <u>ACCESS Irregularity Reporting</u> form to request an INV code from the Department.

# 4. Select tiers for EL students with disabilities or first-year ELs taking the paper-based test.

WIDA ACCESS paper-based test forms in grades 1–12 are divided into two tiers in each grade-level cluster: Tier A and Tier B/C, each assessing students at different levels of English language proficiency in that grade cluster. Tier B/C will be ordered for students who took the paper-based assessment in 2025 and have an IEP indicating that a paper-based assessment should be administered in 2026. Schools can order a different testing tier during the additional test material ordering window (January 5–February 20, 2026). See below for guidelines on tier selection.

#### Criteria for Paper-Based Test Tier Selection

Select the appropriate tier based on the student's overall (composite) proficiency level on the 2025 ACCESS for ELLs test. Suggested criteria for tier selection are as follows:

### **Tier A** is appropriate for beginning ELs who

- enrolled in schools in the U.S. during the current academic school year and did not have previous instruction in English, or
- have an English proficiency level of approximately Level 1–Level 3.4 or currently receive literacy instruction in their native language only.

### **Tier B/C** is appropriate for EL students who

- have social language proficiency and some, but not extensive, academic language proficiency in English,
- have acquired some literacy in English but have not yet reached grade-level literacy,
- are approaching grade-level proficiency in literacy and academic language in the core content areas, or
- are at an English proficiency level of approximately Level 3.5 or higher.

The following criteria may also be considered in determining a student's test tier:

- scores from the WIDA Screener
- scores on other English language assessments used by the district
- written observations by staff working closely with the student

**Note:** Tier selection is not required for students taking the computer-based tests. Those students will be assigned to the appropriate testing tier based on the results of

the Listening and Reading tests, which must be taken first. There are no testing tiers for WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten or WIDA Alternate ACCESS.

5. Oversee paper-based booklet completion (including WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten, WIDA Alternate ACCESS, and writing booklets) of student demographic information.

Complete the Date of Testing box on the **front cover** of the student booklet with the date that the student completed testing.

Complete the **back cover** of each student's test booklet according to the instructions in the table below; **leave all other boxes on the back cover blank**.

Box Number and Description	Students with a Pre-ID Label	Students without a Pre-ID Label
District Name and     School Name	Leave blank	Print the district name and school name
8. Birth Date	Leave blank	Fill in the bubbles completely with a number 2 pencil
10. Grade Level	Leave blank	Fill in the bubbles completely with a number 2 pencil
17. State Student ID Number	Leave blank	Print the 10-digit SASID and fill in bubbles completely with a number 2 pencil
22. School Use Only – Accommodations	Fill in the bubbles for the accommodations used or enter in WIDA AMS	Fill in the bubbles for the accommodations used or enter in WIDA AMS
23. Do Not Score This Section for This Student	Fill in the appropriate bubble (ABS or SPD) for each test the student did	Fill in the appropriate bubble (ABS or SPD) for each test the student did not take

6. Identify and plan to provide universal tools to all EL students, and accommodations to students with disabilities, according to their IEPs and 504 plans.

WIDA ACCESS allows the following categories of supports for students taking WIDA ACCESS tests:

- universal tools: accessibility features available to all students
- test administration considerations: available to all students, at the discretion of the principal or their designee
- accommodations: available **only** to EL students with disabilities whose IEP or 504 plan lists the accommodation

Universal tools, test administration considerations, and accommodations are described in detail in the <u>WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual</u> in the Resources section of the WIDA Secure Portal.

In Massachusetts, use of scratch paper for any of the domains is considered a universal tool. Scratch paper must be closely monitored to ensure that students are doing their own work. Students may not write out entire responses to then be copied into their writing response space in their test booklet or online test or for reading as a speaking test response. Scratch paper is to be used for jotting down ideas or bullet points only. Scratch paper must be collected after the student has completed testing and securely destroyed. Student responses that have been copied, shared with other students, or plagiarized will be scored as "0."

A handwriting booklet may be selected for students in grades 4-12 who are first-year ELs taking the online WIDA ACCESS, or for students with disabilities whose IEP indicates a need for a handwriting booklet. Students taking the writing test using a handwriting booklet must be placed in a handwriting test registration in AMS and removed from the regular writing test registration.

Test accommodations for Massachusetts students with disabilities are listed in the tables on the following pages. Information on the accommodations used by each EL student with a disability must be entered in WIDA AMS (for online testing) or on the back cover of the test booklet (for paper-based testing).

Accommodations are listed in four categories: **Test Presentation**, **Test Responses**, **Test Setting (Environment)**, and **Test Timing/Scheduling**. The tables on the following pages list

- accommodations that are specific to online ACCESS testing
- accommodations that are specific to paper-based ACCESS testing
- the ACCESS test domains where the accommodations are allowed

# WIDA ACCESS Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Test Content Presentation

Online (Accommodation code)	Paper-Based (Accommodation code)	Listening Domain	Reading Domain	Speaking Domain	Writing Domain
Manual control of item audio (MC)* Student manually starts the pre-recorded audio embedded in certain test item prompts.	Manual control of item audio (MC)* Test administrator asks if student is ready to listen, then plays the audio of a pre-recorded human voice on a CD or via audio streaming for certain test item prompts.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes – online test only; N/A for paper test
Repeat item audio (RA)* Student manually plays and repeats pre-recorded audio embedded in certain test item prompts.	Repeat item audio (RA)* Test administrator asks if student is ready to listen, then repeats a prerecorded human voice on a CD or via audio streaming for certain test item prompts.	Yes – repeat item only once	No	Yes	Yes
In-person human reader (IR)	In-person human reader (IR)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Repeat In-person human reader (RP)	Repeat In-person human reader (RP)	Yes – repeat item only once	No	Yes – repeat item only once	Yes – repeat item only once
Large print version of test (LP) N/A	Large print version of test (LP) (student responses must be transcribed into test booklet by test administrator)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Braille version of test (BR) N/A	Braille version of test (BR) (See below for further information.)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Interpreter signs test directions in ASL or another sign system (SD)	Interpreter signs test directions in ASL or another sign system (SD)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Low Vision Script (LV) – Kindergarten ACCESS only	Low Vision Script (LV) – Kindergarten ACCESS only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

# WIDA ACCESS Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Test Item Responses

Online (Accommodation code)	Paper-Based (Accommodation code)	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Scribed response (SR)	Scribed response (SR)	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Word processor or similar keyboarding device to respond to test items (WD) (must be transcribed by test administrator)	Word processor or similar keyboarding device to respond to test items (WD) (must be transcribed by test administrator)	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Student responds using a recording device, which is played back and transcribed by student (RD)	Student responds using a recording device, which is played back and transcribed by student (RD)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes

# WIDA ACCESS Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Test Setting (Environment)

Online (Accommodation code)	Paper-Based (Accommodation code)	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Test may be administered by school personnel in a non-school setting, with DESE approval (NS)	Test may be administered by school personnel in a non-school setting, with DESE approval (NS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

# WIDA ACCESS Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Test Timing and Scheduling Accommodations

Online (Accommodation code)	Paper-Based (Accommodation code)	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Extended Speaking test response time (ES)* Student may have until the end of school day to complete the online Speaking test	test response time (ES)* Student may have until the end of school day to complete the online Speaking test	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A

\*The accommodations for manual control of item audio (MC), repeat item audio (RA), and extended Speaking test response time (ES) must be selected for online test administration prior to testing. Students will not receive accommodated test forms if accommodations are not selected prior to printing test tickets. Instructions for adding accommodations for students can be found in the Knowledge Article "What are the accommodations for ACCESS and Screener testing? How do I add accommodations for a student?" in WIDA AMS.

#### **Braille Tests**

Students proficient in braille can take one of several braille edition tests as described below:

- for grades 1–5, Unified English braille (UEB) in both contracted and uncontracted formats
- for grades 6–12, both UEB Math/Science and UEB with Nemeth in both contracted and uncontracted formats
- Braille tests are not available for students in kindergarten or for students taking the WIDA Alternate ACCESS.
- Uncontracted UEB tests will be ordered by the Department for students who
  took the braille test in the previous year. Contracted braille may be ordered
  during the additional materials ordering window (January 5–February 20,
  2026).

See pages 11–12 and Appendix B of the <u>WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations</u> <u>Manual</u> for important instructions on administering and transcribing the braille assessment. A Pre-ID or District/School label must be affixed to the student response booklet. Booklets returned without labels will not be processed.

The following may **not** be provided to any student on WIDA ACCESS tests:

- reading aloud the Reading test to a student
- electronic text reader (e.g., text-to-speech; Kurzweil 3000) for the Reading test
- bilingual word-to-word dictionaries
- signing the test (items, passages, or response options) to a student who is deaf
- providing oral or written translations of items into a language other than English
- extended testing time over multiple days (EM)

Students must complete test domains on the same day they were started. If there is an extenuating circumstance, pause the test and submit an <u>ACCESS Irregularity</u> <u>Reporting form</u>. See below for further information regarding testing irregularities.

#### **Unique Accommodations Requests**

If an English learner with a disability requires an accommodation that is not listed above, the school may request approval from the Department for the use of a unique accommodation by submitting the request to <a href="mailto:access@mass.gov">access@mass.gov</a> at least two weeks prior to testing. If approved by the Department, the accommodation must be listed in the IEP or 504 plan of a student with a disability.

7. Follow procedures for students who transfer to and from a Massachusetts school during testing.

<u>Instructions for Student Transfers During Testing</u> can be found on the <u>DESE</u>
<u>ACCESS web page</u>. Information regarding the WIDA Student Transfer Form in WIDA
AMS can be found beginning on page 65 of the <u>WIDA AMS</u> User Guide.

### 8. Report testing irregularities.

Any irregularities that occur during the WIDA ACCESS test administration must be reported using the Department's <u>ACCESS Testing Irregularity Reporting Form.</u>

If an irregularity occurs while the student is testing, the test administrator should pause the test, submit the irregularity reporting form, and await further instruction from DESE. Do not continue testing any student involved in the irregularity in any domain until DESE has responded.

Examples of testing irregularities include the following:

- student used an electronic device during test administration other than the one to take the test\*
- student did not work independently or shared their work or test information with another student
- interruption during the test session that does not permit the student to resume testing on the same day
- student took the test with the wrong test ticket (student took a test under another student's name or SASID). Do not administer other test domains for either student prior to approval from DESE.
- student took a test with incorrect accommodations or without the accommodations listed in their IEP or 504 plan
- student took the wrong test mode (i.e., paper versus computer)

\*NOTE: Student use of cell phones, smart watches, tablets, ear buds, Bluetooth enabled devices, computers, or other electronic devices (other than for testing) is prohibited during the administration of the WIDA ACCESS tests.

Staff should actively monitor students during testing. Active test monitoring consists of ensuring students are engaged with the test, doing their own work, and not using electronic devices such as those listed here. Ensure students' personal devices and other materials are out of reach and out of sight of students during testing.

Student use of cell phones for monitoring medical conditions is approved during testing provided the student is tested in small group setting or individually. The test administrator must closely monitor the student and ensure that the phone is not used for any other purpose.

The use of unapproved devices during testing may result in test invalidation. The submission of copied or plagiarized responses will result in the item(s) being scored as "0."

### 9. Address technology concerns and technical issues.

For assistance with technology concerns or technical issues, contact DRC at 1-855-787-9615 (TTY: 763-268-2889) or <a href="https://www.wipachantenness.org/wipachanten

- <u>Technology Troubleshooting and Issue Report Form</u> find this document in <u>WIDA AMS</u> under General Information > Documents. This document provides examples of some common technology issues and some easy troubleshooting tips.
- WIDA ACCESS Technology Troubleshooting find this webinar in the WIDA
   Secure Portal. This webinar provides an overview of the various error messages
   and common troubleshooting solutions.
- WIDA ACCESS Technology Installations: Part 1 find this webinar in the WIDA <u>Secure Portal</u>. This webinar provides instruction on how to configure a Central Office Services Configuration and installation of Central Office Service Devices if needed.
- WIDA ACCESS Technology Installations: Part 2 find this webinar in the WIDA Secure Portal. This webinar provides instruction on how to install DRC INSIGHT and registration on varying student devices (Windows, Macs, Chromebooks, iPads).

### **Available Resources**

Resources to support test administrators and educators who work with EL students are listed below (login may be required):

- DESE ACCESS Web Page
- Massachusetts state page of the WIDA website
- WIDA ACCESS District and School Test Coordinator Manual
- WIDA ACCESS Test Administrator Manual
- WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual
- Guidance on English Learner Education Services and Programming
- WIDA ELD Standards Framework
- WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide for Score Reports 2025

- WIDA Alternate ACCESS Interpretive Guide for Score Reports 2025
- Guide to Understanding the Title III Reporting Elements for English Learners in Massachusetts for 2017 and Beyond
- DESE ACCESS Score Imputations
- Participation Guidelines for WIDA Alternate ACCESS 2025-2026
- WIDA AMS User Guide