

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:

Melanie Manares
English Proficiency Assessment Coordinator
Student Assessment Services
access@mass.gov
(781) 338-3625

Sibel Hughes
Assistant Director, Office of Language Acquisition
Center for Instructional Support
Sibel.Hughes@mass.gov
(781) 338-3569

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	<p>Step 1: Establish procedures in accordance with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) guidelines to identify students who may be English learners (ELs) or former English learners (FELs).</p> <p>Step 2: Administer a home language survey (HLS) to all newly enrolling students.</p> <p>Step 3: Screen the English proficiency of a student when the answer to any of the questions on the HLS is a language other than English. Provide the parents with Parent Notification Regarding English Language Education.</p> <p>Step 4: Determine whether the student is an EL using screening test results and make initial placement decisions.</p> <p>Step 5: Notify parent and/or legal guardian of screening test results and initial placement decision.</p> <p>Step 6: Code the student determined to be an EL in Student Information Management System (SIMS) reports submitted to the Department until the student meets exit criteria as established by the Department.</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

Timelines	The English language proficiency screening shall take place and parents will be notified of the results in their preferred language no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year and within two weeks if the student enrolls in the school district during the school year. Districts should keep a record of the parents' preferred language for future communications as well.
Home Language Survey	<p>Administer the Home Language Survey (HLS) to ALL new students. Districts should administer the HLS provided by the Department to the parents of all new students enrolling in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through 12th grade. If enrollment takes place at a central intake location, there should be a sufficient number of individuals designated and trained in administering the HLS at that location. If the enrollment takes place directly at schools, each school should identify and train at least one person to administer the HLS.</p> <p>Establish a record-keeping system. HLSs provide useful information about ELs. Districts should file HLSs in students' cumulative folders as a resource for educators. Districts should keep a record of the parents' preferred language for future communications.</p> <p>Districts must screen every newly enrolled student whose HLS indicates that there is a language other than English spoken at home. In other words, districts must administer a language proficiency screening test when the answer to any question on the HLS is a language other than English, with the following limited exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students who were previously classified as ELs and were then reclassified as FELs in their former district; • students who transferred from another district within Massachusetts • the only reason another language is referenced on the HLS is due to the student's enrollment in a world language course.

Initial Assessment and Identification

	<table> <tr> <th colspan="2">Students who transferred from another WIDA state with ACCESS results from the last calendar year</th></tr> <tr> <td>ACCESS score lower than 4.2 overall and 3.9 literacy</td><td>No need to screen for English language proficiency. Code the student as an EL and start providing services.</td></tr> <tr> <td>ACCESS score 4.2 or higher overall and 3.9 or higher literacy</td><td>No need to screen for English language proficiency. You can reclassify the student as FEL and start the 4-year FEL monitoring process.</td></tr> <tr> <td>ACCESS score lower than 4.2 overall and 3.9 literacy, but the student met the exit criteria of the state they came from and reclassified as FEL</td><td>Massachusetts cannot accept the other state's reclassification determination based on their exit criteria. No need to screen for English language proficiency, but code the student as an EL and start providing services.</td></tr> </table>	Students who transferred from another WIDA state with ACCESS results from the last calendar year		ACCESS score lower than 4.2 overall and 3.9 literacy	No need to screen for English language proficiency. Code the student as an EL and start providing services.	ACCESS score 4.2 or higher overall and 3.9 or higher literacy	No need to screen for English language proficiency. You can reclassify the student as FEL and start the 4-year FEL monitoring process.	ACCESS score lower than 4.2 overall and 3.9 literacy, but the student met the exit criteria of the state they came from and reclassified as FEL	Massachusetts cannot accept the other state's reclassification determination based on their exit criteria. No need to screen for English language proficiency, but code the student as an EL and start providing services.
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State Approved Assessments	<p>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: The only screener approved for use in screening kindergarten and first-semester first grade students is the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten.</p> <p>Please see WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Guidance for Administration During Kindergarten Registration for additional information regarding administration of the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten.</p> <p>WIDA Screener: The Paper or Online version is to be used to screen students in second-semester first grade through 12th grade.</p>								
Paper Based Screener Costs	<p>The district would pay for any materials needed for the WIDA Screener Paper.</p> <p>For more information on the WIDA Screener Paper, go to the WIDA Store.</p>								

Initial Assessment and Identification

Identification and Placement Criteria**Initial Identification of ELs in Kindergarten**

Test	Grade	Domains Assessed	Minimum Score Not EL
WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	First semester Kindergarten	Listening, Speaking	Listening – at least level 5; AND Speaking – at least Level 5
WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	Second semester Kindergarten and First semester first grade	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Listening – at least Level 5; AND Speaking – at least Level 5; AND Reading and Writing – at least Level 5 in one domain and at least Level 4 in the other

Initial Identification of ELs in Grades 1-12

Test	Grade	Domains Assessed	Minimum Score Not EL
WIDA Screener	Second semester Grade 1-Grade 12	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall composite proficiency level 4.5 or higher and Literacy composite proficiency level 4.5 or higher

Initial Assessment and Identification

Other Useful Resources or Information

Parental Notification: The student's parent must be notified about the screening test results and the placement decisions **no later than 30 days** after the beginning of the school year or within **two weeks** if the student enrolls in the school district during the school year. Please see the [Guidance on English Learner Education Services and Programming](#) document on the Department's web page for more information. Such notifications must be provided in English and, to the maximum extent practicable, in a language that the parent can understand.

Newcomer Students: Data collection code – EL Students in their first year in U.S. schools are optionally exempt from the MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) test for their first year only. They must take all other grade appropriate assessments.

More information about student participation in state assessments can be found on the [MCAS Student Participation](#) web page.

For more information on the identification and placement process, please see the [Guidance on English Learner Education Services and Programming](#) document from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Test Administrator Training and Certification

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
Test Administrator Qualifications	<p>To the extent possible, Test Administrators should be education professionals employed by the district, such as teachers, administrators, or related service providers. Paraprofessionals may administer the tests provided they are monitored by a teacher or administrator with certification in the same room, have completed the online training for the tests they will administer, and have passed the required certification quiz(zes). Individuals <i>prohibited</i> from being Test Administrators include individuals not employed by the district and anyone who has not completed the relevant training and certification. Accommodations may be administered by test administrators, provided they receive training for the accommodation prior to test administration to the extent training is available. The Test Administrator Manuals (located in the WIDA Secure Portal on the Resources page) describe the responsibilities of Test Administrators. The Test Coordinator will determine which tests will be administered by each Test Administrator.</p> <p>All Test Coordinators and Test Administrators administering WIDA Screener or WIDA Screener for Kindergarten for the first time must take the applicable online training course and pass the certification quiz.</p> <p>Those who took the WIDA Screener or WIDA Screener for Kindergarten training course and passed the certification quizzes for WIDA Screener or WIDA Screener for Kindergarten tests in 2023-2024 (last year) do not need to requalify on the quizzes; all others must take the online training and pass the certification quiz for tests they will administer in 2024-2025.</p> <p>Training and certification is required every two years for all tests being administered.</p>
Test Administrator Training Requirements	<p>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Test Administrators must complete the online training course in the WIDA Secure Portal and pass both the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Oral Language and WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Literacy certification quizzes prior to administering the screener.</p> <p>WIDA Screener (Grades 1-12): Test Administrators must complete the online training courses and pass the certification quiz for the tests they will be administering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIDA Screener Online: Administration • WIDA Screener Paper: Administration <p>To be certified to score WIDA Screener, 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 ACCESS Paper and WIDA Screener

Test Administrator Training and Certification

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking for Grades 6-12: Scoring ACCESS Paper and WIDA Screener • Writing for Grades 1-5: Scoring WIDA Screener • Writing for Grades 6-12: Scoring WIDA Screener <p>If a Test Administrator has completed the Speaking scoring training course for the ACCESS paper-based assessment, the Test Administrator is also certified to administer and score the WIDA Screener Speaking Test.</p> <p>Training and certification is required every two years for all tests being administered.</p> <p>New for 2024-25: WIDA Screener training courses will be available on the WIDA Secure Portal July 1, 2024.</p>
Website Permissions	<p>WIDA Permissions (portal.wida.us) Test Coordinators and Test Administrators must set up a WIDA personal account to access the training courses and test administration materials.</p> <p>Educators who wish to set up an account may do so by contacting their District Test Coordinator. Instructions will remain posted on the Department's website as well.</p> <p>New District Test Coordinators should contact WIDA Client Services at 866-276-7735 or help@wida.us for assistance in setting up or accessing a WIDA personal account.</p> <p>WIDA accounts set up previously are still active.</p> <p>WIDA AMS (DRC) Permissions (www.wida-ams.us) Test Coordinators should contact DRC Customer Service at 855-787-9615 or WIDA@DataRecognitionCorp.com to set up accounts in WIDA AMS.</p> <p>Test Administrators and Technology Coordinators who wish to set up an account may do so by contacting their District Test Coordinator.</p>

EL Program Requirements – Services & Support

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
EL Services or Program Requirements	Please see the Department's website for information regarding English learner education programs.
Declining Services	<p>“Opt-out” Requests</p> <p>The decision to opt out must be voluntary and informed, and not the product of district practices or influence, the result of inadequate or inaccurate information, or inadequate district resources. In opt-out cases, the district must inform the parent of the services the child would receive in the district’s English learner education programs, as well as the type of support that the district will provide to the student if the parent decides to “opt out”. Parents should revisit their decision to opt out every year and submit a new request for the current academic year.</p> <p>If a parent of an EL decides to “opt out” of a language program, districts should place the student in an English language mainstream classroom or with an SEI-endorsed teacher and maintain the parent’s opt-out notice for each year in the student’s file. Under federal law, districts must provide instructional support to ensure all ELs, including those whose parent(s) has chosen to “opt out” of ELE programs, have access to the curriculum and receive the same opportunities to master the academic standards and curriculum frameworks as their native English-speaking peers. Districts must also classify them as “ELs” on district reports, annually assess their language proficiency with the state mandated English language proficiency test, ACCESS for ELLs, and notify parents of their child’s participation in such assessments, as well as assessment results. Therefore, in practice, a parent’s choice to opt their child out of an ELE program means their child will not receive separate English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction focused on language development, but the district will provide the necessary support and actively monitor the student’s progress to meet the student’s English-language and academic needs. Districts may also provide additional literacy and language support through reading specialists qualified to teach ELs or establish structured opportunities for the students’ content area teachers to plan content area instruction in collaboration with a licensed ESL teacher.</p> <p>Districts must also keep a record of how such students are provided meaningful access to the curriculum and how they are progressing academically. When a student demonstrates English proficiency through ACCESS for ELLs and has an overall composite score of 4.2 and a literacy composite score of 3.9 or more on the ACCESS for ELLs, districts should reclassify the student and document the change in the student’s EL classification, including evidence used to inform the reclassification, in the student’s record.</p> <p>See Guidance on English Learner Education Services and Programming for more information.</p>