

This document contains guidance on the identification and placement process for newly arrived English learners in your state. WIDA and your state education agency have worked together to provide this outline of policies, procedures, assessment options, test administrator training requirements, and criteria for placement in EL services. This document is updated each spring and throughout the year per SEA request.

For questions related to state policy or the contents of this document, please contact:

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For questions related to WIDA's website, resources, or assessments, please contact the WIDA Client Services Center at help@wida.us or (866) 276-7735.

Initial Assessment and Identification

Questions/Topic	State-specific Guidance
Process Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer a Home Language Survey (HLS) to students when they enter the district. • Students identified as potential English Learners (ELs) by the HLS should be screened within 30 days of enrollment in the district. • The screening results determine the student's EL status (see page 3). • Students identified as EL must be placed in EL services immediately. • Within 30 days after the beginning of the school year or 14 days after enrollment in a TBE/TPI program, parents/guardians must be notified of placement. • The notification describes the program placement, services, exit, and parent rights, including option for refusal. • Update State Student Information System • All students who were initially screened in preschool must be screened again upon entering Kindergarten. • Current ELs in Kindergarten to Grade 12 should not be re-screened.

Initial Assessment and Identification

Timelines	<p>Notification letters of program placement to parents/guardians must be sent no later than 30 days after the beginning of each school year. When a student is identified as EL after the start of the school year, the districts must send a notification letter to the students' parents/guardians within 14 days of the program enrollment date. Districts must notify parents/guardians every year in which EL students participate in an EL program. The communication must always include the screener or ACCESS scores and the program placement.</p>
Home Language Survey	<p>Every public school shall administer a Home Language Survey (HLS) to all new students enrolling in the district for the first time. The HLS should be included as part of the enrollment packet for every student.</p> <p>The HLS is available in numerous languages on ISBE's Identification & Screening page under "Home Language Surveys." Districts that elect to create their own HLS should ensure that it includes at least the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is a language other than English spoken at home, and if so, which language?• Does the student speak a language other than English, and if so, which language? <p>The student shall be identified as a potential EL if the answer to either question is "yes." If the student is a potential EL, the district must screen the student for English language proficiency.</p> <p>The HLS should be administered in the student's home language or a language that the parents comprehend.</p> <p>The Home Language Survey form shall provide spaces for the date and the signature of the student's parent or legal guardian under the two required questions. For online registration, the signature of the student's parent or legal guardian and date need to be on the same page as and under the two required questions.</p> <p>Additional information is available on the ISBE website.</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

State Approved Assessments	<table><tr><th>Assessment</th><th>When Administered</th><th>Domains Assessed</th><th>Minimum Proficiency Score</th></tr><tr><td>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten</td><td>1st Semester Kindergarten</td><td>Listening, Speaking</td><td>5.0 Oral Composite</td></tr><tr><td>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten</td><td>2nd Semester Kindergarten; 1st Semester First Grade</td><td>Listening, Speaking, Writing, Reading</td><td>5.0 Overall Composite</td></tr><tr><td>WIDA Screener (Online or Paper)</td><td>2nd Semester First Grade through 12th Grade</td><td>Listening, Speaking, Writing, Reading</td><td>5.0 Overall Composite</td></tr></table>	Assessment	When Administered	Domains Assessed	Minimum Proficiency Score	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	1 st Semester Kindergarten	Listening, Speaking	5.0 Oral Composite	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	2 nd Semester Kindergarten; 1 st Semester First Grade	Listening, Speaking, Writing, Reading	5.0 Overall Composite	WIDA Screener (Online or Paper)	2 nd Semester First Grade through 12 th Grade	Listening, Speaking, Writing, Reading	5.0 Overall Composite
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Paper Based Screener Costs	The district is responsible for the cost of any paper-based screening materials. They are available from the WIDA Store .																
Identification/Placement Criteria	<p>The screening results within 1-year and ACCESS scores from the previous year may be used to inform program placement. Additional details can be found on ISBE’s EL Placement page.</p> <p>For screener scores, see above.</p> <p>Additional guidance should be considered when screening:</p> <p>An EL screening should not be administered to a student who, in his or her previous school district:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has been screened and identified<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ as English language learner; or○ as English language proficient as required in this subsection (e); or																

Initial Assessment and Identification

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has met the State reclassification requirements as described in Section 228.25(b)(2); or • has met all of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ resides in a home where a language other than English is spoken, and ○ has not been screened or identified as an English learner, and ○ has been enrolled in the general program of instruction in the school he or she has previously attended, and ○ has been performing at or above grade level as evidenced by having met or exceeded the Illinois Learning Standards in reading and math on the student's most recent State assessment administered pursuant to Section 2-3.64a-5 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-5] or its predecessor assessment or, for students for whom State assessment scores are not available, a nationally normed standardized test, provided that either assessment was not administered with accommodations for English learners. This provision applies only to a student who had been enrolled in any of the grades in which the State assessment is required to be administered in accordance with Section 2-3.64a-5 of the School Code or the grades in which any predecessor assessment was administered.
Other Useful Resources or Information	<p>Screening Preschool-Age Children Prescribed Screening Instrument(s):</p> <p>Illinois does not endorse a specific commercial screening tool for potential ELs in preschool from ages 3-5, but lists some vendors on their Identification and Placement webpage.</p> <p>Using Scores to Determine Placement:</p> <p>Districts should use the guidance included in the commercial vendor's training documents for the purpose of placing students. All potential ELs screened with the commercial screening tool need to be re-screened with the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten upon entering Kindergarten.</p>

Test Administrator Training and Certification

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
Test Administrator Qualifications	<p>Who can administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, and/or preschool screener?</p> <p>WIDA ACCESS (the secure state approved annual assessment for English language proficiency), WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, and preschool screener (the state approved initial screeners for English language proficiency) are to be administered by licensed instructional personnel (teachers with a Professional Educator License (PEL) as well as teachers holding an Educator License with Stipulations (ELS)) or licensed non-instructional personnel (coordinators, program directors, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, assistant principals, principals, assistant superintendents and superintendents) who have completed the required training and meet certification requirements for the instrument to be administered (WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener).</p> <p>Additional flexibility may be granted to school districts whose unusual circumstances warrant the need to secure additional staff to support their efforts to assess English learners. In such cases, they may contract licensed personnel who have been trained and certified to administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.</p> <p>Who cannot administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and/or preschool screener?</p> <p>Licensed individuals who have not been trained and certified to administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener cannot administer the corresponding test. Each assessment/screener requires specific trainings.</p> <p>Individuals who only hold a Substitute Teaching License cannot administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.</p> <p>Paraprofessionals who <i>only</i> hold paraprofessional credentials cannot administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.</p> <p>Can substitute teachers administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, and/or preschool screener?</p> <p>Individuals who <i>only</i> hold a Substitute Teaching License cannot administer the WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.</p>

Test Administrator Training and Certification

However, individuals that meet ALL of the criteria listed below may administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.

- The individual has been hired by the district on a long-term substitute basis to fill in for a teacher who is out on extended leave due to illness, maternity leave, or any such leave officially approved by the employing district, and
- The individual's assigned duties must include all duties customarily performed by the regular teacher such as lesson planning, other state mandated test administration and report card generation, and
- The individual must hold a license for the grade level (a Professional Educator License (PEL) or an Educator License with Stipulations (ELS)) and meet state assignment requirements, and
- The individual must complete the required training and meet certification requirements for the instrument to be administered (WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener).

Can paraprofessionals administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, and/or preschool screener?

Paraprofessionals who *only* hold paraprofessional credentials cannot administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.

However, individuals that meet ALL the criteria listed below may administer WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener.

- The individual has been hired by the district as a paraprofessional, and
- The individual must hold a current teaching license for the grade level (a Professional Educator License (PEL) or an Educator License with Stipulations (ELS)) and meet state assignment requirements, and
- The individual must complete the required training and meet certification requirements for the instrument to be administered (WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Screener, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or preschool screener).

Test Administrator Training and Certification

Test Administrator Training Requirements	<p>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Test administrators must complete the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Administration and Scoring training course, including passing both certification quizzes.</p> <p>WIDA Screener: Test administrators must complete the following courses, including passing all applicable certification quizzes, for the tests they will be administering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIDA Screener Online: Administration • WIDA Screener Paper: Administration <p>If also scoring the Speaking and/or Writing domains, test administrators must complete the following courses for the grade level tests and domains they will be scoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking for Grades 1-5: Scoring WIDA Screener and ACCESS Braille • Speaking for Grades 6-12: Scoring WIDA Screener and ACCESS Braille • Writing for Grades 1-5: Scoring WIDA Screener • Writing for Grades 6-12: Scoring WIDA Screener <p>New for 2025-2026: WIDA Screener training courses for scoring Speaking and Writing no longer include content related to WIDA ACCESS 1-5 or 6-12.</p> <p>Recertification policy: Test Administrators (TA) must annually recertify their training for one-to-one WIDA tests for which the TA uses the speaking or writing rubric to score responses. Other WIDA forms should recertify the training every three years. Test administrators who do not participate in the WIDA Screener administration for a year (or more) should recertify their training before resuming.</p>
Website Permissions	<p>WIDA Secure Portal (portal.wida.us): Existing users with the Account Coordinator role can create user accounts for users within that district. Also, WIDA Client Services can create new user accounts, help@wida.us, 866-276-7735.</p> <p>WIDA AMS (DRC) (wida-ams.us): New WIDA AMS accounts must be created by an existing coordinator-level account holder at the school, district, or state level.</p>

EL Program Requirements – Services & Support

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
EL Services or Program Requirements	<p>All ELs in Illinois need to be placed into either a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Program or a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI). EL services and support does not have a minimum requirement of hours/minutes.</p> <p>EL screening results, in addition to EL status, program type, instructional design and periods of service are to be uploaded to the State Student Information System.</p>
Declining Services	<p>To refuse all or a portion of language support services, parents must initiate and provide the district with a written statement that they are refusing services. However, this parental statement does not relinquish the district from its obligation to provide a meaningful education to the student and to continue to annually assess the student's language proficiency with the WIDA ACCESS. The district should communicate the ACCESS results and program options to the parents on an annual basis. If the parent does not indicate a change in services, the refusal remains active.</p>