



Using WIDA Assessment Results During the 2026 Transition to New Proficiency Levels

Minnesota has transitioned to updated English Language Development (ELD) standards. As part of this process, the English language proficiency accountability assessments have been revised to align with these standards.

This document provides guidance to districts and charters on how to access, interpret, and communicate results from these revised assessments during the transition period. This guidance is intended for District Assessment Coordinators (DACs), English learner (EL) program coordinators, EL educators, administrators, and other staff involved in assessment administration, reporting, and instructional decision-making.

Note: In this document, “proficiency level results” refer to score categories reported by WIDA, while Minnesota’s “definitions of proficiency” refer to the state-determined threshold used for EL status exit decisions.

Background and Timelines

This section provides an overview of Minnesota’s transition to the updated ELD standards, the revised WIDA assessments, and key reporting and accountability milestones.

Implementation of Updated English Language Development Standards

As a member of the WIDA consortium, Minnesota adopted the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards in 2011. In 2020, WIDA released the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition to reflect current research, align with academic content standards and disciplinary practices, and advance the field of language development in support of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Minnesota schools and districts began phased implementation of the updated ELD standards during the 2020-21 school year and reached full implementation in the 2025-26 school year.

For more information about this implementation process, visit the Minnesota Department of Education’s (MDE) [English Language Development Standards](#) webpage (MDE > Districts, Schools and Educators > English Learner Education > English Language Development Standards).

Administration of Revised WIDA Assessments

With the full implementation of updated ELD standards in 2025-26, all WIDA assessments have been revised to align with these standards. These revised assessments are:

- **WIDA Alternate ACCESS** (replaced Alternate ACCESS for ELLs in 2023-24)
- **WIDA ACCESS** (replaced ACCESS for ELLs in 2025-26)
- **WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten** (replaced Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs in 2025-26)

For more information on the revised WIDA assessments, visit the [WIDA ACCESS in 2025-26](#) page on the WIDA website.

WIDA Assessment Results

After an assessment is administered for the first time, final results are delayed. This is because all revised assessments need to go through a process called standard setting before results can be released. The purpose of standard setting is to establish the cut scores for each English language proficiency level across all domains and composite scores. WIDA will conduct standard setting for WIDA ACCESS and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten in the summer of 2026.

MDE will follow a two-phase reporting process for WIDA ACCESS and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten results in 2026:

1. Spring 2026: MDE will release early student-level results files so districts can make timely English learner (EL) status and programming decisions. The initial proficiency level results in these files will be psychometrically aligned to pre-2026 proficiency levels.
2. Fall 2026: Updated WIDA ACCESS and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten results will be available after standard setting. The updated proficiency level results will reflect the newly established cut scores.

In the 2026-27 school year, Minnesota will determine new definitions of proficiency and exit criteria for WIDA ACCESS and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten. These new definitions will apply to proficiency level results beginning in 2027.

Note: Access to secure reports (for example, early student-level results files) is typically limited to District Assessment Coordinators (DACs). Staff should consult with their DAC for support with data access and local reporting timelines.

Reporting and Accountability Timeline

The table below summarizes the 2026 reporting and accountability timeline for WIDA ACCESS and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten. Once final reporting dates are determined, the *Important Dates for Results Release* will be posted as a stand-alone document on the [Minnesota Assessment Hub](#) website (Minnesota Assessment Hub > Resources & Training > Policies and Procedures).

Timeframe	Deliverable	Purpose
Spring 2026 (May 18)	Early student-level results files with initial proficiency level results aligned to the pre-2026 proficiency levels	Inform EL status reclassification and exit decisions

Timeframe	Deliverable	Purpose
Summer 2026	Initial District and School Student Results (DSR/SSR) file posted with initial proficiency level results in alternate columns	Continue to inform EL status reclassification and exit decisions
Late summer 2026	Embargoed accountability results available to districts	Review Progress Toward English Language Proficiency results for the transition year
Fall 2026	Individual Student Reports (ISRs) reflecting initial proficiency level results delivered to districts	Share ISRs with families and support interpretation of results
Fall 2026	Public Assessment File posted under the test name ACCESS2026 using initial proficiency level results	Meet public reporting requirements for the transition year
Late fall/winter 2026	Updated DSR/SSR file posted with updated proficiency level results and initial proficiency level results	Use updated proficiency level results for future comparisons; do not revise EL status decisions
Late fall/winter 2026	Test Results Summary (TRS) available with updated proficiency level results	Use TRS for summaries of updated proficiency level results
Late fall/winter 2026	Public Assessment File posted under the test name WIDAACCESS using updated proficiency level results	Ensure the Report Card is populated with updated proficiency level results for public reporting

Initial and Updated Proficiency Level Results

During the 2026 transition year, districts will receive two sets of WIDA ACCESS proficiency level results: initial proficiency levels and updated proficiency levels.

Important: English learner (EL) status reclassification and exit decisions for the 2025-26 school year must be based on initial proficiency level results. Updated proficiency level results reported after standard setting must not be used to revise exit decisions. For guidance on sharing assessment results to support continuity of EL services, refer to the *Continuation of EL Services* section.

The table below summarizes the differences between the two result types.

Descriptor	Initial Proficiency Level Results	Updated Proficiency Level Results
EL status for the 2026-27 school year	Yes —Used for EL status reclassification and exit decisions	No —Updated results do not change EL status reclassification and exit decisions
Primary purpose	Support timely EL status decisions during the transition year	Support instructional planning, progress monitoring, and future comparisons
How proficiency levels are set	Psychometrically aligned to pre-2026 proficiency levels	Aligned to new cut scores established through standard setting
Early student-level results files	Included	Not included
Initial DSR/SSR files	Included in alternate columns	Not included
Updated DSR/SSR files	Remain in alternate columns	Included in standard columns
Individual Student Reports (ISRs)	Included	Not included
Test Results Summary	Not included	Included
Assessment File	Posted under ACCESS2026	Posted under WIDAACCESS
Report Card	Not included	Included
Cross-year Comparability	Must not be used for cross-year growth or trend comparisons	Can be used for cross-year growth comparisons with future administrations

Initial Proficiency Level Results

Early student-level results files will be available in Test WES on the usual spring timeline. These files will contain new scale scores and initial proficiency level results psychometrically aligned to the pre-2026 proficiency levels.

When the initial District and School Student Results (DSR/SSR) file is posted, the initial proficiency level results used for exit decisions will appear in alternate columns, while the standard proficiency level columns will be empty. Additional details will be available in the [DSR/SSR User Guide](#).

Individual Student Reports (ISRs) will be delivered to districts in the fall and will reflect initial proficiency level results.

The Test Results Summary (TRS) will not be available for the initial proficiency level results. Districts will need to conduct local aggregations and analyses using their DSR/SSR files. To meet public reporting requirements, a public Assessment File will be posted in fall 2026 under the test name ACCESS2026 and will include initial proficiency level results. This data will not appear in the Minnesota Report Card.

Updated Proficiency Level Results

When the updated DSR/SSR files are posted after standard setting, updated proficiency level results will appear in the standard proficiency level columns, and the initial proficiency level results used for exit decisions will remain in the alternate columns. Additional details will be available in the *DSR/SSR User Guide*.

The updated proficiency level results do not affect English learner (EL) status reclassification or exit decisions made using the initial proficiency level results. Additionally, no additional Individual Student Reports (ISRs) will be delivered to districts with scores reflecting the updated proficiency levels.

In late fall/winter, the Test Results Summary (TRS) will be available for the updated proficiency level results. An updated public Assessment File will be posted under the test name WIDAACCESS using updated proficiency level results. This data will appear in the Report Card.

Important: District student information systems and local data pipelines may not correctly recognize all data elements in the DSR/SSR files. Districts should coordinate with their vendors to resolve any local system or data import issues.

Interpreting and Communicating Results

This section describes how WIDA assessment results should be interpreted and communicated to families, educators, and other stakeholders.

Data Interpretation

Full implementation of updated standards and revised assessments takes time. Student results may be influenced by local transition timelines, changes in curriculum and instruction, and students' familiarity with revised assessment tasks.

WIDA assessment results provide a snapshot of a student's English language proficiency. These results should always be interpreted alongside other evidence of learning, such as:

- Classroom performance
- Formative assessments
- Teacher observations

Educators can use WIDA assessment results to:

- Identify patterns in language development
- Inform instruction and academic supports
- Monitor progress toward English language proficiency

These data points are most meaningful as part of a balanced assessment system. The following resources support the appropriate use of assessment data:

- [Appropriate and Inappropriate Uses of WIDA ACCESS Results](#) (MDE > Districts, Schools and Educators > Statewide Testing > District Resources): Guidance on using WIDA ACCESS data responsibly and avoiding common misinterpretations.
- [WIDA ACCESS Scores and Reports](#) (WIDA > Assess > WIDA ACCESS > ACCESS Scores and Reports): Detailed information on score types, proficiency levels, and available reports.
- [Testing 1, 2, 3](#): A website that contains an overview of Minnesota’s statewide assessments and resources that help educators understand test purposes, data use, and reporting.

Growth and Accountability

Because of changes to the assessment and scoring, results from the 2026 WIDA ACCESS administration cannot be directly compared to results from prior years. Districts should not create crosswalks or translations between prior and revised assessments.

Updated proficiency level results may be used for future comparisons, including accountability calculations beginning in 2027. For 2026 only, Progress Toward English Language Proficiency will use new scale scores mapped to the previous scale scores and will rely on initial proficiency level results. Embargoed accountability results will be available to districts in the summer. Beginning in 2027, accountability will use new proficiency levels. Additional details will be shared when accountability timelines are finalized.

For information about public reporting files and the Report Card during the 2026 transition year, refer to the *Initial and Updated Proficiency Level Results* section. More information will be shared through the [Assessment Update newsletter](#).

Communication Planning

District Assessment Coordinators (DACs), English learner staff, and other district leaders should collaborate on a communication plan for sharing results with students, families, administrators, the school board, and the public. When preparing, consider the following:

- Clarify key messages, including how local implementation may affect results
- Explain the purpose of WIDA assessments and how results support instruction
- Provide data in context by describing how WIDA results complement other assessment data and classroom evidence

Families will receive Individual Student Reports (ISRs) that summarize their student’s English language proficiency using initial student-level results. To support ongoing conversations about student progress, districts are encouraged to:

- Provide translated ISRs available in [WIDA AMS](#)
- Share resources from the [Engaging Families and Communities](#) page of WIDA’s website (WIDA > Teach > Engaging Families and Communities)
- Host family engagement sessions on interpreting results
- Emphasize that WIDA assessment results are one part of a broader picture of student learning

Continuation of EL Services

Both initial and updated proficiency level results will remain available in MDE reporting systems, including the Student Assessment History Report. However, districts should maintain their own local copies of the student-level data used for exit decisions.

To support continuation of English learner (EL) services, it is especially important that districts securely share assessment results when students transfer to another district. For guidance on providing assessment results when students move or are not enrolled, refer to Chapter 11 of the [Procedures Manual](#).

Opportunities for Involvement

Minnesota educators and community members are invited to participate in WIDA assessment committees and review activities. This participation helps ensure WIDA assessments reflect the diverse strengths and experiences of Minnesota’s students.

To get involved, visit the [Building a WIDA Assessment](#) webpage (WIDA > Assess > Building a WIDA Assessment).

Questions and Support

For questions about the assessment and reporting, contact mde.testing@state.mn.us. For questions about English learner education and standards implementation, contact mde.el@state.mn.us. For questions about accountability, contact mde.essa@state.mn.us.