

WIDA Alternate Screener

October 1, 2025



How to Ask a Question

Please use the Q&A function to ask a question.

Following a brief presentation, questions will be answered verbally or in writing as they are asked.



What is the WIDA Alternate Screener?

The WIDA Alternate Screener is a paper-based screening tool designed to assist schools in determining whether incoming K-12 students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are eligible to receive English language development services.

About the WIDA Alternate Screener

- Administered 1:1
- Grade clusters K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12
- Can be administered in 30 minutes or less
- Total of nine tasks target proficiency levels 3, 4, 5
- Free materials download from the Resources page in the WIDA Secure Portal
- Results provided in four domains and four composites
- Items cover all five ELD standards
- Domains can be administered in any order



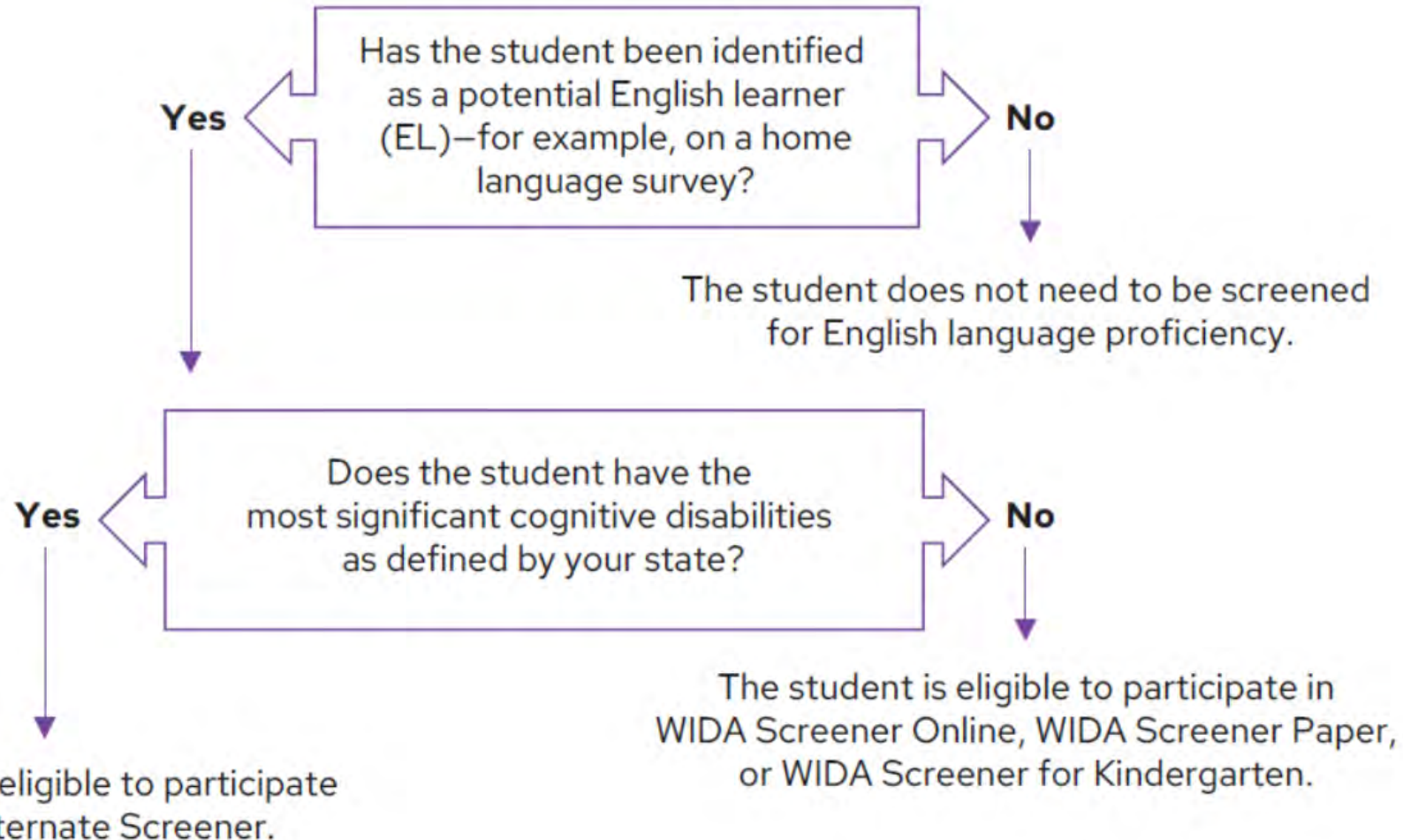
Test Administrator Certification

- Log in to the WIDA Secure Portal to access the online training in the Assessment Training tab.
- All test administrators must complete the WIDA Alternate Screener: Administration and Scoring online training and be certified if they will administer the WIDA Alternate Screener.
- Plan for approximately 1 – 1.5 hours to complete the training course.
- See page 6 of the Identification and Placement Guidance for test administrator qualifications.

Participation Eligibility

- Students in grades K-12 with a language other than English in Section 1 of the Language Survey who
- Meet the definition of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities:
 - have cognitive disabilities evidenced by significant delays in attaining age-level academic achievement standards, even with systematic, extensive individually designed instruction, related services, and modifications, **and**
 - have cognitive disabilities that significantly impact their educational performance and ability to apply learning from one setting to another, **and**
 - require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled, **and**
 - perform significantly below average in general cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. This is defined as a student functioning two or more standard deviations below the mean on commonly accepted norm-reference assessments in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior (e.g., two or more adaptive skill areas such as daily living skills, communication, self-care, social skills, and academic skills).

WIDA Alternate Screener Decision Tree



Students who do not have an IEP or 504 Plan (or arrive with medical documentation) indicating that they meet the [criteria](#) for a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be screened with the [WIDA Screener for Kindergarten](#) or WIDA Screener ([paper](#) or [online](#)) as appropriate for their grade and semester enrolled.

Filter By

Test

ACCESS Braille

☐

ACCESS Online

☐

ACCESS Paper

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Alternate ACCESS

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Alternate Screener

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WIDA Secure Portal Resources Page

By grade span K-2, 3-5, 6-12:

- Student Response Booklets
- Test Administrator Scripts
- Test Booklets

Administration and scoring:

- Test Administrator Manual
- Score Calculator

Determining EL Status

Report in SIMS field
DOE025:

- 00 if not EL
- 01 if EL

- Test the student using the grade span for the grade they are enrolled.*
- After administering the screener, enter the raw scores in the [WIDA Alternate Screener Scoring Calculator](#).
- A student is non-EL if they have an overall composite score of at least Level 4.
- Students in first semester kindergarten are administered speaking and listening only. A score of at least Level 4 on the oral composite is considered non-EL.
- *differs from WIDA Screener

Students with Disabilities

What if a student's disability precludes them from participating in all domains of the WIDA Alternate Screener?

- Refer to the WIDA Accessibilities and Accommodations Manual for available accommodations on any of the screeners.
- A student whose IEP precludes participation in one or more domains of the WIDA Alternate Screener must achieve a score of at least Level 4 in all other tested domains in order to be entered as non-EL in SIMS.

Administering the Correct Screener

- If a student screened with the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener is later determined to meet the criteria for most significant cognitive disabilities, then the student can be rescreened with the WIDA Alternate Screener to determine English learner status.
- If a student was screened with the WIDA Alternate Screener and later it was determined that they should have participated in the WIDA Screener or WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, then the student can be rescreened with the appropriate screener to determine English learner status.
- Refer to pages 14–16 of the Massachusetts Language Survey Protocol if results of the newly administered screener necessitate a change in the student's EL status.



Helpful Resources

- [MA state page of WIDA website](#)
- [DESE ACCESS web page](#)
- [WIDA Alternate Screener](#)
- [WIDA Alternate Screener Score Calculator](#)
- [Massachusetts Guidance on Administering the WIDA Alternate Screener](#)
- [MA definition of most significant cognitive disabilities](#)



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